

Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

Minutes of RMGANJ Meeting, September 9, 2021

Nick Hendershot called the Zoom meeting to order at 9:03 am and welcomed the group and asked that each person enter his/her name and county in the Chat to facilitate recording attendance, In consideration of Brian Schilling's time constraints, he will speak first.

MASTER GARDENER COORDINATOR'S REPORT: Jan Zientek introduced Brian Schilling, Director of Rutgers NJAES/Cooperative Extension, who spoke about the value of the Master Gardener program. More than 3,700 people participate in co-operative extension programs which include both Master Gardeners and 4-H, volunteering in excess of 325,000 hours or the equivalent of 162 full-time jobs, or about \$10,000,000 in volunteer time. There are 70 programatic staffers. The Rutgers administration is very aware of the value to the entire state of the Master Gardener program. Some beginning CES steps are being made in Hudson County with food & nutrition programs. There is a lack of awareness of programs available. If there is a specific interest, please inquire of your co-ordinators who can then put forth requests at their state-wide meetings. Lots of expertise is available in the CES statewide; for example, native plants, mitigating run-off, other environmental issues. Two staff members of note—Bill Erickson (trees) & Chris Obropta (water resources). Master Gardener Helplines are on the frontlines of discovering emerging problems.

Diane asked if there was a possibility of auditing courses at no cost at Rutgers and/or the county colleges. She is particularly interested in those offered in Morris CC horticulture program.

Tricia expressed concern that the MG curriculum is not including emerging topics and concerns.

Cindy asked about the policy of reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses. Both Brian and Jan said they would follow up on the question.

Jan reported that Cumberland's new coordinator Lauren Fordyce started yesterday, replacing Pam Burton. 4-5 counties will be starting classes for new Master Gardeners in Sept., including Middlesex, Morris & Somerset. There are various Zoom options depending on the county. The remaining counties are expected to start classes in early 2022.

Great Tomato Project: It was a serious learning experience administratively. Large quantities of tomatoes were donated to food banks, more precise numbers to follow. Many Master Gardeners are superlative tomato growers.

Secretary's Minutes from September RMGANJ Meeting: Cindy Hedin, Recording Secretary, reported that she had emailed the August 2021 RMGANJ meeting minutes after receiving some changes to the county reports, and had one report removed after. She requested that the minutes as emailed be accepted noting that the final minutes would not include the Mercer report. A motion to accept the minutes with the verbal note of the removal was made, seconded (Nick/Gayle) and approved. Requests to county coordinators (14) for lists of the delegates & alternates yielded 4 replies. Jan will reinforce the request.

Attendance:

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| Atlantic: | |
| Bergen: | Karen Pennell, Herb Arbeiter |
| Burlington: | Nick Hendershot, Sharon Astorino |
| Cumberland: | Betsey Simpson, Keiko Warner |
| Essex: | Terry Felper |
| Hunterdon: | Tricia Deering, Dewey Goodwin |
| Mercer: | Judy Colburn, Betty Scarlata, Sudi Solomon |
| Middlesex: | Jerri Barclay, |
| Monmouth: | Bob Magovern, Bill Schutte, Gayle Williams |
| Morris: | Diane Muenzin |
| Ocean: | Suzanne Keane, Roberta Quinn |
| Passaic: | |
| Somerset: | Cindy Hedin, |
| Sussex: | |
| Union: | |

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Rutgers University: Jan Zientek
Brian Schilling

TREASURER'S REPORT: Roberta Quinn, Treasurer, reported that the current balance is \$14,018.30 . A motion to accept was made, seconded and approved.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Elections will be held in December. In odd year, the president and treasurer are elected. Roberta has agreed to remain for another term as treasurer. We need to fill the president's slot. The previous nominating committee included Jerri Barclay, Karen Pennell and Kathy Dopart. Nick asked if they would serve again. The vice-president and recording secretary positions are up for election in even years.

A committee to plan the October '22 conference will consist of Betty Scarlata, Terry Felper, Keiko Warner, Nick Hendershot & Deirdre Gallagher. There will be no March celebration, Also no meetings in January & February. Discussions about the '22 Conference with begin in October.

CARING AND SHARING:

Gayle expressed concern for Deirdre.

Cindy asked for black swallowtail caterpillars to support a 2nd grade program. She will pick up any that might be available.

Nick reminded representatives to submit their county reports.

ADJOURNMENT:

At 10:10 am it was moved & seconded (Karen/Nick) that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried. The next meeting is 10/14/2021 at 9 am by Zoom.

COUNTY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

Atlantic – no report.

Bergen--22nd annual Butterfly Festival at Garretson Forge & Farm in Fair Lawn. Garretson Farm was certified as a Monarch Waystation in 2005 and, for the past few years, has participated in a scientific monarch butterfly tagging program. Several MG volunteers and children, who raised monarch butterflies during the summer, brought their butterflies to the festival for tagging. Visitors observed monarch and swallowtail butterflies, caterpillars, and chrysalises up close. Children, as young citizen naturalists, learned how to hold a monarch for tagging. They also recorded the tag number and gender of their butterfly specimen on a poster board. The data collected during this tagging process, including the release site location, will be sent to Monarch Watch, which keeps records of any tagged monarchs collected during the butterflies' spectacular fall migration to their wintering colonies in the mountains of Mexico. Display boards with butterfly information, as well as guidelines for starting a butterfly garden, were set up around Garretson's "butterfly central." MGs also assisted with arts and crafts activities and a scavenger hunt for children in and around the extensive herb and pollinator gardens.

Tour and tea at the Hermitage

Seasoned gardeners will explain the significance of the herbs in the Victorian kitchen garden and the vegetables in Mary Elizabeth's garden, named for the last owner of the Hermitage, Mary Elizabeth Rosencrantz. Mary Elizabeth's green thumb sustained her family through hard times. The event is noon-2 pm, Sept. 19. Pick a bunch of herbs to take home. A cup of the Hermitage's mint or chamomile tea and small bites follow.

Burlington – no report

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Cumberland

Rain Garden – Carol Henry reported that her team will begin working in the Rain Garden this week. There was much poison ivy in it, and Wes got the county to spray.

Sunshine – Nancy Vorhauer, MG class 2006 (our chapter's first class), passed away on August 15th. She was an artist and the third female fire fighter in our state!

Propagation Team- Bill Martin reminded us that now is a good time to start saving seeds. While it remains unclear as to when and what events we will be doing, having a great supply of seeds for give-a ways would be a help.

New Business: Keiko stated that the Steering Committee should be active. She offered her backyard as a meeting space.

Sal noted that Lauren is working to get Committees active again – developing new ideas and seeing what is possible. Meetings can be facilitated from the office via Zoom. Backyard meetings are permissible.

The 2022 MG Class will be virtual coupled with other counties.

Kathy King asked about Helpline – should MG be doing something, perhaps taking inquiries from the public? Sal noted that there have been few calls and only a handful of soil samples.

Sal and Lauren are working on volunteer training for interns. Three classes will be scheduled.

Essex - no report.

Hunterdon We are beginning to ramp up some activities.

We are conducting interviews, via zoom for potential new class participants.

Our Helpline has been busy, spotted lanterned fly is a hot topic.

Several of our teams are beginning limited in person work.

Mercer

Administration, training and communications

Consistent with prior years, there was no August meeting.

Mercer County Horticulturalist, Margaret Pickoff's last day with Mercer County was July 16. Margaret did return in August, however, to conduct her last webinar in her Veggie Basics series: Harvesting Crops and End of Season Tasks!

Meredith Melendez, County Agricultural and Natural Resources County Agent II, is conducting the search to fill the position of County Horticulturist and has assumed oversight of the Mercer MG program. The County Horticulturalist position announcement is being re-circulated as response to the initial posting was less than hoped-for.

Activities/volunteerism

Helpline, which commenced limited operations on July 27, continues to be staffed exclusively by members of the Helpline Mentors committee. Mentors are in the Helpline office on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:00 – 3:00 p.m. Members of the public may visit the office by invitation only. Requests received by phone/voicemail and email are being addressed by return phone calls during office hours.

The Helpline Mentors have begun to plan for intern 'on the job' training under the direct tutelage of Mentors. Based on input from the Mentors membership, it has been decided to delay training until Helpline volumes decline from current, high levels. The volume of inquiries and the County mask mandate were deemed too challenging to provide a positive training experience for interns at this time.

Work to restore the Mercer Educational Gardens has accelerated in anticipation of Mercer's first in-person community education event – a composting demonstration – scheduled for September 25. Scheduled workdays continue to be well attended, with strong intern participation in both the Educational Garden restoration and in committee work.

Helping the interns progress through their requirements for Helpline and general service hours continues to be a priority.

For the foreseeable future, Executive and General meetings will continue to be held virtually.

Middlesex --2021-2022 Master Gardener Program information sessions will be held at the EARTH center September 9 @ 6:30pm and September 10 @ 9:30am. We offer day and evening classes for this yearlong program. The orientation classes will give residents the opportunity to see if this program is right for them.

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Master Gardeners provided information on our program and answers to questions on gardening and landscaping at the 2021 Middlesex County Fair in the Agriculture Pavilion.

Great outreach events with MG volunteers at the EARTH Center Open House in August.

Rows for the Hungry donation garden continues to donate fresh produce to MCFOODS and Elijah's Promise

On October 23rd, 2021 the Master Gardener class of 2020 will finally take place and congratulation to all those who made it through a most difficult year.

We resuming free, in-person horticulture talks at the EARTH Center. They are open to all with limited seating. Please visit Middlesex County's EARTH Center website for more info.

On September 13, 2021 Dr George Hamilton is offering an update on the "Spread and Management of Spotted Lanternfly in New Jersey" as part of Earth Day Every Day Webinars - Fall 2021

Monmouth Monmouth County MGs have worked through the summer restoring the Ag. Building gardens to their original beauty. Our interns, with the help from veterans, have restored and made the PAR once again a garden that has produced close to 700 lbs. since late spring! Way to go, Interns! A thank you goes to our PAR mentors Geoff Bray and Tom Lang for teaching good practices to our interns!

In addition, the Junior Master Gardener Garden was weeded, cleaned and planted up. The JMG and Herb Gardens have both made contributions to our local food banks too. Many long and hot days were spent this summer in preparation for the harvests that have come and still keep coming! Further, the Memorial Garden and Monarch Waystation have been weeded, pruned, new plants added and refreshed. The Native Garden received three pawpaw trees and several donated native plants from MGs. They were planted and the garden has had a total cleanup which took much of the summer. All gardens were mulched...many thanks to county for the mulch! They all look wonderful! Thank you to all of our MGs who have donated plants, planted plants, spread mulch, weeded till they dreamed of weeds and have worked so hard to restore our gardens!

We continue to meet for Ops and General Meetings via zoom as we are not permitted to meet in-person in the building per the county. Since our last Spring Garden Days sale in 2019, MGs have been holding plants that have been donated by MGs for, what we'd hoped, the 2020...then the 2021 plant sale. These plants could be perennials, house plants, small trees and the like and are being kept at the homes of a few MGs. We are thinking about having some sort of on-line plant sale amongst our members to reduce the number now being stored for a future sale. We will let you know what we come up with and how it worked out!

Our Speakers Bureau and School Programs Committees are as busy as ever and continue to give presentations or assistance to garden clubs and schools in the county. Diane Larson, our coordinator, still meets on a regular basis via the county library website and zoom for Helpline Q & A...Thanks, Diane! In the county we have been invited to participate in festivals, at parks or in town affairs by having an informational and/or craft table. We are glad to have the exposure and always glad they included us!

As with other counties, we have programs/activities that come up during certain months of the year. September would be when we have our Recognition Picnic and recognize MGs for their continued and outstanding service with the President's Award. This year I have the pleasure to recognize three MGs: Linda and John Bauer and Tom Matulewicz. Linda and John came into the program in 2006 and 2005 respectively. Tom is an original oldie but goodie entering into the program at its beginning, 1999. They all have spent countless hours and have put lots of effort into making the Monmouth County Master Gardener Program the terrific one that it is! Congratulations to Linda, John and Tom! Many thanks!

Morris

Back to the Farm Tour--On Tuesday August 24, 2021 Snyder Farm had a 'Back to the Farm Tour' for guests to see the research that goes on at the farm. Snyder Farm in Pittstown NJ is supported by RMG volunteers from Hunterdon, Morris, and Somerset counties.

Helpline Report--Working strictly remotely, the Helpline had another busy year. We are keeping our fingers crossed that we can have a regular Helpline season in 2022.

Speakers Bureau Report --The Morris County Speakers Bureau has had an incredibly busy remote schedule for 2021. The 2022 schedule is filling up fast and we are currently making available both in-person and remote viewing sessions. –

Rutgers Master Gardener Classes

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We will be starting our regular in-person Rutgers Master Gardener classes in September. We have updated the way material is accessed by students and we are prepared to switch over to either a hybrid or total remote learning situation should the need arise.

Volunteer Opportunities--We are adding new volunteer opportunities slowly as more RMGs are becoming comfortable with volunteer again.

Ocean

Our Display Garden in front of our building has been revived by some hard-working MGs and is ready for visitors as we begin to welcome clients. The Tick Lab and Helpline phone are open with one MG in each place. The Education Outreach Committee has three projects going, one a Zen garden at a school. Barnegat Community Garden has requested some advice, also. Our weekly IPM reports contain relevant information on insects, diseases, etc. The Community Garden had many helpers restoring the beds and is now fully planted and donated 548lbs. to local food banks. Gleaning has brought our contributions to 2,000+lbs. Our calendar, written for last year, has gone to the printer with only half the usual number ordered. We had our first in-person General Meeting with masks and distancing. About 25 MGs were present. Looking forward to more MGs participating in the future.

Passaic – no report

Somerset – Our HelpLine team continues to work with the public, holding virtual call-in sessions on line and responding to emailed queries. Work in the Teaching Garden is proceeding. The restoration of the existing Native Plant and Pollinator plots have been completed, with expansion planned. The Perennial Plant area design is to include a demo area of hügelkultur. Our storage shed is set for delivery on Sept. 20.

Sussex

Union – no report.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at ??????? am. The next meeting is XX/XX/2021 at 9 am by Zoom.

Respectfully Submitted
Cindy Hedin, Recording Secretary