

# From the Potting Shed

March 16, 2025

[www.mgofbc.org](http://www.mgofbc.org)



Lynne Proskow near the Long Pond Ironworks.

## Lynne Proskow: MG activist is among the 2025 Environmental Steward trainees

[Editor's note: Lynne Proskow, Class of 2021, has taken her horticultural training to the next level. She's enrolled in the 2025 Rutgers Environmental Steward program. Here Lynne describes the program and her reasons for enrolling. Lynne is a member of the MG of BC Speakers Bureau.]

### By Lynne Proskow

The Rutgers Environmental Steward (RES) [program](#) trains volunteers on important environmental issues in New Jersey and how they can make a difference. Stewards learn how to help advance sustainable climate-change solutions in their own lives and in their communities.

RES is a certificate program offered through Cooperative Extension, a unit of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station. The program runs from January-May.

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## Meeting news: Tuesday, March 18, 7:15 pm

### Ruth Carll Perennials, Annuals, and Ornamentals in the Landscape

We're meeting in person once again. This month's MG of BC meeting is Tuesday, March 18 at 1 Bergen County Plaza, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Hackensack. Refreshments are available at 7 pm, announcements at 7:15 pm, and speaker Ruth Carll will follow.

Ruth is the state leader for Rutgers Consumer Horticulture. She will discuss how perennials, annuals, and ornamental plants can enhance the landscape. Ruth will share "do" and "don't" examples and the process for selecting the right plants for the right locations.

Here Ruth answers some questions for the Potting Shed.

*My yard contains mature plants, but it needs a refresh. Where do I begin? How do I work with what I have?*

This is a great question. It is the common cry for help that prompted me to develop this particular talk. When we purchase a home, it often comes with a tired landscape. Or, you may be looking to make changes to solve issues with your existing landscape.

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## MG OF BC NEWS

### 22 MGs to receive service pins

Recognition pins for members who completed five, 10, 15, and 25 years of service will be awarded to the following MGs at our March 18 meeting. Pins will be mailed to recipients who don't attend the meeting. Congratulations to all service pin recipients!



#### Five-year service pin:

Herb Arbeiter, Maria Bushman, Terry Campbell, Donna Dorgan, Elizabeth Gil, Debbie Higgins, Keith Mazanec, Caroline Newman, Cheryl Wardrop, and Lisa Yoler.

**10-year service pin:** Jeffrey Chan, Dania Cheddie, Nora Hamawi, Josie Ko, Paula Leibowitz, and Susan Sheridan.

**15-year service pin:** Joseph Cooper, Suzanne Danzig, Pat Knight, Barbara Patete, and Barbara Pisacane.

**25-year service pin:** Elizabeth Choby.

### Reminder: Have you paid your dues?

#### By Dineen Policano, Membership chair

It's not too late to renew your MG of BC membership for 2025. Please make your \$20 check payable to the MG of BC and mail to: Master Gardeners of Bergen County, PO Box 824, Saddle River, NJ 07458. Donations are always welcome. If you would like to make a donation along with your membership dues, please indicate "2025 dues plus donation" in the check's memo line.

To ensure we have up-to-date contact information for you:

- Click [here](#) to fill out the MG of BC Membership Renewal form online. Reminder: If you complete the online form, you still need to mail your check to the above address.
- Or, if you'd prefer, print and complete the Renewal Form sent with this issue of the Potting Shed, and enclose it with your check.

### Armchair tour of Greenwood Gardens



Photo by Joseph Cooper

Joseph Cooper has given us a 4½-minute [video tour](#) of Greenwood Gardens, Short Hills. Greenwood Gardens has something for everyone: Stone, statuary, pools, pergolas, and plenty of plantings on 28 acres. The gardens open for the season May 2. Visit the [website](#).

### Reminder: Keep your hours current

#### By Suzanne Danzig, Volunteer Records chair

Warmer weather and sunshine are the formula for enjoying the outdoors again. As more of our volunteer sites come out of their hibernation period let me remind you to stay current with logging your volunteer hours on Better Impact.

I know I sound like a broken record, but it really is so much easier to enter your hours as you go rather than trying to remember where you were and for how long a month or two or three later.

For our newly certified members, you will find a list of our volunteer sites along with their hours and site coordinators on our [website](#), so please check it out. (Some sites haven't opened for the season yet.)

I am always available should you have any questions regarding Better Impact. Send your questions to me at [suzannedanzig@gmail.com](mailto:suzannedanzig@gmail.com). I look forward to seeing you at our wonderful sites.

## VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS



That's Janet Stofkoper in the background and Suzanne Danzig with her back to the camera.

### **Washington Spring Garden opens April 3**

**By Suzanne Danzig and Janet Stofkoper, site coordinators**

With great enthusiasm, we announce the spring gardening season at Washington Spring Garden, which will begin Thursday, April 3, weather permitting. Our hours are 8:30 am-12:30 pm. However, we welcome any time that you can provide during these hours.

Washington Spring Garden is located within Van Saun Park, 216 Forest Ave., Paramus. Parking Lot 6 is closest to the entrance of this idyllic enclosure, and our meeting place is the brick-walled patio to the right of the path.

Please bring your favorite hand tools, water, and gloves. The park provides barrels, rakes, and other heavier equipment. We anticipate a very exciting season this year as Van Saun will host a Fall Pumpkin Festival in October and the Bergen County Parks Department will work with us over the summer to install new plantings and perform major landscaping projects and other activities to welcome visitors, making the garden an even more desirable destination. We look forward to seeing you April 3!

Contact us for more information: Suzanne Danzig, [suzannedanzig@gmail.com](mailto:suzannedanzig@gmail.com), 201-218-4093; Janet Stofkoper, [janet.stofkoper@gmail.com](mailto:janet.stofkoper@gmail.com), 201-403-1044.

### **Volunteers needed for Teaneck Creek's cleanup March 22 in the Peace Labyrinth**

Teaneck Creek Conservancy needs a few more volunteers to clean up the Peace Labyrinth (its native plant garden) Saturday, March 22 from 1-3 pm. This will be the first cleanup of the season, so be prepared to rake.

Bring hand tools, gloves, sunscreen, bug spray, and water. Teaneck Creek Conservancy will supply large tools as needed. Dress appropriately for the weather. The address is 20 Puffin Way, Teaneck. Meet in the parking lot at 1 pm. The Peace Labyrinth is a five-minute walk.

Click [here](#) to register so you can be contacted if the event is canceled due to extreme weather. Rain date is March 29 from 1-3 pm.

### **Butterfly garden is open!**

Join MG and Bergen Audubon volunteers at the Butterfly and Native Garden in Overpeck Park, 40 Fort Lee Road, Leonia. The garden is located behind the Bergen Equestrian Center.



Site coordinator  
Tammy Laverty at the  
Butterfly Garden last  
August.

Volunteers undertook a heavy-duty cleanup recently and the site is now officially open for the season. Volunteers meet Tuesdays from 10 am-1:30 pm.

Work involves controlling invasive plants, weeding, digging, watering, and planting. Bring hand tools, bug spray, gloves, sun protection, and water. Wear sturdy shoes and long trousers tucked into socks.

First-time volunteers, please contact one of the site coordinators for parking instructions. The site coordinators are Pat Knight, [gspmk@hotmail.com](mailto:gspmk@hotmail.com), 201-848-0069, and Tammy Laverty, [dwd12345@gmail.com](mailto:dwd12345@gmail.com), 201-449-9092.

# RUTGERS ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARD PROGRAM

*(Continued from page 1)*

## **Lynne Proskow: Environmental Steward trainee**

Joining this program has been one of my goals for years because I have been an environmental activist since 1970 with the very first Earth Day celebration. Even though we live in the most densely populated state, New Jersey has a rich ecology and it's worth protecting what we still can.

Every day I see more habitat loss due to construction so, for me, trying to get others to see the beauty of nature and the importance of preserving and enhancing biodiversity for the health of this planet is of primary importance. If we value nature and the ecosystem services it provides, we will find a way to protect and care for it.

I hope to educate young people by getting them out in nature to explore, expand their knowledge, and enable them to create change in their communities. This program will give me a greater understanding of the threats we face and what we can do to mitigate them. These [threats] include global warming, environmental pollution, coastal flooding, stormwater management, invasive species, habitat loss and restoration, food waste, environmental justice issues, and pollinator conservation to name just a few topics covered in these classes; all are taught by experts in their fields.

In my life, I try to practice permaculture principles, which invite me to take responsibility and take action for the things I care about and find solutions where I can make a difference. Even small steps can make a difference.

First off, know that you do not need a science background to take this program. There are so many different ways to engage with the RES program. You can design your own project based on your interests. However, the 60-hour project must be approved by the regional coordinators.

In the fall, there's an Impact Summit where [projects](#) are presented to current class participants, alumni, community leaders, and members from across the state to foster greater environmental resilience.

This is an opportunity to see the variety of creative solutions being implemented to solve environmental issues at the local level.

There is a data base of past projects, so you can see what stewards in the past have worked on to give you some ideas. My only problem with the classes so far is that they take place on Tuesday evenings, so I will miss several months of MG meetings.



**Lynne Proskow**

It's very encouraging to me that this cohort is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary class, and 1,300 students have already taken the training, and most have accomplished projects all around our state.

## **More about RES . . .**

Amy Rowe, the RES coordinator for Bergen, Essex, Passaic, and Hudson counties, noted that more than 30 Bergen County residents have taken the RES program since the program began in 2005. "Yes, we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the program this year," Amy wrote in an email, adding that there are close to 100 people in this year's class representing 20 counties and three people are from Bergen County.

"Taking the RES program is an effective way to incorporate sustainability and environmental protection into the work volunteers are doing as Master Gardeners," Amy wrote. "The program helps Extension volunteers make better decisions when it comes to how human activities impact the environment and how to advise the public on best practices for reducing climate change impacts, protecting water quality, biodiversity, soil health, solid waste management, and many other topics that Master Gardeners may need to deal with when engaging with the public."

## MEETINGS/LIBRARY EVENTS

**March 19, 7:30 pm:** Garretson Forge & Farm, 4-02 River Road, Fair Lawn. Speaker: Tony Bracco, [Bracco Farms](#). Topic: After the Harvest - Methods for Preserving Your Crops.

**March 26, 7 pm:** **Glen Rock Library**, 315 Rock Road, Glen Rock. Speaker: MG Robyn Lowenthal. Topic: Wellness in the Garden.

**March 30, 1:30 pm:** **Old Tappan Public Library**, 56 Russell Ave, Old Tappan. Speaker: MG Lynne Proskow. Topic: A Natural Journey, Bee-ing Curious, and Enjoying Herbs.

**April 3, 7 pm:** **Garden Club of Hackensack**, Hackensack Recreation Building, 116 Holt St., Hackensack. Speaker: MG Robyn Lowenthal. Subject: Container Vegetable Gardening.

**April 3, 7:30 pm,** **Garden Club of Harrington Park**, upstairs in the Harrington Park Library, 10 Herring St., Harrington Park. Workshop leader: Gerri Gibney, club president. Topic: Florals for Spring - Supermarket Style (a workshop). Click [here](#) to visit the club's website for details and how to register.

**April 4, 1:30 pm:** **Demarest Garden Club**, United Methodist Church at Demarest, 109 Hardenburgh Road, Demarest. Speaker: Marc Gussen, naturalist at the Closter Nature Center. Topic: Botany.

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### *(Ruth Carll, continued from page 1)*

Great gardens start before we ever pick up a shovel. During my talk, we will explore the four "Ps" that you need to consider before you begin: Purpose, plants, placement, and planning.

*I want to be sensitive to the environment, etc., but non-natives are so much prettier than native plants. How do I resolve this dilemma?*

There is a common misunderstanding that "native equals good and non-native equals bad." This is not the case. While we want to include native plants for many reasons, there are also valid reasons for including non-native plants as well. The difference is in purpose. We want to include native plants for broad purposes such as preservation of our local botanical heritage and ensuring local wildlife has the plants required for healthy living.

The reasons for including non-native plants are usually the opposite in scale. Instead of a broad environmental need, it is often more focused, such as filling a niche need with a specific plant. We will discuss this facet of planting-with-purpose during the presentation.

### *What's your opinion on getting rid of lawns?*

Alternative lawns aren't for everyone. I have a moss/thyme/oxalis lawn and while I love it, it in no way meets the need for a perfect, uniform lawn. I prefer this strategy as the lawn is maintenance-free, perennial, and blooms. However, it has its downtime as well, and thyme can be hard to get established. I'm happy to share information about this combination of alternative lawn. The look, however, is a personal choice.



*Photo by Paul Sisko*

One of many views of Paul Sisko's garden in 2024.

### **MG gardens on display**

The gardens of three MG of BC members will be on display this year as part of the 2025 Garden Conservancy's [Open Days](#) program. All three have generously agreed that MG of BC members can attend these Open Days at no cost. Here are the dates/times. We'll provide addresses in a future Potting Shed. Meanwhile, save these dates:

- Janet Schulz, Wyckoff: May 17, 10 am-4 pm;
- Noel Schulz, Waldwick: May 17, 10 am-4 pm; and
- Paul Sisko, Mahwah: June 28, 10 am-3 pm and Sept. 13, 10 am-3 pm.