

CBHL is on Instagram!

Kristine Paulus
Head of Acquisitions and Technical Services
New York Botanical Garden

CBHL's official account is now up and running, with our first post pushed on January 10th. If you're on the 'gram, be sure to follow [@plantlibraries](https://www.instagram.com/plantlibraries)! This account aims to showcase the great work of CBHL and all our members. The account is currently being managed by CBHL members Connor Graham, Céline Arseneault, Kristen Mastel, and Kristine Paulus. If you have ideas for future posts, please share them with the team!



CBHL Members' East News

Edited by Shelly Kilroy
Librarian, Peter M. Wege Library
Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Updates

Janet Evans
Associate Director, McLean Library
Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

Reparative Project Update

We are over the halfway mark of our reparative project titled "Who Was Mrs. John B. Smith: Reparative Author-

ity Work on Women's Names in PHS Digital Collections." In this grant, we proposed to add 150 names to the Library of Congress authority files through participation in the Name Authority Cooperative Program (NACO). To date, archivist Penny Baker has added 180 names – well beyond our deliverable. To see an example of an authority record created for this project, click on this record for community gardener and activist Mamie Nichols: <https://lccn.loc.gov/no2024089644>

Mamie Melton Nichols (1917-2009) worked with her Point Breeze, Philadelphia, neighborhood to develop 11 parks, establish 13 community gardens, and plant 18 blocks with street trees, window boxes, and curbside planters. During her tenure at the Point Breeze Federation, she saw her neighbor-

hood’s abandoned buildings decrease from 928 to 60. After Mamie raised her children, she obtained her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in social work and counseling. She then spent years working tirelessly to improve the lives of Point Breeze residents. The next phase of the project will be to update approximately 2,000 PHS digital records to include the authorized names. We will also publish a LibGuide on resources for researching women’s names.



Charismatic long-time neighborhood activist Mamie Nichols spoke at the Point Breeze neighborhood Greene Countrie Towne celebration at its 1983 dedication. McLean Library & Archives. Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

We are grateful to the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation (<https://www.delmas.org/>) for supporting this important work.

PHS McLean Library Book Group

In early January we got 2025 off to a rollicking start with a discussion of Simon Armitage’s translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, followed by Lauren Groff’s *Matrix* in February. We look forward to spring discussions of Cormac McCarthy’s *All the Pretty Horses* and the 2025 Longwood Community Read, *Paradise Under Glass: The Education of an Indoor Gardener*, by Ruth Kassinger: <https://longwoodgardens.org/education/community-read>

Our library’s book group reading selections are found here: <https://pennhort.libguides.com/McLeanLibraryBookGroup>.

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

Compiled by Rita M. Hassert
Library Collections Manager
Sterling Morton Library
The Morton Arboretum

April 2-5, 2025

Association of College & Research Libraries
ACRL 2025
Minneapolis, Minnesota
<https://www.ala.org/acrl>

April 6-12, 2025

National Library Week
<https://www.ala.org/>

May 5-11, 2025

Children's Book Week
<https://everychildareader.net/>

May 6-8, 2025

Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries
CBHL 57th Annual Meeting
Virtual
<http://www.cbhl.net>

May 6-9, 2025

American Alliance of Museums
2025 Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo
Los Angeles, California
<https://annualmeeting.aam-us.org/>

May 15-17, 2025

LOEX 2025 Conference
Pasadena, California
<https://www.loexconference.org/>

June 2-5, 2025

American Public Gardens Association
APGA 2025 Conference
Denver, Colorado
<http://www.publicgardens.org>

June 7-10, 2025

Special Libraries Association
SLA 2025 Annual Conference
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
<https://sla2025.eventscribe.net/>

June 24-27, 2025

Rare Books and Manuscripts Section
RBMS Conference
New Haven, Connecticut
<https://rbms.info/>

June 26-30, 2025

American Library Association (ALA)
Annual Meeting.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
<https://2025.alaannual.org/>

July 13-16, 2025

Guild of Natural Science Illustrators
Visual SciComm Conference
Bridgewater, Massachusetts
<https://www.gnsi.org/events>

July 26-30, 2025

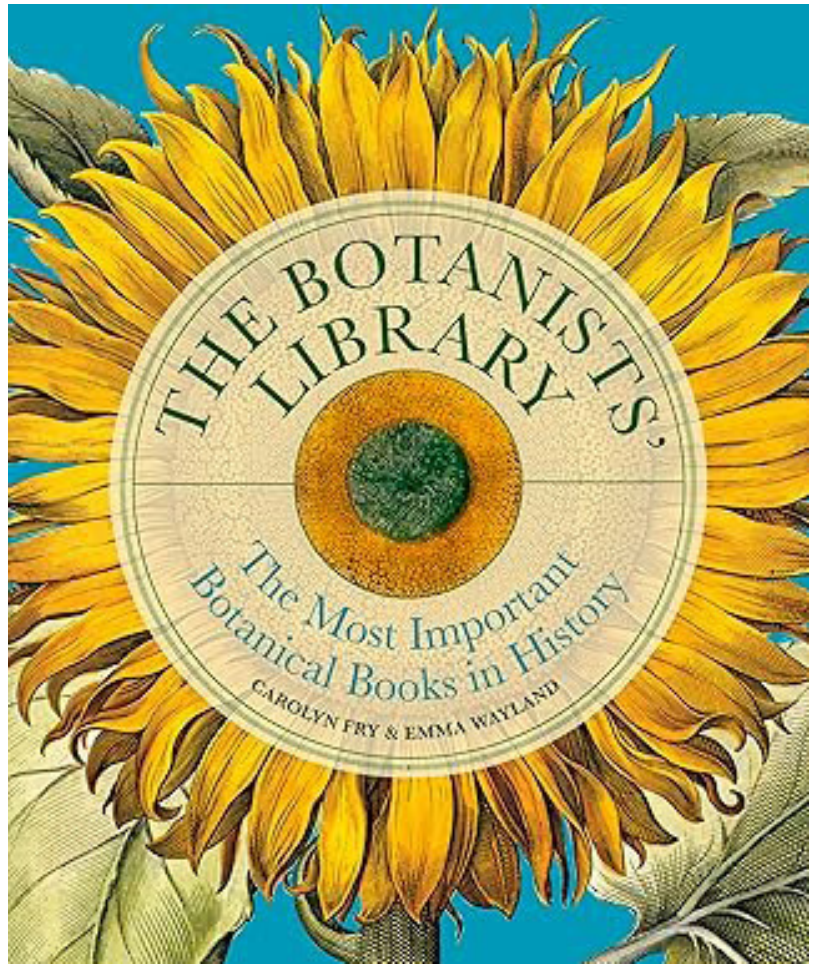
Botany 2025
Palm Springs, California
<http://botany.org>

Book Reviews

Edited by Gillian Hayward
Library Manager
Library and Information Services
Longwood Gardens

The Botanists' Library: The Most Important Botanical Books in History by Carolyn Fry & Emma Wayland. Minneapolis, MN: Ivy Press, 2024. 272 pages, chiefly color illustrations. \$40.00. ISBN 9780711294943.

Reviewed by Stephen Sinon
William B. O'Connor Curator of Special Collections, Research and Archives
New York Botanical Garden



The cover image of a sunflower against a cerulean background is taken from the famous Basilius Besler's *Hortus Eystettensis* and is eye-catching enough but somehow I was expecting a larger-sized volume, perhaps because the subject matter itself is oversized.

The book is divided into six chapters, spanning from ancient times to the present. The first chapter on early texts through 1450, includes a look at Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, and Islamic publications. Continuing on with the development of moveable type printing, the authors discuss the spread of printing and its influence in the New World while introducing several of the classic botanical works. The third chapter addresses the development of botanical gardens and floras, offering a look at the work of Merian, Catesby, and Linnaeus. Much of this chapter is taken up with illustrations. Banks, Curtis, and Hooker appear in the fourth chapter covering 1750-1830. "Botany Becomes a Science" is the title of the fifth chapter, introducing Japanese botanical works along with orchidmania, Darwin, Mendel, and conservationism. The final chapter is rather short and devoted to the era 1950 through the present, discussing the rise of environmentalism, biodiversity studies, and DNA research.

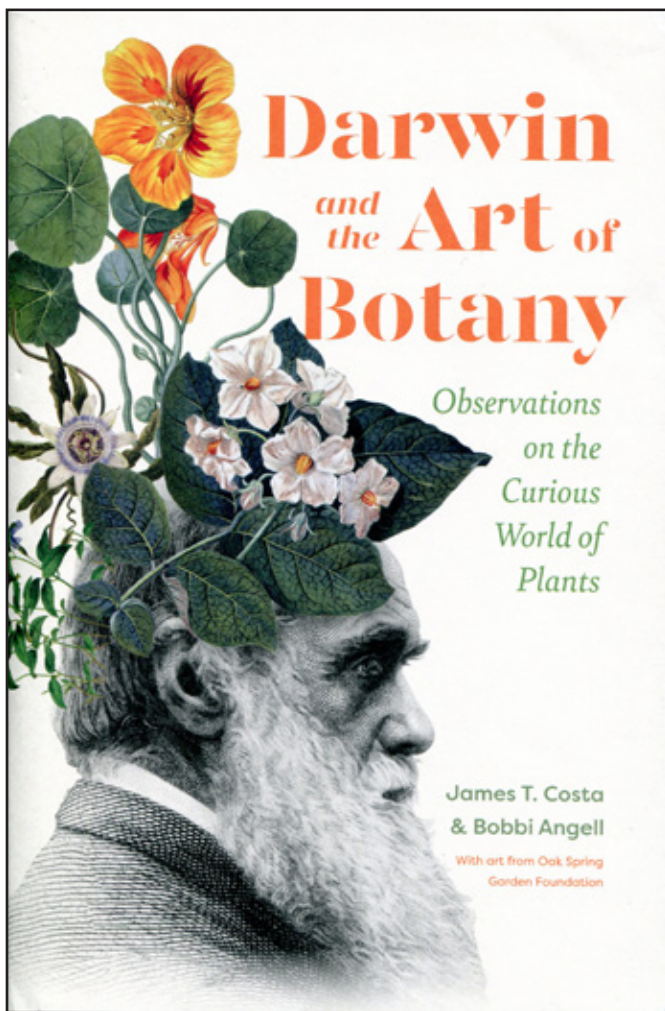
The authors state that they made an attempt to include publications by women wherever possible, but they have left out a number of botanical and horticultural works written and illustrated by women, presumably because these are not included among the greatest and most influential works. The illustrations are uniformly attractive throughout, but no ownership or location information is given in the captions. The picture credits list mostly stockhouse and digital library sources. For such an ambitious subject matter, the bibliography could be much larger.

The authors of this work are editors and writers and not librarians, collectors, dealers, or curators. At only 272 pages it is questionable that the selection of items included comprises the most important

botanical books in history. There certainly are important gaps but many important titles are discussed, enough to give the reader an overview of the topic, making this an enticing introduction for beginners. It is also a good guide for librarians who are tasked with creating exhibits or displays for classes.

Ivy Press states that their books are written by experts in their fields, however, the authors are not associated with any institutions which hold substantial book collections. One might expect this title purporting to be a look at the most important botanical books in history to be written by a well-known authority in the world of botany and horticulture.

Touted as a lavishly illustrated compendium, a complete guide tracing the development of botanical science, and a comprehensive reference, this book really feels more like a coffee table book. It is in no way possible to cover such a broad subject in one tome such as this, which is largely taken up with illustrations, that admittedly are rather engaging.



Darwin and the Art of Botany: Observations on the Curious World of Plants, with artwork from the Oak Spring Garden Foundation. James T. Costa and Bobbi Angell. Portland, Oregon: Timber Press, 2023. 378 pages, colored and uncolored illustrations. \$30.00. ISBN 9781643260792.

Reviewed by Charlotte A. Tancin
Librarian
Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation
Carnegie Mellon University

In Charles Darwin's last 40 years he largely focused on plant research, growing plants at Down House and experimenting, observing, and thinking about the workings of plants. Six of his 17 books from 1862 onward were botanical, illustrated by occasional line illustrations, and he also wrote numerous botanical articles for *Gardener's Chronicle* and other plant-related serials. Botanical artist Bobbi Angell was visiting Oak Spring Garden Library in Virginia when she had an idea: why not pair some historical writings with contemporary botanical art? She particularly had in mind Darwin's work on climbing plants, and she looked at

many examples of compatible art possibilities at Oak Spring. Back at New York Botanical Garden, she met evolutionary biologist Jim Costa, a Mellon Visiting Scholar. Over coffee she told him about this idea, and together they pitched it to Timber Press where they were met with enthusiasm but asked if the project could instead highlight all six of Darwin's botanical books. All agreed and the scope also now includes some of Darwin's botanical articles.

Angell selected 45 species to represent the range of Darwin's interests, and she selected excerpts that

show his working methods and insights. She chose botanical art from Oak Spring Garden Library that was created approximately during the lifetimes of botanical writers Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) and his grandson Charles Darwin (1809-1892). Costa wrote the introduction and contextual information about each species and about what Darwin was focusing on, and also added elucidating comments after some of the Darwin excerpts (Darwin's text is in a different font and in a different color to make this clear). This division of labor works very well. Angell's art selections vividly show the plant being discussed (all are color artworks except for one equally gorgeous uncolored Nicolas Robert engraving of *Bignonia capreolata*), while the line drawings from Darwin's publications make his focus extremely clear. Each of the 45 sections note which Darwin themes are involved: Climbing plants, Cross and self-fertilization, Forms of flowers, Plant movement, Pollination, and so on. Many involve more than one theme. The sections are followed by some notes about Oak Spring Garden Library from its head librarian, Tony Willis, and then a list of the works from that library that were used for this book. An index is also provided.

One of the early sections in the book, *Bignonia*, gives a good example of the kind of thing Darwin was thinking about. He was often growing the plants that he was studying (in garden, greenhouse, meadow, or woods on his property). The *Bignonia* theme here is "climbing plants," and Darwin was trying to understand HOW exactly the climbing was happening in this particular species. He described the ends of the tendrils, "curiously like the leg and foot of a small bird, with the hind toe cut off ... the toes terminate in sharp, hard claws ..." He saw that these tendrils were sensitive to contact, especially on their undersurfaces, and he described how they bend toward or away from kinds of surfaces, and what they do to seek and test a support to fasten onto. He saw that the *Bignonia capreolata* tendrils seeking a support were avoiding the light and going toward darkness (which Darwin tested in ingenious ways), seeking something rooted, onto which it might cling for support before turning to the light. He tried various kinds of supports for them and saw the tendrils test each support and then often turn it loose, sometimes repeating that several times. He experimented with potential supports having different kinds of surfaces. "Knowing that the tendrils avoided the light, I gave them a glass tube blackened within, and a well-blackened zinc plate; the branches curled round the tube and abruptly bent themselves round the edges of the zinc plate, but they soon recoiled from these objects with what I can only call disgust and straightened themselves." It turns out they particularly like climbing trees covered with lichens and mosses, which matches their habitat in North America. The full description of this tendril testing is, I have to say, alarming and entrancing.

Seeing these selections from the range of botanical questions that Darwin was pondering so intensively is truly fascinating, and the added botanical art foregrounds the whole plants and anchors the text. It also highlights the astute collecting of Rachel Lambert "Bunny" Mellon (1910-2014), who followed her instincts and created the stellar collection of botanical books, art, and related materials at Oak Spring Garden Library. The presentation of the text excerpts in bite-sized chunks makes it easy to sample various Darwin specific inquiries and see something of his working methods and "aha!" moments. In this way *Darwin and the Art of Botany* is both browsable and entrancing.

A very small quibble: the invention of intaglio printing and the engraving and etching of copper plates is said to have begun in the late 1500s, not the late 1700s (p. 38).

This book is a gem. Darwin's botanical side shines bright, and so do the authors, and the Oak Spring Garden Library. Highly recommended.



Interior Garden: Hannah Höch, Johanna Tiedtke, Scott Roben. Edited by Leah Pires, texts by Alhena Katsof. Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2024. 95 pages. \$45.00, ISBN 9783775750905.

Reviewed by Kristine Paulus
Head of Acquisitions and Technical Services
New York Botanical Garden

Artists' gardens, and books about them, abound – though in the plant libraries world, there can never be too many such publications. A new book by art historian Dr. Leah Pires takes a look at the remarkable garden of trailblazing German Dada artist Hannah Höch (1889–1978). Along with her work, her garden left a poignant record of avant garde art, sexuality, censorship, resistance, and survival in Nazi Germany. While plants and flowers always played a significant role in her life and work, they would become even more prominent during and following World War II. Her garden was her sanctuary, muse, means of livelihood, and her studio.

Born Anna Therese Johanne Höch, the visionary artist is best known as one of the originators of photo-montage, an artistic practice of making composite photographs by cutting, rearranging, overlapping, and gluing photographs into a new image. Similar to collage, she described it as “an art form that has grown out of the soil of photography.” A member of the anti-art collective of artists called Berlin Club Dada, Höch’s art was labeled by Nazis as “degenerate” and she was subjected to surveillance and frequent raids. She was one of the last members of the Berlin Dada group to remain in Germany during the years of the Third Reich, unable to flee for health reasons. At the onset of WWII, Höch bought a small, secluded house with a garden in a remote area on the outskirts of Berlin. The garden would protect her from persecution for her radical artwork and her unflinching opposition to fascism.

The garden was not only Höch’s artistic muse, but it was also a means of survival, as it allowed her to grow fruits and vegetables for sustenance. She bred roses, which gave her a respectable alibi from nosy neighbors, and allowed her to hide in plain sight. The very soil served as a hiding place for her buried contraband collection of Dada artworks and writing (it was truly a *sub rosa* garden). One such piece was an essay by her former lover and Dutch writer Til Brugman. The essay, “From Holland’s Flower Fields,” is included in the book and is a poetic criticism of the practice of monoculture. The idea of racial purity presided over both plants and people and the same strategies used in the campaign against so-called “degenerate art” categorized foreign species as “degenerate horticulture,” with the authoritarian government directing botanists to eradicate non-native species. However, Höch refused to comply with the regimes’ xenophobic botanical ideology and grew a diverse mix of plants, both indoors and out. Her plant choices are evident in her botanical collages, garden photographs, and archival documents, many of which

are generously included in the book (a list of her plants can be found here). She filled diaries with her thoughts on her plants, which she regarded as her children (a “plant parent” ahead of her time).

Interior Garden includes new site-responsive art by contemporary artists Scott Roben and Johanna Tiedtke, based on their visits to Höch’s garden, and an essay by Alhena Katsof. Together they interweave past and present, private and public, personal and political, offering fascinating new perspectives on Höch’s garden refuge and courageous acts of resistance.

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CBHL Board Retreat Summary

The CBHL Board retreat was held on January 22-24, 2025, and hosted by Denver Botanic Gardens in Denver, Colorado.

Discussion by the Board focused on CBHL's structure, organization, strategic plan, sustainability, challenges, opportunities, and potential models for CBHL to look to as it moves into the future. The Board also discussed the uncertain future that many of us face and how CBHL as an organization might better support its members.

Time was also devoted to the 57th CBHL Annual Conference, which will be hosted by the CBHL Board, held virtually on May 6-8, 2025, and free to all. The theme is "Where do we grow from here?" This theme is grounded in priorities we see as critical and fundamental to CBHL, our profession, and our institutions: discovery, diversity, advocacy, and sustainability. We hope to see you there!

The Board views the retreat as the continuation of a constructive collaborative evaluation process of CBHL that began last year. The Board will continue to meet virtually on a monthly basis.

Kristen Mastel, CBHL President, University of Minnesota, president@cbhl.net

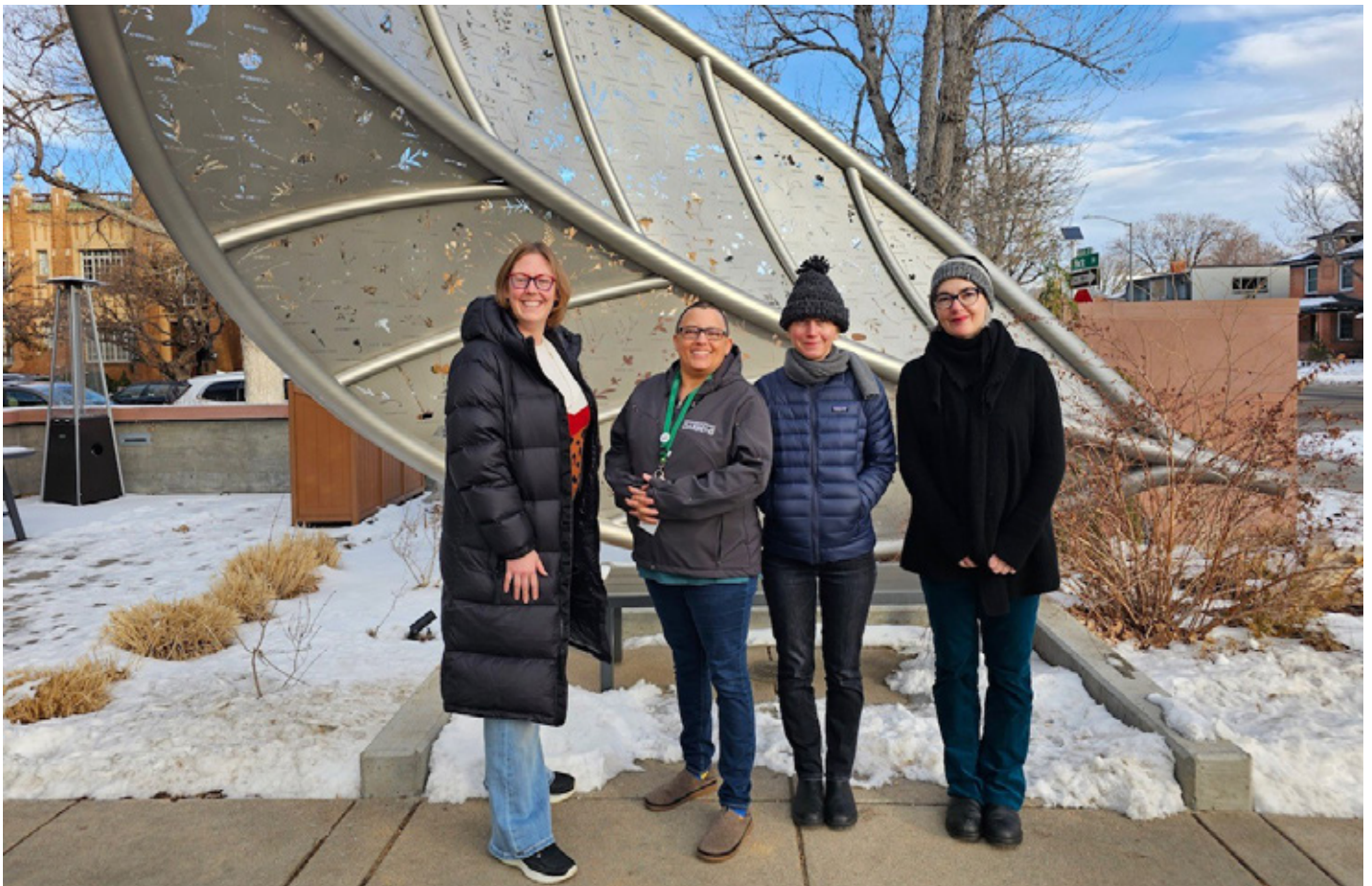
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CBHL Newsletter, Issue 176, March 2025

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Submissions Welcome!

Articles may be submitted to Judy Stevenson, Editor, newsletter@cbhl.net.
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Receive the CBHL Newsletter, Membership Directory, email discussion list, members-only web pages, and annual meeting materials.

Join online at:

<https://www.cbhl.net/become-cbhl-member>

Questions?

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Please use the subject line "CBHL Membership."

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