

## Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

### Minutes of May 14, 2020 RMGANJ Meeting

Dennis Lenahan called the Webex meeting to order at 9:00 am. Some members joined late as they had not noticed that the time was changed from 10 am to 9 am. It was agreed that the time going forward for Webex RMGANJ meetings would be 9 am.

**Secretary's Minutes from April 2020 RMGANJ Meeting:** Tricia Deering, Recording Secretary, reported that she had emailed out an updated version of the April RMGANJ minutes after receiving some minor changes. A motion to accept the minutes was made, seconded and approved.

#### **Attendance:**

Atlantic:	Mary Lou Monihan
Bergen:	Karen Pennell
Burlington:	Merry Bogert, Nick Hendershot, Dave Parsons
Camden:	
Cumberland:	Betsey Simpson
Essex:	Terry Felper, Alice Poueymirou
Hunterdon:	Tricia Deering, Dewey Goodman
Mercer:	Judy Colburn, Betty Scarlata, Sudi Solomon
Middlesex:	Jerry Barclay, Kathy Dopart
Monmouth:	Gayle Williams, Bill Schutte
Morris:	Deirdre Gallagher
Ocean:	Suzanne Keane, Roberta Quinn
Passaic:	Joe D'Errico
Somerset:	Cindy Hedin, Linda Madretzke
Sussex:	Jane Gardner, Pat Schanzlin
Union:	Dennis Lenahan, Dolores Batz-Culp, Deb Murphy
Rutgers University:	Jan Zientek

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Roberta Quinn, Treasurer, reported that the current balance is \$14018.30, which is no change from the prior month.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** Dennis Lenahan reported on Old Business below.

**MASTER GARDENER'S COORDINATOR'S REPORT:** Jan Zientek reported that the county MG coordinators continue to meet regularly. All re-certification requirements are being suspended for 2020.

Jan reported that there has been a 20% recession of budget at Rutgers which will result in layoffs and other cuts. Rutgers is officially shut down for in-person activities thru 8/14. Jan expects that this date will be extended to 8/31 or 9/30 shortly.

Jan reported that he is running an online Helpline Q&A session in his county this coming Saturday May 16. It is open to the public and access is available on the Essex County MG website.

#### **Old Business**

The possibility of an online Conference was discussed. Deirdre Gallagher reported that she only heard back from one of the three speakers she contacted, Dr. Hamilton. He said he would be happy to participate in an online conference. Tricia Deering reported that she contacted Dr. Torres, who also said she was happy to participate. The pros and cons of having an online conference were discussed along with options for a virtual conference format. Many county representatives felt that their members would not be likely to participate in an online conference. They felt the technology was too complex for many members. Others reported that they had participated in several online educational presentations which included Master Gardeners and they were quite good. Some felt it was better to focus on planning a 2021 conference than put something online together for 2020. It was suggested that a possible session for next year would be

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"How We Coped". Dave Parsons made a motion not to have a 2020 conference and focus our efforts on 2021. The motion was seconded and approved with only two nays.

State awards were discussed. Several counties reported that their coordinators had told them that they would not have any state awardees for 2020 due to Covid-19 shut downs. Other counties reported that their counties were interested in giving out awards for 2019 achievements and 2020 efforts, It was clear that the counties vary widely in their thoughts regarding awards. Jan Zientek reported that Rutgers is still working on a university annual event for award recognition. State Award recognition will be discussed at the next coordinators' meeting. It was decided that the counties should not proceed with selecting two awards of excellence as normal and awards will be left to the county coordinators to decide.

Dennis Lenahan asked for volunteers to form a committee to plan the 2021 conference. It was suggested that it would be a good idea to let members think about it and ask for volunteers at the June meeting. A motion was made to ask for volunteers at the June meeting, seconded and approved unanimously.

Dennis Lenahan reported that he had updated the google group with the input he received from members.

**Caring and Sharing:** Gayle Williams reported on the National Wildlife Federation for Certified Wildlife Habitats. It turns out that for many of us it is not difficult to qualify our yards as a certified wildlife habitats. She highly recommends visiting their website ([nationalwildlifefederation@nwf.org](mailto:nationalwildlifefederation@nwf.org))!

### **COUNTY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:**

#### ***Atlantic***

Of course like everyone at Rutgers, we are following the strictest protocol with all person events and projects being cancelled. The Governor's "stay in the home "order remains in effect at this time and as private citizens we are all urged to follow the mandate.

Our Ag Agent Rick VanRanklin gave his vegetable 1 course online this month.

Belinda Chester, our coordinator, is manning our help line and she informed us at our monthly meeting via the internet on the first Friday in , that Rutgers was doing soil tests as of May 4th. Our helpline email is [atlanticcountymg@rutgers.edu](mailto:atlanticcountymg@rutgers.edu)

Since we cancelled the annual plant sale and community horticulture event at our county 4-H center, we already had plugs that had been ordered. For a minimum donation to our county food bank, one of our members took over the responsibility of donating those funds raised by selling them to MG's and donated over \$2500 to the food bank. Our coordinator has sweet potato slips and was arranging for a safe way to distribute them to members who were interested.

She announced that we were looking for MGs to share their stories, as to how , why and when we became Master Gardeners. What we have gotten out of the program and how we enjoyed being involved. These stories are to be shared on our website, the state website and social media.

We are starting a Citizens program among Master Gardeners that will be driven by the need of the Plant and Pest Advisory, looking for what is going on in our home gardens and lawns. Photos of pests and diseases that can be used by Rutgers Cooperative Ext for presentations, articles and diagnostics. More later.

Our 2020 class will graduate as planned in July. Virtually.

We will be having Web calls the first Monday of every month for updates, questions, and sharing. Our next meeting will be June 5th at 10 am.

#### ***Bergen***

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## **Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey**

Our wonderful writers and editor continue to produce the newsletter each month with articles of interest and notifications of online webinars. To read the current issue, please go to our website [mqofbc.org](http://mqofbc.org) and click on 'The Potting Shed-newsletter'.

All sites and meetings have been closed or cancelled, respectively, according to RCE policy.

### ***Burlington***

Of course, no one is permitted to go out to projects, including the demonstration gardens at the Burlington County Agricultural Center.

Since we were already growing pepper plants to use in one of our plots, the Master Gardener overseeing this project decided to run the trial in his yard. Because of limited space he will not be able to use all the pepper plants and so the remaining plants were divided among other group members. In return, members who received pepper plants agreed to observe how the plants do in their gardens and will take notes and answer specific questions. All information will be reported at the end of the season. We gave individual gardeners two or three pepper plants of different varieties; in return they will grow the plants, take notes and answer questions relating to their experience in growing these particular pepper plants.

Our project at the Rancocas Nature Center is in the Rancocas State Park so it has been closed for the last 2 months. The weeds are winning. We haven't been working there with all the rain and social distancing. I hope to get some help and start cleaning out as the distancing decreases and things dry out.

***Camden*** - No report

### ***Cumberland***

The past month has not been without issue due to the virus, social distancing and the like. Hope all are well.

We had really just begun our new intern classes when all this lockdown came about, it meant switching gears and planning to give these new interns at least some of the basics. We borrowed presentations from other MGs, did some voice overs for clarification rather than here view the PowerPoint. In the end we refunded their course money less the cost of the book but continue to push information forward to them. They will be invited back next year for a more hands on course providing that is feasible.

We have been pushing items via Facebook to let the public know we are still here and able to answer questions about their gardening endeavors. We have been showcasing our personal gardens with fact sheets where applicable. For example, I plant a bunch of natives so when my woodland phlox bloomed, I located a fact sheet on them and posted a picture.

Meetings are being held via webex and this week we are holding a thankful Thursday get together. We did a follow-up meeting for the interns with the propagation lesson that Bill Martin and I had done. We are encouraging people to reach out and call people periodically so they don't get disconnected.

***Essex*** – no report

### ***Hunterdon***

- The Hunterdon County MG office now has a Facebook page @Reef Hunterdon County.
- Our Master Gardeners Citizen Scientist are now populating the new Facebook page
- Our Educational Garden team is starting to disseminate info on Native Plants
- Our new Class of 202 graduated
- Our Helpline is fielding questions remotely.
- We have arranged a Webex for our monthly meeting training
- Our HCRHS special needs team is creating educational materials for the students
- Several Master Gardeners are working on developing online materials

### ***Mercer***

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Mercer County offices including Cooperative Extension have been closed since March 12. Mercer County Parks are open to passive recreation only. However, the Mercer Education Gardens are closed.

Master Gardener presentations and in person activities, including Symposium, Plant Sale, Community Education lectures, Trent House Summer Program, and Insect Festival are all cancelled.

County Horticulturist Margaret Pickoff, along with MGs, has been sending out information on various webinars. There is much good free content being offered

Committees have been meeting online via Zoom and Webex. Work continues on projects such as updating our online rolodex and adding fact sheets, etc. The rolodex has 1,127 entries and is updated as new fact sheets are added. Most entries have links which open the document/book.

The Helpline Committee has been meeting with our horticulturist to plan how to help the public online with the gardening questions.

We had our first virtual Executive Board meeting with 52 attendees.

Margaret Pickoff, county horticulturist, has been offering online webinars to the public with the State Library and with the Mercer County Rutgers Environmental Stewards Program.

### ***Middlesex -***

Our Helpline is still operating, answering phone messages and email questions. Angela Monaghan checks the Helpline email account remotely and forwards the questions to the MG on duty for that day. The MG, working from home, can also access the phone messages by calling into the helpline phone.

Master Gardener Helpline LIVE! takes place every Wednesday morning at 10am. To participate, send an email to [Mastergardeners@co.middlesex.nj.us](mailto:Mastergardeners@co.middlesex.nj.us) with the subject LIVE. Include your first and last name and a detailed question about your backyard or garden concerns. You will then receive an email on how to join the next live Webex Training session.

Professor Bill Hlubik and colleagues from Rutgers NJAES are hosting weekly webinars called RU Ready 2 Garden. The webinars take place Thursday evenings at 6:30pm and include a variety of gardening topics. Go to <https://tinyurl.com/RUgarden3B> for more information.

We are planning our first MG board meeting via Webex on June 9, 2020 at 7pm.

### ***Monmouth***

Although the Monmouth County Master Gardeners have not met, many MGs have logged onto the National Wildlife Federation for Certified Wildlife Habitats website to see if their yards qualify as a certified wildlife habitat. ([nationalwildlifefederation@nwf.org](mailto:nationalwildlifefederation@nwf.org)) Suggested by our Community Projects Committee Chairperson, Evelin Gaffney, many MGs have gone to the website, read the qualifications, applied and their yards have been accepted as certified wildlife gardens/habitats! It has been fun and exciting and something we can do together separately! Thanks, Evelin!

Our Class of 2020 interns have had quite a different experience than in all other years! They continue to meet via Webex through classes held twice weekly. They are a very good group of future MGs with great attitudes for very unusual circumstances! Way to go, Class of 2020!

In addition, our Scholarship Committee's deadline date for applicants was originally in April. However, considering the circumstances at hand, the committee extended the deadline to May 1<sup>st</sup>. From the applications submitted, those that meet the qualifications will be chosen for our scholarship for 2020. Despite these uncertain times, students will go to colleges and universities in the fall either on-line or in person. All could use a helping hand for their future.

Although our county offices are closed and we are all safely tucked away in our homes, Helpline continues with over 30 MG volunteers who answer those email questions. We all stay safe and our community gets the answers they need! Not surprisingly, there have been many questions about starting vegetable gardens this year...terrific! Thank you to our coordinator, Diane Larson, for arranging our homey Helpline assistance!

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### ***Morris –***

While most of our programming is shut down, here is a very short list of the things we still have been able to do for the residents of Morris County.

**Helpline:** Tracy Wadhams and Sally Hensen have been gracious enough to continue to answer the incoming calls and e-mails remotely from the Helpline.

**Speaker Bureau:** Gail DiDomenico, has set up four virtual lectures to view using Zoom. The information can be found on Myimpactpage.com.

**IPM Team:** The IPM Team is still making observations from their home gardens and a few of the still open Community Gardens. Their findings will be distributed to all Master Gardeners starting in June.

As Rutgers has determined that we should not meet as a group until at least August 31, 2020, there will be no new Rutgers Master Gardener class starting in September 2020.

### ***Ocean***

Ocean County is on “hiatus” just like everyone else. Our Coordinator, Susan Servando, is arranging for some of our MG Educators to create webinars related to their specialty. We have one program on Hydrangeas scheduled for May 26<sup>th</sup> at 6pm and two more coming up on Tuesdays in June.

We received word from a few of our Outreach contacts that they were able to reschedule their festivals in the Fall. So, we are still hoping to be able to fill some of our information table agreements.

Since it is done through email, our 2021 calendar articles are still being edited and the cover is almost ready. The team expects it to be printed on schedule.

In the meantime, some of us have been taking advantage of the online webinars which have been interesting and informative.

### ***Passaic –***

At the end of the year 2019 and beginning of year 2020 a group of Master Gardeners of Passaic County participated in a project known as Paterson Grow Healthy. This project was funded through an EPA environmental education grant that provides financial assistance to Rutgers University to implement an educational program for fifth grade students in two public schools in Paterson, on Food Systems and how food waste can affect our ecosystem. The goals of the project are to increase awareness about food waste as an environmental issue in Paterson public schools and to increase knowledge regarding the complete food cycle in order to inform decision-making on food selection to reduce waste. This was a really diverse project that included RCE staff and faculty as well as other partners. The mission of the Rutgers Master Gardeners was to serve as teachers and advisors by delivering a class regarding “Where our food comes from”, encouraging students to learn the relationship that exists between food, farmers, agriculture and plants. Part of this mission included having Master Gardeners serve as advisors, by mentoring these same group of students in their school gardens during this spring. Unfortunately, this last part of the project was canceled due to the public health emergency. However, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, along with other partners, have developed a website to provide continuation to the Paterson Grow Healthy project. It was recently launched as a way to keep students engaged virtually with a series of short videos, lessons and activities for them to do at home, for completing the project. A sprouting kit has been purchased for the students, so that they could start growing some simple edible greens at home. A video will be recorded on this specific lesson, explaining how to use the sprouting kit that they will receive to grow some broccoli and radish sprouts. They will be asked to send pictures to document their progress

The Awards Ceremony to honor all of those Master Gardeners who have achieved milestones, along with the graduation of the 2020 Rutgers Master Gardeners Class has been postponed, due to the public health emergency caused by COVID-19. We currently continue to host the training classes via virtual platforms and will do so for the remainder of this course. A digital certificate of completion will be given to all the interns that successfully complete the course. We will find time later on to provide all the hands-on activities that could not be completed.

Construction on the MGAPC new offices continues during the COVID-19 quarantine. The original building was a former Nike site and was demolished to make room for the new building.

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### **Somerset –**

Somerset County Master Gardeners will be selling a calendar for 2021 featuring pictures and artwork of our county gardeners. The subject should be garden or landscape related. Calendars will be on sale in September and October. They will be delivered in November.

Joe Gyurian, our Somerset County MG coordinator is retiring as of July 30th of 2020. Joe has served the County and the master gardeners well for many years. The Master Gardeners are indebted to him for his stalwart service to us and his knowledge, patience and kindhearted nature.

DUE TO THE COVID 19 VIRUS: Rutgers Cooperative Extension has announced that all in-person events, classes, programs, club meetings, camps and other group activities have been cancelled and have been suspended at least through August 31,2020.

MASTER GARDENER RECERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS ARE SUSPENDED FOR 2020. CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS MAY BE ACQUIRED THROUGH WEBINARS,(pre-approved).

### **Sussex**

Nothing to report. Sussex has suspended all activities.

- **Union** -Trex update – MG of Union County participated in the Trex thin film plastic challenge and surpassed the 500 pound requirement, collecting over750 pounds of thin film plastic;
- Received new bench for Demo Garden
- Spring Fair Cancelled due to restrictions/shelter in place orders
- Current Exec Board Meetings and all other meetings have been conducted via Webex platform.
- Current MG classes have been conducted via Webex.
- MG of Union County will be presenting annual scholarships to the 4H club as well as an Outstanding Student of Horticulture at the Union County Vocational Technical School.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 10:30 am. The next meeting is 6/11/2020 at 9 am by Webex.

Respectfully Submitted  
Tricia Deering, Recording Secretary

**Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey**