

Master Gardeners of Bergen County

March 2022 – Potting Shed Mid-Month Update

SPOTLIGHT ON ... WSG



Photo by Suzanne Danzig

The azalea and rhododendron display in Washington Spring Garden around Mother's Day is one of the best in Bergen County.

This is the first in a series of features on MG of BC volunteer sites.

Springtime in Washington Spring Garden

Volunteer times and location: Beginning April 7, volunteers will work Thursdays from 8:30 am-12:30 pm. You don't need to work all four hours or show up promptly at 8:30. The garden is located within Van Saun Park, 216 Forest Ave., Paramus.

Washington Spring Garden at a glance: WSG is a peaceful, Zen-like shade garden. It has large azalea, rhododendron, and mountain laurel bushes with the ground covered by ferns, astilbes, and other groundcovers. You'll find river birch, cherry, and crabapple trees with the latter two providing spring blooms. A natural spring runs through the area and is crossed by Japanese-style bridges. People come just to sit and relax and to watch the wildlife, mainly chipmunks. Locally, it's known as the Japanese Gardens, although technically it lacks some requirements.

What do you do during a typical volunteer shift?

Four or five volunteers typically weed to ensure invasives don't take hold, prune shrubs, water planters,

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

Meeting reminder: Tuesday, March 22

Announcements at 7:20 pm; program to follow.
Click [here](#) to join the meeting at 7:15 pm.

Meeting ID: 926 9258 8641; password: 692429

Beginners' Bonsai

Arnie Friedman, Class of 2004 and chair of the MG of BC Speakers Bureau, has found a new topic to present to the public.



Arnie Friedman

His new talk is called Beginners' Bonsai and he's trying it out at our March meeting. The presentation is the story of how he got bitten by the bonsai bug. "I started out thinking bonsai masters have a lot to say about pruning, soils, and plant root growth, but as I watched YouTube videos and looked at Facebook groups I got interested in trying it myself," he explained. "Now I'm a novice with a new hobby and a new world to explore."

About those Covid guidelines

Rutgers has issued revised Covid guidelines effective April 4. In brief:

- Carry a face mask in case you want to put it on;
- Face masks are still required in classroom and lecture settings;
- Use common sense in your activities;
- Find ways to build in protection for yourself (like social distancing) as a precautionary measure.

(Washington Spring Garden, continued from page 1)

and rake leaves. Some people work in groups; others work individually. The garden is not large, so no one is totally isolated from other volunteers.

Is the work physically demanding?

Bergen County park management does the really large tasks, such as large-tree pruning and removing trees. They also keep the paths through the garden clear. Some physical exertion is required, such as lifting barrels of leaves into the truck provided by the park. However, not everyone needs to do this.

What tools should volunteers bring?

Bring water, gloves, and small tools. Park employees provide larger tools, such as rakes.

Where is the parking?

There are four parking lots near the garden. All are a very short walk to the site.

What projects are planned for this year?

There's one sunny site where we intend to replant the rose garden with more disease-resistant roses. The rose garden will be dedicated to a deceased donor who provided the funds.

Does the site have any historical significance?

The garden is named Washington Spring because, during the Revolutionary War, George Washington was seen allowing his horse to drink there.

Site coordinators: Suzanne Danzig, 201-218-4093, suzannedanzig@gmail.com and Pat Vellas, patvellas@aol.com.

- Information from Pat Vellas, Class of 2014

THINGS TO DO

2 walks at NJ Botanical Garden/Skylands

Learn about trees: March 26, 10-11 am. Rich Flynn, former NJBG head landscape designer, will lead a tour of many of NJBG's specimens. You'll learn the differences between trees, how to tell them apart, and how to use them in your garden. Free. Meet at the Carriage House. Wear sturdy, comfortable shoes.

Spring bird walk: March 27, 10 am. Don Torino, Bergen Audubon, will lead a walk through the garden to look for early spring visiting birds as well as the many resident species. Free. Meet at the Carriage House. Snow/rain cancels.

The NJBG is located at 2 Morris Road, Ringwood. Visit the [website](#).

Doug Tallamy - Celebrate the Earth

2:30-4 pm, April 24

Laurelwood Arboretum's Knippenberg Center
725 Pines Lake Drive West, Wayne

Tickets: \$30 members/\$55 non-members; includes a one-year membership

to Friends of Laurelwood Arboretum
Click [here](#) for more information and to buy tickets

Limited seating - masks required

HORTICULTURE



Photo courtesy of Bruce Crawford

Iris Katherine Hodgkin.

Endearing flowers for a fickle month

Bruce Crawford, manager of horticulture, Morris County Park Commission, has chosen the iris as his March plant of the month.

By Bruce Crawford

Without question, March is a fickle month. Known for beginning as winter and ending as spring, it has also been known to start as spring and end with a snowstorm! Plants which bloom during this month are known for their resilience to extremes in weather. What is even more amazing is how delicate the flowers of many of these plants appear. To me, iris have some of the most endearing and complex flowers a gardener can enjoy and, incredibly, two of the bulbous iris bloom in March!

Iris is a member of its own family, the *Iridaceae* with upwards of 300 species spanning Europe into Asia and North America. . . Click [here](#) to read more.

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(Horticulture, continued from page 2)

Read about rhubarb

Click [here](#) to learn the health benefits of rhubarb from the American Institute of Cancer Research. And, for instructions on how to grow rhubarb, see [quick facts](#) from the University of Minnesota Extension.

- Information from Liz Gil, Class of 2019

Is your club planning a plant sale?

The April *Potting Shed* will include a list of area plant sales run by garden clubs and other non-profit organizations. Send your club's information — location, date, and time of the sale; description of plants available for purchase; price range; and, if applicable, contact information — to [Janet Schulz](#), garden club liaison, by March 25.



WEBINARS

All times are Eastern.

March 17, 10-11 am: NC Cooperative Extension, Buncombe County, sponsors Moss Gardening Madness. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 17, noon-1 pm: Smithsonian Gardens sponsors Garden Rooms - Ideas and Inspirations. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 17, 7 pm: Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum sponsors Spring Gardens. Free. Click [here](#), then scroll down to March 17 in the left column for more information and to register.

March 18, 2 pm: Colorado State University Extension sponsors Convert Your Turf. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 21, 2 pm: National Garden Bureau sponsors Ask the Experts - Seed and Plant Shopping Tips. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 23, 7 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors Gardening with Perennials. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 23, 7-8 pm: Wild Ones sponsors Weed Ordinances. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 24, noon-1 pm: Los Angeles County Public Works sponsors Small-Space Gardening. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 24, noon-1 pm: Smithsonian Gardens sponsors Using Tropical Plants in the Temperate Landscape. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 24, 1 pm: University of Florida Master Gardeners sponsors Improving Soil Health. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 25, noon-1:15 pm: University of Maine Cooperative Extension sponsors Seed Starting at Home. Fee: Sliding scale from \$0 to \$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 25, 1 pm: National Garden Bureau sponsors Ask the Experts - Year of the Salad Greens. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 25, 2 pm: Colorado State University Extension sponsors Pruning Shrubs - Stop the Senseless Shearing. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 31, 4-5 pm: Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College sponsors Fueling the Spring Monarch Migration - How to Prepare Your Yard to Host the Jewels of the Garden. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 31, 7 pm: Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum sponsors Bluebirds and Hummingbirds in My Garden - Really? Free. Click [here](#), then scroll down to March 31 in the left column for more information and to register.

April 1, noon-1:15 pm: University of Maine Cooperative Extension sponsors Preventing Wildlife Damage to Home Gardens. Fee: Sliding scale from \$0 to \$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

April 1, 2 pm: Colorado State University Extension sponsors Fool's Guide to Zero Water Gardens. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

MG OF BC NEWS

Class of 2022 is now in session

There are 114 students from four counties participating in the MG Class of 2022, including 30 students from Bergen County. The 2022 Rutgers Master Garden Online Training Program began in January and will run for 18 weeks, ending May 17. Students meet on Tuesdays for the live presentation via the Canvas Management Learning System, which Rutgers uses to distribute online programs.

Not all students attend the online classes. Some are “asynchronous learners,” explained Karen Riede, Bergen’s horticultural assistant. Instead, they view videos of the weekly subject matter, which are available through Canvas and can be viewed at their convenience as many times as needed.

Karen explained that the first week’s program was devoted to orientation. Among the classes that have been taught were Basic Entomology; Integrated Pest Management; Soils and Fertilizers; Plant Pathology; and Vegetable Gardening. Still to come are Lawn Care; Tree Fruit; Pruning; Tick Safety and Invasive Insects; Flower Gardening; and Houseplants. Instructors are from the NJ Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES).



Karen Riede

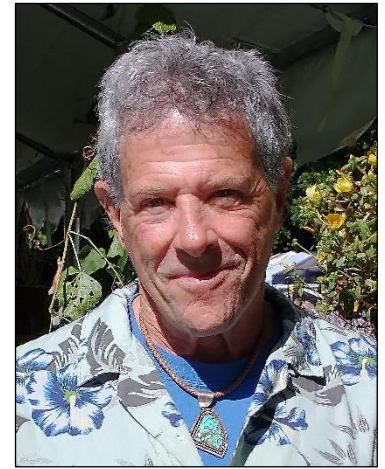
In 2021, the first year of the online pilot program, 12 students from Bergen were enrolled along with students from Passaic and Union counties for a total of 33 students. This year, Burlington County joined Bergen, Passaic, and Union for a total of 114 enrollees.

Karen said she’s been collecting the names of applicants interested in the MG training since 2020. She and Joel Flagler, Bergen County Extension department head and county agricultural agent, interviewed prospective students via conference call.

Back in 2020, a Rutgers MG Coordinator Curriculum Committee, in which Karen participates, was formed to standardize the initial MG training in the 16 counties that have MG programs.

The committee created “modules” for each subject, which students access in the Canvas learning system.

There they find the objectives for each class, pre- and post-class quizzes, factsheets, links, and other resources related to that week’s topic. They’ll also take their midterm and final exam online. Each student will be required to complete an Integrated Pest Management project.



Joel Flagler

Unlike the pre-Covid, in-person MG training program, announcements don’t open each week’s class. Instead, Karen and Joel schedule a monthly Zoom session to provide Bergen-specific information. Joel also teaches two classes: Horticultural Therapy and Basics of Botany and Plant Physiology.

For the group as a whole, Madeline Flahive DiNardo, Union County ag agent, schedules a Zoom session every two weeks to answer questions for the asynchronous learners, although everyone can attend. (Karen also participates.)

Bergen’s Master Gardener program was the first in the state’s 21 counties — in 1984 — under the direction of Ralph Pearson, former Bergen County ag agent. Joel joined the staff in 1987.

Similar to the pre-Covid MG training, Rutgers Cooperative Extension in Bergen County will train one class per year. For 2023, “We hope to return to in-person MG classes,” Karen said.

2022 dues reminder

Your \$20 annual dues are due. If you haven’t paid your dues yet, please visit our [website](#). On the home page, scroll down for the “Renew Your Membership Now” box, where you can click on and print the renewal form with instructions. Future *Potting Sheds* will be delivered only to dues-paying members, MG students, and Lifetime Members.