

# Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

## Minutes of RMGANJ Meeting, November 9, 2023

### Attendance:

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Atlantic:           |   |
| Bergen:             |   |
| Burlington:         | Nick Hendershot                               |
| Cumberland:         | Betsey Simpson, Keiko Warner                  |
| Essex:              | Susan Norkin                                  |
| Hunterdon:          | Tricia Deering, Dewey Goodwin                 |
| Mercer:             | Judy Colburn, Angelina Duggan, Betty Scarlata |
| Middlesex:          | Jerri Barclay, Kathy Dopart                   |
| Monmouth:           | Bob Magovern, Gayle Williams                  |
| Morris:             |   |
| Ocean:              | Suzanne Keane, Roberta Quinn                  |
| Passaic:            | Rashmi Dhekne, Monica Chalgeri                |
| Somerset:           | Cindy Hedin, Ellen Locker                     |
| Sussex:             |   |
| Union:              | Kristin Keifer                                |
| Rutgers University: | Nick Polanin                                  |

Nick Hendershot called the Zoom meeting to order at 9:02 am and welcomed the group to the meeting.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Roberta Quinn, Treasurer, reported that the current balance, as of 11/6/23, is \$13,555.79. The debit amounts, ~\$600.00, \$700.00 & \$800.00, that were in question at the last meeting are still in question. A room use charge of \$1,390.00 for the conference was noted. Rutgers is no longer covering that charge. Two General Ledger items, \$12.13 & \$24.63, were noted also. Nick Polanin will check with Talia. In response to Roberta's question, Nick P. stated that there were 310 registrations total. A motion to accept the treasurer's report was made, seconded and approved.

**Secretary's Minutes from the October, 2023 RMGANJ Meeting:** Tricia Deering commented that there was probably no need for a substitute secretary since the Zoom recording could be used for the minutes. Late to the meeting, Cindy Hedin, Recording Secretary, reported that she had emailed the RMGANJ October minutes earlier this week. There was one addition to the attendance, and two county reports were added. A motion to accept the minutes with those additions was made, seconded and approved.

**MASTER GARDENER'S COORDINATOR'S REPORT:** Nick Polanin reported that the Annual Conference was very well received, the speakers excellent, the venue quite satisfactory and the food arrangements went smoothly, the extra food inadvertently provided by Rutgers Dining Services much appreciated. 310 folks registered: 120 for in person; 190 for online, however 145 was the highest number of virtual viewers at any one time. There were some connectivity issues that were quickly resolved. Links to recordings of the individual presentations will be sent soon to all who registered.

Carl Gersons was very enthusiastic in his praise for Nicki Graf and the greenhouses. There are videos of the greenhouses available online. (Tours of the greenhouses may be arranged for groups of 24 or fewer with advanced planning.)

Comments about future conferences included:

1. Could the Marketplace come back? Probably not because of the extra cost for the room(s).
2. What about awards? Perhaps a separate event? Poster sessions at the conference, but that would make more work for the awardees. Per Ellen Locker-Environmental Steward poster template would make it easier. Do the Booklet again.
3. Should a survey of 10/23 be done? Perhaps too late now.
4. Should next conference be all inperson (no virtual/online option)?

The Consumer Horticulture position will be offered to the top candidate this week, and the person will be on the job by the end of the year. Offers will be made soon for the top candidates for the positions in Passaic and Somerset Counties.

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Judy Colburn reported that Mercer County's new coordinator has been well received, she is enthusiastic and energetic.

### **New Business**

Report from Nominating Committee: Keiko Warner presented the slate:

President-Dave Parsons, Burlington County

Treasurer-Trina Ehntholt, Essex County

Additional nominations will be accepted from the floor at the December 14 meeting when the elections take place..

From a pre meeting question—non RMGANJ members may attend the state meetings. Those interested should ask their county coordinator or rep forward them the meeting link.

### ***Caring and Sharing:***

Middlesex Master Gardeners are selling license plate frames for \$10.00. If interested, contact Jerri Barclay or Kathy Dopart. Kathy assured us that these frames do not violate NJ laws.

Rashmi Dhekne reminded folks of the New Jersey Botanical Garden Show House on Nov. 30, Dec. 1 & 2.

Monmouth Master Gardeners held graduation ceremonies for 30 (+1) new candidates. A bus trip to NYBG (<https://www.nybg.org/>) was fully subscribed.

Somerset Master Gardeners & friends visited Little Island (<https://littleisland.org/>, a very interesting new park in the Hudson River), the High Line (<https://www.thehighline.org/>) and Chelsea Market.

Awards/Recognition events are being held/planned by Hunterdon, Monmouth, Mercer, Ocean, Union and Passaic. Monmouth's event will include a pot luck lunch and an auction.

### **COUNTY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:**

***Atlantic*** – no report.

***Bergen*** -- no report.

***Burlington*** – no report

***Cumberland*** -- Pepper Trials 2023--Many thanks to the dedicated MG who helped pick the peppers. Kaylynn and Karleen distributed hundreds of pounds of peppers to soup kitchens and food pantries in Cumberland and Camden Counties. MG took peppers to senior centers in Cumberland County.

#### **HalloWheaton**

This event was a great success. The scarecrows were so creative, and each entry received a prize. Many thanks to our sponsors. Attendance was overwhelming. Families crowded around the learning tables to learn about rabbits, chickens, goats, wild turkeys, cotton and peanuts. For most children, it was a first time for them to pet animals and they were excited! Patti Sheppard and Marie Nicke did hand painting to raise money for the scholarship fund. Shoshana and Leah Osofsky taught parents and children about cotton plants and peanut plants. Some older children took sprigs of cotton home to share with their classmates. Lynn Houck and Dianna Popwell had the children stamp animal tracks on paper. They gave out coloring books. Materials ran out by 3PM. I did Turkey Talk – the male and female calls were a hit! Many parents and grandparents expressed thanks for this learning experience.

#### **Scholarship**

The committee met and decided to offer two \$1,000 scholarships to high school students who reside in Cumberland or Salem County. We will redouble our efforts in targeting the high schools, 4-H, and Future Farmers of America. We will start sending out the applications at the beginning of November, keeping the deadline April 15. Kaylynn has contacted Rutgers for guidance to enable us to fund the scholarship with the money that is in the Rutgers account.

#### **Trip Committee**

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Chanticleer - Our September trip to Chanticleer Garden in Wayne, PA was a great success - beautiful weather, a guided tour with very knowledgeable docents and time to wander and enjoy the many gardens that inhabit this wonderful property. It is definitely a place to visit more than once!

### Upcoming Trips

Longwood Garden at Christmastime – Monday, Dec. 4

PA Farm Show – Thursday, Jan. 11, 2024

### Veterans Home –

On our October 13th visit, the veterans decorated a grapevine wreath with Nature's weed pods and pine cones as well as some colorful artificial leaves and ribbon to hang in their rooms. On Friday Nov. 17th, we will meet at 9:30 at the Veterans Home to create pinecone turkeys with the residents. no report.

**Essex--** no report.

**Hunterdon** Our new class on MG is progressing well. The new group is very enthusiastic

Our Hunterdon Central team has put the school garden to bed for the winter.

Our Helpline continues to field question from the general public.

Our Sensatory Garden team has cleaned their garden and is preparing a list for plantings in teh Spring.

Our Workshop Team will be hosting several hands on workshops .

We continue to have excellent speakers at our monthly meetings.

### **Mercer**

The Rutgers Master Gardeners of Mercer County hybrid monthly meeting was held October 4. A total of 105 participated, 42 in person and 63 via Zoom.

Take 5 -- MG Coordinator Justine Gray introduced a new monthly segment called "Take 5," aimed at updating members on recent issues that have been cropping up at Helpline. Powdery Mildew vs. Scale: For her first topic, Justine addressed the differences between powdery mildew and scale. She began by sharing the number of questions related to scale and powdery mildew that have come into Helpline so far this year.

Justine also noted that, on several occasions this month, prunicola scale was misdiagnosed as powdery mildew. She went on to describe each, stressing the importance of MGs accurately distinguishing between the two issues.

- Powdery mildew is a fungal disease, presenting as a grayish-white, powdery mat on leaves, stems, and sometimes flower petals.
- An increase in powdery mildew cases is often observed following a period of high humidity.
- Prunicola scale is a non-native armored (hard) scale insect, smaller than a poppy seed, which is often found on stems and branches.
- Scale damage may not be evident until the population becomes substantial.

Justine then provided the following recommendations for dealing with each problem:

#### Powdery Mildew:

- Prune affected areas.
- Preventative measures include avoiding overhead watering and ensuring plants have sufficient space.
- MGs were advised to inquire about the client's watering practices and mulching.

#### Scale:

- Natural predators such as lady beetles, wasp parasitoids, thrips, and mites can be used.
- Horticultural or neem oil, as well as insecticidal soap, are common treatment options.
- Scale tends to particularly affect plants like lilac and cherry laurels.

Helpline Committee: Helpline Happenings: In this month's Helpline Committee update, the focus was on brown marmorated stink bugs, which make their way into homes at this time of year. Co-chair Karen Bennett described these pests as a nuisance in homes, known for emitting a noxious odor as a defense mechanism. While they don't breed in houses, bite humans or pets, damage homes, or consume pantry items, they can be a significant annoyance. Recommended methods for keeping them out include caulking windows, replacing weather stripping, removing vegetation from foundations, capping chimneys, and keeping screen doors closed. The full article on stink bugs is in the newsletter, and includes information on identification, life stages and removal techniques.

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**Insect Fest:** The co-chair expressed gratitude to everyone for contributing to the success of this year's Insect Fest. She provided some key statistics, stating that the event had a great turnout with a total of 420 visitors and 122 cars, with 199 adults and 221 children attending. Positive feedback was received throughout the event, making clear that attendees were both entertained and educated.

**Community Education:** The October event is held on Thursday, October 12, at 7 pm via Zoom. It was mentioned that registration for the program was available on the website, with a flyer also emailed. The event focused on "The Evolving Landscape of Grounds for Sculpture" and was presented by Janis Napoli, the GFS Horticulturist.

**School Gardens:** Jeanne Mroczko provided an important update on the School programs' status, explaining that the Board of Education in Trenton has recently imposed some additional volunteer requirements. Unfortunately, she explained, these requirements are rather strict and differ from what had been required of MGs in the past. One of these new requirements is obtaining a current TB test, in addition to the usual background checks, fingerprinting, providing copies of driver's licenses, among other things. While the committee determines the best way for volunteers to comply with these new requirements, all MG School programs have been temporarily put on hold.

**Hours:** The co-chair reminded everyone to enter their hours on Better Impact, as we are entering the fourth quarter of 2023. A brief review was provided of the 2023 volunteer hour requirements for Certified Master Gardeners.

**Tours:** The co-chair highlighted an upcoming tour to of David Culp's garden, Brandywine Cottage, a two-acre Pennsylvania garden where the technique of layering is in full display for a non-stop parade of color. This tour was held October 13.

**Outreach:** Master Gardeners participated in the Hightstown Harvest Fair on October 7.

**Graduation/Awards Ceremony:** The President reminded everyone of the upcoming Graduation and Awards Luncheon on November 15, 11:30am – 2:00pm. She noted that an email was recently sent out to all with additional information, and pointed out that the RSVP date falls on November 1, which precedes the next monthly meeting. MGs were encouraged to submit their RSVP promptly. She pointed out that the luncheon is an in-person only event and will not be available via Zoom.

**Nominating Committee:** The Chair presented the proposed slate of Officers for 2024. Per the by-laws, at the November General Meeting, the final slate will be presented. The election will be held during the December General Meeting.

**MEG 25th Anniversary Celebration:** The President launched the celebration by acknowledging months of planning and volunteer work. Since that time, the gardens have evolved to become the site of our two largest public events, Plant Expo and Insect Fest, while also serving as a valuable hands-on classroom for training both new and seasoned Master Gardeners. The co-chair of MEG then played a narrated video retrospective that included photos from the development of the site through its award-winning evolution to its present-day glory. At its conclusion, the co-chair and team were extended the President's gratitude for creating such a beautiful and touching visual history of MEG. The video will be available online for MGs to view in the near future. The celebration concluded with the President inviting all to raise a glass of cider to toast another fruitful 25 years. Those present at the event were treated to birthday cake in celebration of this significant milestone.

**Program:** The October program, entitled "Dunes Restoration at the Jersey Shore", was presented by Jaclyn Rhodes, of The Pinelands Alliance.

**Middlesex** The Fruit Garden has been revamped and expanded. The Master Gardener class of 2022 adopted this project as interns and has cleaned, cleared and replanted the beds with new and different varieties of fruit and pollinator plants.

The redesigned Native Plant Garden is close to completion. This display garden offers the public ideas and suggestions for using native plants in the home garden. A visit this time of year demonstrates care of native plants after a killing frost.

Work is winding down in the Children's Garden for this season. Most of our annuals succumbed to the frost of this past week. Many of the perennials are entering a state of dormancy. Some will die back completely while others show a smattering of green growth at ground level. Below ground the roots will continue to grow, keeping plants fed with stored up starches. You can continue to visit the Children's Garden anytime the park is open. We remain open all year for visitors, although work in the garden will be sporadic over the winter

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months. Instead, we will use this time for dreaming and planning how we would like the garden to look and function in the future.

Rows for the Hungry has harvested and delivered an amazing 16,000 pounds of fresh, first quality produce to the food insecure in Middlesex County through their partnership with Elijah's Promise and Replenish, the Middlesex County Food Bank. This is roughly a 33% increase from last year and more food is awaiting harvest.

On October 19 the Middlesex County Master Gardeners had their first full Graduation and Awards Ceremony since Covid. 87 Master Gardeners received awards and a new class of Master Gardeners graduated.

Another class of Master Gardener interns is underway. Approximately 40 students make up the Thursday evening and Friday morning classes. They are showing a lot of enthusiasm for the Master Gardener program and enjoying working in the gardens at the EARTH Center.

**Monmouth** -- Preparation for our graduation and milestone awards has been finalized and an Honorary Master Gardener, Claudia Lammers, was chosen to be honored at this event. Graduation will take place in mid-November.

All Ag. Building gardens have been raked, pruned and tended to in preparation for winter. The PAR garden has been made ready for the Class of 2024 and the legacy crop of garlic will be planted in early November. The Helpline Roundtable committee researches and prepares talks on topics that come up on our Helpline. Other related topics are also discussed that give us additional information that would be helpful during time on Helpline. This committee virtually meets the first Wednesday of each month.

The Member Education committee arranged a trip to the Phillip Alampi Beneficial Insect Rearing Lab in Ewing, NJ. Their mission is: "To develop insect rearing techniques and mass produce beneficial insects to be used to help reduce insect and weed populations below economic levels, not necessarily eradicate them, but bring things back into balance." A very interesting and worthwhile trip!

The School Programs committee has been helping a Girl Scout Troop achieve their Outdoor Art Creator badge and Manalapan HS to design and give ideas for installing a garden in which they could have lunch instead of the cafeteria. And Speakers Bureau has a full schedule with eight presentations between October and November.

Lastly, Monmouth County MGs enjoy celebrating the good year that they've had with a Holiday Recognition Luncheon. MG made food items will be brought and enjoyed by all, while afterwards we'll have an auction with items brought by members. It's always held in December and plans have been made to do so again. A very good afternoon with friends, food and lots of laughs!

In the meantime, Happy Thanksgiving to you all!

### **Morris**

### **Ocean**

Several Outreach projects are finishing up now. The ARC project at Wrangle Brook concluded a successful year with a pesto making workshop. Speakers' Bureau has three more presentations this month. Gleaning Committee has reached its goal of 10,000 lbs. when it gleaned apples last week. The Cutting Garden, a new project this year, bought flowers to The Pines at Whiting where the residents use them in their Flower Arranging Class. Helpline questions and Tick IDs will be handled by the horticulturists (staff) now.

Active committees have now been reporting in our newsletter which reaches more folks than our General Meetings do, so that is a good move encouraged by our Board of Directors. Members have been urged to record their hours in BI before the closing date for this year. (Not all are complying, yet.)

MGs who attended the Fall Conference had positive comments, both the zoom and in-person folks.

Our 2024 class is filled and MGs are volunteering to be mentors to these Interns come January.

**Passaic** – no report

**Somerset** – no report

### **Sussex**

**Union** – The Union County Master Gardeners are busy wrapping up the 2023 season.

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Helpline Training was held in early October, with about 20 people in attendance. Internships began in November to supplement with in person training on the Helpline.

The Board held a Communication meeting in October for all Committees to report on their activities.

Reports were presented for:

The Sharing Garden: Over 1700 pounds of produce grown and donated to 12 agencies.

The Berry Patch: Includes a pollinator garden, tomato boxes, the netted berry patch and the compost bin. Fruit this year included raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, blackberries and Goji, Josta and Kiwi berries. Golden raspberries will be added next year.

Other reports include the Pergola Rose Garden, Drought Tolerant Plot, Plant Architecture Garden, Summer into Fall Garden, Hosta Bed, Lorax Committee and the Herb Garden.

The Children's Program reported on the various summer camp activities with Trailside Nature Center and Winfield Park school. Over 121 kids attended the programs.

A new Hops Trellis will be added to the Demonstration Garden beginning this fall.

The Rain Garden will need some attention in the spring.

The Horticultural Therapy Program is up and running and very well attended at a number of facilities in the county.

A Pin Party was held in October. It was well attended. It featured a Job Fair to encourage sign up for the various committees. Awards were presented to recognize a local MG group and individual.

A Holiday party will be held in December to celebrate another successful year. The 4H members have donated homegrown Christmas Cactuses and Poinsettias for centerpieces. New toys and canned goods will be collected for donation to a local charity.

The Union County Executive Board approved new Board member nominations for 2024 and a memorial plaque for a beloved MG who passed away in 2023.

About 7 UCMG attended the October Conference at Rutgers, others participated on Zoom. The overall feedback was excellent. The 3 speakers were very good and their presentations were informative and interesting.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 10:12 am. The next meeting is 12/14/2023 at 9 am by Zoom.

Respectfully Submitted  
Cindy Hedin, Recording Secretary