

# Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

## Minutes of March 12, 2021 RMGANJ Meeting

Deirdre Gallagher called the Webex meeting to order at 9:05 am. Nick Hendershot welcomed all to the meeting and recognized Herb Arbeiter as a new delegate from Bergen County..

**Secretary's Minutes from September 2020 RMGANJ Meeting:** Cindy Hedin, Recording Secretary, reported that she had emailed version 3 of the February 2021 RMGANJ minutes after receiving some changes to the county reports. A motion to accept version 3, with the addition of the Union County report, of the minutes was made, seconded and approved. This final version will be emailed to all.

### **Attendance:**

Atlantic:	
Bergen:	Karen Pennell, Herb Arbeiter, Suzanne Danzig
Burlington:	Sharon Astorino, Merry Bogert, Nick Hendershot, Dave Parsons
Cumberland:	Betsey Simpson, Keiko Warner
Essex:	Terry Felper; Alice Poueymirou
Hunterdon:	Tricia Deering, Dewey Goodman
Mercer:	Judy Colburn, Betty Scarlata, Sudi Solomon
Middlesex:	Jerri Barclay, Kathy Dopart
Monmouth:	Bob Magovern, Bill Schutte, Gayle Williams
Morris:	Deirdre Gallagher, Diane Muenzin
Ocean:	Suzanne Keane, Roberta Quinn, Susan Reese
Passaic:	
Somerset:	Cindy Hedin
Sussex:	
Union:	Dolores Batz-Culp, Deb Murphy (alternate)
Rutgers University:	Jan Zientek

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** January 1, 2020 opening balance \$ 7960.70  
January--Costs of \$1,885.00 for Rutgers Student Center for 2019 Conference  
March--Revenue of \$7,940.60 recorded as a Rutgers PGM Revenue Adjustment from the 2019 Conference  
December 31, 2020 balance of \$14,018.30  
That's all the activity for last year. The current balance is the same as December.  
A motion to accept was made, seconded and approved.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** Deirdre Gallagher reported on Old Business below.

### **MASTER GARDENER'S COORDINATOR'S REPORT:**

The current policy of no in-person meetings and/or activities through the end of March is expected to continue to the end of May. A protocol for return to outdoor gardening/activities was developed by Jan looking at other states' procedures. It must be approved by Rutgers, includes social distancing, masking, etc. No distinction was made between activities just for MGs and those including MGs and public. Information will be disseminated through county coordinators within the next 3 weeks.

Somerset has a new Master Gardener coordinator, Roslyn Dvorin, as of the end of March. Roslyn will also coordinate the Environmental Stewards program.

Several Camden County MGs have transferred to the Philadelphia group.

Peter Nitzsche has written the Rutgers 250 Tomato Citizen Science Project protocol. Most counties will be participating. Data will be recorded and submitted through Better Impact and on paper. Results will be reported at fall conference. In the future there may be more trialing with Master Gardeners using seeds of other vegetables from the Rutgers breeding program. Peter will present a series of 4 webinars on growing the Rutgers 250 tomato seeds. Tomato harvest is to go to Food Banks, extra

## Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

seedlings are to go to community gardens. Jan mailed bulk seeds to county coordinators, except for Ocean County.

Gayle Williams asked about outdoor activities referring to the protocol Jan wrote. Individual projects, guidelines re: masks, distancing, etc. Dir of Ext. requested protocol. Not yet approved. Distance, masks & density. Vaccinations! Tricia-Hunterdon activities no public.

Judy Colburn (Mercer) asked about the transition from SAKAI platform. Jan replied that several options are being considered including MS Teams (user friendly) and Canvas (used by Rutgers undergraduates). Jan/Essex has begun transitioning data to Canvas. 12 or 14 counties are participating in a training program on-line (evening and daytime) that uses Canvas. Later this year the coordinators will decide how to progress, probably a mix of MS Teams & Canvas.

Nick Hendershot asked about future MG training classes. New Jersey will have a state-wide, uniform curriculum that will be a hybrid of online & in-person, as other states (Washington & Oregon) have already adopted. In-person meetings & activities are important for establishing and maintaining esprit de corps. Sussex has been using on-line + in person for the last 5-6 years. In response to Dave's question, Jan said that 3 counties (Sussex, Atlantic & Cumberland) are using Rutgers Gardening Education Series on Wednesday nights for training new interns. By 2022-2023, there will be a uniform program offered for all Master Gardener intern training in all the counties. County coordinators have the choice whether or not to begin new MG training classes this year. Hunterdon is not starting a new class.

### New Business

Deirdre asked that all be prepared to share **verbally** each month, beginning in April, activities and programs, with questions from this group. Monthly reports will be highlighted.

We're looking toward our fall event. Deirdre will prepare a list of questions aimed at improving communication among the counties. Vital role is educating the public. The goal is to lift the visibility of Master Gardeners throughout the state. Nick Hendershot asked 1) if counties have regular meetings of coordinators and delegates, and, if so, 2) let other counties know how it works. 3) if counties are not having such meetings, they should as it fosters communication. Deirdre said we should look at the "Delegate Responsibility" agreement so that all the counties are on the same page regarding communication of RMGANJ information. **She will circulate that document.** Ocean(501c-3) has an executive committee (chairs of all the committees) that meets monthly with coordinator. Hunterdon (not a 501c-3) has monthly meeting of steering committee (team leads + whoever wants to attend) with coordinator. Mercer has executive board meetings, including coordinator, preceding general meetings. **Counties should please report their meeting schedules to Deirdre.** There have been concerns about reporting projects/activities/policies under consideration before they are firmly in place, or may not happen at all. **Delegates** need to be aware of what **might** be coming down the pike.

### Old Business

Event planning is beginning. Deirdre Gallegher, Terry Felper (north), Betty Scarlata (central) & Keiko Warner (south) have been meeting regularly, discussing indoor vs. outdoor or a combination, but will certainly follow Rutgers' pandemic protocols. The event, possibly at the end of September, indoor/outdoor, will be **celebratory** in nature, provide an opportunity to interact and connect with Master Gardener colleagues, highlight the good work MGs do. This would not be open to the general public. Each county should be represented with an event/project/activity, either pre- or during pandemic, in a format to be decided by county. Venue will be chosen with consultation with Jan. Burlington can pick-south or central. The state-wide Rutgers 250 Tomato Seed Program will be highlighted. Keiko Warner (Cumberland) explained their trip project which has been both educationally and financially successful and a service to the larger community. A booth/table display event (Technology required? Posters? Equipment?) would enlighten Master Gardener attendees as to what other counties are doing, foster cohesion. The committee is trying to cover all the bases regarding weather, facilities (floor/ground space, electricity available, etc.). A festive, party atmosphere!!! Meet & Greet/Brag Fest. Questions: fee? food? Please send questions to the committee. Tricia--we need to **email delegates with details & request for questions/suggestions. Memo will go out.** Kathy Dopart warned of possible problems-among them are weather, bathrooms, water stations, food, handicapped accessible?. Log Cabin/Rutgers Gardens (Dolores) was suggested as a possible venue. Dave Parsons offered to help.

## Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

### County Highlights

Deirdre asked for comments from delegates about their counties activities. Following are the responses.

**Monmouth**—(Gayle Williams) free Coffee Talks are finished, were in lieu of symposium. Three hundred people were online for each talk, from many counties and other states. A flyer was emailed to individuals in the Plant Sale & Bugs, Birds & Beyond email database & shared by those individuals among their friends & contacts. Q&A document emailed to registrants after each talk.

**Ocean**—Seed & Feed-is a non-contact seed distribution. Seeds are donated by members.

**Hunterdon**—Tricia—This week Hunterdon has been having monthly talks, most recently a talk by the State Climatologist. The Women's Halfway House activities are beginning with virtual walks around the vegetable garden using iPads. The women will have make & take activities, supplies provided by Halfway House. Tricia has loaned her seed starting rack with grow lights (for example-- <https://www.gardeners.com/buy/grow-lights-and-stands/grow-lights-and-stands/> ) with Burpee self-watering seed starting tray (<https://www.burpee.com/gardening-supplies/grow-kits/72-cell-self-watering-ultimate-growing-system-prod002627.html>) to Hunterdon Central, and will conduct virtual classes weekly using videos she has made. It will be difficult in the hybrid environment. The students sell produce and flowers from the gardens at their school store and use the money for the gardening program. Hunterdon's Speakers Bureau has been very active doing virtual talks.

**Morris County**—Diane Muenzen - Morris County held the annual Community Gardening Conference virtually on Zoom for .5 days this year. A Hudson Valley Seed Co. representative spoke about Art Paks ( <https://hudsonvalleyseed.com/collections/art-packs> ), Also there were talks about garden pests and health & safety in the garden. **She mentioned the need for a copy of the Delegate Responsibility document.**

There was a general question about availability of online talks if recorded? Morris said yes re: the Community Garden programs. Perhaps Coffee Talks were recorded and link sent to registrants. Do the speakers give permission? Not a copyright issue, but a question of personal property. Distribution of recordings? Ocean has recorded some talks and put them on the website, thus they are available to the public.

**Bergen**-Karen Pennell - Our meeting included "Outstanding Herbaceous Plants," a talk by Robert Lyons. Our Speakers Bureau has been very active speaking at local garden clubs and libraries for no charge. We do record our meetings.

**Mercer County**--Betty Scarlata -- Paul Kurtz spoke on the spotted lantern fly at the HelpLine Round Table. A flyer will be distributed. When do they fly? After 10:00 AM-why?

### COUNTY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

**Atlantic** – no report.

#### **Bergen**

The February meeting was held virtually. Robert Lyons presented: *Outstanding Herbaceous Plants - RX for Long-Lasting Color in the Landscape*. Dr. Robert Lyons' philosophy of gardening has led to an enthusiastic use of colorful plant materials in garden design and an expectation that brilliant color will be present all the time. Designing with a wide array of ornamental plants that will help you realize your goals. He highlighted annual and tender perennial plants, both brand new and tried and true, which have long-lasting flowers, eye-catching foliage, unique ornamental features, and great potential for striking impact in the garden.

Our wonderful writers and editor continue to produce the newsletter each month with articles of interest and notifications of online webinars.

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

All volunteer sites are closed per RCE policy.

### ***Burlington –***

The Helpline of Burlington County received 424 inquiries in 2020. This is an increase of 45 from the 2019 total of 379, and an increase of 125 from 2018's total of 299. These numbers do not include the phone calls that came into the Rutgers Extension Office of Burlington County and were handled immediately by the office staff and did not need to be forwarded to the helpline.

We continue to accept samples from residents asking for help with plant/insect identification, plant disease identification and other issues. 52 samples were dropped off in 2020, 16 prior to the March shutdown, and 36 from May thru December of 2020.

In May 2020, the Rutgers Master Gardener Program of Burlington County started the virtual "Ask the Master Gardener" program with the Moorestown Library. On the first Wednesday of each month, 3 certified Master Gardeners and the Master Gardener Program Coordinator take lawn and garden questions from participants. 8 Master Gardeners took turns rotating in and out each month. If all questions were asked that day, the program turned into a nice group discussion about horticulture. The program averaged about 12 participants.

As of March 5, 2021, we also started a new Virtual Helpline for the public, which will be held on Mondays and Fridays, 10 am to 11 am.

### ***Cumberland***

Master Gardener: Highlights for February 2021

- Gardening Education Series began on Feb 3, and included Wed evenings from 6:30-8:30 pm on 2/10, 17, 24 with an average attendance of 130
- 2 of the faculty speakers in February were from RAREC in Cumberland County
- Post speaker review sessions began on 2/12 and included Fridays from 12 noon – 1:00 pm on 2/19 & 26
- This series of classes will continue through May

Home Horticulture: Highlights for February 2021

- 16 radio spots were recorded for POP 99.9 FM Power of Positivity
  - live-streams on facebook, webpage and Comcast Channel 22
- 16 Facebook posts with 383 reached and 41 engagements, per data retrieved from Facebook
  - "Reached" is the number of people who saw the content
  - "Engagements" is any action someone take
- Researched and provided recommendations for 2 inquiries from clients on the Helpline
- MG Program Coordinator/Home Horticulturist tendered her 2 week letter of resignation on 2/26 and her last day of employ will be 3/12

***Essex*** - no report.

### ***Hunterdon***

### ***Mercer***

Our March Executive and General meetings were held via Zoom on March 1, with over 100 members participating in the General Meeting.

The officers are beginning development of training to help prepare new committee chairs for their roles within the organization, with a target delivery of late Spring/early Summer. The training will address an overview of the Executive Committee, as well as background information on policies and procedures surrounding committee leadership.

## Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

Our Coordinator discussed a possible volunteer initiative to start seeds for donation -- as another avenue to share RMG expertise with the community. The coordinator sent out a questionnaire to assess interest and participation levels/commitments to Mercer's RMGs.

The Speakers Bureau put out a call for additional speakers – the committee is getting significant numbers of requests for talks/presentations. The bureau delivered a talk on seed starting to the NJ Library Association in February.

Only two open seats remain for our Coordinators' Spring semester course on "Spring Gardening Skills with Rutgers Cooperative Extension", offered by Princeton Adult Education.

The Community Education committee reported interest continues to build in online programs.

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Karen Chapman delivered her talk on "Deer Resistant Garden Design". There were more than 500 registrants for the program.

Our Coordinator noted that Mercer County's Master Gardeners have engaged with more people in the last two months than in some previous years. As the Zoom limitation of 300 participants was too limiting, the county has moved to the Webex platform to accommodate the significant audiences drawn to Mercer RMG events.

Mercer County Helpline mentors continue to support our Coordinator with public inquiries, communicating through the Rutgers' CANVAS platform.

Seed catalogs continue to be collected for donation to the Boys and Girls Clubs of America in support of their gardening-oriented project work.

An informal "PlantShare" program among Mercer's RMG's was discussed. The activity would be outside the auspices of the RMG program. An informal plant exchange may be valuable as a way of keeping Mercer RMGs engaged and in touch while continuing to social distance.

The meeting closed with a presentation by our Coordinator on pruning hydrangeas: an overview of the different varieties and their (very different) bloom habits and pruning needs.

Also shared was a look at the expanded/updated NJAES website.

### **Middlesex**

Middlesex County Cooperative Extension is offering their free webinar series, RU Ready 2 Garden starting Thursday, March 11th at 6:30pm starting with Dr. Joe Goffreda talking about pruning fruit trees. The series will continue through the spring, demonstrating innovative gardening techniques from extension staff for new and advanced gardeners alike. These webinars are free and open to anyone who would like to join. Please visit the website to register for the program:

<http://www.middlesexcountynj.gov/Government/Departments/BDE/Pages/RUReady2Garden.aspx>

March 11	Pruning Your Fruit Trees	Dr. Joe Goffreda
March 18	Steps for Soil Testing & Preparing your New Garden	Bill Hlubik
March 25	Selecting Seeds for Your Vegetable Garden Needs	Vivian Morris
April 1	Planning A Backyard Vegetable Garden	Angela Monaghan
April 8	Vegetable Garden Weed Control: Innovative Strategies	Bill Hlubik
April 15	Setting Up Irrigation	Brendon Pearsall
April 22	Ethnic Crops	Dave Specca
April 29	Growing Delicious Fruits in Containers	Gary Gao
May 6	Why Garden Off the Ground?	Pat Donahue
May 13	Root Crops	Adam D'Angelo
May 20	Organic Gardening	Alex Sawatzky

## Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

May 27   Edible Flowers   Angela Monaghan

The Helpline volunteers continue to remotely work from home answering gardening [questions via email and phone during the pandemic](#). Last month the Helpline volunteers held an online training [session](#) to assist them.

### **Monmouth**

The month of February was pleasantly active for us here in Monmouth County starting and ending with our Coffee Talks for Home Gardeners series. Every Saturday in February at 9:30 AM we presented a talk on some facet of gardening. The following are the topics we chose this year: Let's Talk Tomatoes given by Laura Dreifus, There's More to Creating a Flower Garden than Digging a Hole given by Irene Wanat, Healthy Soil for the Home Garden given by Bill Errickson (our Ag. Agent) and Meet the Pollinators and Plan Their Paradise given by Angela Juffey. The series was an overwhelming success and just proves that our audience feels much like we do...we're ready for warmer days to be out in the garden! A huge thank you goes out to our Co-chairs Debbie LaGattuta and Laura Dreifus who organized the Coffee Talks and to all of our speakers and Diane Larson and their expertise.

Our Speakers Bureau continues to give virtual talks to local garden clubs and groups of home gardeners. In the background, MGs are adopting existing programs and tweaking them to make them their own. And, because of the feedback we have received from the Coffee Talks series the following topics are being discussed for future presentations: Lawn Care, Good Horticultural Practices, Let's Talk Peppers, Growing Figs, Bog Gardens and Square Foot Gardening. Programs currently being developed are: Starting Vegetable Seeds Indoors, Organic Pest Control, Saving Seeds, House Plants and a few more. Many thanks to our Speakers Bureau for all of their hard work and great topic for development!

In cooperation with our county libraries, Helpline sessions have been made available on-line by our Coordinator, Diane Larson and MG, Laura Dreifus. This time we worked with the library in Manalapan with great interaction and many residents logging-on for Q&A. And, while not able to work in person, our School Programs Committee continues to meet on-line or through emails to discuss plans for future school gardens and programs. In addition, our Helpline Roundtable Committee will meet again the second Wednesday in March with speaker, Paul Kurtz, Entomologist for the NJDA, who will refresh our memories on the threatening Spotted Lanternfly. Should be a great talk! Other topics for discussion that day will be treating lawns for weeds and what's going on in your garden.

All in all, we have had a very busy and fun February! Monmouth wishes you all good health and hopes that you stay safe and happy.

**Morris**—nothing to report

### **Ocean**

Our MGs are looking forward to spring and planting. A non-contact seed swap held in two parts of the county is giving MGs a chance to try a wider variety of seeds.

Virtual review classes of Diagnostics and Tick ID are being offered. This will keep our skills sharp for when we can resume MG activities in person. Online Intern review classes are also being held every Thursday.

An effort is being made through the Sunshine committee to reach out to MGs who could use some care and concern during this time, even though they are not ill.

### **Passaic** –

**Somerset** – The March-April issue of “In The Garden,” our newsletter, was emailed to our members. It included articles on *Cercis Canadensis* and Beatrice Farrand's landscape designs for the Princeton campus. Also included were reproductions of plant-themed artwork & photography by our members. The dilemma of plastic pots was explored.

Our HelpLine Team continues to respond to questions.

Dan Ross will speak at the March meeting on Invasive Plant Management.

Roslyn Dvorin will begin as our Coordinator late in March.

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

New officers of the Advisory Council will be announced at the March meeting.  
Handbook revision is almost complete.

***Sussex***

***Union –***

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 10:51 am. The next meeting will be April 8, 2021 at 9:00 am via Zoom.

Respectfully Submitted  
Cindy Hedin, Recording Secretary