

2026 WINTER SYMPOSIUM 57TH CVNLA SHORT COURSE PESTICIDE RECERTIFICATION **GROWING WELLNESS: PEOPLE, PLANTS, & A THRIVING PLANET**

FEBRUARY 11, 12, 13, 2026



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2026

8:00 AM

Doors open, coffee service for in-person attendees

8:45 AM

Zoom webinar opens for virtual attendees

9:00 AM

Welcome address

9:10 AM

Earth & Gardener: A Healing Symbiosis

Juliet Sargeant, Sussex Garden School

Award-winning British landscape designer and medical doctor Juliet Sargeant will share her reflections on a 30-year career in creating gardens 'that feel as good as they look'. Having worked as a hospital doctor in the English National Health Service, Juliet retrained as a garden designer and found a more creative outlet for her drive to help people heal. In her talk, Juliet will show us examples of her own gardens, summarize the evidence base for the healing effects of gardens, and give us pointers for creating our own healing spaces. Finally, she will reflect upon her recent thoughts about her own practice and how we could all 'do better' when we design and implement our garden plans. How can we heal the earth as we seek to heal ourselves?

10:10 AM

Break

10:20 AM

An Evolution of Purpose: Japanese Gardens as Healing Spaces

Hoichi and Michiko Kurisu, Kurisu LLC

Since ancient times, Japanese gardens have been evolving within the context of culture, politics, religion, and economics. Today, the art of Japanese gardens is more relevant than ever. Hoichi and Michiko Kurisu of Kurisu LLC will share insights from 50 years of experience creating Japanese-style healing gardens that address some of society's most urgent needs.

11:20 AM

Break

See end of program for CEU details and instructions

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11:30 AM

Walk Two Parks and Call Me in the Morning: The Essential Role of Public Greenspace in Healing
Shelly Barrick Parsons, Capital Trees

Public greenspaces are not just beautiful—they are vital to community health, social connection, and climate resilience. They are places of healing that everyone should be able to enjoy. As practitioners, we know firsthand that nurturing greenspaces is essential to building thriving communities, and that bringing people together often begins with getting their hands in the dirt. This presentation will dig into both the science and the soil: the research that confirms the power of public greenspaces to improve health and resilience, the public landscapes Capital Trees has cultivated, and the practical steps communities can take to ensure all people have access to safe, resilient, and well-cared-for greenspaces. Capital Trees' mission is to lead initiatives that use public greenspaces to awaken, restore, and transform the environment and everyone who lives in it.

12:30 PM

Lunch, networking, book sales & signings

1:45 PM

Keeping Calm and Gardening On: Embracing Gardening's Challenges
Daria McKelvey, Missouri Botanical Garden

In today's world of glossy gardening magazines and social media scrolling, gardeners are often besieged with images and videos of the "ideal landscape", where every plant is perfect, leaves and fruits are miraculously blemish-free, and somehow weeds don't exist. Then, we become frustrated when we can't get our gardens to look the same. The truth is, they never will. We have to come to terms with the fact that floppy plants, chewed leaves, and most certainly weeds, are all part of gardening! In this presentation, we'll look at ways to embrace gardening's challenges and how to work with nature, instead of against it, so we can reduce stress and cultivate a more joyful gardening experience!

2:45 PM

Break with snacks

3:00 PM

Shrubs with Purpose: From Innovation to Inspiration
Natalie Carmolli, Spring Meadow Nursery

As gardeners, we have more power than we realize to help heal the planet. Every choice we make—what we plant, what we replace, and how we design landscapes—ripples out into the environment. This program reveals how Proven Winners® ColorChoice® shrubs are developed with sustainability and climate-smart gardening in mind, from breeding pollinator-friendly and low-water-use plants, to creating alternatives to invasive species, to selecting deer-resistant options that reduce frustration and chemical use. Whether your goal is to support biodiversity, conserve resources, or simply make gardening easier and more rewarding, you'll discover how choosing the right plants helps both your landscape and the world around us.

4:00 PM

Adjourn

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SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Dr. Juliet Sargeant



Juliet Sargeant's 30 years of creating award-winning gardens is founded on a belief that there is a deep and positive connection between people and landscape. Being scientifically trained as a medical doctor, she seeks an evidence base for her creative design decisions. Juliet has been awarded with Gold and Silver-Gilt Awards at The RHS Chelsea Flower Show and has won numerous professional accolades. She is a Fellow of both The Society of Garden Designers and The Landscape Institute. Juliet has for several years been named as one of House & Gardens Top 50 garden designers in the UK and in 2023 Home & Garden Magazine awarded her 'Best Landscape Design Company, Sussex'. Juliet has been named one of The Evening Standard Top 100 People & BBC 100 Women. She is a regular panelist on BBC Radio 4's 'Gardeners' Question Time'.

Hoichi Kirusu



President and Founder of Kirusu LLC, Hoichi Kirusu has been designing and building gardens for over fifty years. From 1968 to 1972, Hoichi served as Landscape Director for the Japanese Garden Society in Portland, Oregon, and supervised the construction of the Portland Japanese Gardens. He founded Kirusu International, Inc, (now Kirusu LLC) in 1972. The landscape firm has an established reputation for gardens of the highest quality including Anderson Gardens (Rockford, IL) and Morikami Museum and Japanese Garden (Delray Beach, FL). Their unique garden designs create "inner space" for inspiration and healing. Kirusu is a leader at the forefront of creating Japanese-style healing gardens to meet the complex needs of society, which has resulted in Japanese gardens in unlikely places. Kirusu has collaborated with forward-thinking water-treatment facilities to create space for community, and in 2019 completed the first-of-its-kind healing garden inside the maximum-security Oregon State Penitentiary (Salem, Oregon).

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Michiko Kurisu



Michiko joined her father, Hoichi, at Kurisu LLC in 1999 to document the construction of the Morikami Museum's Japanese garden in Delray Beach, Florida. Since then, Michiko has been involved with all Kurisu's major projects nationally and internationally. A graduate of Brown University, Michiko studied photography at the Rhode Island School of Design and ecology and conservation with the School for International Training in Botswana. Michiko's role at Kurisu LLC includes working closely with Hoichi to develop the company mission, articulate the healing qualities of Japanese gardens, and raise awareness through education and community engagement of the impact Japanese gardens can have on wellbeing. Based in South Florida, Michiko is also the co-founder and director of an organic community garden and sub-tropical food forest, Swinton Community Growing Project, whose mission is to cultivate resilience in plants, people, and community.

Shelly Barrick Parsons, Ph.D.



Shelly Barrick Parsons, Ph.D. is the Executive Director of Capital Trees, where she leads efforts to awaken, restore, and transform public greenspaces across Richmond, Virginia. Through her leadership, Capital Trees has expanded its impact as a trusted partner in designing and sustaining vibrant natural places that improve environmental health and community well-being. Shelly brings a background in ministry, community development, and nonprofit leadership to her role, integrating her values of stewardship, inclusion, and collaboration into every project. She recently completed the Lincoln Vibrant Communities Fellows Program, a national leadership initiative focused on place-based transformation.

Daria McKelvey



Daria McKelvey is a horticulturist and certified arborist at the Missouri Botanical Garden. She supervises the Center for Home Gardening and Horticulture Answer Services, where she conducts outreach, provides information, manages the Plant Finder Database and Gardening Help website, and gives gardening talks to local organizations. In 2022, her expertise earned her the “Emerging Horticultural Professional Award” from the American Horticultural Society. A true “plant nerd,” Daria enjoys teaching and sharing her passion for plants with others. In her spare time, she enjoys botanizing, hiking, and nature photography.

Natalie Carmolli



Natalie’s roots run deep in horticulture. She grew up on a mid-Michigan farm with a walipini-style glass greenhouse, helping in her mother’s seasonal flower business. Later in the family florist shop, she learned everything from planting to presentation. She went on to earn a degree in performing and fine arts, all while staying active in the industry—blending creativity with hands-on experience. Now in her featured role as a public speaker, she brings together her artistic background and lifelong love of plants, sharing the art of gardening with audiences through the beauty of Proven Winners® ColorChoice® flowering shrubs.