



North Shore Horticultural Society

P.O. Box 171, Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA 01944

February 2023 Volume XXV Number 5

www.NSHorticulture.org

Meeting Location

Sacred Heart Parish Hall
62 School Street
Manchester-by-the-Sea

Upcoming Meetings

Thursday, Feb 23rd

7:30 PM

*Building Productive
Organic Soil*
Peter V. Hauschka

Thursday, Mar 23rd

7:30 PM

*Fresh Water Plants and
Your Garden*
Donald J. Padgett

Thursday, April 27th

7:30 PM

Annual Meeting
and
*Victorian Flowers
We Still Love*
Thomas Mickey

Next Board Meeting

Thursday, March 2nd
7:30 PM



Building Productive Organic Soil

Peter V. Hauschka, Ph.D.

Thursday, February 23rd

Peter will talk about the structure and composition of soils to understand how plant roots interact with soil and extract nutrients necessary for growth. He will describe the organic components and living organisms in soils, along with their benefits to soil structure, moisture retention, and mechanisms of storing and releasing essential plant nutrients. His presentation will wrap up with a discussion of ways to improve organic soils.

Over the past 50 years, Peter's main hobby has been the design, construction, planting, and maintenance of organic gardens. Fruit growing is his main interest, along with vegetables and perennial flowers. On his 1-acre farm are 52 fruit trees, large beds of raspberries, blackberries, red and black currants, gooseberries, blueberries, and elderberries, and 4-5 beehives. The yield is about 1000 lbs. of fruit and 400 lb. of honey each year. Organic soil building and enrichment has been essential for high yields from healthy, disease-resistant plants.

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## **Member survey**

Many thanks to those of you who filled in our survey about program topics and volunteer participation. We'll have the survey available at the February meeting as well. Or you can send us an email and we can send you a survey back.

## **President's Message**

*Carol Batdorf*

Hi Everyone. February is upon us. I look at this month as the time to dream about the garden. If you keep a garden journal or add notes in your calendar, now is the time to read back on what did well and what needs work. Your journal can also be a pictorial account of what is growing and when. What plant came up or bloomed on what date. I have yet to get enough discipline to write a garden journal but this year may be the start. We are seeing changes in our weather. Over the last two weeks, I have seen hellebores in full bloom and many in bud. My snowdrops are up and budded. Some are under the oak leaf blanket and are forming bulges of leaves around the garden. I am reluctant to open the leaf blanket for the snowdrops and other spring bulbs that have sent up leaves because it is going to be crazy cold this weekend.

It is also the time of the year when it is "snowing" plant and seed catalogs. I love looking through the colorful pages and thinking "I would love that in my garden". Of course, I am drawn to the sun-loving blooms but I don't have that kind of garden. It is great to look but remember that the plants shipped are much smaller than the ones that you can get at local nurseries. You also can see the conditions of the plants when buying them in person. Use the catalogs to dream and make plant lists but hold off on buying. Yes, I have had success with mail order plants but I also have had disasters. This past summer, the deer found my hostas so I am ordering more hellebores because the deer do not eat them. I would love to try different

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## President's Message (*continued*)

types of hostas but would just be buying deer food. I learn from the past to plan for the future.

Our speaker this month will help us to learn how to enrich our garden soils so the future of our gardens will be bright and colorful. Come join us, bring a friend, brave the cold and let's learn about good dirt. Happy garden dreaming. ~ Carol

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Learn about the Gloucester Generous Gardener Program

It all began as a plant swapping site that Susan Kelly started 6 years ago that really didn't take off. She turned that into a "philanthropy through gardening" program through donation. Today, Susan manages a volunteer committee of over 250 people who install, plant, and maintain 45 award winning gardens along the boardwalk at Gloucester's waterfront. This creative and task-driven group has figured out how to raise funds to plant 22,000 tulips, 7,000 daffodils, and countless dahlias and perennials! Open to the public. Thursday, February 9th 7 PM
First Church Meeting House
12 Meeting House Green, Ipswich MA

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### Upcoming Flower Shows – Mark your Calendar!

February 23-26  
**Connecticut Flower and Garden Show**  
Hartford, CT  
<https://ctflowershow.com/>

February 25-26  
**New England Camellia Society Display**  
New England Botanical Garden at Tower Hill  
Bolyston, MA  
<https://nebg.org/shows/>

March 2-5  
**Utopia Horticulture and Epicurean Festival**  
Boston Seaport, MA  
<https://www.utopiaseaport.com/>

March 4  
**Annual Spring Bulb Show**  
Botanic Garden at Smith College  
Northhampton, MA  
<https://garden.smith.edu/plants/lyman-conservatory/seasonal-shows/spring-bulb-show>

## The Plant Box

Sitting on the floor at the farm stand was the loveliest looking plant – all swirls of green and ivory and frond-like leaves with bumps. It stood out from the others – those Gerber daisies and English ivy looked



so mundane. I picked it up, admired it, but it had no tag. Would this irresistible greenery work in my carefree plant household? No one knew what it was. The mystery along with the plant intrigued me.

At home, I pondered: it had to be a fern. Picture after picture turned me down. I needed a dichotomous key but instead, like the game show contest I felt I was, I phoned a friend. Actually, I photo-ed a friend. Off went a picture by text message. In return I got back "moss." Moss? She had to be kidding. This is a 5" high plant, broad and proud, not a low creeper covering a rock. She followed up with "look at Selaginella." More images later, there was Frosty Moss, looking just like my new plant.

Frosty Moss is a recent addition to houseplant varieties sold to brighten up winter displays and container gardens. Native to warm climates like in the Azores, it has moved to other environments. It is easy to care for once you know its preferences: humidity, indirect light, being warm and watered and occasionally being fed. It would fit right into my low maintenance plant posse.

And it's a fern. And a moss. And something different. Digging through information, a definitive explanation came forward: it's a type of spike (or club) moss with roots and leaves and reproduces through spores rather than seeds. Its official name is *Selaginella Kraussiana* 'variegata'.

My new plant has been a discovery and is a reminder that an open mind leads to many wonderful surprises.

*This edition of the Plant Box was submitted by Anne Morin. Thanks, Anne!*  
*Is there a type of plant that is special to you?*  
**Please submit your idea** (photo and relevant informative text ~200 words) for a future edition of the Plant Box to [northshorehorticulture@gmail.com](mailto:northshorehorticulture@gmail.com)