

# THE HISTORY OF NEW ENGLAND BOTANIC GARDEN AT TOWER HILL

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The Worcester County Horticultural Society, the third oldest active horticultural society in the United States, is a non-profit educational organization formed for the purpose of advancing the science and encouraging and improving the practice of horticulture. New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill's history began in the fall of 1840. During the annual cattle show of the Worcester Agricultural Society, 24 professionals, merchants and public officials staged a fruit and flower display, which was received with rave reviews. The success of the fruit and flower show inspired the original 24 men to create the Worcester County Horticultural Society in 1842.

The continued success of the Society created a demand for a building to house offices, a library and exhibitions. In 1851, the Society's first headquarters was built in downtown Worcester and weekly summer shows highlighted the produce and gardens of this thriving agricultural community. The crops were so robust and varied that in 1855 one exhibitor alone showed more than 200 varieties of pears! The Society continued to grow and by 1867, the annual exhibition had to be moved. By 1928, the Society had outgrown its Front Street property, so land was purchased to build a new headquarters, Horticultural Hall, at 30 Elm Street in Worcester. During the 1940s, as agriculture shifted and the large 19th and early 20th century country estate gardeners that had supported exhibitions dwindled, the exhibitions themselves decreased. In 1983 the Society turned its sights toward cultivating gardens. In 1986, the Society set its focus on creating a botanic garden at Tower Hill Farm in Boylston. The Society set to work with Environmental Planning and Design of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to produce a 50-year Master Plan for the garden, which would guide its development in the years to come.

In April 2022, the Garden changed its name from "Tower Hill Botanic Garden" to "New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill." The new name reflects the Garden's goal of helping people all over New England make joyful connections with plants, inspire people, and improve the world.

Today, New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill features a four-season display of the finest plants for cultivation in New England. Carefully planned gardens and collections of ornamental, edible and native plants, plus trails that enhance the natural features of this beautiful 171-acre property and a robust program and event schedule make New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill a must-see destination.