



### 2024 GREAT AMERICAN GARDENER AWARDS

The American Horticultural Society (AHS) is proud to announce the recipients of the Society's 2024 Great American Gardeners Awards. These individuals and organizations have contributed significantly to fields such as plant research, garden stewardship, horticultural outreach, and teaching. We look forward to sharing more information about all of the honorees and celebrating their work through the AHS website and social media channels.

#### LIBERTY HYDE BAILEY AWARD

*The American Horticultural Society's highest award, the Liberty Hyde Bailey Award is given to an individual who has made significant lifetime contributions to at least three of the following horticultural fields: teaching, research, communications, plant exploration, administration, art, business, and leadership. First awarded in 1958.*

This year's winner of the AHS's highest honor is the late **Jim Nau**, who served as the greenhouse, gardens, and trials manager at Ball Horticultural Company for 37 years. He was a plant expert, an accomplished writer, a sought-after speaker, a historian, and a garden designer. Nau, an industry icon, passed away in June 2023.

#### RESEARCH

Jim Nau's journey in the horticultural field began when he completed a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture from Iowa State University in 1982. Directly after graduation, he joined the Ball Horticultural Company, to which he dedicated his entire career. Through his work at Ball, Nau became a leading researcher in plant variety trialing, with the goal of recommending the best varieties to North American growers.

As manager of the trial gardens at Ball's headquarters in West Chicago, Nau oversaw the production of plants for testing every year. He became an expert on the seed companies, breeders, and specific varieties across a wide range of genera in the categories of bedding plants, cut flowers, perennials, herbs, vegetables, and other primarily seed-grown horticultural items. He kept meticulous notes regarding crop culture and the germination needs for each item. He also kept notes about field performance across decades. As a leader at the North Carolina Farm Bureau put it, "he was a walking encyclopedia of knowledge based on history and experience." Nau is also credited with helping to identify Wave® petunias, a breeding breakthrough in the bedding plant standards, developed by Kirin and PanAmerican Seed. He recognized the importance of having growers and the industry working together.



COURTESY OF BALL HORTICULTURAL CO.

In addition to his plant trials research, Nau was considered one of the top historians in the seed and horticulture industries. He collected horticultural books, catalogs, and objects and served as the Ball archivist for years. He also documented the life of Claude Hope, an award-winning breeder best known for his work with impatiens, and conducted detailed research on the country's horticultural legacy families.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Nau communicated his plant research widely through industry publications. In addition to writing *Ball Culture Guide: The Encyclopedia of Seed Germination*, *Ball Plant Propagation Guide*, and *Ball Perennial Manual*, he edited over 20 editions of *Ball Redbook*. Introduced in 1989, *The Ball Culture Guide* is considered the international industry standard reference source for growing floriculture crops from



**Nau was instrumental in the development of Wave® petunias, a breeding breakthrough in bedding plant standards.**

seed. Nau's four editions of *The Ball Culture Guide* provide detailed information on germination, scheduling, production temperatures, lighting requirements, propagation and growing-on tips, and final garden height for 400 seed-grown crops.

While the reference guides are Nau's most well-known publications, he also contributed writings on the history of the national and international seed industries to *GrowerTalks*, a leading trade publication. In 2003, Nau was recognized with the Perennial Plant Association's Garden Media Promoter Award, which distinguishes a nominee representing media such as radio, television, newspaper, book publishing, magazine, photography, etc., whose educational and promotional efforts result in heightened public awareness of the work done by the perennial plant industry.

In addition to publications, Nau was a sought-after speaker on topics such as new varieties, perennials, and garden design, and he shared his passion for plants at many conferences and grower open houses. Most of his work was in North America,

but in the 1980s Nau traveled throughout Korea giving lectures to vegetable growers on how to grow flowers. The government wanted to start a flower industry for the coming Olympic Games. Nau was instrumental in establishing floriculture in Korea, which is now a big and thriving market.

## DESIGN

Once he determined the best plants, Nau allowed them to guide his design for the gardens at Ball's headquarters' campus in West Chicago. As manager, he was responsible for the overall garden of 55 acres, which included greenhouses and cold frames. Nau created a true treasure trove of the best plants from around the globe. Over time, with Ball president and CEO Anna Ball's unwavering support and inspiration, the garden grew into a full-scale wonderland complete with trees, shrubs, garden features, and stunning displays of annuals and perennials in every color imaginable. He introduced novel ideas, colorful combinations, and an inspired mixture of annual, perennials, and shrubs.

Nau demonstrated a deep commitment to transparency, not only for himself but also for his company. Despite Ball Horticultural Company having its own proprietary breeding companies, as the largest distributors of the US and Canada, they made sure to provide access to a wide range of genetics from plant producers all over the world. A leader at Welby Gardens, a wholesale nursery in Denver, Colorado, shares, "We were always amazed at Jim's skill and creativity in his work in the gardens, his devotion to displaying all the industry's varieties fairly and to their maximum potential. He was quick to recognize the merits of his competitor's variety as well as those of his own company."

## LEADERSHIP AND MENTORSHIP

During his long and distinguished career, Nau founded and led several professional organizations in the horticultural field. He served as the president of All-America Selections, an independent non-profit organization that tests new, never-before-sold varieties for the home gardener, and co-founder and president of the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers. He also served as a leader for the Perennial Plant Association, as a frequent speaker and contributor of articles and as a conference and tour organizer.

As a leader, Nau understood the importance of mentoring emerging horticulturists. He was an avid supporter and mentor to over 100 interns during his career, passing on his love for gardening and his commitment to excellence. One of his greatest legacies will be the knowledge and passion he instilled in future generations of horticulturists.

Above all, Jim Nau is remembered by horticultural colleagues for his collaborative attitude. "Jim's personality and his incredible knowledge set him apart and make him unique. He was a kind, generous friend to so many in the industry. His contribution to horticulture is huge," says Anna Ball. This fondness and affirmation of Nau's impact was echoed through support for Nau's award nomination from leaders at the Ball Horticultural Company, All-America Selections, Longwood Gardens, the North Carolina Farm Bureau, and many nurseries and seed companies. ■

## EMERGING HORTICULTURAL PROFESSIONAL AWARD

*Given in the early stages of an individual's career, this award recognizes significant achievements and/or leadership that have advanced the field of horticulture in America.*

**Kenton Seth** is the owner of Colorado-based garden design business Paintbrush Gardens, co-author of the *New York Times*-acclaimed 2022 book *The Crevice Garden*, and former head of horticulture for Western Colorado Botanic Gardens.



He is an international speaker, a nursery owner/operator, an accomplished propagator of novel plants, and a designer and plantsman of crevice gardens, meadow gardens, and native plant landscapes.

In his freelance garden design work, Seth consults for, designs, and installs rock, native plant, and xeric gardens. His designed landscapes range from Colorado to the Pacific Northwest, North

Carolina, and New Zealand. While primarily an educator, consultant, and designer, he also installs public demonstration exhibits and residential landscapes to test, perfect, and demonstrate new techniques and plants. His mission is to demonstrate and facilitate examples of dry or unirrigated landscapes that are also ecologically beneficial, to raise the demand for such landscapes.

*The Crevice Garden* was praised by *New York Times* columnist Margaret Roach for "recruiting a wider and younger cohort to the practice." Seth's landscape work is informed by his BFA in Studio Art from Colorado Mesa University and his Master Gardener certification from Colorado State University.

## Great American Gardeners Award Committee

The AHS's 2024 Great American Gardeners Award Committee was chaired by **Holly Shimizu**, AHS board member and former director of the United States Botanic Garden, based in Glen Echo, MD. Members of the committee include **Kaifa Anderson-Hall**, President and CEO, and founder of Plants and Blooms ReImagined in Washington, D.C.; **Panayoti Kelaidis**, Senior Curator and Director of Outreach at Denver Botanic Gardens in Denver, CO; **Ryan McEnaney**, Marketing & Communications Manager at Bailey Nurseries in St. Paul, MN; **Kelly D. Norris**, an award-winning author, plantsman, and landscape designer in Des Moines, IA; **Nan Sterman**, a garden designer, author, botanist, and award-winning garden communicator in San Diego, CA; and **Steven Still**, PhD, Emeritus Professor of Landscape Horticulture at Ohio State University in Columbus, OH.

## JANE L. TAYLOR AWARD

*Given to an individual, organization, or program that has inspired and nurtured future horticulturists through efforts in children's and youth gardening.*

**Ashley Krueger** is the education coordinator at the Gardens on Spring Creek in Fort Collins, Colorado, where she has led the education, equity, and access department since 2016. As a leader, she works to create culturally responsive, developmentally appropriate, interdisciplinary opportunities where teams can cultivate independence, curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking. Krueger's leadership is informed by 14 years of experience in informal learning environments including nature centers and botanic gardens across the western United States.



At the gardens, Krueger heads Project Hort, a free summer career training and volunteer program for teens entering seventh through 12th grades who are passionate about gardening. The teens gain hands-on horticultural job skills working in the garden with the plant professionals.

In addition to her work at the Gardens on Spring Creek, Krueger also leads an organizational collaborative, NOCO Beet, to ensure environmental education is in every grade in every school in the region. She is a published author of research on the development of empathy for wildlife as well as a children's book illustrator and author of the award-winning book, *The Curious Little Snail*. Krueger holds a Bachelor of Art in Sociology from Colorado College, a Masters in Education from the University of Washington, and a Certificate in Environmental Education and Community from IslandWood.

## GARDEN STEWARDSHIP AWARD

*Given to a public garden that embraces and exemplifies sustainable horticultural practices in design, maintenance, and/or programs.*

The **University of Idaho** stewards two arboreta: C. H. Shattuck Arboretum (a 14-acre naturalized arboretum started in 1909) and the Arboretum and Botanical Garden (a 64-acre cultivated arboretum founded in 1982). Jointly, the Arboreta embrace sustainable horticultural practices in design, maintenance, and programs. Their sustainability practices include maintaining site integrity, such as mulching with site-sourced materials, creating their own compost, and minimizing herbicide and pesticide use; conserving water through plant choices, recirculation systems, and permeable surfaces; reusing local materials for hardscape and paths; cultivating habitat for birds; and reducing carbon footprint by reducing mowing and switching to electric tools.

The University of Idaho Arboreta educate the region's professionals about sustainable horticultural practices, as well as encour-



aging and disseminating research in fields such as plant hardiness, systematics, and hybridization. They function as sites for instruction in botany, horticulture, forestry, landscape architecture, and environmental sciences, as well as for public field trips, lectures, and tours. They also serve as restful, beautiful environments where visitors can cultivate an appreciation of the importance of plants.

### HORTICULTURAL INNOVATION AWARD

*Given to an individual or company whose innovations have made the field of horticulture more sustainable and accessible to all.*

**New Directions in the American Landscape** (NDAL) is an educational organization dedicated to the art, culture, and science of ecology-based landscape design and practice. NDAL has been a pioneering influence in this field since 1990, and continues to educate landscape architects, landscape designers, horticulturists, and the gardening public.

NDAL's impact stems in part from an expansive approach envisioned by its founder, Larry Weaner of Larry Weaner Landscape Associates. Besides the creative integration of science and design at NDAL events, topics in anthropology, history, and the arts provide designers with a rich framework for understanding the full extent of what's possible and required by ecological/cultural design. Paired with these innovative theoretical investigations is a commitment to exploring tangible, practical techniques for diverse scales and contexts.



**NDAL's educational programs are geared to professionals and home gardeners.**

### Nominations for 2025 Awards

Help us give recognition to deserving "horticultural champions" by nominating someone you know for one of the 2025 Great American Gardeners Awards. Look for more details in the July/August 2024 issue of this magazine or online on our website at [www.ahsgardening.org/awards](http://www.ahsgardening.org/awards).

NDAL's programming includes an annual design symposium on landscape, ecology, and culture, as well as a regular schedule of presentations from visionary creative and influential minds such as Ian McHarg and Doug Tallamy. In more recent years, NDAL has expanded its programming to include home gardeners, students, and educators through virtual and regional events.

### COMMUNITY GREENING AWARD

*Given for exemplary contributions by an individual, institution, or company that demonstrate the application and value of horticulture to creating livable communities that are greener, healthier, and more equitable.*

The **Pennsylvania Horticultural Society** (PHS), an internationally recognized nonprofit organization founded in 1827, uses horticulture to advance the health and well-being of the greater Philadelphia region.



**PHS President Matt Rader oversees programs that impact over a million residents of the greater Philadelphia region.**

PHS programs create healthier living environments, increase access to fresh food, expand access to jobs and economic opportunity, and social connections between people. PHS's work spans 250 neighborhoods; an expansive network of public gardens and landscapes; year-round learning experiences; and the nation's signature gardening event, the Philadelphia Flower Show.

In 2022, the work of PHS's programs directly engaged over 300,000 people in the greater Philadelphia region with program impacts being felt by 1.14 million Philadelphia residents who live within a 5-minute walking distance of a PHS project. Recent projects include serving as lead partner for the development of the City of Philadelphia's first ever Philly Tree Plan, a 10-year plan to restore tree canopy in Philadelphia's lowest canopy neighborhoods; and partnering with the University of Pennsylvania to study the effects of nature-based programs to mitigate crime and promote public health outcomes in low-income, BIPOC communities. ■

# 2024 AHS Book Award Winners

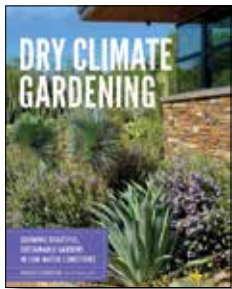
Each year, the American Horticultural Society recognizes outstanding gardening books published in North America with its annual Book Award. Nominated books are judged by the AHS Book Award Committee on qualities such as writing style, authority, accuracy, and physical quality. This year four award recipients, listed below, were selected from more than 35 nominated books published in 2023. Five more books received honorable mentions.

AHS's 2024 Book Award Committee was chaired by **Viveka Neveln**, garden editor for BHG.com in Des Moines, Iowa. Other committee members are **Scott Aker**, a garden communicator and director of the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens in Wyoming; **Perla Sofía Curbelo-Santiago**, a garden communicator in San Juan, Puerto Rico; **Christine Froelich**, a horticulturist, landscape designer, and consultant in the Rochester, New York, area; **Kim Toscano Holmes**, a freelance communicator and horticulturist based in Stillwater, Oklahoma; **Jim Long**, a garden book author and nursery owner from Blue Eye, Missouri; and **Lucy Mercer**, a garden writer and blogger in Atlanta, Georgia.

## Dry-Climate Gardening

by Noelle Johnson (Cool Springs Press).

■ Scott Aker praised this book for having “broader applicability than many other dry-land gardening books that I’ve run across before,” as well as for “clearly explaining the thought process you need to go through when you garden in a dry climate.” Christine Froelich admired how Johnson “framed the information in a way that is really easy to understand. It’s sort of like she’s kind of your friend, you know, holding your hand as you read along.” Curbelo-Santiago says the book included a lot of information relevant to gardeners in tropical climates.



## The Seven-Step Homestead

by Leah M. Webb (Storey Publishing)

■ In Jim Long’s assessment, this new addition to the pantheon of homesteading books “has wide appeal to people starting to look at ways to be more self-suffi-



cient.” Kim Toscano Holmes agreed, pointing out that the information presented “builds on itself so we’re not repeating things that we learned in chapter one, we’re just adding and adding. I thought it was very well done.” Lucy Mercer praised the design and images in the book, which she says complemented the text.

## Tiny + Wild

by Graham Laird Gardener (Cool Springs Press)

■ Committee members liked the crisp design and clear photos in this book, as well as the approachable scale of the many different projects the author described.



“It’s like the scrappy little, ‘you can do it too’ kind of guide,” says Mercer. “If I had to recommend a book to somebody who wanted to grow a meadow garden

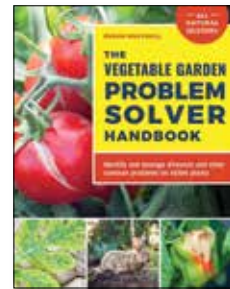
or a native plants garden, no matter what size their property, I’d say go with *Tiny + Wild*.” Viveka Neveln praised the design and layout for helping to “break projects up into manageable, bite-sized pieces.”

## The Vegetable Garden Problem Handbook

by Susan Mulvihill (Cool Springs Press)

■ This book received high marks from the committee for its authoritativeness, excellent resources, and high-quality images. “I feel this is widely applicable to gardeners of any kind, from beginners to experienced,” says Long. “Susan’s voice is very warm

and authoritative, so it’s just like having a reassuring friend who is walking you through the garden,” adds Mercer. “I really appreciate it as a practical book...that I could take it with me to the garden and check problems using the high-resolution photos,” says Curbelo-Santiago. Froelich agrees: “This is the kind of book that would get very dirty because I’d be taking it out in the garden.” ■



## Honorable Mentions

**Edible Houseplants** by Laurelynn G. Martin and Byron E. Martin (Storey Publishing)

**Firescaping Your Home** by Adrienne Edwards and Rachel Schleiger (Timber Press)

**Flower Bugs** by Angella Moorehouse (Pollination Press)

**Prairie Up** by Benjamin Vogt (3 Fields Books)

**Wildscape** by Nancy Lawson (Princeton Architectural Press)