

From the Potting Shed

Dec. 1, 2024

www.mgofbc.org



Maria Bushman, Wendy Sowa-Maldarelli, and Lisa Yoler.

Creating a memorable day for Valley Hospital patients

While many of us were busy roasting a turkey or dreaming about enjoying one, sisters Lisa Yoler and Maria Bushman, both from the Class of 2019, spent Thanksgiving morning at Valley Hospital. Wendy Sowa-Maldarelli, Class of 2024, joined them. They engaged patients in a simple craft project to create Thanksgiving pumpkin floral arrangements.

With generous donations from Stew Leonard's, Wegmans, and the MG of BC, Lisa and Maria had all the necessary materials. They coordinated the project with Mary T. McHugh, coordinator of Adult Programming Volunteer Resources, and Kaitlyn Mocerri, manager of Volunteer Resources at Valley Health System.

Inspired by their weekly visits with patients and their families, Lisa and Maria recognized the positive impact that simple acts of kindness can have.

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Holiday party at the Bergen County Zoo

By Chris Kozar, Class of 2020 and Hospitality chair

Just a reminder that the holiday get together is right around the corner, Dec. 10. The MG of BC will provide hot entrees, a salad, and sandwiches. We're asking attendees to each bring a dessert for about four people.



Pixabay photo

We'll meet at the Bergen County Zoo Education Center in Van Saun Park at noon and mingle until about 2 pm. Van Saun Park is located at 216 Forest Ave., Paramus.

We're adding something new: A special addition this year is a gardeners swap/exchange. If you have a tool or book you no longer use, bring it to exchange for another. Tools should be cleaned and sharpened and books in decent condition. If you have a packet of seeds to share, bring it, labeled of course.

If you have not yet RSVP'd for the holiday party, send an email to me immediately at chriskozar@aol.com. See you there!

VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

There was a lot going on at the Hermitage this season

**By Bernadette White, Class of 2021
and site coordinator**

The Hermitage gardens officially closed Nov. 6. We had a great spring and summer, despite the heat. Here are our accomplishments this season:

We expanded the Victorian flower garden. Ed Drennan (2019) widened and erected new posts and fencing with Herb Arbeiter (2019) lending a hand. [Ed is pictured below.] The expanded flower garden is now 15 x 20 feet.

Some of the perennials — iris, phlox, daisy, lavender, and forget-me-not — will be interspersed with biennials (hollyhock, verbena) and annuals (geranium, dahlia). The more flowers, the merrier!



At the Hermitage flower garden: From left: Liz Gil (2019); Wendy Sowa-Maldarelli (2024); Cheryl Wardrop (2018); Nancy Moses (site coordinator with Bernadette White); Herb Arbeiter (2019); Patricia Crossley (2022); Marie Scotti-Bosworth (2023).



Ed Drennan (2019) was definitely hard at work installing fence posts early in the season.

However, our biggest accomplishment was installing new posts and 7-foot fencing around our existing vegetable garden. This was the project of Thomas Tynan, Eagle Scout, with help of his parents, sister, fellow Scouts and MGs Herb Arbeiter (2019), Dan Coviello (2024), Ed Drennan (2019), and Scott Japko (2022).

We cleared a very weedy area — thanks to Wendy Sowa-Maldarelli (2024), Marylou Moravec (2024), and Marie Scotti-Bosworth (2023) — and planted prickly pear cactus, Shasta daisy, blue mist flower, iris, columbine, and monarda. Pawpaw trees will be added in the spring.



At some point, every volunteer must take a break. That's Katherine Montgomery (2023) and Dan Coviello (2024).

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VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

There was a lot going on at the Hermitage this season

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New fencing around the vegetable garden.

We continued expanding flower beds in the front and side areas of the Education Center, which was the handiwork of Cynthia Drennan (2019) and Debra Sweet (2023).

Chris Kozar (2020) continued to work on the pollinator garden by weeding and adding new plants. We re-mulched all the flower beds and the herb garden.

We held two successful plants sales in early June and during the August craft festival.



Scott Japko (2022) and Dan Coviello (2024) installing fence posts.

Our 2025 goals: The maple sugaring event in February will be our first big volunteering event of the 2025 season. Other goals are to sow period-appropriate vegetables and flowers in our new beds and continuing to maintain existing areas.



Cynthia Drennan (2019) wielding the stirrup hoe.

In addition to the regular weekly volunteers [named on page 4], I'd also like to thank Katherine Montgomery (2023); Donna Picheria (2023); Suzy Basu (2023); Joe Gemignani (2024); Scott Japko (2022); Bob Nunes (2023); Susan Petrillo (2024); Penny Readie (2024); Darcy Valenti (2024); Cheryl Wardrop (2018); and Patricia Weiss (2024 for their volunteer hours.

*All photos by
Bernadette White*



Suzy Basu (2023) engaging with the weeds.

VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

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Thank you to all our 2024 volunteers!

Bergen County Zoo

Dan Coviello (2024); Anita Hall-Davis (2022); Sharon LaMonica (2022); Sharon Ma (2018); Marylou Moravec (2024); Dineen Policano (2023).

- Jeffrey Chan (2011), site coordinator

Bergen New Bridge Medical Center

Linda Bourke (2023); Karen Clemments (2022); Donna Faustini (2012); Rose Santos Martinez (2017); Patricia Pacheco (2022); Theresa Schneider (2016); Janet Stofkoper (2023); Janet Troy (2015).

- Lynette Stewart (2017), site coordinator

Butterfly and Native Garden

Peter Cammarano (2023); Terry Campbell (2018); Carol Ennis (2019); Hyo-Jung Kim (2024); Chris Mueller (2015); Anne-Marie Romano (2022); Karen Shaner (2023).

- Pat Knight (2009) and Tammy Lavery (2015), site coordinators

Garretson Forge & Farm

April Barth (2017); Christine Belli (2015); Martha Carlucci (2021); Terry Cohn (2020); Melody Corcoran (2016); Donna Dorgan (2018); Nora Hamawi (2009); Lucy Jickling (2019); Sal Lagattuta (2015); Gimai Ma (2021); Beverly Malabrigo (2023); Jane Nicholson (2017); Barbara Patete (2009); Gary Puzio (2021); Noel Schulz (2016); Janet Stofkoper (2023).

- Lida Gellman (1999), site coordinator

The Hermitage

Herb Arbeiter (2019); Dan Coviello (2024); Patricia Crossley (2022); Cynthia Drennan (2019); Ed Drennan (2019); Liz Gil (2019); Chris Kozar (2020); Marylou Moravec (2024); Mary Orlando (2023);

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Maggie Raywood (2021); Marie Scotti-Bosworth (2023); Wendy Sowa-Maldarelli (2024); Debra Sweet (2022).

- Bernadette White (2021), site coordinator

New Jersey Botanical Garden

Maria Bushman (2019); Elizabeth Choby (1998); Vivian DeMarco (2006); Donna Dorgan (2018); Patricia Klecanda (2023); Ingeborg Langer (1998); Karen Norton (2023); Janet Stofkoper (2023); Patricia Weiss (2024).

- Dania Cheddie (2013), site coordinator

McFaul Environmental Center

Melody Corcoran (2017); Paul Sisko (2021); Ben Weiner (2020).

- Joseph Cooper (2008), site coordinator

Washington Spring Garden

Wendy Bucceri (2022); Dan Coviello (2024); Jeanne Etter (2023); Mike Fioravanti (2024); Joe Gemignani (2024); Chris Kozar (2022).

- Suzanne Danzig (2008) and Janet Stofkoper (2023), site coordinators

Volunteers needed to 'deck the halls'

Dec. 5 will be a busy day at Garretson Forge & Farm as volunteers "deck the halls" of the homestead and grounds in preparation for Dutch Christmas Dec. 7. [See "Events" on page 7.] Volunteers are needed from 10 am-2 pm to decorate the Christmas tree and both fireplace mantels and hang wreaths on outdoor fence railings, the front porch columns, and more.

Hope you can help us get this huge job done. This will be our last Thursday volunteer day for the year. No registration is required. For more information, contact Lida Gellman at lb922@aol.com.

Garretson Forge & Farm is located at 4-02 River Road, Fair Lawn.

- Lida Gellman (1999), site coordinator

CAREERS IN HORTICULTURE

Lisa Yoler's passion for gardening will lead to a new career

By Lisa Yoler, Class of 2019

Have you ever thought of using your knowledge of horticulture to help more than your garden?

Upon graduating as a Master Gardener in 2019, my primary aspirations were to continue my education in the topics we covered in class and further my knowledge and practice in horticultural therapy.

Since its establishment in 1973, the American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA) has been the sole national U.S. organization dedicated to advancing the horticultural therapy profession and promoting the use of horticulture as a therapeutic tool for human well-being. AHTA's mission is to foster the professional development, education, and expertise of horticultural therapy practitioners. [Visit [AHTA](#) to learn more about its initiatives and resources.]

There are two distinct paths for professional development in horticultural therapy, each with its unique focus and requirements:

Horticultural therapist: Horticultural therapists have specialized training and typically hold certification or a degree in horticultural therapy. They have an education in both plant science and human science. They follow a structured, goal-oriented approach to help individuals or groups address specific physical, mental, or emotional needs.

They conduct assessments, set treatment goals, document progress, and work closely with other healthcare professionals. Their approach is similar to other therapies (like occupational or physical therapy), but they use plants and gardening as the primary tools for healing.

Therapeutic horticulture practitioner: Therapeutic horticulture practitioners, on the other hand, may not have formal certification in horticultural therapy, but they are trained in using plants and gardening to enhance well-being. Their focus is generally on the benefits, such as stress relief, social interaction, and mental stimulation, of engaging with plants.



Lisa Yoler in the greenhouse at Bergen Community College.

The approach is more recreational, less clinical, and may not involve individualized assessments or treatment plans. They may work in settings like community centers, senior centers, or schools, where the goal is to support general wellness rather than specific therapeutic outcomes.

My aspiration to become professionally registered as a horticultural therapist is fueled by the exemplary work of professionals like Joel Flagler, Bergen County ag agent, and Theresa Schneider, MG of BC president.

Courses at Rutgers and BCC

The curriculum offered at Rutgers University and Bergen Community College can be a stepping stone toward personal growth, fulfillment, and making a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

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Lisa Yoler: A horticultural therapist in the making

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Rutgers University offers a comprehensive certification in Horticultural Therapy covering a wide range of subjects, including Human Science, Horticulture, and electives, such as General Plant Pathology. The program also includes an internship component providing students with hands-on experience.

For those interested in auditing courses, the Rutgers University Board of Governors offers the [Senior Citizen Audit Program](#), which allows retired NJ residents, age 62 or older, to audit classes on a space-available, non-credit basis. This is an excellent opportunity for lifelong learners to expand their knowledge without the burden of tuition costs.

Bergen Community College offers a variety of psychology, plant science, and horticulture classes. [Click [here](#) for information about tuition and fees.] Bergen County residents who have reached their 65th birthday before the first day of classes are eligible for a tuition waiver through the [Tuition Waiver Registration](#) program.

All tuition-waiver-related registration takes place the day before the start of class and is based on course and seat availability. Students who use a waiver should view the availability of courses in the system before registering. [Click [here](#) for information about the registration calendar and forms.]

To become certified as a horticultural therapist, I needed to complete several undergraduate courses that were not part of my original Bachelor of Science degree. At BCC, I took Developmental Psychology: Lifespan; Abnormal Psychology; Fundamentals of Horticulture; Plant Propagation; Principles of Landscape Design; and People-Plant Relationships.

At Rutgers, I completed the course Horticultural Therapy: Concepts and Skills. In the spring, I plan to take Horticultural Therapy: Techniques and Programming (at Rutgers) and Pest Management in Ornamental Plants (at BCC). Afterward, I will need to complete a 500-hour internship under the guidance of a certified horticultural therapist.

The horticulture classes I take at BCC are with Dr. Steven Fischer. "Doc," who has taught horticulture at BCC since 1978, coordinates all aspects of the program and is its heart and soul. He teaches many courses in the department and is a member of the



"Doc" Steven Fischer and Lisa Yoler in the Bergen Community College greenhouse.

BCC Horticulture Advisory Committee and an adviser to the Board of Directors of the New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association (NJLCA).

Gardening while helping others

Pursuing a career in horticultural therapy offers a unique opportunity to blend a passion for gardening with the desire to help others. Through programs and resources provided by institutions like Rutgers and BCC, aspiring professionals can gain the necessary knowledge and skills to impact the well-being of individuals and communities.

The journey to becoming a certified horticultural therapist is a personal path of growth and learning and a way to contribute to the healing power of nature.

Whether through structured therapeutic programs or engaging recreational activities, the potential to enhance lives through horticulture is vast and rewarding. I am excited to continue this journey and inspire others to explore the transformative effects of working with plants and the outdoors.

A man and his wreath



Photo by Miriam Taub, Class of 2011

Bill Hoffman, Class of 2024, left November's MG of BC meeting with one fewer holiday decoration to buy. He "won" the wreath created by speaker Thomas Cawley during his demonstration of floral design for the holidays. Attendees wrote their names on slips of paper, deposited them into a pail, and Thomas chose Bill's name at random.

(Valley Hospital, continued from page 1)

More than 55 patients from the cardiac, pulmonary, ICU, oncology, maternity, and geriatrics departments enjoyed a few hours of entertainment during a holiday filled with mixed emotions and yearning to be part of the joyful world outside the hospital walls. "It was amazing; we received such a great response from patients," Lisa said. "There were lots of hugs and tears." Maria added: "Seeing the smiles on their faces made everything worthwhile."

With Valley's approval, Lisa and Maria are determined to continue the project for the December holidays and beyond. Lisa's pursuit of a career as a horticultural therapist underscores her commitment to this cause.

[See pages 5-6 for the story of Lisa's journey to become a horticultural therapist.]

WEBINARS

All times are Eastern.

Dec. 4, 5-6 pm: AARP Virtual Community Center sponsors Holiday Sneak Peek: The Magic of a Longwood Christmas. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Dec. 4, 7-8 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors Know Your Natives: Winter Wanderings. Fee: \$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Dec. 11, 5-6 pm: AARP Virtual Community Center sponsors Phipps Conservatory's Winter Flower Show. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Dec. 14, 10-11:30 am: Penn State Extension sponsors Good Gardening Saturday: The Story is in the Seed. Fee: \$5. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

EVENTS

Holiday Open House at Skylands

Dec. 5-8, 10 am-4 pm: See how the MG of BC Holiday Open House team applied their creative skills to the Withdrawing Room and Octagonal Hall based on this year's HOH theme of A Gilded Age Holiday. Click [here](#) for ticket information. The GPS address is Morris Road, Ringwood.

Dutch Christmas at Garretson Forge & Farm

Dec. 7, 10 am-4 pm: Visit the homestead all decked out and festive. A holiday sale will include craft and honey vendors, gift shop items, hand-crafted wreaths, and baked goods. Sinter Klass will greet guests by the fireplace.



Sinter Klass arrives at Garretson Farm Dec. 7.

Admission is free; donations are welcome. The address is 4-20 River Road, Fair Lawn.