

# From the Potting Shed

June 1, 2025

[www.mgofbc.org](http://www.mgofbc.org)



## See Paul Sisko's garden



Photo by Paul Sisko

You're invited to see Paul Sisko's 3.5-acre garden June 28 from 10 am-3 pm during the Garden Conservancy's Open Days program. There's no charge for MGs and interns. "Just show up and sign in as Master Gardeners, with guests if you wish," Paul said. Above is the tiered rock garden. Stairs are to the right. The address is 113 Fardale Ave., Mahwah. Enjoy!

## MG picnic June 17: Are you coming?

**By Chris Kozar, Hospitality chair**

You're invited to the MG of BC picnic in Van Saun Park, 216 Forest Ave., Paramus.

We hope all Master Gardeners and interns will join us for this annual get-together Tuesday, June 17 from noon-2:30 pm at Pavilion I (eye), which is located north of Walden Pond on the road leading to the park's Howland Avenue exit. There's plenty of parking at the pavilion.

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## From the President's Desk

**By Theresa Schneider, Class of 2016**

Volunteer Opportunity at the Bergen County Fall Harvest Festival!

As of the end of May, there's no agricultural extension agent or horticultural assistant for the Bergen County Cooperative Extension office. This presents an opportunity for the Master Gardeners of Bergen County to step up and take the lead in planning displays for this year's Fall Harvest Festival scheduled for Sept. 27-28 from 10 am-5 pm at Overpeck County Park.



If you're interested in volunteering at the festival, please contact me at [mgofbc.board@gmail.com](mailto:mgofbc.board@gmail.com). You can dust off a previous display or develop a new display on a topic you're passionate about. Additionally, you can volunteer for half a day, a full day, or the entire weekend.

The MG of BC is committed to providing a fantastic experience for our community at the Fall Harvest Festival. I look forward to your enthusiastic participation and can't wait to see the amazing displays you'll bring to life!

**MG of BC fall meeting schedule  
1 Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack**

**Sept. 16, Oct. 21, Nov. 18**

## IN OUR GARDENS

### *A book plants a seed for experimenting with the ‘Three Sisters’*

**By Edith Terzano**

Sometimes things unfold in mysterious ways, as what recently became apparent to me. I was reading “Braiding Sweetgrass,” a book by Robin Wall Kimmerer, a botanist and a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation.

Through her writing, she weaves together both her scientific understanding and the native teachings about the reciprocal relationship between all. I was particularly taken by a chapter titled “The Three Sisters” in which she offers an example of Indigenous agriculture where corn, pole beans, and squash are grown together and how, together, these three sisters not only feed people, but also teach us beautiful life lessons. Hmmm, I became intrigued.

Not long after reading this book, I attended a presentation about small-space gardening and, lo and behold, a slide was shown with none other than a graphic depiction of “The Three Sisters.” A short group discussion followed and, somehow, a fire burned brighter in me: I have to try to grow that.

So I started to plan: What variety of corn, beans, and squash are we talking about? How much space is needed? Are any special resources necessary? Is this actually doable? Yet despite the questions, that small voice inside me kept repeating, I have to try to grow that. So I did.

I rented space in the Hackensack Community Garden and enriched the spent-looking soil. As for the plants, for no apparent reason a neighbor came by and offered me squash seedlings, and another offered me pole bean seedlings he had grown thinking they were bush beans! Then I bought a type of flint corn seeds, recommended because of the strong stalks they produce (best support for the pole beans).

As for the planting within the rented space, my sister and I created five mounds of dirt and then planted five kernels (seeds) of corn at the top of each mound. Because corn cross pollinates it is best to have multiple stalks. Also, we planted one pole bean seedling and one squash seedling on opposite sides of each mound.



*Photo by Edith Terzano*

*The beginnings of the Three Sisters (corn, beans, and squash) in Edith's plot in the Hackensack Community Garden.*

Not sure if Indigenous people cordoned off their plants somehow, but experience has taught us it is best to surround your plot with fencing to protect the plot from critters known to feast in the Community Garden. It felt good to get started.

*More about the Three Sisters' experience and the life lessons they teach us in future issues of the Potting Shed.*

#### ***Want to know more about the sisters?***

- Click [here](#) for an 11-minute video, Companion Planting of North American Indigenous Peoples from [GRIN-U](#) (Germplasm Information Resources Network).
- Click [here](#) for an article about the benefits of intercropping from the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

## WEBINARS

**All times are Eastern.**

**June 4, 10-10:30 am:** AARP Virtual Community Center sponsors Small-Space Gardening. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. AARP membership is not required.

**June 5, 1 pm:** National Garden Bureau sponsors Ask the Experts About Edible Perennials. Free. Click [here](#) to register.

**June 11, 2 pm:** Colorado State University Extension sponsors Native Plants: Potting Media, Soil, and Tips for Transplanting Success. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**June 13, 2-3 pm:** American Horticultural Society sponsors Shade Gardening: Dazzling Plants and Design Tips. Fee: \$15 AHS members; \$20 non-members. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**June 18, 7-8:30 pm:** Native Plant Society of New Jersey sponsors Removing Invasive Plants from Home Landscapes and Reducing Their Spread. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**June 19, noon-1 pm:** AARP Virtual Community Center sponsors African American Gardens and Foodways for Juneteenth. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. AARP membership is not required.

**June 23, 2-3 pm:** AARP Virtual Community Center sponsors Eat Your Yard: Designing an Edible Garden. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. AARP membership is not required.

**June 26, noon-1 pm:** Smithsonian Gardens sponsors the Flight Garden at the National Air and Space Museum. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Recorded webinar available until June 22:** The Garden Conservancy sponsors Bedrock, the Making of a Public Garden with Jill Nooney, author. Click [here](#) for the webinar. Click [here](#) to visit the Bedrock Gardens website.

## MG picnic, continued from page 1

The MG of BC will supply sandwiches and drinks. We're asking attendees to contribute one of the following based on the first letter of your last name.

- Last name starts with A through I: Appetizer or chips.
- Last name starts with J through P: Salad (green or pasta type).
- Last name starts with Q through Z: Dessert.



A sampling of food from our 2023 MG picnic.

Since we need to know how many are coming before we order the food, be sure to RSVP by June 11 to me at [chriskozar@aol.com](mailto:chriskozar@aol.com). See you there!

## MG OF BC NEWS

### A gentle reminder to enter your hours

**By Suzanne Danzig, Volunteer Records chair**

It never hurts to offer a gentle reminder to keep your hours up to date in [Better Impact](#). To maintain your certification, you need to earn and record 25 volunteer hours and 10 continuing education hours each year.

Many of you have adopted the "record-as-I-go" method, which I highly recommend. In that way you do not have to go back in your calendar or resort to memory.

Keep up the great work out there at our sites and events. As always, I am available should you have any questions. Contact me at [suzannedanzig@gmail.com](mailto:suzannedanzig@gmail.com).



## VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

### *What's new at the Butterfly Garden? A larger pond, lupines in bloom*

**By Pat Knight and Tammy Laverty**

The Butterfly and Native Garden in Leonia is humming this season. Last year during our ceremony marking the opening of the Native American section of the garden, the many dragonflies that were flying around were referred to as ancestors.

Hearing this and attending a webinar about a “no-fuss wildlife pond-how to attract dragonflies” started us on the mission to have a place that dragonflies can lay their eggs.

Volunteers installed a bigger pond, about 4.75 feet long, to complement a smaller one that was installed in 2024. The new pond has a section that's 18 inches deep to allow frogs, dragonfly and damselfly nymphs, and other aquatic insects to safely winter below where the water freezes.



Photo by Tammy Laverty

Volunteers placed logs and moss around the new pond so it's user-friendly for insects, birds, and other critters.

At the moment the new pond contains pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*), corkscrew rush (*Juncus effusus*), swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), and cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*). Both ponds are now surrounded by fencing for safety reasons.

Meanwhile, thanks to us, the lupines are growing. It has taken a few years to establish this bed of sundial lupines (*Lupinus perennis*). Initially, overwintering lupine seeds planted in the fall did not produce seedlings in the spring. After some research, we found that scarifying the seeds in vinegar and coating them in *rhizobia inoculum*, specific for lupines, produced good germination.

The lupine seedlings are small and can take one to two years to mature. We also helped the growing lupines by removing competing plants and adding fencing to protect them from critter predation.

It was also found that lupines are short-lived perennials of about three to five years, but they are so worth it! The pollinated flowers of mature lupines produce seeds that eject, scatter, and germinate on their own. Now new seedlings are identified and protected and are self-sustaining with a little help. Lupines attract bees and sometimes hummingbirds and moths.



Lupines up close.



Photo by Miriam Taub

Pat Knight, left, and Tammy Laverty with the lupines they've nurtured from seed.

Join volunteers at the Butterfly Garden Tuesdays from 10 am-1:30 pm. Contact site coordinators Pat Knight at [gspmk@hotmail.com](mailto:gspmk@hotmail.com) or Tammy Laverty at [dwd12345@gmail.com](mailto:dwd12345@gmail.com) for directions to park. Bring hand tools, bug spray, gloves, sun protection, and water. Ticks are present so wear long trousers tucked into socks

and sturdy shoes. The garden is located in Overpeck County Park, 40 Fort Lee Road, Leonia, behind the Bergen Equestrian Center.

*(Volunteer site news, continued on page 5)*

## VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

### Garretson Forge & Farm joins the PA Flax Project

[Editor's note: Garretson Forge & Farm is participating in the [PA Flax Project](#), which is re-establishing the fiber flax industry in Pennsylvania. Volunteers monitor two types of flax seed (one for fiber, one for seed) and file reports on growth and conditions. This article was written by MG Donna Dorgan for the Garretson Gazette.]

**By Donna Dorgan**

Flax (*Linum usitatissimum*) is a long-stemmed annual flowering plant with pale blue blooms. It was domesticated thousands of years ago. Flax seeds are eaten as a nutritional supplement. Its seeds are high in omega-3 fatty acids, protein, vitamins, and minerals. Commercially, flax seeds are processed into linseed oils, which are used in wood-finishing products, paints, and linoleum.

Flax fiber is extracted from the bast beneath the surface of the stem and used in the production of linen. Retting is the process through which the flax fibers are extracted from the plant stems. After the flax has been retted, it is scutched and heckled. After going through all these processes, its fibers can be woven into linen. Finer grades of linen are made into damask and lace. Linen is valued for its breathability, softness, strength, and antibacterial qualities.

For centuries, flax was widely grown for fiber in North America. Colonial-era farmers grew flax and transformed it into linen to make garments and household textiles. Over time, linen was replaced by cotton grown by enslaved people and by petroleum-based synthetics.



Photo by Lida Gellman

Nora Hamawi, left, and Melody Corcoran weeding in Garretson's flax patch.

Today, flax for linen is grown in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands but not in the United States.

Flax grown for fiber differs from flax grown for seed. When growing flax for linen, long-stem varieties of flax are preferred. When grown for linen, the flax is harvested and retted before its seeds mature. Flax is relatively easy to grow; it does not require high fertility, irrigation, or a lot of pesticides. Consequently, it is more sustainable than other types of fabric production.

The PA Flax Project (PAFP) is attempting to bring back commercial flax production and revitalize the textile industry in southeastern Pennsylvania. The last US flax linen processor closed in the 1960s. As part of its efforts, the PAFP is sponsoring

the Square Yard Project. PAFP has asked participants to grow a square yard of flax, collect information regarding its growth, and report the information back to the project. Modern flax seed varieties have been bred and selected in Europe. PAFP is interested in learning how they perform in the United States.

In connection with the PAFP, a square yard of Lisette flax was planted at Garretson April 10. Lisette is a long-stem variety of flax from Van De Bilt, the Netherlands. We are collecting information and will report back to PAFP.

A square yard of Sussex organic flax also was planted. The Sussex variety is grown for its seeds and has shorter stems. Consequently, we can compare and contrast the two varieties of flax.



## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

### The Helpline needs your help

Hey, Master Gardeners! Here's an activity that allows you to sit, keep your hands clean, and earn volunteer hours all at the same time. It's the Rutgers



*Pixabay photo*

Cooperative Extension Helpline, which is open through September.

The Helpline needs volunteers Tuesdays and Wednesdays

from 10 am-noon. Volunteers work in the Rutgers Cooperative Extension office on the fourth floor of 1 Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack. You can park in the employee garage.

Alyssa Glynn, senior program coordinator for RCE and county extension department head, needs one to two people per shift. While interns will get preference, any MGs can sign up. To volunteer, send an email to Alyssa at [alyssa.glynn@rutgers.edu](mailto:alyssa.glynn@rutgers.edu) or call the RCE office at 201-336-6780.

### Work in the Trail Conference HQ garden

The NY-NJ Trail Conference seeks Habitat Helper volunteers June 15 and 29 to work in the native plant garden at its headquarters, 600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah. The work sessions are from 9 am-noon.

- Click [here](#) to register for the June 15 work session.
- Click [here](#) to register for the June 29 work session.

For information that's not available via the registration page, call Terry Cohn, site coordinator, at 201-290-9576.

## EVENTS

**Wave Hill, June 6, 1-3 pm:** Meet the Makers: Gardeners' Open House. Free with admission to the grounds. Click [here](#) for more information. Registration is not required. Click [here](#) to visit the website. 4900 Independence Ave., Bronx, NY.

**New Jersey Botanical Garden, June 7, 1-2 pm:** Wildflower walk in the shady, wooded wildflower garden. Fee: \$5; free for children under 12. Wear sturdy shoes. GPS address is Morris Road, Ringwood. Meet at the Carriage House. Click [here](#) to visit the website.

**Bergen-Passaic Chapter, Native Plant Society of New Jersey, June 7, 2 pm:** A private guided tour (an easy-to-moderate hike) of the Lorrimer Sanctuary. Registration is required since space is limited. Click [here](#) to register; indicate how many people will be arriving in your car. 790 Ewing Ave., Franklin Lakes.

**Laurelwood Arboretum, June 7 and 21, 10:30 am:** Free guided walking and cart tours. First come, first served. 725 Pines Lake Drive West, Wayne. Meet at the Knippenberg Center for Education. Click [here](#) to visit the website.

**Ridgefield Park Earth Day, June 14, 10 am-3 pm:** Rain or shine. Eco cruises, fishing derby, science shows, events for all ages. Free. 24 Industrial Ave., Ridgefield Park. Click [here](#) for the flyer.

**Mill Creek Park, June 22, 10 am-noon:** Bergen County Audubon Society leads a guided nature walk at an outstanding location for birdwatching. Meet at the trail entrance off the rear parking lot of Bob's Discount Furniture, 3 Mill Creek Drive, Secaucus. Click [here](#) for a list of Bergen Audubon field trips.