



## Gardening Resources & Tips from the MMGA

### July 2026 *Botanical Journeys and Horticultural Preservation*



A gardener in July is that kid in the candy shop...all those colors and shapes and sizes and we want one of each. Many gardeners visit horticultural sites as their summer destinations (think [Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens](#)), while others choose less traveled paths and international destinations. Some gardeners, like Robert Frost, quietly enjoy(ed) July at [home](#):

*I made a garden just to keep about me  
The birds and things I love, all summer long.  
I doubt not they'd live well enough without me;  
How would I live without them -- their sweet song?...*



#### ***In this month's issue of [The Dirt](#)...***

- Featured How-To: Learn how to take international botanical journeys with garden gloves in hand!
- Featured Garden: Enjoy this pictorial essay on the long-term history and efforts of preserving Maudslay State Park.
- Featured Book Review: Do some sleepy armchair traveling and uncover Monty Don's books and gardens.

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They can subscribe online by clicking [HERE](#).

Massachusetts Master  
Gardener Association Presents

# Fall Gardening Know-How

## Topics Include

- Growing Bulbs
- Saving Seeds
- Organic Gardening
- Preparing the Garden for Winter

Join us **ONLINE**

August 12, 19, 26 September 2  
7-8:30 PM

Registration closes August 9th, 2026

To learn more and sign up, click to  
visit our website. Questions? Email us  
at [knowhow@massmastergardeners.org](mailto:knowhow@massmastergardeners.org)

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***Featured How-To  
Volunteering on Vacation***

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*Author Art Kreiger became a Master Gardener in 2015 and is now a Principal MG. A Belmont resident, he was the PM or co-PM at the Longfellow House - Washington's HQ National Historic Site in Cambridge for seven years. Art is a mostly-retired environmental and land use lawyer at Anderson & Kreiger, and now spends much of his so-called free time removing invasive species and planting native plants in various public parks and private gardens. He hopes to become a Lifetime MG in this lifetime.*

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Have you wanted to get beyond the tourist experience when you travel? Do you wish you could garden in faraway places instead of leaving your gloves at home? You can! Having enjoyed several Sierra Club service trips, my wife and I decided to design our own. Over the past decade, since I became a Master Gardener, I cold-emailed various botanic gardens and other organizations offering to volunteer for a week. We were welcomed every time.

### **Caribbean Botanic Gardens**

Ten years ago, I emailed the Dutch National Caribbean Alliance about volunteering in February. They referred us to the national park on St. Eustatius, a tiny island that we'd never heard of. It turned out that "Statia" was a prominent trading crossroads and the first foreign government to recognize the new United States. The small park staff offered us a room in the "science center," a former police station. A spine-jolting ride up the volcanic slopes took us to the **Miriam C. Schmid Botanical Garden**, a small native plant preserve established 25 years ago. The dramatic setting overlooked St. Kitts and Nevis, with migrating whales and dolphins, but the garden is beset by invasives such as "**coralita**," a vine with pink flowers and gnarly roots. We removed as much as we could. In our spare time, we helped with Tropicbird and Bridled Quail Dove surveys, hiked, rode bikes to the beach, and explored local history.



The next winter, we emailed the **University of Puerto Rico Botanic Garden** and volunteered there. We rented an apartment near the beach and a car for the commute. One day, we joined a group of rose-lovers from all over the island who volunteer to tend the rose garden every week. A Puerto Rican agronomist, who started the garden in 2014 in raised concrete beds built by the USA after WWII, taught us how to graft roses as well as mangoes and avocados. Another day, we helped the staff in the teaching gardens and learned their resourceful hacks for vertical gardening. With no University budget, they use painted tires, soda bottles, and whatever other materials are at hand.

## UK Botanic Gardens

Wales was recommended to us, so I cold-emailed the **National Botanic Garden of Wales**, established 25 years ago on a 500-acre site in south-central Wales, and spent a week there in September 2025. We rented a stone cottage in a nearby village and worked with the “horti” team in several gardens, including the kitchen garden, the desert gardens (in the world’s largest free-standing glass dome), and the rock garden, with plants from all over the world. On “Bog Day,” the entire horti staff convened to pull invasive vines and trees out of the bog. We all emerged from that work wet and muddy – and happy.



This May, at the suggestion of one of the gardeners in Wales, we volunteered at the **Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh** for a week. The RBGE is a magnificent 356-year-old garden in the heart of Edinburgh, and we walked to work each morning from our Airbnb. The garden features collections from China, Nepal and Chile, among other places. We repotted *Thunia* orchids, planted *Skimmia japonica* and *Amphipogon* grass, weeded the Queen Mother Garden (a memorial to Queen Elizabeth’s mother), and then weeded the magnificent blooming rhody and azalea gardens.



## Other Volunteering Adventures

In the summer of 2024, I googled “largest Italian environmental non-profit” and emailed them about volunteering for a week in July. They didn’t know of any openings at botanic gardens but referred us to Lorenzo who runs a permaculture farm in northern Tuscany. Lorenzo farms 29 acres of vegetable gardens and fruit orchards on 13th-century terraces so steep that he named it **La Scoscesa**, the steep

slope. We slept in the library that he had built behind his commercial-grade kitchen. We harvested 5,000 onions one day and irrigated the farm by ourselves when Lorenzo was away. He left us fresh bread, pasta and baskets of peaches, plums, and heirloom tomatoes, and invited us to help ourselves to the farm’s delicious produce. After work, we cooled off in the icy river way down in the steep valley and walked into town for delicious dinners at local restaurants.

Most recently, this winter we rented an apartment for a month near our daughter in New Orleans. After researching local environmental groups, we found opportunities to remove invasives with the **City Park Conservancy**, plant trees with the **NOLA Tree Project** in neighborhoods still treeless more than 20 years after Katrina, and garden at two historic estates. I was pleasantly surprised that the **Longue Vue estate gardens** where we worked were designed by Ellen Biddle Shipman, who designed the garden at the **Longfellow House in Cambridge**, where I volunteer as an MG.

Why take these “busman’s holidays”? If we went as tourists, we would never have met the warm and welcoming staff, volunteers, and local residents in these places. Most of our tasks were familiar to MGs – planting, pruning, weeding – but we learned about many plants that we had never heard of. (I learned, before pulling too many, that Purple loosestrife and Garlic mustard are tolerated in the U.K.!) And as tourists, we would not have learned that northern Tuscany, for all its vineyards and olive groves, is actually a food desert because of the rocky soil and harsh climate. Or that they still use the 19th-century way of measuring sunlight in the Victorian glass house in Edinburgh: strips of special sun-sensitive paper up in the dome that are changed every day. (Above: Art and Rebecca in Edinburgh.)



What are the drawbacks of vacations like these? They come with some uncertainty, but the work averaged only about 5 hours per day for 4-5 days, the accommodations ranged from spartan (ex-police station) to unusual (library loft) to familiar (Airbnbs) but were always comfortable (though watch your head in Welsh cottages!), and we worked closely with the staff and local volunteers. To keep gardening and learn about a beautiful place when you're away from home, just pick a destination, send an email, pack your work gloves, and go!

# 2026 Massachusetts Gardening Symposium

Presented by the Massachusetts Master Gardener Association

**Saturday, September 26, 2026, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM**

**BENTLEY UNIVERSITY, WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS**

## **10 Years of Growing Together: Reimagining the Garden from the Ground Up**

All gardeners are invited to explore fresh ideas shaping the future of our landscapes, large and small. Expert insight into soil science, adaptability/sustainability and elements of design promise new knowledge and inspiration for all levels.

### **THREE ACCLAIMED SPEAKERS:**

**Kirsten Kurtz**



Soil Scientist

**Stephen Orr**



Garden Writer & Editor

**Page Dickey**



Ecological Garden Designer

### **THREE EXCITING TOPICS:**

- “The Science Behind Healthy Soil” (Kurtz)
- “The Gardener’s Mindset: Lessons Learned from Four Gardens” (Orr)
- “Garden Design with an Ecological Slant” (Dickey)
- Q&A Panel featuring your curated questions for all 3 speakers

Also includes lunch, vendor marketplace, book signings, raffle and door prizes



## **LEARN MORE AND REGISTER**

<https://www.massmastergardeners.org/educational-resources/Symposium>

*Early Bird price thru July 6th--Registration closes Sept. 16, 2026*

Header photo courtesy of Master Gardener Erica Bond © 2026 MMGA, all rights reserved



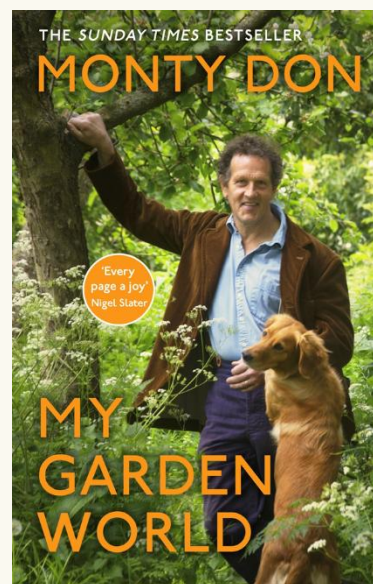
## **Monthly Book Review**

### **My Garden World, by Monty Don**

Reviewed by Madeline Chamberlain, SPMG

I have long since been in the habit of reading before bed. For the most part, I like to stick to gardening and other nonfiction books because, while they're interesting, they're not exactly page-turners. Gone is my ability to stay up until 3am reading *The Hunger Games*. Monty Don's *My Garden World: The Garden Year* is the perfect bedtime book and I think I've read it cover to cover about three times now. (Publishing information [here](#).)

**Monty Don** is an acclaimed English gardener, probably best known for hosting BBC Gardeners' World at his extensive garden, Longmeadow, in Herefordshire, England. He has also hosted numerous garden specials as well as written his fair share of gardening books. It's probably safe to say that any gardener— male or female— who knows of him has a bit of a crush on him. He's effortlessly dapper, charming, and joyously enthusiastic about all types of gardening.



Don's *My Garden World* is arranged by month and is composed of short essays about the various plants and animals that occur naturally or in his garden during the season. Essays are simply titled: "Jackdaws," "Wild Daffodils," "Brambles," "Weasels." Sometimes the essays are about his observations, other times they are about his boyhood memories, and other times they include extensive research. Don has a keen eye for the world around him and few features get left out. While you'll read about expected topics like owls and wild apples, you'll also read about

the slightly more obscure— moths and lichen. Occasionally, the subjects repeat throughout the book. For example, there are three separate entries about goshawks, spanning the year. The result is a book that feels more like a nature diary than a reference book, making it infinitely enjoyable to dip into each evening.



It is interesting to live gardening through English eyes. There, (as mentioned above/below, depending on article placement) garlic mustard is a welcome herb and food source for native butterflies. There, grey squirrels are an invasive nuisance. There, windows and doors are left open all summer long because mosquitoes aren't much of an issue. However, gardeners on both sides of the Atlantic know that our craft has a certain

magic to it and Don's reverence for such is clear.

I have long since hoped that one day I would learn I was the heir to an extensive (and un-mortgaged) English estate. Until then, I welcome the escapism My Gardening World provides. Nightly, just as I fall asleep, I can imagine myself rambling through the countryside in sturdy brogues, carrying a handmade basket as swifts fly overhead.



## ***Featured Monthly Garden***

### **Maudslay State Park**

74 Curzon Mill Road  
Newburyport, MA 01950

<https://www.mass.gov/locations/maudslay-state-park>

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*From author Marlys Edwards: I grew up in rural Minnesota in a family that raised or grew most of its food. Leaving in my early 20s, I moved back and forth across the country before settling in Brooklyn, NY, working in education. I moved to work at Phillips Academy in Andover, MA, where my last job was as Dean of Students, before retiring and moving to Newburyport. I purchased a home with a garden that was primarily grass. After realizing that I had no idea how to create the living space I wanted my garden to be, I enrolled in the MMGA class of 2014 and became project manager of Maudslay State Park in 2016. With two other Master Gardeners, I presented the idea of regions and the North region began having potluck meetings at Long Hill. I also volunteered as garden coordinator for the organization. I am currently part of the North Region Committee, a CA for the MG training program, as well as continuing as PM in Maudslay.*

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## **Maudslay State Park**

In 1985, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts purchased the 488 acre estate of the Moseley Family and named it Maudslay State Park after the Moseley's English estate Maudsleigh. The Moseley Family originally purchased the plot of land in the 1860s and continued through several decades. In the early 1900s, they hired Martha Brookes Hutcheson to design the formal gardens and manicured areas with specimen plantings from the Arnold Arboretum and the Heritage Estate. Charles Sprague Sargent influenced the more natural areas of the estate along the carriage roads. Mrs. Moseley won many awards from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for the landscape design.



Here are several examples of specimen plantings that exist in the park today:

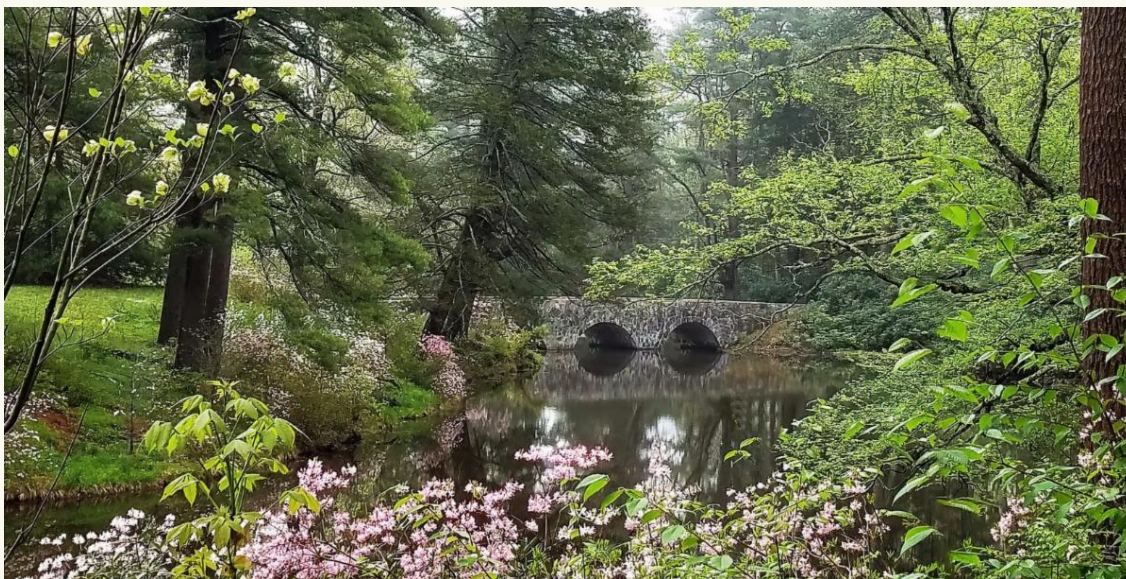


For several decades after the purchase by the state, none of the landscape was maintained except the Italian and Rose Gardens, much of the beauty of the plantings was lost under a canopy of invasive plant material. Starting in 2016, Master Gardeners along with local volunteers began the process of clearing invasive plant materials and pruning some of the thousands of specimen plantings throughout the park.



As we continue to maintain the property, the challenge lies in attempting to capture the essence of the original gardens and designs when over a hundred years

have passed since the original planting followed by several decades of neglect. Shrubs and trees have died while decades of no maintenance has, in many cases, resulted in the loss of the original concept. In 2016, MGs started work on The Flowering and Reflecting Pond. It was so thick with invasive material that one could not see from one bank of the pond to the other side. We spent several years working on the area. There is still a great deal of work to do but at last DCR is now able to set out picnic tables for people to enjoy the scene.



We next moved to address a stand of Kaempferi azaleas (*Rhododendron kaempferi*) purchased from the Arnold Arboretum that suffered from years of neglect. Over the course of several years, we have cleared out dead material, as well as bittersweet, to allow the azaleas to thrive in their border alternating with *Cornus florida* trees which we also pruned. Their spring bloom is spectacular.



There is also an espalier apple tree (see below) that we believe was planted in the 1930s that had been randomly pruned with loppers. We learned about the **Modified Lorette Pruning Method** and have used that to rejuvenate the tree

with splendid results. We also pruned dozens of yew hedges that had been allowed to grow beyond their hedge height and were filled with invasive vines and dead wood. Ultimately the Courtyard area will be cleared of debris and planted as a “ruin garden” by DCR.



Adjacent to the Courtyard is the Italian and Rose Garden. At one point there was a trellis in the formal garden that supported a beautiful series of white wisteria vines. Several years ago the vines were cut several times to the ground while the brick walls in the formal gardens were being repaired. The tenacity of that plant was obvious when the following year the vines started to emerge and all but one has returned to full glory. Master Gardeners carefully pruned the vines shaping them for their location. Although the trellis is gone, this is the display of them blooming this spring.



Main Drive, the entrance to the Moseley mansion, was planted with thousands of rhododendrons, azaleas, and ornamental trees. Over the decades, every conceivable vine has invaded the drive including Virginia Creeper, poison ivy, chocolate vine, brambles and English ivy. Every spring, we work on removing these aggressive materials but it is a battle not easily won. The competition with the vines has created a negative environment for the intentional plantings. This spring, most of the area will be cleared of the unwanted vines and we will focus on pruning the shrubs once they have bloomed.

We have also cleared the area called Tower Hill, which has some extraordinary rhododendrons, and now the public is able to stroll the area in the spring to view the flowers.

And finally, the project that we will be addressing for at least another 5 years in the Mountain Laurel area, native to the site. It was one of the attractions to the area for the Moseley family and John Greenleaf Whittier actually wrote the poem *The Laurels*, based on the collection in Maudslay. Master Gardeners and volunteers are in the process of clearing out a tremendous amount of dead wood and then pruning the laurels, some to rejuvenate the plants and others to remove dead material. Our focus is to clear the area of much of the dead wood as it is a potential fire hazard while leaving the larger logs to enrich the soil.



The work in Maudslay is not for the faint of heart but the effort, when completed, is extremely gratifying to those who have labored. We've never spent a morning working without a member of the public stopping to say thank you and sometimes to ask how they can get involved.

The final perk of working with local volunteers is that there are now two new active members of MMGA who started as volunteers in Maudslay. The park is beautiful and accessible to all. Even those on scooters or wheelchairs can access the trails. Although the Moseleys developed the area for their family it has become a beautiful place for all to visit as a state park!



## ***Seasonal MMGA Learning Resources***

**Ask us your questions in person!** Trained volunteers staff Ask-a-Master-Gardener (AAMG) tables at dozens of events throughout the growing season.

- The AAMGA is coming to a community near you, so check our [AAMG Calendar](#) for dates and times.
- Belong to a local organization that would like to host an AAMG? Contact

[Outreach@MassMasterGardeners.org](mailto:Outreach@MassMasterGardeners.org)

**Why guess? Test! Get your soil pH tested - for free!**

- Visit a soil testing clinic near you: [Soil Testing Calendar](#).
- To request an MMGA Soil Testing event for your organization's event, contact [SoilTesting@MassMasterGardeners.org](mailto:SoilTesting@MassMasterGardeners.org)



## ***Year-round MMGA Learning Resources***

**Have a plant problem?** Email our volunteers your questions...and they'll get back to you. Please include your name, phone number, and as much detail as possible, including photos.

- Massachusetts Horticultural Society at [MHSHelp@MassMasterGardeners.org](mailto:MHSHelp@MassMasterGardeners.org)
- New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill [Hortline@NEBG.org](mailto:Hortline@NEBG.org)

**Speaker's Bureau:** If you're a member of a garden club or other organization, check out our lecture topics here. If you need information on how to schedule a talk for your group, contact our Speakers Bureau Manager at [Speakers@MassMasterGardeners.org](mailto:Speakers@MassMasterGardeners.org).

## ***Credits***

### **Featured Articles & Columns**

- Featured How-To: Art Kreiger, PMG
- Featured Garden: Marlys Edwards, LMG
- Featured Book Review: Madeline Chamberlain, SPMG

### **Pictures (in order of appearance)**

- Robert Frost home, garden, by NH State Parks
- Gardens in Puerto Rico, Italy, Wales, Edinburgh, all pictures by Art Kreiger, SPMG
- Monty Don book and gardens, by [www.montydon.com](http://www.montydon.com)
- Maudslay State Part, all by Maryls Edwards, LMG
- Dahlias, by Lynne Larson, PMG

### **Editorial Staff**

- Executive Editor: Madeline Chamberlain, SPMG
  - Editor: Lynne Larson, PMG
  - Content Specialist: Kathy Donnelly, PMG
  - Copywriters: Madeline Chamberlain, SPMG, and Carolyn Alessi, CMG
  - Circulation: Nancy Kedersha, PMG, and Chip deVillafranca, CMG
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## *Who We Are*

The Massachusetts Master Gardener Association is an independent non-profit organization whose mission is to share research-based horticultural knowledge and experience with the public. We meet that goal through Master Gardener Certification, outreach, education, volunteering, and public gardening programs for the advancement of best practices in sustainable, regenerative horticulture.



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