

# NYBG

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## With Spring Around the Corner, The New York Botanical Garden Offers a New Season of Leading Experts and Compelling Topics in Online Lectures

Farm-to-Table Agriculture, Japanese Artist Yayoi Kusama's Unique Vision, the Agricultural and Medical Knowledge of Enslaved Africans, and Plant Communication Are among the Featured Subjects from March through June 2021



Left to right: Chef Dan Barber and plant breeder Michael Mazourek, Ph.D. (Photo © Row 7 Seed Company); historian Carolyn Roberts, Ph.D.; and ecologist Suzanne Simard, Ph.D. (Photo © Brendan Ko)

**Bronx, NY**—It may be hard to believe at the end of one of the snowiest Februaries on record in New York City, but spring is only a few weeks away. The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) is ready for the season with a new lineup of engaging and thought-provoking lectures presented online by leading experts in landscape design, horticulture, farm-to-table agriculture, contemporary Japanese art history, African American studies, botanical art and illustration, plant communication, and more.

March brings ***Cultivating Diversity from Seed to Table***, in which three prominent experts, including celebrated chef Dan Barber, will discuss the ways in which chefs, artists, and plant breeders can promote diversity in the plants that we eat. The **21st Annual Winter Lecture Series**, which began in January, concludes in March with landscape designer and composer Larry Weaner, who will show how an understanding of musical composition can increase the emotional power and improvisatory freedom of a landscape design.

In April, as part of NYBG's expansive exhibition *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature*, guest curator Mika Yoshitake, Ph.D., will consider the organic forms central to Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama's unique vision. Two ***Hidden History*** talks in May by groundbreaking researchers Judith Carney, Ph.D., and Carolyn Roberts, Ph.D., will reveal the valuable agricultural and medical

knowledge enslaved Africans brought with them to the Americas, and in June, Suzanne Simard, a pioneer in the field of plant communication, will present fascinating insights into forests, showing how they are complex communities of interdependent species that share resources and rely on one another for survival.

All lectures will take place online. Registrants will receive login instructions. The full schedule of lectures and presentations follows.

### ***Cultivating Diversity from Seed to Table***

*Tuesday, March 23, 2021; 11 a.m.–12 p.m.; Online*

*Garden Member \$15/Non-Member \$18*

Three prominent experts come together for a lively exchange celebrating the ways in which chefs, artists, and plant breeders can promote diversity in the plants that we eat. The conversation is inspired by the luminous paintings of heirloom edibles and their wild relatives in *Abundant Future: Cultivating Diversity in Garden, Farm, and Field*—the Fourth NYBG Triennial exhibition with the American Society of Botanical Artists (ASBA). The featured speakers are:

- **Dan Barber**, chef and co-owner of the award-winning restaurants Blue Hill and Blue Hill at Stone Barns, who is on a mission to reimagine food from the ground up. He discusses his work with plant breeders to pursue new varieties of vegetables and grains packed with deliciousness.
- **Michael Mazourek**, Ph.D., plant breeder and Cornell University professor, who will talk about how the relationship between people and the crops we cultivate has changed over time—from our ancient ancestors who domesticated wild plants to modern plant breeders who cross-pollinate crops in the quest to promote resilience and genetic diversity.
- **Carol Woodin**, renowned botanical artist and ASBA Director of Exhibitions, who will share the fascinating stories behind some of the edible plants featured in the *Abundant Future* exhibition.

### **21st Annual Winter Lecture Series**

#### ***Gardens of Meaning***

*Thursday, March 25, 2021; 11 a.m.–12 p.m.; Online*

*Each lecture: Garden Member \$15/Non-Member \$18*

NYBG's 21st Annual Winter Lecture Series, *Gardens of Meaning*, which began in January, features speakers who approach the garden from non-traditional perspectives—healing, inclusiveness, and music—that add new layers to our notions of beautiful spaces and the gardening experience.

- March 25: **Larry Weaner**, landscape designer and composer  
*Music Composition and Landscape Design*  
For Larry Weaner, a leading figure in North American landscape design and restoration, garden design and music composition have much in common. While one may be visual and the other sonic, both look to explore freedom of expression within formal constraints. Weaner believes that understanding the principles and techniques of composition can help designers create "musical" landscapes that can evoke powerfully direct emotional responses, reveal themselves gracefully over time, and incorporate elements of improvisation.

### ***Tokachi Millennium Forest***

*Thursday, April 1, 2021; 10–11 a.m.; Online*  
*Garden Member \$15/Non-Member \$18*

The Tokachi Millennium Forest on Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island, is an ecological project with a 1,000-year sustainable vision. Celebrated landscape designer **Dan Pearson** contributed to the master plan with a sweeping Meadow Garden, mixing colorful ornamentals with natives, and a wavelike Earth Garden, echoing the mountains beyond. Under the skillful custodianship of head gardener **Midori Shintani**, Tokachi has evolved to reflect principles at the heart of Japanese culture: observation of seasonal changes, practical tasks performed with care, and the interconnectedness of all living things. Using breathtaking images from their new book, *Tokachi Millennium Forest*, Pearson and Shintani reveal this remarkable project that bridges East and West and embodies naturalistic gardening at its most inspiring.

- **Dan Pearson** is renowned worldwide as a designer, horticulturist, and gardener. His many accolades include Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects and five award-winning Chelsea Flower Show gardens, including a 2015 Gold Medal and Best in Show.
- **Midori Shintani** trained in horticulture and landscape architecture at Minami Kyushu University. She has been head gardener of Tokachi Millennium Forest since 2008, merging "new Japanese horticulture" into wild nature.

### ***Harriet Tubman: "The Ultimate Outdoorswoman"***

*Tuesday, April 13, 2021; 11 a.m.–12 p.m.; Online*  
*Garden Member \$15/Garden Non-Member \$18*

As a young enslaved girl in the swampy wetlands and upland forests of Dorchester County, Maryland, Harriet Tubman learned to navigate different ecosystems, mimic the sounds of birds, trap animals, and use plants for medicine and food. Maryland Park Ranger **Angela Crenshaw** reveals how Tubman, whom she calls "the ultimate outdoorswoman," gained the expert naturalist skills that later helped her guide more than 70 enslaved people to freedom through the Underground Railroad.

- **Angela Crenshaw** received her bachelor's degree in economics and environmental studies from Washington College and her master's degree in energy and environmental policy from the University of Delaware. She became a Maryland park ranger in 2016. As the assistant manager of Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park in Church Creek, Maryland, she shared both her knowledge of the environment and the legacy of Harriet Tubman with visitors. Ranger Crenshaw currently works at Gunpowder Falls State Park.

### ***Cosmic Nature: Embracing the Unknown***

*Thursday, April 15, 2021; 11 a.m.–12 p.m.; Online*

*Garden Member \$15/Non-Member \$18*

As part of NYBG's expansive exhibition *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature*, **Mika Yoshitake**, the exhibition's guest curator, discusses the organic forms central to Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama's unique vision, which integrates nature and human nature, the earthly and the cosmic. Emphasizing the pivotal role of biomorphic imagery from both microcosmic and macrocosmic perspectives, Yoshitake examines the visceral impact of Kusama's artistic language and the ways life and afterlife profoundly coexist in the artist's lifelong journey of embracing the unknown.

- **Mika Yoshitake**, Ph.D., is an independent curator with expertise in postwar Japanese art. As Curator of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (2011–18), she curated *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors* (2017–19) among other exhibitions. Upcoming curatorial projects include the international tour of *Yoshitomo Nara* (2021–22) at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, a major retrospective at M+ Hong Kong (2022–23), and *Breath(e): Towards Climate and Social Justice* (2024) at the Hammer Museum.

### ***They Wrote the Books: New Publications by NYBG Botanical Art Instructors***

*Friday, April 16, 2021; 1–2 p.m.; Online*

*Garden Member \$15/Non-Member \$18*

Join **Robin Jess** and **Carol Woodin** (*Botanical Art Techniques*), **Dick Rauh** (*The Science Behind Flowers*), and **Wendy Hollender** (*The Joy of Botanical Drawing*)—all supremely talented artists and beloved NYBG instructors—in a lively and creative discussion of their recently published books. You'll get a sneak peek at the unique features of each and a behind-the-scenes look at what it takes to create books as beautiful as they are informative.

- **Robin Jess**, the former executive director of the American Society of Botanical Artists (ASBA), is the coordinator of NYBG's Botanical Art & Illustration Program. She is fluent in graphite, watercolor, pen and ink, and etching. She has been a freelance botanical illustrator and artist since 1976. She earned an MA from Pratt Institute.

- **Carol Woodin**, a specialist in rare plants in watercolor on vellum, is the ASBA's director of exhibitions. Her work has been exhibited around the world, most recently at the Museo della Grafica in Pisa, Italy; Santorini Biennale of Arts in Greece; UBS Gallery, New York; and the Shirley Sherwood Gallery in the United Kingdom.
- **Dick Rauh**, Ph.D., started his career in botanical painting in retirement after a career in motion picture special effects. After completing NYBG's certificate program in Botanical Art & Illustration, he did illustration work for scientists. That led him to pursue graduate studies in plant sciences at the City University of New York, where he earned his doctorate in 2001.
- **Wendy Hollender** is a botanical artist, author, and instructor. Her illustrations have been published in *The New York Times*; *O, The Oprah Magazine*; *Real Simple*; and *Good Housekeeping*, among other publications. A graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, she began a career in botanical illustration after completing an NYBG certificate in 1998.

### ***Hidden Histories***

*Two Tuesdays: May 4 & May 18, 2021; 11 a.m.–12 p.m.; Online*

*Each lecture: Garden Member \$15/Non-Member \$18*

Two *Hidden History* talks reveal the valuable agricultural and medical knowledge enslaved Africans brought with them to the Americas.

- **May 4: In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Food Legacy in the Atlantic World**  
Much of the groundbreaking research by Professor **Judith Carney** focuses on African contributions to New World agriculture and ecology. In this talk, she shows how enslaved people established familiar foods from Africa, such as rice, okra, yams, blackeyed peas, and millet, as staples in their subsistence plots, which Carney calls the "botanical gardens of the dispossessed."
  - **Judith Carney**, Ph.D., a professor of geography at the University of California, Los Angeles, conducts research in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America that examines gender, food systems, and agroecological change, as well as African contributions to New World environmental history. She is the author of numerous research articles and two award-winning books, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* and *In the Shadow of Slavery*.
- **May 18: Medicine, Knowledge, and Power in the Atlantic Slave Trade**  
Even as they were brutally forced from their homelands, enslaved Africans brought valuable medical and botanical knowledge with them to the Americas. Professor **Carolyn Roberts** highlights how African plant expertise was incorporated into 18th-century science and used to sustain the largest forced oceanic migration in human history. She will discuss which plants enslaved Africans used, how they made

medicines, and what present-day phytochemical research reveals about why these medicines were so effective.

- **Carolyn Roberts**, Ph.D., is a historian of medicine and acclaimed educator, with a joint appointment in the departments of History/History of Science and Medicine and African American Studies at Yale University. Her current book project, *To Heal and To Harm: Medicine, Knowledge, and Power in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, will be the first full-length study of the history of medicine in the British slave trade.

***Finding the Mother Tree: A Conversation with Suzanne Simard***

Tuesday, June 8, 2021; 1–2 p.m.; Online

Garden Member: \$15/Non-Member \$18

As a pioneer in the field of plant communication, ecologist **Suzanne Simard** has spent a lifetime rigorously documenting the forests of North America and the Arctic. Rather than simple collections of individual plants, these forests are complex communities of interdependent species that share resources and rely on one another for survival. Through this thought-provoking lens, Simard shares fascinating insights into how trees have evolved to recognize their neighbors and remember the past; how they elicit warnings and mount defenses; and how they compete and cooperate with each other. She shows how these arboreal systems mimic both our neural networks and the structure of our civil societies, and how the ancient hubs of these communities—what she calls Mother Trees—play a crucial role in a given forest’s vitality. Her lecture will be followed by a conversation with **Todd Forrest**, NYBG’s Arthur Ross Vice President for Horticulture and Living Collections.

- **Suzanne Simard**, Ph.D., a professor of forest ecology at the University of British Columbia, has been shaped by her personal journey, including a childhood spent in the logging world of British Columbia’s rain forests that taught her to love and respect trees. She is the author of a new memoir, *Finding the Mother Tree*.

For more information, visit NYBG’s [Lectures and Symposia Web page](#)

To register, visit [nybg.org/adulted](http://nybg.org/adulted) or call 718.817.8720.

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**The New York Botanical Garden is located at 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458. For more information, visit [nybg.org](http://nybg.org)**

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