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**New England
Botanic Garden**
AT TOWER HILL

New England Botanic Garden Honors Horticultural Excellence, Environmental Stewardship, and More with Annual Awards

(June 20, 2023) BOYLSTON, MA – New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill, a 171-acre garden owned and operated by the Worcester County Horticultural Society (WCHS), recently convened members and the public for its 182 annual meeting. A highlight of the event included the [presentation of a slate of awards](#) celebrating innovative and impactful horticultural contributions made by industry professionals, home gardeners, nonprofit organizations, and municipal groups throughout New England.

“Honoring members of the community and the horticulture industry is an important and deeply rooted tradition for our organization,” says Kentur Russell, newly elected to Chair the WCHS Board of Trustees. “These awards shine a spotlight on thoughtful, sustainable garden projects as well as people dedicated to the art and science of horticulture.”

Community Greening Awards honor the efforts of individuals and groups using plants and gardening to bring people together or address a public need. Projects must meet a variety of sustainability standards. Recipients are nominated each year by members of the public, and nominations for 2024 are set to open shortly. The 2023 awardees include a nonprofit, public high school, and municipality:

- [Rest. Stop. Ranch](#) received a Community Greening Award for the “Best Sustainable Public Green Space.” Located in Topsfield, MA, Rest. Stop. Ranch offers a wheel-chair accessible garden sanctuary designed to provide therapeutic benefits to people with long-term illness and disabilities as well as their care-partners. The garden, which is also Certified Wildlife Habitat, is open to all and free of charge.
- [North High School](#) Community Garden in Worcester, MA, was honored as the “Best Edible Garden.” Each summer, North High students plant and harvest food that they donate to the Worcester Free Fridges project to help address food insecurity.
- The [Town of Millbury Armory Revitalization Project](#) received recognition as the “Best Municipally Sponsored Project” for positive low-impact development that improves stormwater management with raingardens and pedestrian safety with bump-outs at the crosswalks.

While some of WCHS’s annual awards recognize community projects, others honor lifetime achievement, dedication to public gardens, or horticultural excellence. The Silver Medal, one of the organization’s highest honors, was posthumously awarded to Barbara Morse, an Acton resident and longtime member of the WCHS Board of Trustees. Morse was instrumental in

efforts to bring more families to the botanic garden through development of The Ramble, a unique space designed specifically for children to explore nature and learn.

The Cary Award is a prestigious award presented every other year to an individual who has advanced the field of horticulture either as an educator, landscape practitioner, plant breeder, nursery professional, or horticulture researcher. The 2023 Cary Award honored Wayne Mezitt, Board Chair and former President of [Weston Nurseries](#), a fourth-generation run family business celebrating its 100th anniversary. Mezitt is also owner of [Hort-Sense](#), a personalized horticultural advisory service. An influential horticulturist, he has dedicated his long career to making gardening more accessible to the average homeowner through improved plant varieties that do well in New England climates. He is also a mentor to many of the region's leading horticulture professionals.

The final category of WCHS awards recognizes the dedication and commitment of Garden volunteers. Each year, 250 people give their time to support horticultural work, educational programs, events, and more. Eileen Clark of Holden and Kathleen Devericks of Northborough received this year's Annual Volunteer Awards. Clark, who began volunteering in 2014, has given 1,200 volunteer hours to the Garden, supporting the team in a variety of invaluable capacities including mentoring new volunteers. Devericks began volunteering at the Garden in 2019 and has given 440 hours through hands-on work in the gardens and as a Garden Explainer, welcoming visitors and sharing information about plants.

"We hope that all of this year's awardees feel the gratitude we have for the work they do, whether at our garden, in the community, or within the horticultural industry," says New England Botanic Garden CEO, Grace Elton. "Our mission is to create experiences with plants that inspire people and improve the world, and each of our awardees helps make that possible."

New England Botanic Garden is open to the public seven days from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, visit nebg.org or contact Public Relations Manager Liz Nye at lnye@nebg.org or 508-869-6111 ext. 143.

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About New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill

New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill is a nonprofit organization located at 11 French Drive in Boylston, Massachusetts. A regional destination, we are operated on 171 acres by the Worcester County Horticultural Society, one of the oldest of its kind in the country, and are open to the public for garden viewing, trail walking, activities, private events, educational classes, weddings, exhibitions, and more. We are an [AAM-accredited](#) museum that includes an irreplaceable collection of plants. We hope to engage you in a life-long passion for growing plants for their ornamental, economic, and ecological value. Learn all about New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill including its history, mission, and its staff, please visit www.nebg.org.