

Meet Our Seminar Speakers!

Keynote Speaker: Kerry Ann Mendez

Seminar: Reblooming Perennials and Flowering Shrubs

Seminar: Dazzling Plants and Design Tips for Seeing Your Way Out of the Shade

Kerry Ann Mendez is an award-winning garden educator, author and design consultant based in southern Maine. In recent years she has presented over 500 lectures to more than 40,000 gardeners in 23 states and Canada. As a popular educator and communicator, she has received over 450 five-star reviews from her lecture audiences, which are available for review on the independent national website GreatGardenSpeakers.com. In 2014 she received the Gold Medal award from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for "Exceptional teaching and writing that increases public enjoyment and appreciation of horticulture." Kerry Ann's gardens have been featured in many gardening magazines, including *Fine Gardening*, *Garden Gate*, *Country Gardens*, *Horticulture* and *Better Homes and Gardens*.

Ron Callea, MS, ED, CNLP

Seminar: Environmental Factors that Effect Plant Growth

What you may or may not have known about light, soil, temperature, and water. How these factors in our environment work to help or hinder processes in plant growth and development.

Ron Callea is a horticulture instructor at McKinley High School in Buffalo. He has New York State permanent certifications in Plant Science, Earth Science and Biology. Ron is also the owner of Callea Landscapes which he started in 2001. Ron has over 42 years in the industry and previously worked at Suburban Landscaping and Asplundh Tree Expert.

Regina Clinton

Seminar: Ticks of WNY

Regina Clinton is an Extension Associate specializing in Community Integrated Pest Management (IPM). In this role, she conducts outreach and education to communities, and research on pest control measures that minimize environmental, health, and economic risk. Regina collaborates with stakeholders throughout New York State to develop and implement effective IPM strategies in the home, landscape and urban agriculture settings.

Tom Draves

Seminar: Forget Everything You Know About Large Tree Pruning

Tom Draves is a partner of Draves Tree Service, a third-generation tree and landscape company. He is the village arborist for Williamsville, an ISA Certified Arborist, commercial pesticide applicator, and United States army ranger. Tom was awarded the Gold Leaf Award by the International Society of Arboriculture; the President's Award and the Distinguished Arborists Award by the New York State Arborists; Business of the Year Award by the NYS Nursery and Landscape Association and has received several City of Buffalo Executive Chamber citations. Tom has taught several short course classes at Cornell and has given numerous seminars on all aspects of tree related issues to various groups and organizations. Tom holds US, Canadian and European plant patents for new tree introductions. Tom has designed, built, and maintains a Level II, accredited by ArbNet arboretum in Darien, NY. The arboretum hosts over 600 species of trees and shrubs.

Andrew J. Gall

Seminar: Paver Maintenance

AJ Gall trained and worked as a hardscape installer for 7 years with Lighthouse Landscaping in Coraopolis, PA. He studied hardscape installation and tools of the trade for four years as a member of both Hulton Tool and Alliance Designer Products US sales team for 5 years. AJ partners with companies such as Unilock, Techo-Bloc, Cambridge, Nickolock, Yukon Valley, to further educate on product and installation techniques. He also partners with local dealers in the WNY market as a technical support and "problem solver" for any hardscape issues.

Bryce Gossel, CNLP

Seminar: Dos and Don'ts of Landscape Estimating

Bryce Gossel is with Gossel Lawn & Landscape is a full-service landscape company that designs, installs, and maintains landscapes with proper horticultural practices. He also is a Certified Nursery and Landscape Professional (CNLP).

Michael Klepp

Seminar: Wonderful World of Water

Methods of water conservation and protecting water quality will be discussed. Rain gardens, efficient irrigation, rain barrels, drainage and more will be shown.

Michael Klepp started his landscaping business, 'The Plant Man', when he was 15 years old. He received degrees in education and horticulture to further his knowledge and continues training to this day. He is evolving his business to specialize in maintaining healthy, biodiverse landscapes where nature and humans peacefully co-exist. He has consulted for homeowners, municipalities, and nature preserves. In 2022 Michael started 'Nature Teacher,' an educational experience business. He travels throughout NY giving interactive hikes and classroom presentations where he provides scientific information in combination with personal experiences to convey relatable, practical, and positive ways to work with and enjoy nature and landscapes.

Aaron Lilly

Seminar: Dos and Don'ts of Landscape Estimating

Aaron Lilly is an estimator and project manager with his family business Beau Enterprises. Aaron acquired an Associate of Arts and Sciences (A.A.S.) focused in Ornamental Horticulture from Niagara County Community College under the expertise of the great Carolyn Stanko. He is skilled in plantings, hardscapes, and various landscape upgrades. He has been estimating and designing various projects both commercially and residentially in the Western New York area for over almost 10 years.

Dan Masterson

Seminar: Attracting Pollinators to Your Yard

With 20 years of experience in the garden center industry, 15 years in ponds and water gardens and 12 years as a beekeeping instructor, **Dan Masterson** of Masterson's Garden Center and owner of EcoLake Pond Restoration takes an ecological approach to backyard landscapes. Dan says...understanding your ecosystem is the key to success and fulfillment in your landscape.

Leigh McGonagle, CNLP

Seminar: Planting Containers for Exceptional Impact

Offering container gardening services and seasonal color is a fantastic upsell to existing customers. In this session, learn design concepts that can elevate your containers from basic to "Wow!"; from color theory, playing with foliage, layering design elements and more. Walk away with tips and tricks that will create perceived value, and increase your bottom line.

Leigh McGonagle spent the last 18 years working in agricultural related fields; in nurseries, garden centers, florists, as well as large landscape contracting firms. Part of her career also jumped into technology, software development and business process improvements, as part of helping her father's software company grow from 45 people to over 300 in 2 years. This gives her a unique perspective – connecting horticulture, design, technology and business practices into one lens. She is active in her state landscape association, serving as a regional President, Board member, and recently chair of the revived State Conference Planning Committee. She is an active member of NALP, is a Proven Winners Certified Landscape Professional, and serves on the executive board for Digging In – a national container gardening association.

Tom Mitchell**Seminar: Mistakes in the Landscape****Seminar: Weed ID**

Tom Mitchell is presently teaching horticulture at Niagara County Community College and previously taught horticulture at McKinley High School for 33 years. Tom teaches the plant protection class at NCCC which results in the 30-hour certification needed to take the state pesticide exam. Tom is the owner of Mitchell Landscaping Inc. Mitchell Landscaping specializes in landscape maintenance. Tom is a past president of the NYS Agriculture Teachers Association and PLANT WNY and served as trustee of the WNYSNLA Foundation.

Nora Saintz, CNLP**Seminar: Hell Strips**

Nora Saintz is the founder of Gardenette, specializing in landscape designs for DIY installations. She holds certifications as a CNLP and Master Gardener, with additional training from Cornell University's Landscape Design program. Through her work, Nora has developed a unique approach to bridging professional landscape design with homeowner installation.

Andrew Schettine**Seminar: UDig NY**

Overview of the process, legal requirements surrounding excavation, utility markings, and safe digging best practices.

Andrew Schettine is the WNY Field Representative for UDig NY.

Steve Sypniewski, Lifetime CNLP**Seminar: Pruning 101****Seminar: What's Bugging My Trees**

Steve Sypniewski, a lifetime resident of WNY, followed his father's footsteps into the green industry. Steve worked for several Buffalo area landscape firms, including his own, with experience in a wide range of services, including design/build, maintenance, and tree service. He is a Lifetime CNLP, an ISA Certified Arborist, and a NYS Certified Pesticide Applicator in category 3a. He is currently the assistant campus planner and arboretum manager at SUNY Buffalo State.

Corey Ukroenz**Seminar: Artificial Turf Installation 101**

Corey Ukroenz is the Vice President at Rymar, a premier supplier of artificial turf in North America. Committed to the principle of "doing things right," Corey is dedicated to empowering landscape and hardscape professionals across the continent. His mission is to help them navigate the complexities of the rapidly evolving artificial turf industry.

With substantial experience spanning sales, installation, and distribution, Corey possesses a profound understanding of every facet of the artificial grass sector. He leverages this expertise to enrich his training sessions, providing valuable insights and a comprehensive perspective to his audience. Known for his exceptional communication skills, Corey fosters an engaging learning environment and offers ongoing support, ensuring that professionals are well-equipped to succeed and achieve sustainable growth in the dynamic field of artificial landscaping.

Tim Zimmerman, CNLP

Seminar: Where Did That Plant Go?

Seminar: From the Farm - What is New for 2025?

Tim has been a sales representative for Medford Nurseries for ten seasons, serving garden centers and landscapers in Western and Central NY and NW PA. He assists with plant selection and procurement for sale and installation, as well as teaching about plant varieties and design regularly at industry trade events. Tim spent 16 years as a designer and salesman with high volume landscape contractors in the Buffalo area, including 13 years as landscape manager with Menne Nursery in Amherst, NY. He lives and gardens with his wife and two kids in Snyder, NY, fighting the bunnies, deer, and clay right along with you.

Business Owners Round Table

John Patrick Gaughan – Attorney, Law Office of John P. Gaughan, PLLC

Jason R. Maciejewski – Partner, Songin CPAs CVAs PLLC

Lou Sardo - Financial Professional, Equitable Advisors

Jennifer Watson - Insurance Advisor, Lawley Insurance