

METRO HORT GROUP

An Association of Horticultural Professionals in the New York City Tri-State Region



Plant-O-Rama 2025

As Adrian Benepe said at Plant-O-Rama, winter is the time for dreamers. Everyone in the industry is already dreaming of spring. This fall has seemed particularly dark for those of us working in the New York metro area—it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the challenges of the times on a local and national level.

But perhaps hope is still present. The energy at this year's Plant-O-Rama was so infectious, I'm so grateful to have left such a celebratory day feeling reinvigorated and excited for the season to come. How could the energy not be there? Just days before our annual convention at Brooklyn Botanic Garden, one of five *Amorphophallus gigas* in the entire country decided to open its flower for the first time at the Garden. How fortuitous! The following day, the Lunar New Year brought the year of the snake—a time of transformation as people slither in to new beginnings. All of these are signs of good things to come. Let's continue to cultivate our connections and our local ecosystems.

Sincerely,

Metro Hort Group Board President

**UPCOMING
PROGRAMS**

WINTER MEMBER PROGRAMS

- **February 12, 2025:** Mike P. Gibson | *Creative Pruning Techniques: The Gibson Method*
- **February 19, 2025:** Woody Plant Pruning Workshop @ The High Line
- **March 18, 2025:** *Labor in the Landscape* | Panelists: Rosemarie Miner, Michael Ng, and Bella Ciabattone with Moderator, Toshi Yano
- **April 17, 2025:** Save the Date!
- **Spring 2025:** *Choosing and Changing Careers in the NYC Horticultural Scene: A Workshop* with Don Sussman

More to be announced!

We've hired a videographer! All lecture program recordings will be distributed by email shortly after each program.

REMEMBERING ERIC T FLEISHER

Eric T Fleisher with his wife and colleague, Andrea Filippone



We are sad to share the news of the passing of Eric T Fleisher who passed away earlier this year unexpectedly from a stroke. T served as President of Metro Hort Group from 2007 to 2017.

A leader in the fields of sustainable horticulture and soil science, T brought innovation and fresh ideas to some of the top institutions in the country. T was a national leader in the field of sustainable horticulture, and was the former director of horticulture at Battery Park City Parks Conservancy (BPCPC) in lower Manhattan. Fleisher brought this 37-acre oasis of parkland on the Hudson River to the forefront as the only public garden space in New York City to be maintained completely organically. A 2008 Loeb Fellow at Harvard University, he was a frequent lecturer on sustainable practices. Everyone who was lucky enough to have known or worked with T will miss him deeply.

He is survived by his wife and colleague, Andrea Filippone, who formed F2 Environmental Design. The company was born out of their shared vision of combining modern classic design, in the European tradition, with ecologically sound scientific practice and principles. Andrea has partnered with Tim A. Craul, CPSSc to assist with current and future F2 Environmental Design clients.

SCHOLARS SPOTLIGHT

Metro Hort Group has an annual Professional Development Grant program which opens to members each fall. The grant can be applied to support continuing education classes and other training or opportunities relevant to urban horticulture. The grant award is up to \$1,000. In 2025, four grants were awarded to Sean Howard, Oliver Lopez, Gabi Stone, and Jen Wong.



PLANT-O-RAMA

SPEAKER PROGRAM



There's no doubt about it, Plant-O-Rama was a huge hit this year, with the greatest attendance we've seen in recent years. This year the Plant O Rama committee was pleased to organize a an inspirational speaker line up featuring local based practitioners. Our speaker program video is [still available for purchase on Eventbrite through February 7th, 2025.](#)

Sessions included:

All Together Now: Collective Action in the Face of Climate Change & Bio Diversity Loss
Edwina von Gal, Perfect Earth Project

Reimagining an Historic Landscape using Native Plants and Sustainable Horticulture
Ethan Kauffman, Stoneleigh

Managing Naturalistic Gardens & Landscapes: Tactics and Techniques
Moderator: Rashid Poulson, Brooklyn Bridge Park
Panelists: Jessica Kaplan, Riverside Park Conservancy; Marni Majorelle, Alive Structures; Sarma Ozols, Trust for Governors Island; Pawel Pieluszynski, Brooklyn Bridge Park

Cultivating Creativity: A Conversation with Artists and Horticulturists

Moderator: Stephanie Lucas, Madison Square Park Conservancy

Panelists: Patrick Costello, 2024 BBG Performing Artist in Residence; Jean Shin, Artist; Lily Kwong, Landscape Artist and founder of STUDIO LILY KWONG



Trade show Attendees

TRADE SHOW

Plant-O-Rama remains one of the best places to meet local green industry trade representatives for both wholesale and retail consumers. This year we welcomed 35 exhibitors who provide high quality goods to the local trade.

CAREER FAIR

28 organizations exhibited at the newly renamed Career Fair- recognizing that finding employment in the green industry is a lifelong pursuit and more than just a job. Individuals had the opportunity to meet with employers and educational institutions regarding opportunities.



Career Fair Attendees



Bonsai Museum Walk

We are grateful for the long-time support and partnership of the wonderful team at **Brooklyn Botanic Garden** for continuing to host Plant-O-Rama. We are grateful to the horticulture team for opening the doors to the community and sharing their extensive expertise and insights on the free BBG Gardener Walks.

BBG GARDENER WALKS (30-45 MINUTES EACH)

Bonsai Museum Walk | Led by David Castro
MEET AT CONSERVATORY ENTRY HOUSE

Fragrance and Shakespeare Gardens Walk
| Led by Madelyn Ringold-Brown
MEET AT MAGNOLIA PLAZA

Tropical Pavilion Walk | Led by Kate Murphy
MEET AT CONSERVATORY ENTRY HOUSE

Brook Walk | Led by Jesse Brody
MEET AT MAGNOLIA PLAZA



Seed Swap

SEED SWAP

Our second annual Seed Swap had generous donations from North Brooklyn Parks Alliance, Baker Creek Seeds and more. Visitors could share, trade, and take seeds for the season to come.

THANK YOU

Thank you to our sponsors for supporting the 29th Annual Plant-O-Rama!

Presenting Sponsor: Atlantic Nurseries

Hospitality Sponsor: New Moon Nursery

Keynote Sponsors: Emmas Garden &
North Creek Nursery

Happy Hour Sponsor: Proven Winners Color Choice
Flowering Shrubs

Supporting Sponsors: Barton Nurseries,
Domino Park, Landcraft Environments,
Meadow Lab, Pinelands Nursery and Supply,
and Town and Garden

A SEASON IN REVIEW

MONTHLY PROGRAMS

September 17, 2024: Ecological Landscape Care and Practice, A Conversation (Recording Available)

Panelists Richard Hayden, Senior Director of Horticulture at the High Line; Shanti Nagel, Owner and Principal of Design Wild; Rashid Poulson, Director of Horticulture at Brooklyn Bridge Park; and Toshi Yano, Director of Perfect Earth Project discussed their different approaches to ecological design, management, and education.

October 17, 2024: Drew Schuyler | Untermyer at 13 (Recording Available)

Drew shared the challenges and future happenings of Untermyer, a 45-acre public garden in Yonkers.

November 14, 2024: Dr. Frank Rossi | Reimagining the American Lawn (Recording Available)

Dr. Rossi outlined the best design and maintenance practices that maximize quantifiable ecosystems services, including alternatives to lawns.

December 11, 2024: Holiday Book Reading with Marta Mcdowell and Jarema Osofsky

Two guest authors gave us a sneak peek of their work during our annual meeting and holiday potluck.

>>> FIELD TRIPS & SOCIALS

Thank you to all of our field trip hosts and attendees!

- **August 20, 2024** Summer Social at The High Line
- **October 20, 2024** Annual Tri-State Meeting of the Manhattan and Hudson Valley Chapters of the North American Rock Garden Society

>>> FIND AN EVENT

Looking to engage more in horticulture within the community? Our community calendar has an up-to-date listings of all of the local horticulture happenings. The calendar includes workshops, tours, lectures, and symposia that will bring your skills to the next level.

Are you hosting an event? Share your event today by emailing events@metrohort.org for free promotion.

You can also tag us on socials and we will re-share.

>>> POST A JOB OR FIND YOUR NEXT CAREER MOVE

Metro Hort's job board continues to be one of the best ways to recruit horticultural talent in the tri-state area. Employers can post jobs for free on our website. You do not have to be a member to post, and the posting will remain on our site for up to 3 months.

The jobs board is a great way to make your next career move with new jobs posted daily. Employers are required to include salary information and benefits so you can plan which career move is best for you.

>>> VOLUNTEER WITH US

Metro Hort Group is a volunteer run organization. Volunteering is a great way to meet new friends and give back to the community. Volunteering can also help you learn new skills while gaining a sense of accomplishment. Anyone is welcome to volunteer, but we are presently seeking those who have particular interest in digital and written communications, audio and video technology, and event management.



Holiday Book Reading

Stay connected





➤➤➤ STRATEGIC PLANNING

At the beginning of 2024, Metro Hort Group's Board of Directors embarked on a strategic planning process. The volunteer, board-run organization set out to streamline and update operations as well as maximize the organization's impact among their members and the larger tri-state region, to ensure a successful future for Metro Hort Group.

Under the leadership of Board President, Stephanie Lucas, the Metro Hort Group Board of Directors hired a consultant to develop a comprehensive strategic plan that outlines short-term (~12 months) and long-term (~24 months) goals, aimed at enhancing its operational efficiency, financial stability, member engagement, and programming, to ensure a successful future for the organization. These goals align with the organization's mission to provide opportunities for horticultural education, networking, and employment for the public and private sectors, with the goal of cultivating a more attractive, sustainable, and green environment.

The plan development process included the collection of multiple data points through a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis. Participants included staff members, volunteers, board members, and other key stakeholders. Following initial data analysis, the Board of Directors participated in an in-person visioning/brainstorm session, to identify core strategic goals. A high-level summary of the goals is located on the following page.

Once goals were created, a dashboard was established for the Board and Board Committees to track progress on a quarterly basis. This helps ensure timeliness, adaptability, and organization-wide communication, as the Board seeks to implement significant changes in the coming months.

One key take away from the Board of Directors was the desire to reframe Metro Hort Group's mission, vision, and value statements to better align with the future-forward leadership and goals of the organization. The rewriting will likely occur in 2025, so that they can be unveiled during the organization's 40th anniversary in 2026. This strategic plan equips Metro Hort Group with a clear roadmap for both immediate improvements and long-term sustainability. By aligning its goals with its mission and values, the organization aims to foster inclusivity, enhance community engagement, and secure its position as a leader in the horticultural community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SHORT TERM GOALS

1. Board/Staff/Administration: Strengthen governance and operational efficiency by:
 - Implementing Standard Operating Procedures, updating by-laws, and setting board terms
 - Identifying volunteer opportunities and aligning organizational resources
 - Exploring the feasibility of funding an Executive Director
2. Finance: Develop a robust financial framework by:
 - Creating an annual budget
 - Setting expense and revenue goals for FY25 and identifying revenue gaps
 - Exploring grants, partnerships, and updated fee structures
3. Communications & Marketing: Enhance brand consistency and outreach by:
 - Conducting a brand audit and revising brand guidelines
 - Strengthening digital engagement through website updates and social media strategies
 - Implementing a comprehensive communication plan
4. Membership: Optimize member engagement and satisfaction by:
 - Conducting research to align program offerings with member needs
 - Revising fee structures and enhancing business membership benefits
 - Establishing feedback loops for continuous improvement
5. Programming: Advance Plant-O-Rama by:
 - Establishing strong leadership and governance for the event
 - Securing optimal venues and diversifying event offerings
 - Strengthening marketing strategies and implementing feedback mechanisms
6. Mission Alignment: Refine the organization's guiding principles by:
 - Updating the mission statement, core values, and vision statement through stakeholder workshops
 - Ensuring alignment with goals and integrating these principles into operations

LONG TERM GOALS

1. Mission Alignment, Membership, Board/Staff: Foster diversity and inclusion by:
 - Launching DEI awareness campaigns and forming a DEI advisory committee
 - Implementing targeted outreach and onboarding strategies
 - Regularly collecting and acting on feedback regarding inclusivity
2. Communications: Advocacy: Promote horticulture initiatives by:
 - Partnering with local organizations and creating informative materials
 - Hosting community events and recruiting ambassadors for horticulture advocacy
 - Collaborating with local media to amplify visibility
3. Communications & Marketing: Maximize digital content value by:
 - Developing a content strategy and optimizing for search engines
 - Leveraging social media platforms and analytics to enhance engagement
 - Recruiting volunteers to support content creation and management
4. Programming: Collaboration: Strengthen partnerships with city agencies by:
 - Establishing consistent communication and shared objectives
 - Collaborating on funding opportunities, events, and community projects
 - Developing volunteer programs that benefit both parties
5. Finance: Ensure financial sustainability by:
 - Diversifying revenue sources through memberships, sponsorships, and fundraising
 - Expanding Plant-o-Rama with additional programming and promotion
 - Strengthening financial management practices for transparency and growth

