

From the Potting Shed

Feb. 15, 2025

www.mgofbc.org



MGs at Garretson Forge and Farm package seeds. From left to right around the table: Jane Nicholson, Nora Hamawi (wearing a hat), Noel Schulz, Melody Corcoran at the head of the table, Liz Scholl, and Chris Belli.

Free organic and heirloom seeds: Garretson seed library opens Feb. 23

By Liz Scholl

Join us to celebrate the 10th year of the Garretson Community Seed Library Feb. 23 from 1-3 pm.

We have received generous donations of heirloom and organic vegetable, herb, and flower seeds from Seed Savers Exchange, High Mowing Organic Seeds, and Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds, and we offer them to the community for free.

Enjoy conversing with Master Gardeners and other local gardeners. We will have information on dates for indoor and outdoor seed starting in our area, garden designs, composting, native plants, and ideas for deer-resistant plants.

Seeds from the Garretson Community Seed Library will also be available on Thursdays, March 20; April 3, 10, 17, and 24; and May 1 and 8 from 10:30 am-noon; and Sundays April 13 and 27 from 1:30-3 pm. Garretson Forge & Farm is located at 4-02 River Road, Fair Lawn.

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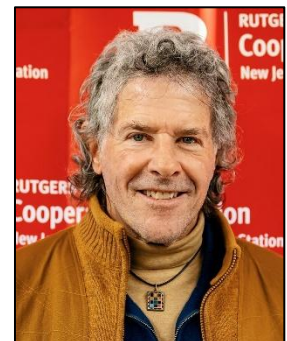
Links are clickable and are noted in [blue](#).

Meeting news: Tuesday, Feb. 18 via Zoom

Hot Topics on the Hotline

Joel Flagler and Karen Riede

What are the “hot” topics that Bergen County residents inquire about when calling the Rutgers Cooperative Extension office? Joel Flagler, RCE agriculture agent for Bergen County, and Karen Riede, who retired as horticultural assistant in September, will discuss hot topics and how they’ve changed over the years at our Feb. 18 MG of BC meeting. The Zoom link will be active at 7 pm; click [here](#) to join the meeting.



Joel Flagler

Joel will retire March 1 after 37 years as ag agent. In an email, he recalled that some of the “stickiest” hotline calls involved neighbor vs. neighbor. “I used to actually go out to visit homes where neighbors were complaining about neighbors whose trees were overhanging their property and causing problems with shade, unwanted tree fruits, etc.; neighbors whose views were ‘impaired’ by trees belonging to neighbors; and neighbors who suspected foul play and sabotage — herbicides, vandalism, etc. — by neighbors.”

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(Hot topics, continued from page 1)

Joel said he stopped doing site visits when he realized that “many of these situations were not solvable.” He continued: “Rutgers agreed with my decision to refuse site visits for homeowners,” though he continued visits to landscape contractors and arborists.

Joel noted that he tried to separate the homeowners from the professionals by keeping homeowners on the hotline service while professionals called him directly.

Zoom link for the Feb. 18 MG meeting

Click [here](#) to join our Feb. 18 meeting via Zoom. The link will be active at 7 pm. The meeting will begin at 7:15 pm followed by the speakers. Please keep your microphones muted. Thank you!

Interestingly, Joel said that calls would also come from lonely seniors “who wanted to talk and wanted to complain and vent about any number of things.” While he and Karen “try to give these callers our attention and let them know we care” some of them, he said, “would like to talk for an hour and just vent. In those cases, we get back to the basics of sensible action plans, which include test the soil, do not try and kill anything that moves, [and] consult with a landscaper, or exterminator as appropriate.”

What we familiarly refer to as the “hotline” is officially called the Master Gardener Helpline. And there’s a story about that name. Joel recalled that he used to call it the Rutgers Master Gardener Hotline until perhaps the late 1990s. That was the same time that Ralph Snodsmith, host of the weekly radio show “The Garden Hotline” and an ag agent with Cornell Cooperative Extension, complained to the then-chair of the Rutgers ag agents department that “... the name ‘Garden Hotline’ belonged to him and he did not want us using it. [The chair] immediately directed us to use the name Garden Helpline instead,” Joel said.

How did Snodsmith know about Bergen’s hotline? Joel speculated that Snodsmith was aware that Joel wrote a weekly gardening column for The Record (from 1990-2000) in which he always advertised the hotline and its two phone numbers.

Retirement lunch for Joel is Feb. 28

Joel Flagler’s retirement lunch is scheduled for Friday, Feb. 28 from noon-2 pm in the Learning Center, 4th floor, 1 Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack. Lunch and donation toward a gift is \$30 per person. The deadline to RSVP is Feb. 17.

Make your check for \$30 payable to **Bergen County 4-H Leaders Association** and mail to:

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Bergen County
1 Bergen County Plaza, 4th Floor
Hackensack, NJ 07601

**For additional information,
contact Monique Bliss at 201-336-6780.**

MG OF BC NEWS

Board positions up for a vote Feb. 18

Three MG of BC Executive Board positions must be filled this month. The board’s Nominating Committee has reached out to the MG of BC membership for volunteers to serve two-year terms in the following positions: Recording secretary, corresponding secretary, and treasurer.

A slate of candidates will be presented to the board and to the general membership at the Feb. 18 meeting. However, at that time, MG of BC members will have the opportunity to nominate additional certified MGs for these board positions.

The nominees so far are:

- Recording secretary: Marylou Moravec, Class of 2024;
- Corresponding secretary: Maria Bushman, Class of 2019; and
- Treasurer: Jean Friedman, Class of 2004. Jean is the current treasurer who has held this position since November 2023 following the death of Pat Vellas.

If you have any questions about nominating a candidate, contact Lisa Yoler, MG of BC vice president and chair of the Nominating Committee, at johnyoler@gmail.com.

TRIPS AND TOURS

**March 8 is the Philly Flower Show tour;
RSVP deadline is March 1**

By Suzy Basu, Trips and Tours chair

Join the MG of BC for a trip to the [Philadelphia Flower Show](#), the nation's largest and longest-running horticultural event. This year's theme, "Gardens of Tomorrow," envisions how gardening today can nurture a healthier planet. Our visit will include an early morning tour (8-10 am) led by expert docents who will give us behind-the-scenes insights into the exhibits before the doors open to the public.

After the tour, we'll explore the exhibits at our own pace before gathering for lunch at noon. We'll aim to drive home in the daylight with the group deciding on a departure time.

Schedule

- 5:30 am: Carpool from Bergen County (or drive on your own).
- 8-10 am: Tour of the show.
- 10 am-noon: Explore exhibits at your own pace.
- Noon: Group lunch at the venue's food concessions.
- Afternoon: More time to explore (or rest!) before heading home.

Cost: \$128 per person (ticket and Ticket Protection making it refundable).

MG of BC trip to the Philadelphia Flower Show

Saturday, March 8; 8 am-4 pm; \$128

View details and RSVP:

<https://calendar.app.google/Gzwz9VzZDEvED2wW7>

RSVP: Email Suzy Basu at mgofbc.trips@gmail.com to join. We need a minimum of three MGs to proceed. *If the minimum isn't met, the trip will be canceled. With Ticket Protection, your ticket is refundable.*

Transportation: Carpool (two-hour drive) starting at 5:30 am or meet us at the 8 am tour. I'll arrange carpools once RSVPs are in. You're welcome to drive independently or arrange your own overnight stay.

Meals: We'll gather for lunch at noon at the venue's food concessions. Outside food isn't allowed.

Guests: Guests are welcome, but only MGs count toward the three-person minimum.

What's after the Philly Flower Show?



Photo by Joseph Cooper

An aquatic garden at Wave Hill.

**A trip to Wave Hill, Saturday, May 3, 10 am-1 pm
\$25 per person for admission and tour**

View details and RSVP:

<https://calendar.app.google/Co7dkArMFjNrHG9L9>

EVENTS

Lynne Proskow speaks: Container gardening

MG Lynne Proskow will speak Feb. 20 at 7 pm at the Westwood Public Library, 49 Park Ave., Westwood. Her topic is Container Gardening in Small Spaces and Introduction to Self-Watering Containers. Click [here](#) to register.

Community Garden Conference

See the flyer attached with the Potting Shed email for information about the 15th annual Community Garden Conference at Frelinghuysen Arboretum, Morris Township, March 1 from 9 am-4 pm.