

From the Potting Shed

April 1, 2025

www.mgofbc.org



Pea Day at Garretson



Photo by Melody Corcoran

Cesar Coy and Katherine Drury planting peas at the annual Pea Day event at Garretson Forge & Farm. It's an Irish tradition to plant peas at St. Patrick's Day. (Garretson's event took place March 16.) Most pea varieties take 60-70 days to mature. Click [here](#) for a gardener's guide to peas from Penn State Extension. See more volunteer site photos on page 3.

From the President's Desk

By Theresa Schneider, Class of 2016

Master Gardeners do more than maintain gardens and parks; at our core, we are educators. The primary role of a Cooperative Extension-certified Master Gardener is to share evidence-based horticulture and agriculture practices with our communities.



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Meeting news: Wednesday, April 30, 6 pm

Clare Kennedy Cannabis: Stigma to Science

Three years ago, Dr. Steven Fischer of the Bergen Community College Biology and Horticulture Department asked Clare Kennedy to help him create a certificate program in cannabis studies.

Today, this BCC program offers certificates in three areas — cannabis cultivation specialist, cannabis retail specialist, and cannabis extraction and product development specialist. The courses are offered online and asynchronous, and the BCC [website](#) touts that prospective students can “become a cannabis professional in nine weeks.” The next class starts April 7.



Clare Kennedy

As Clare Kennedy explained in an email, colleges in New Jersey can obtain a license to grow cannabis that is “hemp,” meaning cannabis that has a very low

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Rutgers NJAES Years of Service Award pin recipients



These Master Gardeners received Years of Service Award pins during our March 18 meeting. Sitting from left: Elizabeth Choby, 25-year pin; Joseph Cooper, 15; Jeffrey Chan, 10; and Maria Bushman, 5. Standing from left: Keith Mazanac, 5; Dania Cheddie, 10; Debbie Higgins, 5; Terry Campbell, 5; Herb Arbeiter, 5; Liz Gil, 5; Barbara Pisacane, 15; Donna Dorgan, 5; and Lisa Yoler, 5. Pins were mailed to the following who did not attend the meeting: Caroline Newman and Cheryl Wardrop, 5-year pin; Nora Hamawi, Josie Ko, Paula Leibowitz, and Susan Sheridan, 10; Suzanne Danzig, Pat Knight, and Barbara Patete, 15.

Eligibility for a Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension Years of Service Award pin is determined based on the hours that *you* enter into [Better Impact](#). Each year, MGs are required to complete at least 10 hours of continuing education and 25 volunteer hours to retain their certification. Better Impact reports are used to confirm eligibility for a Years of Service Award pin. *Be sure to report all your hours (both volunteer and continuing education) in Better Impact to be considered for a Years of Service Award pin in a timely manner.* **Note:** Certified years don't have to be consecutive for award purposes.

(President's Desk, continued from page 1)

In Bergen County, MGs educate the public in a number of ways. First is through the Helpline. The Helpline opened today and continues through September. MG volunteers are needed at the Hackensack RCE office on Tuesdays and Wednesdays (from 10 am-noon) to help research and answer questions that come into the Helpline.

The Speakers Bureau is another activity where MGs teach community members. At present we have four speakers who provide presentations around the county at the request of organizations like garden clubs and libraries. If you are passionate about a particular gardening topic, consider volunteering with the Speakers Bureau.

A third way in which MGs provide education is through one-day events like Earth Day and Tree Fest, as well as county-sponsored fairs like the Family Fun Fest and the Fall Harvest Festival. These events

provide MGs a chance to interact with a large number of community members sharing information on specific topics and highlighting resources available via the Helpline and the Rutgers Cooperative Extension office.

Lastly, MGs have opportunities to interact with community members at our various volunteer sites. This is where we can step up our game in 2025. How might we advertise the Helpline or provide QR codes to Rutgers factsheets while volunteering at our various sites?

If you are interested in learning more about volunteering with the Helpline, Speakers Bureau, or a community event, or if you have some ideas about how we might highlight the Helpline and Cooperative Extension educational materials at our volunteer sites, please contact me at mgofbc.board@gmail.com.

VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

At the Hermitage: Indoor and outdoor seasonal prep work



Photos by Bernadette White

Above left: Volunteers held a seed-sowing session in the basement of the Hermitage's education center in early March. From left: Herb Arbeiter, Bob Nunes, Katherine Montgomery, and Marie Scotti-Bosworth sowed tomato, hyssop, forget-me-not, hollyhock, zinnia, and dill seeds, to name a few. Above right: This crew was responsible for the first cleanup of the season. From left: Cesar Coy, Katherine Drury, Irmain Rowley, Bernadette White (site coordinator), Chris Kozar, Marie Scotti-Bosworth, and Jennifer Ermoian.



Photo by Miriam Taub

At Teaneck Creek: The Peace Labyrinth and more. . .

This year we plan to continue maintaining the native garden within the Peace Labyrinth and will expend efforts on the Woodland Peace Garden outside the labyrinth. We've designed the garden to help visitors learn about native plants — which ones work in specific microclimates — and choose ones that they can plant.

We're also using plants to naturally control the spread of invasive species, such as mugwort and Japanese hops. Not everything in the Peace Labyrinth is deer-resistant, but it's surrounded by a fence. The plants in the Woodland Peace Garden, along the park's Green Trail, are the most deer-resistant native plants that grow in the Northeast.

- Dave Chalek, resident landscape designer and lead garden steward, Teaneck Creek Conservancy

Clockwise from rear: Seana Kirk, Susan Truesdell, Katherine Drury, Cesar Coy, and Joe Gemignani in the Peace Labyrinth.

HORTICULTURE

Yes, you can have a sustainable lawn

By Arnie Friedman

We have all been exposed to the lawn chemical and seed companies that tell us that a greener lawn is truly more American than apple pie. They promote lots of feedings (up to five a year), weed control applications, fancy lime pellets, pesticides, and seed mixes with lots of blue grass and fillers.

I would like to make the case for less. Lots less. In fact, how about no chemicals that will leach into our water supply. No pesticides to kill off the natural micro-organisms. Less nitrogen resulting in less lawn growth and fewer cuttings and no chemicals running into our streams and rivers. And, best of all, different grass mixes that don't need as much water, maybe no irrigation at all!

Let's just talk about lawns and fertilizer. The first thing a property owner can do is stop fertilizing. Yes, just stop! Lawn grass is just like any other perennial plant. It needs water; carbon dioxide; some nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium; plus traces of other minerals like iron and magnesium. Most of these elements are naturally occurring.

When soil is not compacted, gasses like CO₂, air, and water vapor can easily reach the roots. Nitrogen forces green growth. That's why when we add nitrogen fertilizer the lawn looks so dark green. But if we stop adding extra nitrogen grass grows slower. If it grows slower we don't have to cut it so often. So then how do we feed the lawn and see that it keeps growing? The answer is "cut it and leave it."

Typically, homeowners cut their lawns, bag the clippings, and dispose of them. However, if we cut them up a bit smaller and leave them on the lawn they will enrich the lawn just like fertilizer. Basically, we are making mulch out of our clippings and enriching our lawn with our own compost. The key to doing this is by changing your lawn-mower blade to a mulching-style blade.

Often going under the name Gator Blade these blades cut the grass but, rather than blowing them out into a grass catcher, they cut the grass a second time making the pieces smaller. The grass then falls to the ground and decomposes between the grass blades.

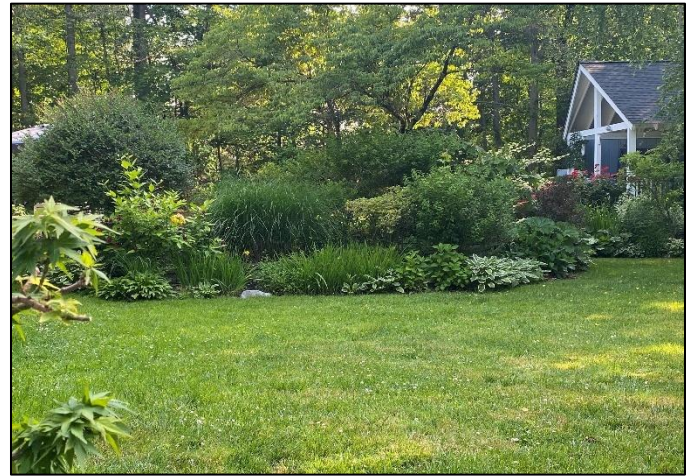


Photo by Arnie Friedman

Arnie's lawn is the result of 20 years without chemicals. Notice the clover blooming? It takes nitrogen from the air and makes it available in the soil, Arnie said.

When you cut with a mulching blade you don't see the grass clippings on the lawn and, in a short time, they decompose naturally amending the soil.

Decomposing green material produces nitrogen naturally as a byproduct. *You will never need to add fertilizer again!* I have not fertilized my lawn in 20 years. As a bonus, by adding a slow, steady amount of decomposed material, my lawn grows slower. During most of the season instead of mowing weekly the lawn should not need a cut more than every 10 days to two weeks.

If you use a lawn service ask them to cut with a mulching-style mower and leave the clippings. It's easier for them, but they might resist because they can't sell you lawn amendments. Be tough and insist. The money you save on fertilizer treatments you can spend on more shrubs and flowers so they can still make a living. They just need to sell you what you need, not unnecessary extras.

What about adding lime? The answer is simple. Do not add lime or any other amendment without doing a soil test! (Click [here](#) for information on Rutgers soil testing.) Lawn grasses grow well in a soil that is close to neutral acidity. Compost, i.e., lawn clippings, when composted should have a neutral pH level.

Next time: Seeds and watering. If you "just say no" to adding fertilizer and practice "cutting and leaving" you will make a big contribution to helping our environment and having a sustainable landscape.

TRIPS AND TOURS



Photo by Joseph Cooper

Wave Hill with the Hudson River in the background.

Wave Hill: Across the bridge, a world away

By Suzy Basu, Trips and Tours chair

Join the MG of BC for a springtime visit to Wave Hill in the Bronx where we'll enjoy a guided tour of the stunning gardens at the height of their early-May bloom. Our guided tour runs 10 am-noonish focusing on the seasonal highlights across the gardens, including the Flower Garden and Wild Garden, and the spectacular views of the Hudson River.

Wave Hill trip – Saturday, May 3

View details and RSVP:

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

Schedule

- 9 am: Carpool from Bergen County (optional);
- 10 am-noon: Guided tour of the gardens;
- Noon: Lunch at Wave Hill's café (optional);
- 1 pm: Departure.

Cost: \$25 per person (covers admission and tour);
\$13 for parking.

Transportation: Suzy will organize carpools starting at 9 am for those interested; departure around 1 pm.

Accessibility: The gardens are generally accessible, though some paths may be uneven. Wheelchairs are available for rental.

Guests: Bring a guest to share this beautiful experience. Join us for this peaceful, spring-filled morning among vibrant blooms and good company.

RSVP: Email Suzy Basu at mgofbc.trips@gmail.com to join.

WEBINARS

All times are Eastern.

April 1, 6:30 pm: Teaneck Public Library sponsors Vegetable Gardening 101 with MG Robyn Lowenthal. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

April 3, 7 pm: Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum sponsors Taking the Mystery Out of Organic Gardening. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

April 4, 6-6:30 pm: AARP Virtual Community Center sponsors Gardening for All Ages: Ease Stress and Get More Exercise. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. AARP membership is not required.

April 14, 6:30 pm: Rutgers Cooperative Extension sponsors Forestry Success in the Pinelands. Click [here](#) for more information and to register for this and other webinars in the Earth Day Every Day series.

April 16, 7 pm: Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum sponsors Container Vegetable Gardening. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

April 21, 6:30 pm: Rutgers Cooperative Extension sponsors Plastic Reductions in New Jersey. Click [here](#) for more information and to register for this and other webinars in the Earth Day Every Day series.

April 28, 6:30 pm: Rutgers Cooperative Extension sponsors Ocean Observation on the Jersey Shore. Click [here](#) for more information and to register for this and other webinars in the Earth Day Every Day series.

They call me mellow yellow



Photo by Bruce Crawford

This winter aconite has dark lines in the sepals (they actually look like petals) that serve as nectar guides for pollinators. The true petals are those “trumpets” in the middle that actually contain the nectar. I have photographed this plant for 30 years but keep trying in the hopes that one picture will somehow tell the story.

**- Bruce Crawford, manager of horticulture,
Morris County Park Commission**

THIS AND THAT

Rutgers MG swag for sale

Are you craving a Rutgers MG hoodie, T-shirt, cap, or apron? These items are available through April 13 on the Rutgers Master Gardener merch [website](#).

“We took your advice and have a new assortment of clothing and accessories in this season’s menu of items,” said Ruth Carll, state program leader in consumer horticulture. “You’ll find ‘performance’ fabrics as well as cotton, T-shirts with pockets and without, and V-neck T-shirts. There are also more types of hats, an apron, and a water bottle.”



Items will ship to arrive three to five weeks after the “store” closes April 13.

NPS native plant guide for kids, adults

The Native Plant Society of New Jersey recently published its [Native Plant School Guide](#). This is a beautiful, full-color guide that can be downloaded or printed. It’s a great educational resource about gardening with native plants, not only for teaching children but also for adult learning. Enjoy!

- Sal Lagattuta

Trail Conference seeks volunteers April 6

Volunteer as a Habitat Helper at the NY-NJ Trail Conference headquarters where you’ll work in the native plant garden, 600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah. The session is April 6 from 9 am-noon.

Click [here](#) to register and learn what to expect and what to bring. For information that’s not available via the registration link, call Terry Cohn, site coordinator, at 201-290-9576.

(Clare Kennedy, continued from page 1)

component of the psychotropic molecule THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) for research purposes. Her presentation will include a discussion of the differences among the three cannabis strains/varieties and the plant’s morphology; the effects of THC and CBD (cannabidiol) on the body; and licensing to grow cannabis in New Jersey.

Clare is a graduate of Rutgers University (BA in biology); Montclair State University (MS in biology); and BCC (AAS in horticulture). She has taught high school science for most of her career “but now in retirement I am an adjunct at BCC,” she wrote.

About our April 30 meeting location

Our April 30 meeting will be held in the greenhouse on the BCC campus, not in our usual location in Hackensack. See the BCC map that was attached to the Potting Shed email. Park outside the greenhouse.

Due to the limited size of the venue, the meeting is for MGs and interns only; it’s not open to the public. Half of the attendees will hear Clare’s presentation while the other half can shop at the college’s annual plant sale. Then the groups will be reversed.

More about the plant sale as we get closer to April 30. Payment for plants is by check or cash only.

MEETINGS/EVENTS

All meetings/events are free except as noted.

April 3, 7 pm: Garden Club of Hackensack, Hackensack Recreation Building, 116 Holt St., Hackensack. Speaker: MG Robyn Lowenthal. Topic: Container Vegetable Gardening.

April 3, 7:30 pm, Garden Club of Harrington Park, upstairs in the Harrington Park Library, 10 Herring St., Harrington Park. Workshop: Florals for Spring - Supermarket Style. Click [here](#) to visit the club's website for what to bring. To register, send an email to [Gerri Gibney](#), club president.

April 4, 1:30 pm: Demarest Garden Club, United Methodist Church at Demarest, 109 Hardenburgh Ave., Demarest. Speaker: Marc Gussen, naturalist at the Closter Nature Center. Topic: Botany.

April 7, 6:30 pm: Sundial Garden Club, Hillsdale Public Library, 509 Hillsdale Ave, Hillsdale. Speaker: Janet Schulz, MG alum. Topic: A Collector's Point of View.

April 8, 7 pm: Friends of the Westwood Public Library Garden Club, Westwood Public Library, 49 Park Ave., Westwood. Speaker MG Chris Kozar. Topic: Deadheading, Dead Leafing, or Pruning: What Should I Be Doing? Click [here](#) to register.

April 8, 7 pm: Ramsey Area Garden Club, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, 55 Wyckoff Ave. (corner of Woodland Avenue), Ramsey. Speaker: MG Robyn Lowenthal. Topic: Gardening the Green Way: Best Practices for Gardening in a Changing Climate.

April 9, 7 pm: Wyckoff Area Garden Club, Wyckoff Public Library, 200 Woodland Ave., Wyckoff. Speaker: MG Arnie Friedman. Topic: Stone in the Garden. Refreshments at 6:30 pm.



Arnie Friedman

April 10, 7 pm: Garden Club of Teaneck, Richard Rodda Community Center, Room MP2, 250 Colonial Court, Teaneck. Drive up the hill to the rear parking lot. Speaker: Capt. Bill Sheehan, Hackensack Riverkeeper. Topic: Protect, Preserve, Restore: A

Visit us on social media

- **Facebook:** Visit Master Gardeners of Bergen County | Hackensack NJ | Facebook. A pop-up box will appear requesting that you log in or create an account. If you don't have a Facebook account, click on the "x" in the upper right corner of the pop-up box to close it, and you'll have access to the MG of BC Facebook page.
- **Instagram**



Virtual Tour of the Hackensack River. Click [here](#) for more information.

April 10, 7 pm: Thielke Arboretum, 460 Doremus Ave., Glen Rock. Speaker: MG Lynne Proskow. Topic: Container Gardening in Small Spaces and an Introduction to Self-Watering Containers. Fee: \$10. Click [here](#) to register; registration is suggested but not required.

April 14, 7 pm: Bergenfield Garden Club, Cooper's Pond Park meeting house, 15 W. Church St., Bergenfield. Speaker: Mary Jo Sichak, Passaic County MG. Topic: Hummingbirds: Tiny Gems in the World of Birds.

April 15, 6 pm: Hasbrouck Heights Garden Club, second-floor meeting room, Hasbrouck Heights Library, 320 Boulevard, Hasbrouck Heights. Speaker: Nisha Khanna, certified landscape designer and founder-owner of [Growing Gardens](#). Topic: Garden Do's and Don'ts. Refreshments and greetings at 5:30 pm.

April 22, 7:30-9 pm: Mahwah Museum, 201 Franklin Turnpike, Mahwah. Speaker: MG Chris Kozar. Topic: Adding Natives to Your Garden. Fee: \$5. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

See more meetings/events in the mid-April Potting Shed.