

2022 Year-End Report

After 2 years of online programming, it has been fun to return in person this fall at our monthly meetings while still navigating the effects of the pandemic, and now this winter, our new *Tripledemic*. We plan to continue with in-person and online programs as we continue to build this great network and provide flexibility. We know many of our members are working tirelessly in the green industry and hope to connect with you at future Metro Hort programs, especially Plant-O-Rama! Help us grow this community by sharing our organization with your colleagues.

JULY – DECEMBER, 2022

Monthly Meetings: We returned to the Central Park Arsenal for in-person meetings after 2 ½ years. These speakers delivered excellent talks at the Arsenal with members happy to catch up in person with fellow members.

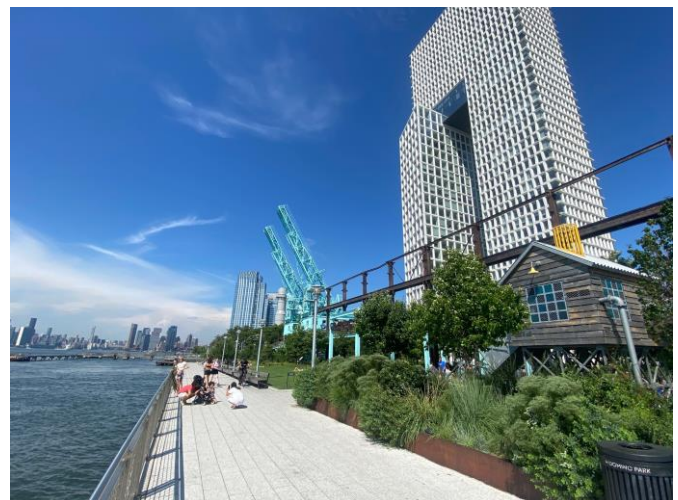
- September 14 - Jonathan Kui, [*Carnivorous Plants and Their Role in Society*](#)
- October 14 - Anna A. Paltseva, Ph.D., [*The Hidden Mystery Behind Soil Contamination and Simple Ways to Defeat It*](#)
- November 14 - Gwen Dawson, [*South Battery Park City Resiliency Project*](#)
- December 12 – Jennifer Greenfeld, Deputy Commissioner for Environment & Planning NYC's Parks & Recreation

These speakers' slide presentations may be viewed directly in the links, in addition to all past speaker presentations found on our [Archives webpages](#).

Field Trips:

Four field trips were held since July 1st:

- **July 21 - Brooklyn Bridge Park** Our outing to BBP was bittersweet as it was also a farewell to long-time MH Board member Rebecca McMackin prior to beginning her Loeb Fellowship with the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Thirty members explored Pier 3, one of her favorite areas. We were able to see how her focus on ecological landscape practices have been rigorously applied to transform the Brooklyn waterfront into a teaming habitat for birds, butterflies, pollinators and other wildlife. The evening ended with a festive celebration for Rebecca's send off at Fornino's (Pier 6) who provided a beautiful rooftop setting with complimentary drinks and food.
- **August 5 - Domino Park Summer Social** Our summer social turned out to be a terrific 2-for-1 special! Nathan Bartholomew (Director of Horticulture at Two Trees Management Company) added an insiders' tour of the 5-acre Domino Park, in addition to providing complimentary snacks for our happy hour. Nathan walked us through this recently created park located on the site of the former Domino Sugar Refinery (East River waterfront). He provided history on the project, including details on the complexity of designing/engineering the infrastructure. The integration of salvaged equipment reminds the visitor of the historical industrial use of the site as a major sugar refining facility. The park is brimming with activity and is clearly embraced by the surrounding community.



- August 23 - The Farm at Javits Center** After navigating a maze of elevators and service corridors, our group of over 30 members reached the state-of-the-art urban farm on top of the Javits Center. The Farm spans 1 acre of vegetable growing beds including a 3,500 ft² climate-controlled greenhouse and a 10,000 ft² rooftop orchard. The operation began in 2021 and is managed by Brooklyn Grange Rooftop Farm (BK Grange). Co-founder and CEO of BK Grange, Ben Flanner and team provided an overview of their approach to farming, including crop selection/rotation, soil selection/maintenance, irrigation systems use/maintenance, etc. We also learned about many of the design and infrastructure considerations that enabled the development of the farm, including the rainwater collections system. We enjoyed the breath-taking river views from the east side of the Farm where the apple and pear orchard and “mobile gardens” of 100 movable planters are situated.



- September 29 - Governors Island** Following a brief ferry excursion from southern Manhattan, Andi Pettis and four of her knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff hosted ~ 30 members to an early fall walking tour. We heard of the many challenges faced by the horticultural staff including the hosting of massive events on the Island, the topography (steep slopes) of the 3 hills, and the highly exposed location. We also learned about various approaches to control of invasive species and were shown successful examples of the use of solarization. From the hills to the protected “woody” areas to enjoying Slide Hill with its 3 slides, a good time was had by all. And, the expansive views of the Statue of Liberty, Manhattan and Jersey City skylines are always awesome!



Workshops: Two workshops were held since July 1st:

- **July 18th - Community Composting at Queensbridge Community Compost Site,** hosted by Devin Reitsma, Project Manager for NYC's Big Reuse Community Compost Project. We learned about the programming of the NYC Compost Project, industrial composting in an urban setting, and the benefits of compost application for horticulture. We then toured the Dutch Kills Green, a unique lush green park built right in the busy intersection of Queens Plaza North and Queensboro Bridge.



Devin Reitsma, Roxana Tejada, Carolyn Jacobs

- **August 20 - Bee Keeping Workshop** Ruth Harrigan, a veteran NYC beekeeper, hosted us at the apiary in the quiet neighborhood in Douglaston, NY. We were amazed by how honeybees use the polarized-light pattern of the sky as a compass for navigation, and communicate this information to their nest-mates through the 'waggle dance'.



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From left to right, Kean Eng,
Viola Marks-Kelly, Teresa
Markham, Leonidas Santos, Jose
Gallego-Blanco, Ruth Harrigan



Membership Survey:

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Metro Hort Membership Survey this past September in which the response rate was ~20%:

- Evenings are the best time for monthly meetings
- Online programs are the most accessible
- In-person meetings are the preferred method getting to know other members
- Host in-person programs and social events with the option to live stream in order to reach a wider audience
- Earlier career responders expressed interest in mentor programs, special social groups, networking and [Discord](#) chats.

The bottom line is we will continue with in-person meetings and field trips including some outside of NYC, and keep some level of online programming. Our Programs Committee will be scheduling talks featuring landscape design, horticulture, sustainability, and local topics.



UPCOMING IN 2023

PLANT-O-RAMA - JANUARY 30 (ZOOM) & 31 (IN-PERSON), 2023

After a 2-year virtual hiatus, we are back, IN PERSON at Brooklyn Botanic Garden, with 2 Keynote Speakers, 4 Break-Out Sessions, Trade Show, Jobs Fair, BBG Guided Walks and our Closing Party.

Face masks are strongly recommended.

Monday, January 30, 6 – 7:15 pm (ZOOM)

Keynote Speaker: Thomas RaShad Easley, Ed.D., *Forest Rhythms; Hip Hop Environmentalism*

Tuesday, January 31, 9 am – 4 pm (In-Person @ BBG)

Keynote Speaker: Jared Barnes, Ph.D., *A Plantastic Future*

4 Break-Out Sessions:

- Sergio Moncada-Leiva, *Getting to 30% Canopy Cover Throughout NYC: Why, Who, and How.*
- Anthony Bulfamante, A. Bulfamante Landscaping; Richard Pacailler, Town & Gardens, Ltd.; Whitney Parkerton, Parker Meadows, Inc. *Sustainability Stories: Landscape Contractors Building a Greener Future.* Moderated by Mark Davies, Higher Ground Horticulture.
- Craig Pine, *Navigating the Tsunami of Plant Introductions*
- Rebecca Kagle, *Creating Native Meadows in the Urban Environment; Design through Management.*

Plus all-day Trade Show, Jobs Fair (10 am – 1 pm), BBG Guided Walks (1 & 2 pm), Closing Party w/ D.J. Dao (3 – 4 pm), along with announcing the two recipients of this year's Professional Development Grants (\$1,000 each).

For full details, check out <https://www.metrohort.org/calendar/plant-o-rama>.

To purchase tickets, go to: www.eventbrite.com/e/plant-o-rama-2023-tickets-468358511917



MHG Board: We are happy to welcome 5 new board members whose terms begin in 2023:

- **Rowan Blaik** is Vice President of Horticulture at Brooklyn Botanic Garden. He has overseen the Garden's grounds, glasshouses, and collections in this role since 2021. He joined BBG in 2017 as Director of Living Collections, became Associate VP of Horticulture and Living Collections in 2019, and Acting VP of Horticulture from 2020. Prior to BBG, Rowan was head gardener for eight years at Down House, the former home of Charles Darwin. He managed the garden through the Darwin bicentenary. In the U.K., Rowan worked and trained with the Royal Parks; the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; and English Heritage. He holds a Master of Research from UCL, London, and a Diploma in Horticulture from RBG, Kew.
- **Richard Hayden** is the director of horticulture for The High Line. He previously served as assistant deputy director of the Los Angeles Natural History Museum where he oversaw the *Nature Gardens* and collaborated with scientists in their study of urban nature. He also served as the project manager for La Brea Tar Pits Museum's new master plan. He began his 25-year career in horticulture as a Los Angeles-based landscape designer, recently served as the board chair for Pacific Horticulture and previously as the President of the Los Angeles District of the Association of Professional Landscape Designers.

- **Shanti Nagel** is the founder of Design Wild, a landscape design firm working at the intersection of climate, people, and collective well-being. She founded an organic vegetable farm at the age of 20 and after years in operation, she moved from rural agriculture to urban agriculture managing one of New York City's largest urban farms. She is a graduate of NYBG's School of Professional Horticulture, a trained horticulturist and skilled landscape designer. She comes from a long line of social activism and approaches all her work through a lens of equity and justice. For the last decade, Shanti and Design Wild have been creating naturally ferocious, beautiful, and incredibly durable gardens in extreme urban environments, public spaces, affordable houses, as well as private residences in NYC and the Hudson Valley.
- **Richard Martin Smith**, a University of Florida alum and Certified Horticulture Professional, has worked in the horticulture education field for over a decade, including experience with secondary, post-secondary, adult and professional learners. As the Director for the School of Professional Horticulture at NYBG, Richard is excited to expand on the many initiatives already taking place. Richard comes to NYBG with a diversity of practice: Master Gardener, biological scientist, plant nursery owner, crop consultant, and lead teacher for a public-school horticultural sciences program. Richard's goals are to develop a broader reach and create greater access for the future of horticulture.
- **Jossue Velasquez** is the High Line Network Coordinator at the High Line and an Urban Naturalist Certificate candidate at the New York Botanical Garden. His *parkie* background includes operations, events, and public programs experience at Madison Square Park and Bryant Park. On his free time, Jossue is a budding birder and wildlife photographer. His mission is to make urban green spaces more ecologically friendly by leveraging community engagement, technology, and peer-to-peer learning via networks like Metro Hort Group, the Public Space Alliance, and the High Line Network.

Monthly Meetings:

Watch your emails and our website for dates and details of upcoming Monthly Meetings starting this winter.

- February 16 - Andrew Bunting, *The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society: Transforming Lives Through Horticulture*
- March (online) – Brett A. Weiss, Botanist & Head Grower, Gabriella Plants, Oviedo, FL. Details to follow
- April – TBD

Please renew your 2023 membership now & join us at Plant-O-Rama on January 30th & 31st as well as at our popular monthly meetings and upcoming programs.

On behalf of the entire Metro Hort Group Board, we wish everyone a very happy and healthy holiday season as we work together to build a greener and more prosperous 2023!

Respectfully yours,

Charles M. Yurgalevitch

Charles M. Yurgalevitch, Ph.D.
President

Steph Lucas

Stephanie Lucas
Vice-President

Field Trip photos by S. Vonderheide
Workshop photos by K. Eng