

From the Potting Shed

Aug. 1, 2024

www.mgofbc.org



For a good time, volunteer at the Butterfly and Native Garden



Photo by Miriam Taub, Class of 2011

Extreme heat doesn't stop volunteering at the Butterfly and Native Garden in Overpeck Park, Leonia. Tammy Laverty, Class of 2015 (left) and Pat Knight (2009) are the site coordinators, and they make sure to enjoy what they're doing even when it's 90 degrees in the shade. Tammy noted that the volunteers have been going "full steam ahead" through the recent heat waves.

See page 5 for Pat's guidelines on how volunteers stay reasonably cool while they work. Volunteering takes place Tuesday from 10 am-1 pm. Contact [Pat](#) or [Tammy](#) for more information.

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

From the President's Desk

By Theresa Schneider, Class of 2016

Good news! After a five-year hiatus, the Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey (RMGANJ) is hosting the Award for Excellence luncheon this fall. Bergen County has an opportunity to submit the names of two Master Gardeners and/or teams for state-level recognition. The RMGANJ stated that for 2024 it would leave the selection criteria up to each county.



Now the challenge: We've got to put a process in place quickly to request and vet nominations. The MG of BC board is working on this, including setting up an awards committee.

To get a jump on this opportunity, I ask that each of you think about a deserving MG or team working at one of our volunteer sites and send [me](#) your thoughts and suggestions. You can also contact [me](#) if you're interested in serving on an awards committee.

Hope you are enjoying a productive yet relaxing summer. See you in September.

Fall MG of BC meetings

Sept. 17, Oct. 15, Nov. 19

VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

An invasive autumn olive met its match with McFaul volunteers

By Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016

Autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) is a highly invasive woody shrub native to eastern Asia. It was introduced into the United States in 1830 as an ornamental that could provide food and habitat for wildlife.

It was previously planted for erosion control on ridges and roadsides by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (now known as the [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)). The leaves of autumn olive are silver colored on the underside, and the stems have sharp spines. The plant has clusters of small cream to yellow flowers in the spring.

The flowers are followed in the fall by numerous small pink to red berries with a silvery sheen that contain a single seed. One autumn olive shrub can produce up to 80 pounds of fruit or a total of 200,000 seeds in a season. The fruits are less nutritious than native species fruits but are readily eaten and widely dispersed by birds and mammals.

Autumn olive very easily outcompetes and displaces native species and can grow in the poorest of soils. It is a nitrogen-fixer: It changes the soil chemistry and can thereby inhibit the growth of native species that require infertile soil. It's fast growing — up to 6 feet in a single season — and can often reach 20 feet tall by 30 feet wide. It also can outcompete native species by shading them out. It leafs out very early in the spring and loses its leaves late in the fall. Altogether, autumn olive is an aggressive plant that has been declared invasive throughout the United States.



Photo by Joseph Cooper

From left, Paul Sisko, Class of 2021, Joseph Cooper (2008), and Melody Corcoran (2016) removing an invasive autumn olive tree at McFaul Environmental Center in May before its seeds developed. Click [here](#) to watch them, along with Ben Weiner (2020), in Joseph's three-minute video of the entire tree removal process.

Autumn olive is difficult to eradicate. Cutting down or burning the shrub is not sufficient to get rid of it. It quickly re-sprouts from the roots. Penn State Extension has detailed [information](#) on effective control methods including:

- Hand-pulling seedlings making sure to remove all of their roots as any remaining roots could re-sprout; and
- Cutting down plants before they fruit and then repeatedly applying an herbicide, such as glyphosate, to the remaining trunk and stems several times from summer to winter.

Volunteer in the Trail Conference's native plant garden

The NY-NJ Trail Conference has scheduled four Habitat Helper workdays in August when MG volunteers can work in the native plant garden at the Trail Conference headquarters, 600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah, and earn volunteer hours.

Click [here](#) to register for any or all of the following volunteer sessions:

- Aug. 6, 9 am-noon;
- Aug. 11, 10 am-1 pm;
- Aug. 18, 9 am-noon; and
- Aug. 25, 10 am-1 pm.

Terry Cohn, Class of 2020, is the site coordinator and will lead the Aug. 6 and Aug. 18 work sessions. Contact [Terry](#) for more information about volunteering in the native plant garden. Bring work gloves, your favorite garden tools, and dress for the weather.

MG OF BC NEWS

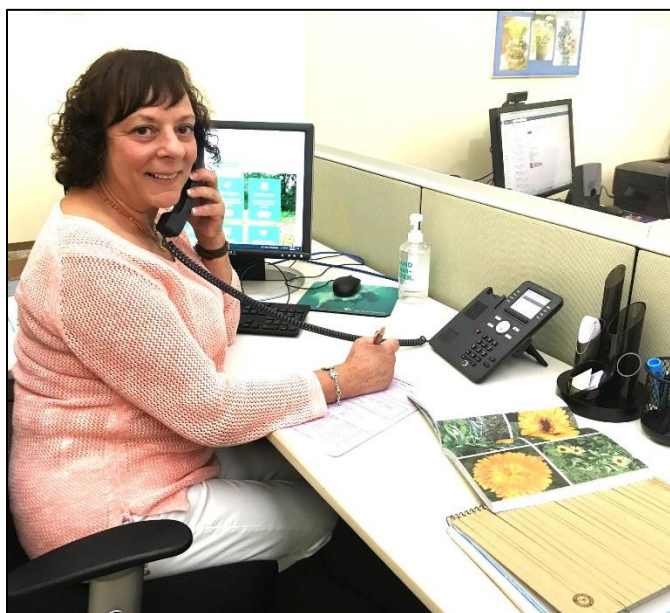


Photo by Karen Riede

Susan Petrillo, Class of 2024, working the hotline.

How are your telephone skills?

By Karen Riede, Class of 2017

The Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) of Bergen County hotline is available Monday and Thursday from 10 am-noon through Thursday, Sept. 25 for all MGs/interns who would like to experience staffing the hotline.

As reported in other counties throughout the state, calls to the MG hotline have decreased, but there are plenty of other activities to take advantage of while staffing the hotline:

- Assist the RCE staff with help needed in the office;
- Learn how to do an effective search for research-based information and resources; and
- Get help with Better Impact, or have your other questions answered.

Please consider volunteering for the hotline. Two volunteers are needed per shift. The RCE office has two computer stations, each with a phone for hotline staff. You're never placed in a situation that you cannot handle. It's appropriate to tell the caller that you'll research the problem and call back. I will help mentor you.

We welcome all MGs/interns to our friendly, pleasant, temperature-controlled office setting on the fourth floor of 1 Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack. If you're an MG or intern and interested in staffing the hotline, call the RCE office at 201-336-6780 to schedule.

Members of the public can call the RCE hotline at 201-336-6783 or 201-336-6784 and leave a message.

Click [here](#) to read a story about the RCE hotline that appeared in *The Record* July 16.

WEBINARS

All times are Eastern.

Aug. 8, 2-3 pm: The Garden Conservancy sponsors A Short History of Flowers: The Stories That Make Our Gardens. Fee: \$5 members; \$15 non-members. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Aug. 13, 1-1:30 pm: Wisconsin Horticulture Extension sponsors Tree Planting 101: Setting Trees Up for Success. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Aug. 22, 11 am-noon: AARP Virtual Community Center sponsors Learn to Grow Roses. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. AARP membership not required.

Aug. 22, 7 pm: Wild Ones sponsors Combating the Biodiversity Crisis with Native Plants. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Bergen County

Joel Flagler	Agricultural/Resources Management Agent/County Extension Dept. Head 201-336-6780
Karen Riede	Horticultural Assistant 201-336-6788

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IN OUR GARDENS

Thanks to Melody Corcoran, Edith Terzano, and Janet Schulz for submitting photos of the goings-on in their gardens.



Jeepers creepers!

By Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016

This creepy fellow, about 1 inch long, was hanging around my back door one afternoon. It's a wasp mantidfly — not a mantid (as in praying mantis) or a wasp — but rather a neuropteran or nerve-winged insect.

Lacewings and antlions are other members of the neuropteran family of insects. They are predators that feed on smaller insects including other mantidflies. Much like a praying mantis, they use their forelegs to grasp their prey as they eat. They also feed on tree sap and nectar.

Wasp mantidflies are also parasitoids of spiders. They lay their eggs on leaves. After hatching, the mantidfly larvae attach themselves to a passing spider, feed on the spider's blood until the spider lays an egg sac, and then invade the egg sac and feed on the spider eggs until they (the mantidflies) pupate. Charming little guys.

Want to know more?

Click on these links for more information and photos of the wasp mantidfly:

- University of Minnesota [Dept. of Entomology](#);
- LSU [College of Agriculture](#); and
- [Northern Woodlands](#) magazine.

The B's have it



A busy bumblebee bumbling about my beautiful bee balm bush. It's a "beee-utiful" thing!

- Edith Terzano, Class of 2018

A black witch moth



Janet Schulz, Class of 1988, found this black witch moth on the bottom of a hay rack window box. Its wingspan can be up to 7 inches. Click on these links for more information and photos:

- [Museum of Natural History](#) at the University of Colorado, Boulder;
- [The Nature Conservancy](#); and
- [University of Wisconsin Milwaukee](#)

(Butterfly Garden, continued from page 1)

Pat offers the following advice for keeping cool:

- Depending on the heat and humidity, we sometimes start earlier in the day, for those who can make it, and we leave before the heat gets too intense.
- Some people are able to weed a bit in the sun earlier in the day before the heat gets too intense and then they move into the shade.
- The garden offers shady areas, and we encourage volunteers to work in the shade.
- Head coverings and comfortable clothing help. Be sure to bring drinking water. (We keep extra bottled drinking water handy.)
- We encourage volunteers to take frequent rest/water breaks in the shady picnic area within the garden.
- Volunteers should leave when they feel they've had enough of the heat.

(Continued in the next column)



Volunteers installed this pond at the Butterfly and Native Garden in the spring. Some of the contents, from left: Pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*) with the arrow-shaped leaves; American white waterlily (*Nymphaea odorata*) with the darker flat, disc-shaped leaves at water level. Behind the waterlily is the light green buckbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) with the three leaflets. The tiny plants that resemble a layer on the water surface are eastern mosquito fern (*Azolla caroliniana*). The last two plants are considered Plants of Concern in New Jersey.

- During this drought someone is usually watering with a hose and, if needed, can get a splash or spray of water to cool off.
- Throughout the garden there are large containers of water for watering plants and for volunteers to splash themselves.

[Editor's note: For information about recognizing and treating heat-related illness, see the attachment titled "Heat-Related Illness" that was sent with the Potting Shed.]

Clethra in bloom



Photo by Harriet Steiner

Karen Shaner and Peter Cammarano, both Class of 2023, admire the clethra in bloom at the Mary S. Topolsky Garden in Teaneck. Last September, they planted 13 of the shrubs, while more recently they weeded and mulched. Volunteers work Thursday from 10 am-1 pm. The garden is located at 640 River Road. Park on Kipp Street. For more information, call Harriet Steiner, Class of 2019 and site coordinator, at 201-741-6756.