

Master Gardeners of Bergen County

July 2022 – Potting Shed Mid-Month Update

SPOTLIGHT ON . . . VOLUNTEER SITES



Photo by Terry Cohn

The Trail Conference HQ ablaze in *Heliopsis helianthoides* (false sunflower).

NY-NJ Trail Conference HQ: ‘Habitat Helpers’ maintain the native plant garden

Volunteer days and hours: Sundays, 9 am-noon (currently twice a month) and occasional weekdays. To sign up to volunteer, visit the “upcoming events” [page](#) of the NY-NJ Trail Conference website and, under the “Title” column, look for “Habitat Helpers.” The next workday is July 17. The Trail Conference headquarters is located at 600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah. Visit the [website](#).

What’s unique about your volunteer site?

The garden at the NY-NJ Trail Conference HQ was created about five years ago and has developed into a lush native plant garden. It’s on the site of the Darlington Schoolhouse, which is on the National Register of Historic Places.

What do you do during a typical volunteer shift? How many MGs show up? Volunteers, called Habitat Helpers, work on various projects around the site depending on the time of year. Activities include weeding, pruning, removing invasive plants, planting seedlings, and mulching paths.

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AROUND THE STATE

In Middlesex County, MGs created a seasonal Butterfly House

By *Miriam Taub, Class of 2011*

A visit to the Butterfly House, a project of the Rutgers Master Gardeners of Middlesex County, gets you up close and personal with butterflies at every stage of their lives: Egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, and adult. Butterflies reside in the Butterfly House from June-August each year. The host and nectar plants planted in the house were chosen to accommodate the butterfly varieties within.

The driving force behind the Butterfly House is Dale Duchai (pronounced du-shay), MG Class of 2009, who was among the first MGs to volunteer when it opened in 2009 as a 20-by-24-foot hoop house covered with shade cloth.



Photo by Miriam Taub

Since the Butterfly House didn’t have an official project lead, Dale offered to do it, a role she’s held since 2010. A year later Dale — who’s been interested in butterflies since age 8 and became a butterfly enthusiast in her late 20s — had the idea to double the size of the hoop house to 20-by-48

In the Butterfly House: Monarch on a zinnia while a black swallowtail caterpillar rests on a parsley stem.

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(Volunteer sites, continued from page 1)



Photo by Terry Cohn

Anne-Marie Romano, Class of 2022, weeding in the native plant garden at the Trail Conference headquarters.

Volunteers learn to identify native plants as well as invasive plant species. There are usually a few Master Gardeners as well as other interested people. The Bergen-Passaic Chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey also assists in maintaining the garden.

Do volunteers work as a group? Individually? Please describe. We try to work in teams, but it depends on the group leader.

Is the work physically demanding? Most gardening work involves some physical exertion. The site can accommodate those who choose to do more physically demanding activities as well as those who choose less strenuous tasks.

Are any special skills needed at your site? No special skills are required.

Are there any volunteer opportunities at your site that are not strictly "gardening"? If so, describe. The Habitat Helper workdays are specifically for maintaining the garden. The Trail Conference [website](#) describes other volunteer activities.

What, if anything should volunteers bring with them? Volunteers should bring their own tools, work gloves, and water. There is a well-supplied tool shed with shovels, tarps, and other specialized tools.

Where do you park? There's a parking lot adjacent to the building.

Anything else you'd like to say about your site. The garden is located on a beautiful site adjacent to Ramapo Reservation. There are restrooms and a water fountain in the building for volunteers to use. The gardens are continually changing. One of the more recent installations is a fern garden in the back. Usually, gardeners leave with some native plant seedlings that have been removed from the path.

- Information from Terry Cohn, Class of 2020

Site coordinator: Terry Cohn, 201-290-9576, terrycohn@hotmail.com

WEBINARS

For your convenience, all times are Eastern.

Reminder: All your 10 education hours can be earned by attending gardening-related webinars.

July 20, 6:30-7:30 pm: AARP Virtual Community sponsors Global Plant Exploration and Conservation with Longwood Gardens. Free. AARP membership not required. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

July 20, 6:30-7:45 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors Gardening for All Seasons - Bees, Bugs, and Birds. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

July 21, 10-11 am: North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension, Buncombe County, sponsors Invasive Plants - Ugh! Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

July 23, 1-2 pm: Los Angeles County Public Works sponsors Small Space Gardening. Free. Click [here](#) to register and for the schedule of upcoming webinars.

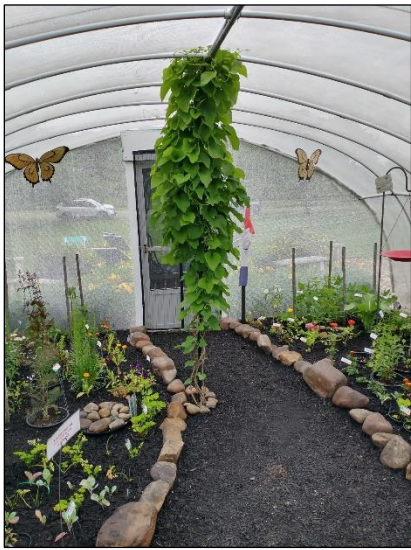
July 26, 7-8:30 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors Tomatoes - Seed to Harvest. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

July 27, 7-8:30 pm: AARP Virtual Community sponsors Finding Success with Orchids. Free. AARP membership not required. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

July 28, 7 pm: Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum sponsors Gardening with Ornamental Grasses. Free. Click [here](#), then scroll down to July 28 in the left column for more information and to register.

(Around the state, continued from page 1)

feet, its current size. The Middlesex County MG program pays for the hoop house materials and ongoing maintenance.



Dutchman's pipevine attached to the frame of the Butterfly House.

Enter the Butterfly House through the front mesh screen "door" and walk along the mulched path edged in stones. On both sides of the path are the flower beds with perennials, herbs, annuals, and a tree or two pruned to fit the space. Here and there butterfly décor dangles from the hoop house frame. A Dutchman's pipevine, also attached to the

frame, hangs mid-path. The vine is a host plant for pipevine swallowtail caterpillars.

Each plant is identified by labels placed in the ground with stickers attached to show whether it's an "H" (host plant), "N" (nectar plant), or both. Perennials are planted in the ground in half-pots, as Dale refers to them. These are plastic flowerpots minus their bottoms that keep the plant's roots from spreading horizontally and for plant identification during spring cleanup. The half-pots make it easier to dig up and relocate the plants as needed. Annuals are planted directly in the beds. "As their [butterfly] 'mother,' I have to make sure I sustain their life by providing host and nectar plants," Dale said.



Photo courtesy of Dale Duchai

Dale Duchai in the Butterfly House.

Although butterfly predators, such as ants, wasps, bees, toads, and spiders, are present in the Butterfly House, no pesticides are used. Instead, Dale relies on peppermint, rosemary, marigold, and lavender to keep bugs away from the host and nectar plants.

"In a controlled environment we see everything from eggs laying to mating — all stages of the metamorphosis

cycle," Dale noted, adding that the cycle takes from 21 to 27 days, depending on the weather.

When the Butterfly House opens the first weekend in June its residents are monarchs and painted ladies, which Dale orders from a butterfly farm in Florida. The butterflies are shipped overnight in individual glassine envelopes on dry ice. The next to arrive are cabbage whites, which Dale catches in the surrounding Davidson's Mill Pond Park. When other varieties of butterflies arrive in the park later in the season, Dale and other volunteers use nets to catch and then release them in the Butterfly House.

Dale said she's housed as many as 19 varieties of butterflies over the years. A few years ago, she recalled, there were 150 butterflies in the house at one time.

Each Friday, Dale inspects the host plants for eggs, caterpillars, and chrysalides and adds a colored ribbon to mark her finds. For example, an orange ribbon wrapped around a leaf or stem denotes a monarch egg, caterpillar, or chrysalis. Blue ribbons denote painted lady activity; green ribbons indicate black swallowtail activity.



Photos by Miriam Taub

Orange ribbon around the milkweed leaf denotes monarch activity, in this case it's a caterpillar.

She then compiles a report for the volunteers who staff the Butterfly House from 10 am-noon, Saturdays and Sundays in June, July, and August. Approximately 35 MGs volunteer at the Butterfly House to weed, plant, and do whatever is needed, while 20 of those volunteers act as guides during the season.

Visitors are offered a net and asked whether they want to catch butterflies in the surrounding park, Dale said. Children who catch a butterfly and release it in the Butterfly House are given a sticker and the butterfly is named in their honor.

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The Butterfly House is one of numerous gardens that the Middlesex County MGs manage at the [EARTH Center](#) in Davidson's Mill Pond Park, 42 Riva Ave., South Brunswick. Among the gardens are a children's garden, vegetable garden, perennial garden, rain garden, fruit garden, herb garden, and Garden of Memories. All the gardens will be open to the public from noon-4 pm, Aug. 20. Dale expects that several hundred people will show up for the activities, food trucks, and music.

The Butterfly House will close to the public for the season Aug. 28. After that time, Dale will take all the butterflies — except the monarchs — home where they'll overwinter. She'll tag the monarchs in the third week of September prior to their release.

"It's not only kids who get excited" watching the eggs turn into caterpillars, she said. "It's a riot to see adults trying to catch butterflies."

- **Walk through the Butterfly House via [Facebook](#).**
- **Watch the Royal Ontario Museum's life cycle of a monarch on [YouTube](#).**

Morris MG team wins international award

The Rutgers MG Community Garden Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Team in Morris County has won first place in the 2021 David Gibby International MG Conference Search for Excellence Awards in the Innovative Projects category.

This volunteer team regularly inspects Morris County community garden plots to identify insects, diseases, and environmental and cultural problems. Any issues found are researched by the team, using science-based university or Cooperative Extension sources, and reviewed by Rutgers Cooperative Education of Morris County faculty and staff.



Photo courtesy of Dave Los

Morris County MG Mary Albright inspects cucumber plants as part of the IPM Team.

The team prepares biweekly reports during the growing season to provide community gardeners with alerts of potential issues. The reports feature photos to help gardeners recognize the problems and offer research-based prevention and management techniques.

In addition to the reports, the team also tracks each year's first observations of insects and diseases by date and location. Now in its fourth year, the project's database of first observations and summary chart serve as key resources, allowing gardeners to anticipate possible problems during the growing season. To receive copies of the biweekly report, send an email to [Cynthia Triolo](#), RCE of Morris County.

THINGS TO DO

Become a 'Habitat Helper'

Help care for the native plant landscape at the NY-NJ Trail Conference headquarters as a Habitat Helper. The next workday is from 9 am-noon, July 17 at the Trail Conference HQ, 600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah. Click [here](#) to sign up. Registration is required so the organization knows how many volunteers to expect and to notify them of any weather-related change in plans.

Bergen Audubon's annual Butterfly Day

The Bergen County Audubon Society will sponsor its 13th annual Butterfly Day from 10 am-3 pm, July 17 at Richard DeKorte Park, 1 DeKorte Park Plaza, Lyndhurst. Guided walks are scheduled every half hour starting at 10:30 am. Visit the New Jersey Family [website](#) for the schedule of activities. The event is free. Rain date is July 24.

Volunteers needed for cleanup at Brett Park

The Friends of the Hackensack River Greenway Through Teaneck need volunteers for a cleanup of Lower Brett Park from 10 am-noon, July 23. Meet at the swing bridge entrance to Historic New Bridge Landing, 1201 Main St., River Edge. Volunteers pick up trash, free trees from invasives, and plant natives where possible. Bring gloves, clippers, and loppers, if available. Check the Greenway [website](#) for any schedule changes before coming to the event.

Pick your own fruits and vegetables

Recently, The Record listed local (and not-so-local) farms that offer pick-your-own fruits and vegetables. Click here to read the [article](#) on the Northjersey.com website. **Note:** The list is not all-inclusive.

HORTICULTURE



Photo courtesy of Bruce Crawford

Bugbane's apetalous flowers open from the base upward.

Bugbane — a plant of great depth

Bruce Crawford, manager of horticulture, Morris County Park Commission, has chosen *Actaea racemosa* as his July plant of the month.

By Bruce Crawford

I find it interesting how we often see attractive native plants in gardens long before we see them in the wild! I first saw bugbane, botanically known as *Actaea* (formerly *Cimicifuga*) *racemosa* at the Connecticut home and garden of Fred and Mary Ann McGourty. Fred had been the editor for the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's informative Handbook Series and specialized in perennials, ultimately publishing a book titled "The Perennial Gardener."

Most of his knowledge came from the garden he and Mary Ann developed at their home, which they named Hillside Gardens. With a touch of genius, they had positioned a number of bugbane plants such that you could view a small piece of statuary through the slender 6- to 8-foot-tall floral stems. It created a wonderful feeling of depth and a lifelong appreciation for how best to use this elegant plant. . . Click [here](#) to read more.

The worst weeding mistakes?

Better Homes & Gardens lists seven of the worst weeding mistakes that a gardener can make. The first: Not knowing the enemy. If you can identify the weeds, you can learn how to control them. Click [here](#) to read the article.

Tales from the MG Hotline

By Janet Schulz, Class of 1988

You can't make this stuff up. I was a guest at a garden party where I met a fellow Master Gardener from Ocean County. We chatted, as gardeners do, and she told me the funniest story.

She was working the MG Hotline one day when a woman called with a question about her tomato plants. "I'm not getting any tomatoes," the caller reported. "I can't understand it. The plants look so healthy."



My friend asked her if she was getting flowers. Her reply: "Sure, and I have been dead-heading them regularly like you told me to do with my marigolds."

Arnie hones his bonsai skills



Photo by Jean Friedman

Arnie and Jean Friedman, both Class of 2008, visited Herons Bonsai, south of London, recently. In our last issue, Arnie reported that Jean took a private lesson with Peter Chan, bonsai expert and owner of Herons Bonsai. Now it's Arnie's turn. Arnie said he was honored that Peter allowed him to prune one of his Japanese maples. See Peter's [video](#) on YouTube on how to create a maple bonsai in 20 minutes. Click [here](#) for other Herons Bonsai videos on YouTube.

VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION



Photo by Alessandra Federico, Bergen County General Services

At the Plaza: Interns from the MG Classes of 2020-2022 pose after filling the concrete planters with waxed begonias and vincas at Bergen County Plaza in Hackensack July 11. Standing, from left, Seana Kirk, Class of 2020; Marc Oliff, 21; Joel Flagler; Anita Pazcoguin in maroon shirt, 20; Bernadette White, 21; Maureen Caban in gray hat, 22; Anita Hall-Davis in white T-shirt, 22; Karen Sasso, 20; Lynne Proskow, 22; Karen Riede, horticultural assistant and Class of 2017. Sitting, at left: Debra Sweet, 22; Karen Dennis, 22. Maggie Raywood, 21, and Anne-Marie Romano, 22, also volunteered that day.

At the Hermitage



Photos by Kathleen Sullivan, Class of 2010

At left, Patricia Crossley, Class of 2022, weeds the dry-laid stone wall on Franklin Turnpike. At right, Liz Gil, Class of 2019, weeded and watered the herb bed as well as planted *Asclepias* seedlings in front of the bee balm. Join MGs at the Hermitage from 9:30 am-noon, Tuesday and Wednesday. The Hermitage is located at 335 N. Franklin Turnpike, Ho-Ho-Kus. Visit the [website](#).