

From the Potting Shed

July 1, 2025

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Water-wise

Give your garden longer soaks

By Arnie Friedman

The only thing I can say about the heat wave and plants is water more. Not more frequently but longer soaks. Watering more often evaporates rather than soaking in. Longer soaks get down deeper encouraging deeper roots that can bear the stress better.



Mulch is great for holding in moisture and keeping the soil cooler around the roots. However, two "don'ts" are don't put mulch on too thick; 2-2½ inches is best. Too much mulch prevents the vital gases in the air from filtering into the soil. Don't pile it up around tree trunks, by the way. We call them mulch volcanos, and they're bad for the trunks.

The second "don't" is don't mulch on a super-hot day. Mulch is inherently warm when you get it because of all the microbial action within that's breaking it down. The microbes release heat. On a really hot day, mulch can actually be hot enough to scorch young recently planted annuals and perennials.

This happened to me years ago when my crew finished planting a lovely new perennial garden. We ordered regular hardwood mulch in bulk from a local supplier and spread it by hand. It was a warm summer day and by the evening our plants were wilting. We watered to cool it down but the next day we noticed some of the leaves on the new plants were actually shriveled and brown along their edges from being scalded by the mulch. Who knew this could happen!

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From the President's Desk

By Theresa Schneider, Class of 2016

The first week of summer has created a weather whiplash effect with local temperatures jumping from the 60s to 100° F and back down to the 60s in just seven days! This variability is characteristic of the weather New Jersey has experienced over the last 12 months.



According to an [article](#) by Amy Rowe, RCE Agriculture & Natural Resources county agent and county extension department head for Passaic County, New Jersey experienced its driest fall on record in 2024, and 2025 produced the third-driest January and fifth-wettest May ever recorded.

Whether you are a weather enthusiast or not, as a Master Gardener, it's good to have some handy weather resources to share with our community members. The [Rutgers NJ Weather Network](#) is a great place to start for local weather information as well as trend data. The [National Weather Service](#) also provides information on local weather as well as great educational resources.

Stay safe in this summer heat. See you at our Sept. 16 meeting.

At the Trail Conference HQ



Photo by Terry Cohn

Linda DeWolfe and intern Jin Kupperman spent the morning of June 15 cutting back the aggressive native plants (penstemon, goldenrod, false sunflower, and monarda) that were too close to the walkway at the NY-NJ Trail Conference headquarters. The next volunteer session is July 13 from 9 am-noon. Click [here](#) to register. Or click [here](#) to register for the July 27 session. The address is 600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah. Terry Cohn, terrycohn@hotmail.com, is the site coordinator. See another photo on page 6.

FOR THE BIRDS

Here are events and articles revolving around our feathered friends.

Want a bird-friendly yard?

Laurelwood Arboretum is sponsoring a lecture on bird-feeding basics where you'll learn how to choose feeders and food and turn your yard into a bird-friendly habitat. It's July 16 from 5:30-6:30 pm, and it's free, though registration is required. Click [here](#) for the Laurelwood Arboretum home page, then scroll down to the July 16 event for more information and the

registration link. Laurelwood is located at 725 Pines Lake Drive West, Wayne.

Create a hummingbird haven

Read the Rutgers [factsheet](#) with instructions on how to attract ruby-throated hummingbirds to your yard. The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Extension also offers [instructions](#) on welcoming hummingbirds to your backyard.



Pixabay photo

Ruby-throated hummingbird

Diary of the wood ducklings

Read Jim Wright's [column](#) about the wood ducklings at the Celery Farm in Allendale. Jim writes the birding column for The Record. Be sure to click on the link in Jim's column to see the ducklings climb out of their nesting box. So cute.

Raptors and rehabilitation

Take a self-guided tour of the Raptor Trust, 1390 White Bridge Road, Millington. Click [here](#) for information about the Raptor Trust's educational programs.



Pixabay photo

Red-tailed hawk

In its 2024 annual report the Raptor Trust noted that it admitted 5,353 birds of 149 species, up about 8% from 2023.

Which bird was the "most admitted" to the Raptor Trust? The American robin. The red-railed

hawk was the "most admitted" of the 531 raptors of 17 species brought to the sanctuary. Click [here](#) for the annual report, which is full of stories about bird rehab at the Raptor Trust.

IN OUR GARDENS

The 'Three Sisters' are adaptable, surviving, and thriving

Editor's note: Edith Terzano introduced us to her experiment with the Three Sisters (corn, pole beans, and squash) in the June 1 Potting Shed. Click [here](#) for that issue; the article is on page 2.

By Edith Terzano

It's been about one month since my sister Elizabeth and I planted the Three Sisters in my Hackensack Community Garden plot.

Weatherwise, with a lot of rain limiting the number of sunny days and with unstable temperatures ranging from less than 40° F at some times and up to 90° F at other times, I worried how my Three Sisters would handle the climate stresses of the last month.



The Three Sisters: That's corn with the tall, thin leaves; butternut squash with the large silver-veined leaves; and pole beans with the smaller light green leaves and tendrils. That's Edith's lavender in the background. It's planted in a separate plot.

begun to unfold. Meanwhile, I find the need to get to know more about the Three Sisters plants.

Sister Corn, I've come to respect your strength as you reach toward the sky with the inner conviction of stiff, strong, stalks typical of the Flint variety of corn that you are. It amazes me that your root system does not drive deep in the soil so as not to threaten your sisters' space in your shared earthy mound. You are

I'm happy to report that they all appear to have adapted and are surviving. Sister Corn has sprouted despite it all. Sister Pole Beans has sent out her tendrils, which have started to climb. And the broad silver-veined leaves of Sister Squash have



Photos by Edith Terzano

Edith and Elizabeth planted five mounds of the Three Sisters in the same plot.

there for Sister Pole Beans whose tendrils seek you out for support that they might fulfill their imperative to reproduce for the survival of their variety and produce sustenance for others as well. Your generosity above ground is duplicated below ground as your roots bind nitrogen in the soil thus providing underground nutrition for your sisters.

Sister Squash, you complete the Three Sisters trio. Your silver-veined leaves shade the ground you travel along, thwarting the growth of competitors, allowing some moisture to remain during dry spells while protecting your budding young squash that carries your future within it.

I am humbled by what's happening here. These plants are teaching me. In their quiet demonstrations they speak of reciprocal relationships, of sharing for the good of the whole. I feel as though they are giving to me, and I must give back in return. I want to take care of them as they take care of me. I begin to realize a feeling of gratitude and a kinship with these plants. I feel enriched body and soul.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

'Blast' at Teaneck Creek July 18

Teaneck Creek Conservancy is seeking volunteers to work in its Peace Labyrinth and native plant garden Friday, July 18 from 9 am-noon. This "blast" is a one-time event when many volunteers help to accomplish garden chores during a span of a few hours.

For this blast, volunteers will assist with seasonal maintenance tasks, such as weeding, pruning, and general light garden clean-up as well as removing invasive species in the above areas. "This help will be instrumental in keeping the space looking beautiful and functional for upcoming programming," said Jonathan Block, Conservancy associate.

Dave Chalek, resident landscape designer and lead garden steward of Teaneck Creek Conservancy, will supervise the volunteers.

Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts, closed-toe shoes, and a hat, and bring sunscreen, bug spray, and sunglasses. Bring hand tools and gloves. Teaneck Creek Conservancy will provide a water station as well as larger tools, such as shovels, rakes, and loppers.

Click [here](#) to register. There's no rain date. Teaneck Creek Conservancy is located at 20 Puffin Way, Teaneck. Meet in the parking lot at 9 am.

WEBINARS

All times are Eastern.

July 3, 11-11:30 am: AARP Virtual Community Center sponsors Craft Studio: Garden Magic at Home (create your own succulent terrarium and fairy garden). Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

July 16, noon-1 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors Uses and Benefits of Rain Barrels. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

July 29, 6-7 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors Vegetable Gardening: Home Gardener Basics for Success. Fee: \$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Picnic in the park



Chris Kozar, MG of BC hospitality chair, posed with some of the goodies available at our annual picnic in Van Saun County Park June 17. "The day turned out lovely — not too hot and no rain!," Chris said. "Everyone was so generous with the salads, appetizers, and desserts they brought. The park facilities, once again, were fine. We had more than 30 Master Gardeners there who enjoyed the day."

July 31, 1-2 pm: Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation sponsors Monarchs and Pesticides: Understanding the Risks, Creating High-Quality Habitat. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Recorded webinars you may like . . .

Click [here](#) to visit the Smithsonian Gardens video library for its collection of 87 videos from the Let's Talk Gardens video series. You'll find recordings on such diverse topics as roses, native edibles, native spring ephemerals, plant photography, winter gardens, tropical plants, orchids, and more. There are too many topics to name. Check them out, especially if you need continuing education hours for 2025.

VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

Bergen County Zoo: Small space, multiple gardens



Photos by Dineen Policano

Marylou Moravec and site coordinator Jeffrey Chan water the newly planted annuals and other plants during the extreme heat June 23. Below, a look at the gardens maintained by the Zoo Crew.

By Dineen Policano

The gardens at the Bergen County Zoo in Van Saun Park are in full bloom. From the perennial garden to the herb garden to the pollinator garden with some annuals mixed in, everything is thriving thanks to the “Zoo Crew”: Jeffrey Chan (site coordinator), Dan Coviello, Anita Hall-Davis, Sharon LaMonica, Sharon Ma, Marylou Moravec, Louise Mullin, and me.

The gardens are located near the main entrance to the zoo, just past the Education Center.

We have many visitors admiring the gardens and inquiring about specific plants. The liatris and butterfly weed get lots of attention, especially this time of year, because of their vibrant colors. Jeffrey Chan and Sharon Ma take the cannas home for the winter and bring them back in the spring. They both often contribute plants from home to the gardens.

What always amazes me are the children who are so very interested in gardens, reading the plant markers out loud, smelling the herbs, and asking questions. Sometimes their parents have to say, “Let’s go and look at the animals.” It makes you wonder if there are any potential horticulturalists among them.

Join the Zoo Crew Mondays from 8-11 am (summer hours). See the [Bergen County Zoo listing](#) on our website for more information. The zoo is located in Van Saun County Park, 216 Forest Ave., Paramus.



ASK ARNIE

Editor's note: Arnie Friedman, Speakers Bureau chair, is an NYBG Certified Landscape Designer and former NYBG instructor. Click [here](#) to contact him with your gardening-related questions.



These roots of my river birch are lifting the patio stones. What can I do?

To tackle the issue of tree roots lifting patio stones there are two distinct approaches. The first would be to eliminate the large root that is raising the patio stones. Large roots (at left) can be removed.

Roots like this serve two purposes for the tree. They are anchors that hold the tree in place and are repositories of starches and water that the tree produces in its leaves and stores in the large roots for times of drought and stress. Cleanly cutting part of this root would be OK as long as you don't remove too much or remove multiple roots.

The second approach, which I would favor in this case, is to simply remove the raised stone and make the tree base area a bit bigger.



The person who made the patio could cut the edge of the existing patio with a stone saw to make a nice new patio edge. That way you are not introducing a cut to the tree root, which potentially could make a wound where pathogens could enter or destabilize the tree.

Note from Miriam Taub: This is my river birch. I opted for a general contractor, who trimmed the stones (above), cut the large stone in two, and hollowed out a space underneath to accommodate the root. I celebrated with a power-wash for the patio.

Watering advice, continued from page 1

Oh, and don't forget those hanging baskets of summer annuals. If they are hanging under the eaves they may not be getting a good soaking from passing rain showers. If they are in direct all-day sun they may need watering twice a day in this heat.

It's best to start watering after midnight or just before sunrise if using an automated system. Hand watering should be done early before it's so hot that water will evaporate before filtering into the soil. Afternoon/evening watering leaves plants wet overnight, which encourages mold and fungus to grow.

Facts and myths

Penn State Extension offers this [article](#) separating facts and myths when it comes to watering your garden.

Pollinators are thirsty, too!

Learn about the importance of a water source for wildlife from the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. Click [here](#) for the article, which includes instructions to build that water source.

More Trail Conference HQ volunteers



Jin Kupperman, Seana Kirk, and Scott Japko after weeding, pruning, and mulching in the native plant habitat at the NY-NJ Trail Conference headquarters in Mahwah June 29. See the photo caption on page 2 to register for the July volunteer sessions.

TRIPS AND TOURS

Laurelwood Arboretum in June, in bloom



If you missed the June 29 trip to Laurelwood Arboretum, have no regrets. Suzy Basu, MG of BC Trips and Tours coordinator, has planned a trip to the Frelinghuysen Arboretum, Morris Township, for the last weekend of July; date and cost TBD. See details in the mid-July Potting Shed. Guests are welcome. In the meantime, if you have questions, contact Suzy at mgofbc.trips@gmail.com.



At Laurelwood Arboretum, from left, Edith Terzano, Terry Cohn, Martha Carlucci, Nora Hamawi, Christine Belli, Wendy Sowa-Maldarelli, and Suzy Basu. Five guests also attended. Above right, Suzy captured a honeybee on an Eastern prickly pear (*Opuntia humifusa*).

EVENTS

July 6, 10 am: Bergen County Audubon Society sponsors a native plant and butterfly walk at Richard DeKorte Park, 1 DeKorte Park, Lyndhurst. Free. Contact [Don Torino](#), Bergen County Audubon Society, for more information.

July 11, 8:30-10:30 pm: Teaneck Creek Conservancy and Bergen County Audubon Society sponsor Moth Night at Teaneck Creek Conservancy, 20 Puffin Way, Teaneck. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. Bring a flashlight.

July 19, 2-4 pm: Bergen-Passaic Chapter, Native Plant Society of New Jersey sponsors a private guided tour of Lorrimer Sanctuary (rescheduled from June due to rain). The tour is about a mile over easy-to-moderate trails. Registration is required since space is limited. Click [here](#) to register; indicate how many people will be arriving in your car. Lorrimer is located at 790 Ewing Ave., Franklin Lakes.

2025 New Jersey county fair schedule

County fairs begin this month, and most take place in July and August, except for the Bergen County Fall Harvest Festival, which will be Sept. 26-28. Click [here](#) for the schedule.