

**Thursday, July 24, 2025**

**Topsfield Fairgrounds  
207 Boston Street  
Topsfield, Massachusetts**



**FIRE  
& ICE**

# **DOWN to Earth!**

**2025 Annual Summer Conference & Trade Show**

*Where everything is possible!*

**Who should attend? YOU!**

**Why attend?** Professionals in the green industry will not want to miss this great summer opportunity for education, recertification, and networking!

Down to Earth attracts more than 600 industry professionals representing garden centers, retail and wholesale nurseries, greenhouse growers, landscape contractors, maintenance, designers, and architects.

It's the place to connect with industry colleagues and friends. **Scan the QR code or visit [mnla.com/dte25](https://mnla.com/dte25) for more information.**



**Register by June 20, 2025  
for the BEST price!**





## Get Down to Earth on the North Shore with MNLA!

### Summer is for vacations and all things fun.

For green industry professionals it's a great time to take stock and learn about new products, trends and business solutions.

- Find business knowledge about new plants and products, sales, operations and profitability.
- Attend education sessions organized by your professional colleagues.
- Visit more than 60 exhibitors, and join attendees that include growers, independent garden centers and landscape firms.

Are you letting the customer dream their dreams? Are your customers clearly seeing beyond the price and seeing the benefits of what you can do for them?

- Amazing speakers
- Hands-on product demos
- A great lunch and lively afternoon of networking

We've put together a program packed with MCH and pesticide recertification credits! **Visit [mnla.com/dte25](http://mnla.com/dte25) today for registration.**

### Vendor & sponsor opportunities!

Promote your products and services and be showcased during our event, in *Pro Grow News* and online throughout MNLA.com! Learn more at: [mnla.com/dte25](http://mnla.com/dte25)

### Where?

**Our 2025 host site is in Topsfield, Massachusetts,** located eighteen miles north of Boston on US Rte. 1. The Topsfield Fairgrounds is situated on 83 acres of beautifully landscaped property abutting the Ipswich River. Founded in 1818 by the Essex Agricultural Society, it is the site of the longest continuously operating county fair in America and one of the largest annual events held in Massachusetts.

### Who's there?

**Amazing speakers with blazing new industry trends, the coolest business solutions and more!** Hands-on product demos to get you ready for anything and a great lunch with a lively afternoon of networking.

### Why?

**The 2025 Educational Program will be dynamic and innovative with expanded hands-on demonstrations.**

- Challenge yourself with the MCH sponsored Plant I.D.
- What's all the buzz? Learn the ins and outs of bee keeping.
- Join MA State Police guidance for trailer safety and compliance
- Safety DEMO for ladders/chainsaw/pole pruning
- Equipment DIY DEMO for solutions for your equipment by John Deere & United Ag & Turf

Have fun while learning about new products and plants offered by our exhibitors. New demonstration programs promise to be a lively plus to your conference experience.



**Visit [mnla.com/dte25](http://mnla.com/dte25) for more information and to register online.**

# Demos That Make a Difference!

## CONCURRENT DEMOS 8:30am–2:00pm

**What's all the buzz?** • Learn the ins and outs of beekeeping. Get a glimpse of practical beekeeping. The Essex County Beekeepers' Association will provide information on how to keep honeybees, bee biology, and how beekeepers manage bees through the seasons. Learn about honey and beeswax harvesting. Thinking of adding pollinator plants to your portfolio? This is a great way to get a "bee perspective"!

**Plant I.D. Challenge** • Sponsored by the MCH Board • Test your plant knowledge skills with the Plant I.D. Challenge and ask the experts about tips and tricks they use for plant identification. Thinking of becoming an MCH? This is a great preview of what you can expect at the upcoming MCH exam on August 6.

**Safety Demonstration** • Join Mayer Tree throughout the day for tips on: ladder safety in the landscape, chainsaw safety and pole pruning safety.



**Electric Vehicle 101: Technology, Rebates and Incentives** • Director of the Massachusetts Clean Cities Coalition Zachary Jenkins will provide information on the benefits of adopting electric vehicles, electric vehicle infrastructure and electric tools/lawn care products. Handouts will be available regarding: EV basics, things to consider as a consumer, infrastructure adoption, battery recycling, idle reduction and fire prevention.



## 10:30am

**MDOT: Safety & Compliance for Landscape Fleets** • Join Massachusetts State Police for this educational program focused on ensuring your vehicles meet legal and operational standards. Bring your truck & trailer! Speakers: members of the Massachusetts State Police

## 1:00pm

### Equipment DIY Demonstration •

United Ag and Turf and John Deere are excited to share with you our commitment and offerings that allow you to repair and maintain your equipment. There are many options available to every customer that give great flexibility in keeping your equipment working its best. This is a great opportunity to learn about all of these resources.



## Let the challenge, the fun and the judging begin!

**12:00pm in the Trade Building**

**You are invited to compete for a chance to be crowned "MNLA Container Garden Designer of the Year!"** Join Deborah Trickett from The Captured Garden for the fourth annual competition and education! Contestants will be challenged to create a container garden using provided materials. Deborah will highlight container gardening trends and pick the brains of contestants during the competition.

*Scan the QR code or visit [mnlacommunity.com/dte25](http://mnlacommunity.com/dte25) to register online and for more information including the competition rules and regulations.*

### People's Choice Award

1st prize	\$250	3rd prize	\$75
2nd prize	\$125	4th prize	\$35

ALL competitors will be entered into a drawing for the chance to win several donated prizes by our sponsors. Must be present to win!

Participation in the competition is only \$35 per entry (one entry per person). Participants need to be registered for the full Down to Earth Summer Conference & Trade Show program. Winners will be announced at the end of the Down to Earth program.



# Event Schedule and Educational Sessions

**7:30am** Registration & Trade Show Open

**8:00am–2:30pm** Coffee & Vendor Networking

**8:30am–2:00pm** Classroom Sessions & All Day Demos

**10:30am–1:30pm** Food Trucks



## SESSION A 8:30am

**How to Survive a Pesticide Audit/Inspection • Location: Bee Building •** Laura Manning, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources Pesticide Inspector II • This session will cover what is looked for during an inspection. General laws and regulations such as license requirements, record keeping, WPS, and pesticide storage will be covered. This is a free flowing presentation where questions are welcome and topics may change depending on the questions. 🐝 Pesticide credit requested.

**Design Tips for Striking Sustainable Flower Gardens • Location: Coolidge •** Kerry Ann Mendez, owner, Perennially Yours • This presentation covers design tips that will delight customers and generate more business. Stunning gardens will be our classroom for emphasizing striking design essentials that elevate gardens from ordinary to sublime, regardless of the hardiness zone or sunlight conditions. We will consider texture, movement, color, repetition, plant combinations, vertical elements and more.

**What's New in Solution Central •**

**Location: Trade Building •**

Chris Kennedy, MCH, Kennedy's Country Gardens and Jim Connolly, MCH, Weston Nurseries • Summer conference exhibitors have the tools, services and products to help you succeed! Explore what's new, improved and exciting!



## SESSION B 9:30am

**How Did They Do That? Rooftop Bus Gardens • Location: Trade Building •** Trevor Smith, Design and Education Manager, Weston Nurseries • The addition of green roofs to bus shelters can help reduce extreme heat, provide direct shade, help reduce flooding from heavy rain, and improve plant pollinator biodiversity. Learn how small simple steps can have a huge impact on our built environment and how this approach may be exactly what we need to begin to reverse the effects of climate change.

**A Camel's Garden: Drought-tolerant Plants for a Changing Climate • Location: Coolidge •** Jen Kettell, BCMA, MCH, Radiant Leaf Consulting • Moderate and severe drought conditions have become commonplace here in New England. What if we started to incorporate plants that simply need less water? Jen will share the effects of drought on woody plants and describe plant adaptations for dealing with drought. She will introduce a new palette of plant material that will decrease water use while increasing species diversity and beauty in client landscapes.

**Spotted Lanternfly: Impact, Current Status, and Management Options • Location: Bee Building •** Elizabeth Barnes, Ph.D., Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources • Spotted lanternfly is a highly visible agricultural and nuisance pest that has now been found in several areas in Massachusetts. This presentation will cover the issues they cause, their current distribution, and an overview of management options. 🐝 Pesticide credit requested.



**10:30am** State Police Compliance for Landscape Fleets & Trailers

**12:00pm** Container Competition

**1:00pm** DIY Repair Solutions with John Deere/United Ag & Turf

**2:30pm** Program Concludes

## SESSION C 10:30am

**Designing Resilient Edges: Blending Native and Ornamental Landscapes • Location: Coolidge •** Miles Connors, MALD, MCH, Parterre Ecological • Explore how to thoughtfully integrate native and ornamental plantings to create resilient, functional, and visually dynamic landscapes. Learn how to select plants that enhance biodiversity, stabilize soils, and thrive in varying conditions while maintaining aesthetic appeal. Discover strategies for designing adaptable, low-maintenance landscapes that balance ecological health with horticultural artistry.

**The Invasives Among Us • Location: Bee Building •** Jennifer Forman Orth, Ph.D., Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources • Get the latest information about invasive plants in Massachusetts, including management techniques, biocontrol development, additions to the Massachusetts Prohibited Plant List, and what grassroots organizations are doing to reduce the impact of these problem species in our state.

## SESSION D 1:00pm

**Field Identification: Leaves, Branches, Buds & Seeds! Botany in a Day • Location: Trade Building •** Kelly Perry, MCH, Swan Point Cemetery • Some trees and shrubs have more amazing features than just leaves. Join Kelly for some unique tree and shrub identification using seeds, seed pods, flowers, bark, and even thorns!

**Hate Ticks? Using Practical Science to Prevent Tick Bites and Lyme Disease • Location: Bee Building •** Blake Dinis, Plymouth County Extension • Ticks are a re-emerging threat to human health. There are at least 10 diseases in Massachusetts and each can have life-changing consequences. By understanding tick biology, we can make informed decisions to prevent tick bites and disease. Join our workshop for science-based information to keep you and your family healthy. 🐝 Pesticide credit requested.

**Time-saving, Mighty-mite Shrubs That Outshine Perennials • Location: Coolidge •** Kerry Ann Mendez, owner, Perennially Yours • My outlook on flower gardening has evolved over the decades. In addition to practicing the latest earth-friendly practices and incorporating more natives, I have also shifted my focus from perennials to shrubs that provide months of radiant color but are far less maintenance. This eye-opening lecture focuses on remarkable shrubs for front to mid-border gardens, as well as their pruning requirements. These stunning beauties also are ideal for over-wintering in containers.

## Outdoor Fun & Social Events

**Lunch networking begins at 11:30am** Topics include: Women in Horticulture, Gas to Electric, Workforce Development, and much more!

**11:30am–2:00pm Carnival games** supporting Breast Cancer research in honor of Cathy M. Day our MNLA event administrator for many years who lost her fight against Breast Cancer on March 31, 2025.



**2:00pm WINNERS CIRCLE** for Container Garden Competition!

Visit [mnla.com/dte25](https://mnla.com/dte25) for more information and to register online.

# Welcome Our 2025 Speakers!

**Elizabeth Barnes** is the Forest Pest Outreach Coordinator with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and previously worked as the Exotic Forest Pest Educator at Purdue University. She studied biology as an undergraduate at Mount Holyoke College and received her Doctorate in plant-insect interactions from the University of Denver where she studied tent caterpillars and fall webworms.



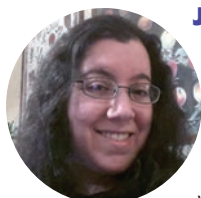
As Senior Director of Parterre Ecological, **Miles Connors** oversees the daily operations and strategic growth of this dynamic division within Parterre Garden Services. With expertise in invasive plant management and native plant restoration, Parterre Ecological is dedicated to restoring wetlands and woodlands, establishing wildflower meadows, and advancing green infrastructure initiatives across Greater Boston, Maine, New Hampshire, Cape Cod, and the Islands. The firm collaborates with residential homeowners, landscape designers, historic cemeteries, city parks, and urban wilds to create resilient and ecologically rich landscapes. Miles holds a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Planning and Policy and a Master's in Sustainable Landscape Planning and Design from the Conway School of Landscape Design. Prior to his role at Parterre Ecological, he served for nearly a decade as Head Gardener for the Newport Restoration Foundation, where he developed his passion for working with people and plants.



**Blake Dinius** graduated with a degree in Biology from the University of Massachusetts—Boston. Soon after, he began a seven-year career in ecotoxicology, where he directed studies on bees, lacewings, springtails, earthworms, and other critters. As an extension educator, Blake is committed to delivering science-based education that you can rely on. Blake offers programs on anything entomology-related: From pollinator gardening to tick bite prevention to guided butterfly walks.



**Jennifer Forman Orth** is an Environmental Biologist for the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, where she works on a number of botanical and entomological issues, including insect pests, invasive plants, plant resources for pollinators, and mosquito control. Jennifer completed her Ph.D. at UMass Boston, where she studied the odd breeding system of Japanese knotweed. She also has a master's degree from Boston University's Center for Energy and Environmental Studies.



**Jen Kertell, BCMA** is a consulting arborist serving the New England area (and occasionally beyond!). As the owner of Radiant Leaf Consulting, she shares her passion for horticulture through the training she provides to both homeowners and green industry professionals. She started landscaping as a teen, continuing to farming, greenhouse production, and finally the Arnold Arboretum before she began building Radiant Leaf Consulting. Today, Radiant Leaf is celebrating over ten years as a small local business.



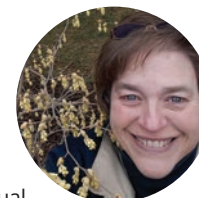
**Laurie Manning** is a Pesticide Inspector II for the last 21 years for Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. Laurie is also the Worker Protection Standard Coordinator for Massachusetts.



**Kerry Ann Mendez** is an award-winning garden educator, author, design consultant and proprietor of Perennially Yours based in southern Maine. As an exceptionally popular educator and communicator, she has presented hundreds of lectures to thousands of gardeners in 23 states. In 2014 she received the Gold Medal award from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for "Exceptional teaching and writing that increases public enjoyment and appreciation of horticulture." Kerry Ann has written four gardening books, the most recent being *The Budget Wise Gardener* and *The Right-Size Flower Garden*. Her e-newsletters go out to almost 10,000 subscribers throughout the United States. In 2016 Kerry Ann started producing international gardening Webinars that have been enjoyed by thousands. To learn more about Kerry Ann, please visit her web site [pyours.com](http://pyours.com).



**Kelly Perry** holds the position of Director of Horticulture, Greenhouse Operations and Educational Outreach at Swan Point Cemetery, a 200-acre, active, nonsectarian historic garden cemetery located at 595 Blackstone Boulevard in Providence, Rhode Island. In this capacity, she is responsible for: producing the greenhouse's annual ornamental plant material; implementing the seasonal decoration programs; caring for the arboretum and ornamental gardens; developing landscape projects; leading grounds and garden tours, workshops and lectures; and coordinating all floral and planting displays for Swan Point's grounds and facilities. Kelly is also very active in the cemetery and green industries. She serves as the current President of the Rhode Island Cemetery Association, Past President of the New England Cemetery Association, and the Board of Directors for the Massachusetts Nursery and Landscape Association.



**Trevor Smith** is Design and Education Manager at Weston Nurseries in Massachusetts. He holds several landscape certifications and is a past President and a current Trustee of the Ecological Landscape Alliance. He is an award-winning regenerative landscape designer, specializing in green infrastructure, native plant design, habitat creation, and implementation of ecological design principles. He is passionate about the natural world which inspires his commitment to sustainable landscaping practices in an era of climate change.



Award-winning container garden designer **Deborah Trickett** has worked in the gardening industry for over 30 years, starting with her first job in a greenhouse at age 13 until the present as the owner of The Captured Garden. Deborah is a frequent lecturer, speaking at the New England Spring Flower Show, The Connecticut Flower Show, the Newport Flower Show, the Northwest Flower and Garden Show, as well as The Philadelphia International Flower Show. She has also shared her passion for perennials at the Perennial Plant Association Annual Symposium. She was a featured speaker at the Grand Garden Show on Mackinac Island. She has taught classes and workshops at the Arnold Arboretum in Boston. Her work has been featured in *The Boston Globe*, *The American Gardener*, *Garden Gate* and *New England Home* magazines as well as on the TV show *New England Dream Home*.



Visit [mnl.com/dte25](http://mnl.com/dte25) for more information and to register online.

# 2025 Summer Conference Registration



## Get Down to Earth on July 24 and learn more about:

- Scorching new green industry products
- Blazing new gardening and landscaping trends
- The coolest business solutions for your staff & clients

Summer is for vacations and all things fun. For green industry professionals, it's a great time to take stock and learn about new products, trends, and business solutions.

### Where Topsfield Fairgrounds

**Why** The 2025 Educational Program will be **dynamic and innovative** with expanded hands-on demonstrations.

- **Challenge yourself** with the MCH board sponsored Plant I.D. Challenge.
- **Check out the products and services** in our educational program, "Solution Central" with Chris Kennedy and Jim Connolly.
- **Earn up to 3 MCH credits** while connecting with industry peers.
- **Pesticide credits:** up to **four** contact hours available

### FOOD & PRIZES!

Food trucks and unlimited water from 10:30am–1:30pm.

Carnival games from 11:30am–2:30pm.

**Support your scholarship program.** Learn more about the MNLA Foundation Raffle Ticket Tree at registration!

### OUTDOOR FUN & SOCIAL EVENTS!

- Interactive education, demos & exhibits
- Fourth Annual Container Garden Competition

Visit [mnla.com/dte25](https://mnla.com/dte25) for more information and to register online.

## ATTENDEE REGISTRATION FORM

Company

Street Address

City/State/Zip

Phone/Fax

Contact Email

### Attendee details

Please check the box if an attendee is participating in the container competition and include an additional \$35 per participant.

Name/Email ☐ Participating in competition

Name/Email ☐ Participating in competition

Name/Email ☐ Participating in competition

Name/Email ☐ Participating in competition

Name/Email ☐ Participating in competition

## ATTENDEE PRICING

**MNLA member** \$75/person by June 20 •  
\$115/person after June 20 and for walk-ins

**MCH (non-member)** \$85/person by June 20 •  
\$125/person after June 20 and for walk-ins

**Non-member** \$95/person by June 20 •  
\$135/person after June 20 and for walk-ins

**Full time students & children** (12 & under) \$25/person

**Battle of the Container Garden Designers** \$35/person • All competitors must also be registered for the summer conference.

\*MNLA Members must log in to [mnla.com](https://mnla.com) to receive member rates.  
**Questions?** Call 413-369-4731 or email [mnlaoffice@gmail.com](mailto:mnlaoffice@gmail.com).

## REGISTRATION & PAYMENT

**Please note:** All registrations are transferable within a company; they are however non-refundable.

**Payment by credit card:** [mnla.com/dte25](https://mnla.com/dte25)

**Payment by check:** Make payable to MNLA and mail to:  
MNLA, PO Box 924, Palmer MA 01069.

## Save even more today!

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