

Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

Minutes of April 4, 2017 RMGANJ Meeting

Jane Gardner welcomed the group. Terry Zane called the meeting to order at 10:06 am. The following new State Representative was introduced: Roberta Quinn from Ocean County who will be their new alternate delegate.

Minutes from December 6, 2016 Meeting: A motion was tendered and members unanimously voted to accept the minutes as submitted with one spelling change.

Attendance:

Atlantic:	Mary Lou Monihan
Bergen:	Joseph Cooper, Carolyn Gretchen, Karen Pennell
Burlington:	Terry Zane, Marilyn Bidrawn
Camden:	Diane Shonyo
Cumberland:	Carol Henry
Essex:	Jane Kinkle, David Haines
Hunterdon:	Tricia Deering
Mercer:	Betty Scarlata, Bob Robinson
Middlesex:	Jerri Barclay, Dale Duchai
Monmouth:	Karen Poorwin, Gayle Williams
Morris:	Carla Schan
Ocean:	Suzanne Keane, Roberta Quinn
Passaic:	Barbara Cook, Darlene Norwak
Somerset:	Linda Madretzke
Sussex:	Jane Gardner, Pat Schanzlin
Union:	Dolores Batz-Culp, Carol Hannemann,
Rutgers University:	Nick Polanin

TREASURER'S REPORT: Pat Schanzlin reported a balance of \$10,626.08. This amount is still unconfirmed with the new Rutgers financial system. A motion was made to accept the Treasurer's Report and was seconded. The motion carried.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Terry Zane reported that she did not have anything new to report

MASTER GARDENERS COORDINATORS REPORT: Nick Polanin reported that Rutgers Gardens is being awarded Horticultural Landmark status by the American Society for Horticultural Science.

Nick reported on the March 20 coordinators meeting. He met Belinda Chester, the new Atlantic County coordinator and Angela Monaghan, the coordinator from Middlesex County, at the meeting. Dan Kluchinski was not in attendance as he is undergoing treatment.

The coordinators reviewed the National Standards for Master Gardeners. They are broad in scope and are published in the February 2015 issue of the Journal of Extension:

<https://www.joe.org/joe/2015february/iw1.php>. Nick reported that he is still waiting on Atlantic and Mercer for Annual Report information. He asked the county representatives to please follow-up with their coordinators. He also reported that there has been some discussion among the faculty about the use of Sakai. The feeling is that it is underused and could be eliminated. A survey was sent out on non-classwork use of Sakai, which Nick replied to for RMGANJ.

There was also discussion about the possibility of standardizing statewide Master Gardener volunteer hours reporting using an online system. Each individual master gardener would post their own hours using a system such as Better Impact, Inc. (previously known as Volunteer Squared), as an example.

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Nick provided an update on Youth Protection. Monmouth County is leading the way due to their Junior Master Gardener program. They have worked through the online program. The video is not yet available separate from the training web site for those who are not required to complete the entire program.

He reported that updates to the native plant and community gardens programs are available. Various locations for training in 2017 for these programs are being considered.

Nick reported that the coordinators have started moving forward with updating Policies and Procedures. Two sub-committees were formed: Curriculum and Policies and Procedures. Two RMGANJ members have volunteered to be on the committee: Terry Zane and Mary Lou Monihan.

Old Business:

Updates to the Bylaws of the Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey were discussed. A motion was made to accept the changes with the following additions: 1) add the date, time and page number as a footer and 2) add "to be posted on the designated website" to Article IV, Section 2D. The motion passed. Terry Zane asked the members to remember that the Bylaws need to be reviewed and updated every odd year.

Jane Gardner reported that no progress has been made on the Conference Evaluation Survey which would be done through the Rutgers Survey System, Qualtrics. Jane will re-forward the survey to Nick Polanin who is responsible for next steps. The end of April was set as a deadline to get the survey online. It will go to all certified NJ Master Gardeners to find out how to attract more attendees to the conference. Nick has email access to the coordinators and the RMGANJ group. Coordinators will need to send the survey to their counties with sufficient time to respond. The survey completion deadline should be no later than May 31. RMGANJ members should encourage their coordinators to send it out in a timely manner. Nick's administrative assistant will enter responses for those who do not have email. Jane Gardner will put together a schedule for the survey implementation.

New Business:

Refreshments: Thank you to Passaic for their hospitality. Cumberland County will host in May.

Conference 2017: A contract with OPEC was arranged for the Conference for Saturday October 7, 2017. The costs are the same as in 2016: \$1375 for the first 174 attendees and \$5 per person for each additional person. Registration will be launched towards the end of June. Terry Zane proposed keeping the cutoff date open until 4 days before the conference which is when the final numbers are due to catering. She would like to eliminate late fees. Last year there was a late fee which we ended up waiving because of a combination of system problems and because we had not met our target number of attendees. The price will be the same as last year. An early registration discount was suggested instead of a late fee and will be considered. Another suggestion was to send out an additional (August) reminder email.

It was mentioned that there needs to be a contact person if someone is having trouble with the online registration system. Nick reported that the contact person is Dalyyn Knigge. Her name/number/email will be included on the registration form as the contact person.

It was pointed out that we need to decide on a name for the Conference. Terry Zane asked Monmouth County to come up with a fun/creative suggestion at the next meeting.

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There was a question on why the conference is in October. Discussion followed on different options for the conference to attract more participants ranging from a date change to a location change to video locations. The video location could be a live feed as an option in a southern location or after the fact taped versions. Discussion followed regarding the need to cover costs for the base conference and additional video costs. It was also suggested that education hours may be an issue – only 3.5 hours of CEUs for an all-day conference. Perhaps the recognition presentations should count to CEUs. Many of these issues are covered in the survey. Jane Gardner will review the survey to see if, considering the discussion, more questions should be added. It was reported that there used to be two conferences: Spring and Fall. Spring was less formal, always at a different place and sponsored by a county. The spring conference was not the RMGANJ responsibility. It was decided to table the conversation until the survey results are compiled.

Caring and Sharing: It was reported that the National Wildlife Federation has a monarch habitat program called the Mayor's Monarch Pledge. Information about the program is available on the NWF Website.

Nick Polanin also reported that this is National Volunteer month. It is a good time to provide special recognition to county volunteers.

BREAK: Thanks to Passaic County for the refreshment set-up for this meeting.

COUNTY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

Atlantic –It was a quiet month of March for the Atlantic County Master Gardener projects due to inclement weather after a mild winter. Ironic.

Our members gave a few talks and the projects are slowly but surely re-grouping.

We did not have a speaker for our monthly meeting and there were no trips planned.

Our plant sale plans are coming along for the month of May 2017.

The best and biggest news is that we finally have a part-time coordinator, a Master Gardener, Belinda Chester. She is funded by a grant by Atlantic County, for 18 hours per week. Her official Rutgers title is "Professional/Research/Manager Horticulture.

Belinda attended her first coordinators meeting in March 2017. We have a small class of 12 that will be finishing in May and 2 previous Master Gardeners have returned, taking their classes and resuming their volunteer hours.

Thanks to Belinda, we are restarting our project at the Pleasantville Main Street School. The school has received a grant for a greenhouse and we will be expanding the program from a mainly spring project to almost year-round. We will be also expanding the program with Master Gardener talks to students as well as "hands on" projects and offering education to their parents as well. We will be donating the food during the summer to the families who participate in the program/school.

Bergen – Our February guest speaker, Anthony Bracco, from Bracco Farms went from a Graphic designer to hobby farmer to full-fledged farmer. This all came to about by the momentum of the food movement. He shared his methods of farming, including safe seed sources, sustainable methods; tools and implements; and how to translate these to backyard gardens. His farm operated as a CSA subscriptions, a farm stand and supplier for many farm-to-table eateries and chefs

The Helpline has begun and is available Monday through Thursday mornings from now to October.

The Hermitage Museum and the Hermitage Master Gardeners held a maple-tapping event in February. About 15 trees were tapped on the grounds of the National Historic Landmark in Ho-Ho-Kus.

Garretson Farm kicked off the spring season with its annual Pea Day planting in March. Regular volunteering also began on Mar 23rd. Bergen County beekeepers and the founders of We Believe spoke on the importance of beekeeping in NJ and how to begin in your own backyard.

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NJBG is very busy with Skyland Manor Tours, End-of Winter Tree Walk, Family Woodland Hike. Don Torino from the Audubon society did a presentation on creating a backyard wildlife habitat that welcomes birds, butterflies and wildlife into your garden.

Theilke Arboretum held its seasonal Weed Warrior Day stewardship project this past Sunday. Local expert Elaine Silverstein and other knowledgeable volunteers shared their wisdom on weeds and invasive plants.

Trips and Tours: Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture Blue Hill Farm.

3 Farmers helped create the philosophical and practical framework for the Center. A working four-season farm and educational center 30 miles North of New York City. They help guide the mission to create a consciousness about the effect of everyday food choices

Burlington –

Projects:

Butterfly Garden at Smith Woods

The team scanned the ten plots and discovered that some of the perennials are appearing - yarrow, chives and parsley. The debris was raked and seaweed removed. The compost pile was turned and aerated. Soil samples were collected for pH testing.

Donation Garden at Medford Leas

The team started about 15 flats of warm season seeds. They are germinating in our members' homes where it is nice and warm. When it warms up, they will be moved to our unheated greenhouse and then to the garden. Several flats of cold season plants have been started in the greenhouse. Peas and some potatoes have been started in the garden. Garden cleanup is underway and plans for this season have been made. This year's education focus will be "weed control". Different mulches, ground covers, and even organic Preen will be tested. New members are being recruited and are not required to be master Gardeners.

IPM and Demonstration Plots at BCCAC

The team began the work on the demo plots early March; at the present team meetings are held every two weeks. Depending on the weather, weekly gatherings will resume. Plans for the demo plots this year, include: Herbs, new strawberry plants, tomatoes and tomatillos, sun hemp, flax, black oil sunflowers, nyger and white proso millet. The five raised beds will be planted with annuals and the kitchen garden will remain a source of fresh herbs and demonstration of tomatoes growing in a cage around a compost tube. The team is very excited with the projects for the new season.

PPA

The group met March 28th to review and plan for the 2017 season. PPA provided a thank you luncheon and we were given a tour of the remodeled barn and plans to landscape the new visitors' entrance area.

Rancocas Nature Center

The team had a 3-hour garden planning meeting with Mary Belko, our coordinator at the Rancocas Nature Center. Weeds were cleaned out of the Children's garden beds and mulch added to the paths with the help of Moorestown Friends School (60) eighth graders. The team also talked about gardening and chores while they worked. The students helped rake the driveway gravel out of the pollinator bed and mulched around the goldfish pond. Official work days start in April.

Articles published in the *Burlington County Times* Master Gardeners Journal:

- March 8, 2017. "Selecting the right seeds for your garden" by Judy Janas

Presentations given:

- March 1, 2017, Meredith Bogert presented "Plants for Shade" at the Moorestown Library

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- March 16, 2017, Meredith Melendez, Agricultural Agent, Mercer County, presented “Food Safety in the Garden” to the Master Gardeners

Camden – Demo Garden: Continue planning sessions on the new demonstration gardens. The committees have selected plant material, plant dates and hardscape features (shed, fencing, electrical needs and water lines). The Green Fair is set for all day Saturday May 6. The Green Fair will have various vendor booths, demonstrations for the children on flower planting, and vegetables and herbs for sale by our greenhouse committee. Our plant diagnostic committee will help consumers id any issues with their spring planting and our feature speaker will be Mike McGrath from the PBS station in Philadelphia. Our fair will be located on our grounds at our Camden County Environmental Building. The new intern class of 15 is finishing their classes in two weeks. They will then be trained in the helpline and can start working with certified master gardeners on our various projects. Our community outreach committee has begun booking various venues for us to be at. These include talks, demonstrations and information talks at fairs, libraries and farmer’s markets. The greenhouse committee meets weekly and are finished seeding the next vegetables and herb crop. These plants will be sold at the May Fair or used in our demonstration garden beds. Our last speaker at our March 26 General Meeting featured a talk by our master gardener Linda Hurd on monarch butterflies. Linda is a pollinator garden expert and works with various libraries on pollinator gardens.

Cumberland – Our propagation team continues @ the RAREC farm with 4 greenhouses full & plenty of Rutgers 250 tomatoes that will be for sale at our plant sale May 6th at Wheaton Arts Eco Fair. Cleanup has started on our pollinator & rain gardens. Three of our MG’S have been working with the Parks & Recreation Dept. giving 3 classes about Community Gardening. This will be fulfilling their obligation for a grant from Millville Community Sustainable Jersey Grant. Also, one of the Master Gardeners had an article published in the local paper about the advantages of CSA’s.

Essex – Programs during the Month of April or before:

- On Saturday April 29th at 10:00 AM we have scheduled our third session of “Let’s Talk Vegetable Gardening” at The Teaching Garden located behind the Walther House at Presby Memorial Iris Garden 474 Upper Mountain Ave., Upper Montclair, NJ. This session will focus on topics such as spring crops, planting tender vegetables and succession planting.
- The first talk for the Teaching Garden, Let’s Talk Vegetable Gardening Series, was held on Wednesday March 22, 2017 at 7:00 PM. At Maplewood Arts Center, 1978 Springfield Avenue, Maplewood, NJ 07040. This session focused on seed starting, succession planting, three season gardening, companion plants, and space allocation, everything you need to plan you garden for the season. Over 18 people (Master Gardeners and others) attended.

The second talk, Container Vegetable Gardening, was held on Saturday March 25, 2017 at 10:00 AM. At Garibaldi Hall, 621A Eagle Rock Avenue, Roseland, NJ 07068. This class introduced novice and experienced gardeners alike to the benefits and techniques of growing vegetables in containers. Over 18 people (Master Gardeners and others) attended.

Workshops during April and Beyond:

HORTICULTURE WORKSHOPS FOR SENIORS:

Our latest program on March 20, the first day of Spring, was assisted by our wonderful dedicated volunteers. Our first activity was a terrific power point dedicated to the Philadelphia Flower Show and the many blooms of the spring season. Florence Rollino opened the program by reciting a poem with a Spring theme. We are proud of one guest who is 100 years old, brought by her daughter and they are very happy to participate in our program.

Our dedicated volunteers helped our guests plant three different kinds of bulbs: daffodils, grape hyacinths and crocus.

ALL PROGRAMS TAKE PLACE ON MONDAYS, 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M.

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GARIBALDI HALL, 621A EAGLE ROCK AVE., ROSELAND
PROGRAMS ARE FREE.

- APRIL 17 - SPRING BLOOMERS (reserve by April 11)
- MAY 22 - WHAT GROWS TOGETHER IN YOUR GARDEN (reserve by May 16)
- JUNE 19 - ENJOYING SUMMER IN THE GARDEN (reserve by June 13)

Trips during April and Beyond:

- Mt. Cuba Center in Hockessin, Delaware on Wednesday April 26th.
- New York Botanical Garden, Chihuly Exhibit, September 15, 2017, "Artworks by world-renowned artist Dale Chihuly will be on view at NYBG in his first major garden exhibition in New York in more than ten years." Dot Kamphausen is organizing a docent tour of the exhibit on September 15th. Carpool and pay as you enter with the group.

Projects during April and Beyond:

- **Branch Brook Park - Cherry Tree Pruning Team.** Meets weekly to prune historical collection of 5000 cherry trees.
- **Branch Brook Park -Prudential Concert Grove** (Southern Section). We weed, prune, transplant and plant perennials and shrubs.
- **Brookdale Park Pruning** —ongoing pruning of Trees.
- **Education Outreach** - Projects in schools.
- **Giving Garden** - an *A Lot to Grow* community garden that grows produce for the food pantries and soup kitchens in the Nutley area.
- **Glenmont Project** - Thos. Edison Nat'l. Historical Park in West Orange.
- **The Greenhouse** - for those that want to transplant and water.
- **Grounds At Roseland** - to help maintain and beautify.
- **GROW Community Out-reach Program** – 3-4 Sessions a year, half-day long, recent Graduates become involved.
- **Helpline** - volunteer
- **Horticulture for Seniors** - meets monthly with seniors.
- **Integrity House (Secaucus)** - guide recovering substance dependent people with growing vegetables that supplement the kitchen.
- **Pollinator Garden** - In Brookdale Park
- **Rose Garden** - in Brookdale Park
- **Speakers Bureau** is part of our community out-reach. Choose a topic of interest and become an active speaker.
- **The Teaching Garden** - At Presby Iris Garden

Events during April and Beyond:

- Our Greenhouse is now open. It's that time of year to begin propagation of mother plants for our Annual Plant Sale on Friday and Saturday May 5 and 6 at Presby Iris Gardens in Montclair. As well as Saturday May 13 at Garibaldi Hall in Roseland.
- April 29 Earth Day at the Essex County Environmental Center

Speakers at Our Monthly Meeting during April:

- At our next meeting on April 8th at 9:30 A.M., our speaker will be:
Melanie Macchio, from the Central Park Conservancy
Melanie Macchio is an architectural historian and tour guide and currently serves as the Director of Park Information Resources at the Central Park Conservancy. She coordinates research resources and works with teams across the organization to develop a myriad of interpretive materials for the public. Prior to joining the Conservancy, Ms. Macchio worked as the Senior Project Manager for The Cultural Landscape Foundation, a national non-profit organization

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dedicated to connecting people and places through stewardship education. Ms. Macchio has a Master of Arts degree in Cultural Resource Management from the University of California, Riverside, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Lake Forest College in Illinois.

Hunterdon – Hunterdon County's Helpline started for the season on Monday April 3. Our upcoming speaker is Dr Sybil Gotsch speaking on Climate Change and the Cloud Canopy. The newly formed Garden Bus Trips team has scheduled it's first trip to Longwood Gardens in May. Our Newsletter started a new column called Garden Structures with articles about making things for the garden such as waist high raised beds or screening. Programs continue at the Hunterdon Care Center, Whitehouse School, the Presentation Team, Hunterdon Central and pruning at Snyder Farm. Other teams are getting started for the upcoming season: Community Events, Anderson House, Seed-for Salad Teams and the Sensory Garden..

Mercer – Our annual Plant Expo will take place at MEG on May 6, from 9am until 2 pm.

The Mercer County Extension office, now on Spruce Street, including all functions currently housed there, will be moving to a new location sometime in the next year. The current facility is extremely crowded, and the largest meeting room is no longer adequate for our general meetings, which have been held at the Boys and Girls Club just down the street. The new venue will be the old Mercer county Youth Detention Center, a short distance away. It offers more space, and will house several county agencies. Some interior refurbishment must be done before anyone can move in. The exterior has much more "green space" than the current building, which means more opportunity for RMG's to develop larger "Extension Gardens" to beautify the site.

The herb garden at MEG suffered severe damage during the crazy winter weather this year, mainly because of poor drainage. To remedy this, one section has been excavated and a gravel base and drainage piping installed to remedy the problem long term. It will be refilled with a soil mix suitable for the planting to go there, and then replanted and the "sun dial" replaced. Two further sections will need to be similarly corrected in subsequent years.

Our online hours recording system continues to gain adherents – we now have 207 members on board.

A community education presentation on IPM, by Meredith Melendez, our County Agent, will be held at Howell Living History Farm at 1 pm on April 29.

A tour to Peace Tree Farms will take place on April 21, and another tour will go to North Creek Nursery on April 27.

Our April speaker was Dr. Randi Eckel from Toadshade Wildflower Farms. She spoke on "Native Shrubs and Trees – Making a Difference in the Garden. Her talk was entertaining and very informative. She brought a large collection of wildflower seeds and some small plants for sale.

Middlesex – Our gardening helpline is back to full summer schedule and multiple requests are coming in for the speaker's bureau. Both are becoming busier as spring finally arrives.

There was an orientation class for those Master Gardeners who wish to work in the greenhouse. Those who completed the training are busy seeding flowers and vegetables for our plant sale as part of Rutgers Day on April 29th from 9-4. The new Rutgers Scarlet strawberry and the classic Rutgers 250 tomato will be available for sale.

Two upcoming workshops are being offered at the EARTH center in Davidson Mill Pond Park on Riva Avenue in South Brunswick.

Intro to Backyard Composting

April 15, Sat. 10 AM - 12 PM

Composting kitchen and backyard waste keeps organics out of our landfills.

Learn how to get started on this garden feeding process.

Attendees may also pick up pre-purchased compost bins at the workshops.

Free, with registration at 732-745-4170 or e-mail solidwaste@co.middlesex.nj.us

Successful Gardens in Small Spaces

April 22, Sat. 10 AM - Noon

Get the most from your garden efforts.

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Square foot gardening and container gardening will be discussed.
Register at 732-398-5262 or e-mail Carol.Richiusa@co.middlesex.nj.us

Monmouth – Monmouth County MGs have been busy readying all of our Ag. Building gardens... turning beds, raking the winter away and waiting for the mulch delivery. March 24th kicked off our season with the School Garden Conference, a day of presentations geared to educators (numbering over 100) with plenty to bring back to present school gardens and future ones. Also included were a variety of activities that are fun and learning experiences. Many thanks to Pat Eisemann and her committee for a wonderful day! On March 25th we offered “Celebrate Spring...A Symposium” to our residents. The day consisted of presentations on native plants and pollinators, waking up your garden, weed control in lawns, ground covers, insect and disease control in the vegetable garden and 10 common landscaping mistakes and how to avoid them. All presentations at this event were given by MGs. Many thanks to Estelle Lumer and her committee for this outstanding day! This free event was very well received and both events will take place annually.

Our Junior Master Gardener Program will be starting up on Saturday, April 29th with 18 excited 9-11 year old children. The program meets for 8 Saturdays and is presented in two parts with the first starting indoors as an educational component from 9:30 AM-about 10:30 AM (snacks from 10:30-11:00). The second part, from about 11 AM till noon, is outside in the JMG garden where children will work as teams of two and have their own garden plot. After the program ends in June, the children are encouraged to come back on weekends to harvest and work in their garden. Many of our students enter their vegetables in the County Fair and have done very well winning ribbons for their efforts!

Also getting ready is the Spring Garden Days Committee for their annual sale on Friday, May 19th and Saturday, May 20th. Plants offered for sale will be: annuals, perennials, small trees and shrubs, vegetable plants, herbs, donated plants (MG grown), hanging baskets and new this year will be fruit trees and shrubs. We will also have a “Trash to Treasure” section and presentations are scheduled both days on topics of garden interest to our residents.

Morris

- Offered first library outreach event of the season at Morris County Library.
- One new lecture for Speaker’s Bureau vetted.
- Several Master Gardeners assisted Frelinghuysen staff in offering sold out Community Garden Conference.
- Approved two pollinator garden projects; one in Madison and the other in Jefferson TWP.
- Geared up with Helpline refresher courses and binder revisions for start of Helpline on 4/3/17.
- Organizing Working with Youth opportunity to begin on April 23 in Chatham for 8 weeks.
- Offered next to last Internship training session on 3/20 for Class of 2016/2017

Ocean – Our Education Outreach Committee has been very active with several on-going school projects. The Vertical Gardening project, led by Susan Servidio, our Coordinator, was completed with the harvesting of a small amount of spinach. The children were impressed. Ocean County Interns journeyed to Monmouth County to join their Interns for a combined class on Pesticides.

On March 15th Susan Servidio, Jim Digney, and Jerry Jelllets attended the O.C. Board of Freeholders meeting to award Freeholder Director Joseph Vicari and Freeholder John Bartlett, Jr. Honorary Master Gardener certificates for their continuing support of the Master Gardener program in Ocean County.

The Stafford Library Outreach is underway twice a month with a Helpline table and a speaker presentation. The talk last week on “Attracting Hummingbirds and Butterflies” was well received. Talks finish in June, but Helpline continues through the summer. Some of our members will be assisting the Forestry Service in Jackson with their spring tree seedling project. Plant Sale Committee has sign-up sheets ready for our meeting this Thurs. which is also the date for the Helpline Training for veterans and Interns.

Passaic – At the last MGAPC meeting members were recognized for their years of service and for the number of hours they have volunteered. Pins, certificates and plaques were given to the honorees. Next

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meeting will be our joint meeting with Bergen County in Hackensack. Work has started on the Bloomingdale Senior Center since the weather is now cooperating.

Somerset – Somerset Master Gardeners had their first meeting for planning the 4 H Tent at the Somerset County Fair in August. Members are discussing a title and the subject matter of the tent. Further meetings will take place according to calendar dates chosen.

The Advisory Council (our present governing board) is busy and their meetings occur in Bridgewater. After reviewing and changing some of the Handbook, they have been working on advertising and educating the members about all the working teams which exist presently.

Next month is our Awards luncheon for members who have gone beyond the "call of duty" in their membership activities.

Sussex – In Sussex County, spring is just around the corner. The plan for the Demonstration Garden is complete, fencing has been installed and we are working with the County to install the quarry pack. Once the weather breaks, MGs will begin working on installation of the hardscape.

The Newton Green is also due for renovation this year. New plantings are going in around the Civil War Monument, a rejuvenation of the veterans' memorial beds is planned and refreshing of many of the flower plantings will be done. Master Gardeners will be working to make this public space a Sussex County showplace.

Our Helpline materials and library are being updated. The Helpline is open for callers and visitors. We are assembling reference materials, including fact sheets and research papers, to support Helpline volunteers in identifying and preparing responses to all the questions that come in. An analysis of resident question patterns was completed to understand when residents ask for specific information and what the key topics are. This will assist in organizing the reference materials.

Requests for speakers are coming in and programs have been conducted for children and elders around the county. Our new evening intern class is continuing with over 40 participants, 32 of whom wish to complete the volunteer requirements to become Master Gardeners. Many of these individuals are working daily, so we will be identifying opportunities for this new group to gather the 60 hours needed to complete their internships outside traditional avenues.

Our Awards Luncheon is planned for early April.

Union – March 2, Union County put up three new signs at the Demo Garden advertising the Demonstration Garden, Rain Garden, and Helpline.

March 25, Madeline DiNardo, County Agricultural Agent hosted the "Get Your Vegetable Garden Growing: Home - School - Community 2017," with Meredith Melendez, Mercer County Agricultural Agent as kenote speaker.

The Master Gardeners of Union County held a Communications Committee Meeting on March 29, 2017. The following items were reported:

Annex Garden: Kale and lettuces seeds were planted, and some have been transplanted.

Berry Patch: Have two different styles of espaliered trees growing. They will install netting this month for the season.

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Children's: Committee Meeting and Class was held March 28. They will be working again with Trailside Nature & Science Center's Summer Camp Programs (and were mentioned in their brochure) adding two new classes for a total of six.

Community Beautification: The website was updated to include projects in the binder (kept in the Helpline office) for Master Gardeners to review when looking for volunteer hours.

Cutting: Dahlia and zinnia seeds have been planted. The new MG class will be working on the shrub bed for this committee.

Garden Fair: 5000+ Flyers have been printed. 430 pepper plants have been transplanted to peat pots with several hundred pre-sold. Tomatoes have been started. Vendors have been contacted.

Helpline: The MG Helpline has moved to spring hours: Monday to Thursday 9-3, and Friday 9-1. The new class has three members that have become Helpline Interns. A book case was donated by our Office Manager, Judi Laganga.

Herb Garden: Seeds have been planted, and some have sprouted. Cilantro/Coriander *Coriandrum sativum*, love or hate it, is the Herb of the Year per the International Herb Association (<http://www.iherb.org>).

Sharing Garden: The fence was rewired to prevent the squirrels from jumping the electric fence. New topsoil was added and rototilled into 4 beds to combat the compacted soil from years of use. Cold hardy crops will be directly seeded into the beds. New lettuce varieties are being researched.

Lastly, our March meeting was snowed out. The program on pruning will be presented April 19.

ADJOURNMENT: At 12:05 PM

Respectfully Submitted
Tricia Deering, Recording Secretary