



2026 Summer Plant Symposium

Thursday, September 10th, 2026 | Frelinghuysen Arboretum, Morris County

Celebrating America's 250th Anniversary:
Rooted in History. Growing the Future.

Agenda

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 8:00am to 8:30am | Check-in at Registration Table Breakfast Plant Auction Opens |
| 8:30am to 9:30am | <i>The Art of Crafting Outdoor Spaces Using Spatial Design</i> with Roy K. DeBoer, PP, LLA
No matter whether the project is large or small, this simple but very effective technique allows the designer to easily organize a garden's spatial 'needs' (pools, dining areas, tot lots, etc.), craft interesting views and develop a sequence of outdoor spaces that will accommodate all of a homeowner's needs and desires.

The process is scalable, and works just as effectively on a small courtyard as it does on a huge park site. It is also a very effective communication tool and enables you the designer – not a computer program – to explain your design thought process to a client. Bottom line, it is the technique for starting beautiful designs that allows you to more easily sell those designs! |
| 9:30am to 9:45am | Coffee Break Visit Plant Auction |
| 9:45am to 10:45am | <i>Classic Plants Worth A Second Look!</i> with Bob LaHoff (Hall's Garden Center) & John Stella (Linden Hill Nursery)
With what appears to be an endless palate of plant material available to gardeners today, why are some overlooked? John Stella from Linden Hill Nursery and Bob LaHoff from Hall's Garden Center & Florist will speak about some of their favorite plants, share their attributes and their ability to problem solve. John & Bob, passionate about most plants, have been friends for over three decades. A handful of cultivars will be touched upon with the hope that some of their choices are used more often in future landscapes. |

10:45am to 11:45am ***From Consumer Awareness to Industry Action: How Sustainability is Reshaping the Green Industry*** with Marie Chieppo, CFS Regenerative Design Studios LLC

Climate change and rising environmental awareness are fundamentally reshaping consumers wish lists for their landscapes. Landscape designers are experiencing an exponential increase in demand for plants and materials that can withstand weather extremes, while consumers are paying closer attention to ecological function and long-term landscape performance.

This session explores what environmentally aware buyers-both consumers and designers-are looking for and how growers and landscapers can respond in practical, scalable, and market-relevant ways. Sustainability trends shaping purchasing decisions include growing demand for regionally appropriate native plants, hardscape that reduces runoff, methods for harvesting water, and products made from renewable resources. Landscapers are especially well positioned to be part of the solution. Through soil-building practices, reduced chemical inputs, and more sustainable maintenance practices, landscape professionals can help transform individual properties into healthier, more resilient living systems.

The session will also examine how concerns about plastic waste, soil health and water quality are influencing large scale producers.

Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of emerging consumer expectations, and practical strategies for aligning services and product offerings that are in increasing demand. The goal is to help growers, designers, landscapers, and retailers identify steps they can take now to strengthen their business and help move the green industry toward a more resilient future.

11:45am to 12:15pm ***Panel Discussion: Beyond the Plastic Pot: Real-World Experiences with Alternative Containers*** with Panelists Marie Chieppo, David DeFrange, & a User of Air Trays (TBD)
As sustainability continues to reshape the green industry, growers and retailers are exploring new alternatives to traditional plastic containers. But how do these products perform in real-world production and retail environments? Join our panel of industry professionals as they share their firsthand experiences using alternative pots, discussing the successes, challenges, customer response, and lessons learned. Whether you're considering making the switch or simply want to stay informed, this candid discussion will provide valuable insights to help you evaluate what's right for your business.

12:15pm to 1:15pm **Lunch | Visit Exhibitor Area & Plant Auction**

1:15pm to 2:15pm

Talk & Tour – A Fresh Look at Plants with Bruce Crawford, Horticulturalist, Morris County Park System

In only just the past few years, our plant palette has shifted due to invasive qualities, disease, or other issues many professionals would have never considered.

Fortunately, there is a treasure trove of great plants that are readily available but have simply fallen out of the limelight and are awaiting rediscovery. Bruce will highlight some of these great plants as well as some of the newer cultivars on a one-hour tour and discuss how they can readily fit into our modern landscapes!

2:15pm to 3:15pm

Panel Discussion: Current Cultivars that Fit Today's Needs with Panelists Bob LaHoff, John Stella, Bruce Crawford, Carrie Stanker & Rosalind Doremus

Discover the plants that are meeting today's landscape challenges. This panel of industry experts will each showcase several of their favorite cultivars, explaining what makes them stand out, where they perform best, and why they're well-suited for today's landscapes and gardens. From improved disease resistance and climate adaptability to pollinator value and exceptional ornamental appeal, attendees will leave with practical recommendations and fresh inspiration for future plant selections. Panelists are encouraged to bring plant samples to make this interactive discussion even more engaging.

3:15pm to 4:15pm

Healthy Soils Support Healthy Trees – The Amazing Soils Genomics with Wei Zhang, Ph.D. (Co-Founder/Co-Owner Zynnovation LLC aka "Tree Diaper")

Urban trees are vital to our urban ecosystems. Green industry professionals understand the benefits large mature trees provide and their effects on health and quality of life of residents. However, urban trees face various challenges, including soil degradation, pollution (including deicing salts and pesticides), invasive pests, compaction, extreme weather conditions and ... Most urban soils are destroyed by the development process.

Soil Genomics is a fascinating new field that explores how microbes in the soil affect the health and growth of plants. It is like a DNA test, but for soil. It provides better understanding the composition and function of the soil microbial communities, such as how they support urban trees, mitigate environmental stresses such as pollution and changing climate, open nutrients pathways for trees, and defend trees against pests. This knowledge can be used to develop more effective strategies for managing urban soil health, such as promoting the growth of beneficial microorganisms and improving soil structure and nutrient availability. The improved tree health helps to reduce the need for human intervention like pesticide.

This presentation shares cutting-edge knowledge with green industry professionals and provides ways to grow trees for the long-term benefits with significantly reduced costs and resources. Since July 2023, soil samples from across USA have been analyzed. The results will be revealed with insights in soil microbiome of situations like overwatering, soil compaction, extreme heat, pollutants (including deicing salts and heavy metals from brownfield sites), as well as application of pesticides, soil stimulants and organic matters.

4:15pm to 4:30pm

Rooted in History. Growing the Future. A Conversation on Leadership, Legacy & the Next Generation with Tom Knezick

The green industry has always evolved through resilience, innovation, and collaboration. In this engaging closing conversation, Tom Knezick will reflect on the industry's remarkable journey, discuss the opportunities that lie ahead, and challenge attendees to embrace their role in shaping the future. A fitting conclusion to a day dedicated to honoring our roots while growing toward tomorrow.

4:30pm to 5:00pm

Sign-out for Recert Credits | Pick Up Plant Auction Plants | Safe travels home!