

From the Potting Shed

Oct. 14, 2024

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It's 'Leave the Leaves Month'



Bergen Audubon sign

What do *you* do with your leaves? Leave them be? Mulch them? Rake into garden beds? The National Wildlife Federation has designated October as Leave the Leaves Month. Click [here](#) to learn how leaves do good for lawns and wildlife. The biggest no-no: Bagging your leaves.

"I am a huge proponent of leave the leaves," said Bruce Crawford, manager of horticulture, Morris County Park Commission, who also contributes his "Plant of the Month" and "Gardening Notes" to the MG of BC website. "At Willowwood [Arboretum] we leave them. At Frelinghuysen we will start using them as mulch this year or next. It's a process of change."

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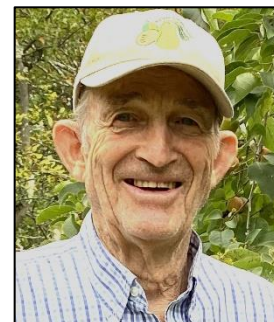
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Meeting news: Tuesday, Oct. 15, 7:20 pm

Charlie West: Persimmons

Dr. Charlie West, retired professor, owner of [West Farm Nursery](#), and lover of persimmons and pawpaws, will discuss — and bring samples of — the American persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) at our October meeting.



Charlie West

"The persimmon is hardy into Zone 5, very easy to grow in backyard/garden situations, requires very little maintenance. No sprays," he wrote in an email. "It's perfect for organic culture. Most of the selected cultivars are self-fertile and will produce fruit without pollination," he added. "The result is mostly seedless fruit. Thus, only one tree is required."



American persimmons: The ruler puts their size into perspective.

MG of BC meetings are free and open to the public in the fourth-floor meeting room, 1 Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack. Park in the garage or on the plaza. Refreshments at 7 pm; announcements at 7:20 pm. Charlie West will follow at about 7:30 pm.

IN OUR GARDENS

Winter care for *Plectranthus*



Here's a closeup of Janet Schulz's *Plectranthus* Mona Lavender while the photo below shows the shrub in relation to her backyard.



Janet, Class of 1988, explained that the plant is a tropical and needs to be brought inside for the winter. She stores hers in an unheated back porch. She planted "Mona" in a 12-inch plastic pot and placed *that* pot in a decorative winter-hardy planter so the planter itself can remain outdoors. For ease of transport, she carries the plastic pot onto the porch for the winter. Using the two-pot system is easier than planting in the spring and digging it up in the fall.

Janet purchased "Mona" this year and offered this advice: The plant blooms only when the days are short, so you'll have to wait until the fall to see this burst of color in your garden. Its stems and backs of the leaves are purple, too. It's native to South Africa, but it sure is pretty.

Paul admits he's full of beans



Paul Sisko, Class of 2021, with beans harvested in September. Behind him, at right, are his raised vegetable beds.

EVENTS, ETC.

Oct. 20, 11-am-12:30 pm: Laurelwood Arboretum, 725 Pines Lake Drive West, Wayne. Growing Native Plants from Seed workshop. Fee: \$10 members; \$20 non-members. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Oct. 25, 9 am-1:30 pm: Rutgers Environmental Steward Impact Summit, Rutgers Eco Complex, 1200 Florence Columbus Road, Fieldsboro. Fee: \$20 includes lunch. This conference is for anyone interested in environmental sustainability, climate change resilience, and volunteerism. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Oct. 28, 6:30 pm: Lyndhurst Garden Club, 250 Cleveland Ave., Lyndhurst. Speaker: Lynne Proskow, Class of 2022. Topic: Gardening in Small Places and Introduction to Self-Watering Containers.

VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

The (one) fruit of her labor



Photo by Tammy Laverty, Class of 2015

Pat Knight, Class of 2009 and site coordinator at the Butterfly and Native Garden in Leonia, proudly points to a fruit on the garden's passion flower vine. Tammy Laverty, who's a site coordinator with Pat, said of the vine: "We had lots of growth, flowers, and some bees but few fruit. So, Pat researched how to pollinate a passion flower. It is an intricate flower, and Pat gave it a try and — viola — the flower she worked on did fruit successfully. Way to go Pat!"

Visit the garden for a talk (Plants for Birds) and a walk Oct. 19 at 10 am when you'll birdwatch and discuss why native plants are so crucial to our bird population. Volunteers will show you what you can plant in your own backyard. Bring your binoculars!

The garden is located in Overpeck Park, 40 Fort Lee Road, Leonia. Park in the lot adjacent to the Bergen Equestrian Center. Walk to the dirt road and follow the signs to the Butterfly Garden.

'Leave the Leaves Month' (Continued from page 1)

"I have a LOT of leaves living on 3½ acres," said Paul Sisko, Class of 2021. "Much of them on driveways, etc., get blown back into the woods. The ones that fall within my gardens are collected and mulched with a machine, which breaks them down to 11 times finer than the original leaf size. I then put them over my raised veggie beds and mix them into the soil."



That's Paul Sisko operating his leaf mulcher. The resulting mulch is deposited into wire bins (below the mulcher) placed around his property.

Arnie Friedman, Class of 2004, who has a landscape design business, noted:

"What we do is grind the leaves on the lawn with our mower and put the ground leaves into the beds. In some of our other beds where we don't mind the mess we just leave the fallen leaves. Doing this has saved me from having to buy mulch for my beds in many years. The leaf litter breaks down slowly enriching the soil and is a great habitat for all sorts of wildlife."

Tammy Laverty, Class of 2015, offered this advice for homeowners with smaller properties. "I gently rake my tiny lawn, walkway, and deck and put the leaves in the beds. In winter, I enjoy the white-throated sparrows doing their little shuffle in the leaves to get a yummy meal. And then in summer I enjoy a nice burst of fireflies after they have overwintered under the leaves."

Coming in November . . .

Details of volunteer "blasts" at the Mary S. Topolsky Garden Nov. 7 and the Teaneck Creek Conservancy Nov. 20. Mark your calendars to spend time outdoors and earn volunteer hours.