

Horticulture Club and Landscape Architecture Class win awards at the CT Garden Show

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In the middle of the winter blues, the University of Connecticut's Horticulture Club, in collaboration with the Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture, presented a full-scale garden exhibit to bring spring to life. This presentation took place at the CT Flower and Garden Show from February 19-22 at the CT Convention Center in Hartford.

This group won awards from the Federated Garden Clubs of CT, Inc. and the Landscape Design Council for Excellence in Design for Non-Profit and Educational Landscape Exhibits. The garden exhibit also won the awards for Best Use Unusual Plant Material as well as Best Trained or Shaped Specimens.

All the plants for the show were sourced from donors inside Connecticut and must be able to survive in Connecticut climate, Olivia Delello, plant manager of the Horticulture Club and ecology and evolutionary biology student, stated. Delello said that before coming to the show, the plants were cared for by Horticulture Club advisor Shelly Durocher, plant growth facilities manager Nick Pettit, and greenhouse technician Madison Sajkowicz, along with the UConn Floriculture team.

The theme of the event was a Storybook Garden, which Delello said their design took literally with a little free library and a birdhouse so "people

could get lost in an enchanted forest." A swinging bench was donated for the display by Travis Clark, PSLA Farm Manager, to enhance the theme, according to Delello.

This theme and design earned the display attention from the radio show Lite 105 The Mary and Mike Show. This radio show runs a contest each year for a couple to get married at the Garden Show. This year, Nidia Vasquez and Micheal Burn got married in UConn's display, according to WTNH News 8.

Delello said she was, "It was an honor for the club to win the awards, but the wedding was very special."

The full-scale garden exhibit was designed by the LAND 3311 Landscape Architecture Construction II Planting Design Class led by Sohyun Park, a professor of landscape architecture. This was the first time that the class participated in the show, working on the design for about 4-5 weeks in class and was able to help set up the exhibit. This was one of the two projects that are normally done within class to prepare the students for the landscape design industry, according to Park.

"It was nice to have a project that the students were able to see from start to finish, as it is more like industry," Park said.

The field of landscape architecture encompasses, "science, art and engineering, utilizing design tools and biodiversity to create beautiful and functioning designs," according to Park, whose research current-



University of Connecticut's horticulture club receives awards at the CT Garden Club. The club won several awards including The Federated Garden Clubs of CT & Landscape Design Council Excellence in Design Award for Not-for-Profit and Educational Landscape Exhibits, Best Use of Unusual Plant Material and Best Trained or Shaped Specimen. PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONNHORTCLUB ON INSTAGRAM.

ly focuses on the biodiversity of landscape spaces. Currently on campus there is an ongoing landscape architecture project like rain gardens, bioswales, and roof garden, as well as a proposal for Northeast Science Quad, according to UConn Today.

The Horticulture Club normally meets Wednesdays from 7-8 p.m. and routinely does projects with plants such as air plant wire wrapping or a murder mystery collab with the Women in Soil Ecology Club, upcoming on March 11.

Niko DeSousa, president

of the Horticulture Club and eighth semester molecular cellular and evolutionary biology student, said, "Go outside! Plants are cool and come of course [to the club]. There are tons of cool people here to learn and have fun. It's just a good time!"

CT ATTORNEY GENERAL ISSUES WARNING: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ALREADY COVERED BY CURRENT LAWS



Portrait of Connecticut Attorney General William Tong. Tong has released a memorandum on artificial intelligence to explain its potential legal consequences. PHOTO COURTESY OF @AGWILLIAMTONG ON INSTAGRAM.

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Connecticut Attorney General William Tong issued an advisory memo this past week reminding residents, businesses and state officials that the state's existing civil rights, privacy and consumer protection laws already cover a wide range of conduct involving artificial intelligence and how violators will be held accountable.

The Feb. 25 memorandum, addressed to all state officials and agencies, lays out how four major areas of Connecticut law; civil rights, data privacy, consumer protection and antitrust apply to AI systems used in everyday life. The advisory covers scenarios ranging from AI-powered tenant screenings and loan decisions to targeted advertising and insurance claims.

The memo arrives amid an ongoing debate at the state Capitol over whether Connecticut needs comprehensive AI-specific legislation. According to CT Mirror, the state has now failed twice to pass broad AI regulation, with Senate Democrats and Gov. Ned Lamont's administration clashing over how aggressive the state's approach should be.

"There's definitely a debate over how strong our AI laws should be," Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff, D-Norwalk, told CT Mirror. "But I will tell you that if you talk to average people on the streets, they're very concerned about AI and how it's going to impact them."

The memo clarifies that AI-driven choices are subject to Connecticut's antidiscrimination laws in the same way that human decisions are. Regardless of whether the decision was made by a human or an algorithm, businesses that use AI tools to make decisions about housing, hiring, healthcare, lending or insurance are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, national origin or other protected characteristics.

Tong also addressed concerns about federal rollbacks, noting that while the Trump administration recently rescinded earlier federal AI guidance, underlying federal antidiscrimination statutes including the Fair Housing Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act remain fully in force. Residents who believe they have been denied equal treatment by an AI system can file a complaint with

the Office.

According to the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, Connecticut businesses face a major compliance deadline on July 1 when recent amendments to the CTDPA take effect, expanding the law's reach to cover many more businesses and introducing new requirements around automated decision-making disclosures and data protection assessments.

The CBIA acknowledged the memo's importance while raising concerns about regulatory burden.

"Connecticut's existing civil rights, consumer protection, privacy, and antitrust laws provide meaningful protections for both consumers and businesses when it comes to the use of artificial intelligence," CBIA vice president of public policy Chris Davis said in a press release.

That tension between consumer protection and business flexibility has defined Connecticut's AI debate for several years. According to CT Mirror, Lamont has repeatedly pushed back on comprehensive AI legislation, with his office warning that heavy regulation risks sending a message that Connecticut is unwelcoming to technology sector investment.

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