

Master Gardeners of Bergen County

February 2022 – Potting Shed Mid-Month Update

HORTICULTURE

Why didn't my plant come back?

By Janet Schulz, Class of 1988

I bought a perennial two summers ago at an end-of-season sale. I took really good care of it by planting and watering it. However, I wondered why it did not survive the winter. I need to ask myself these questions so I don't lose another plant again.

- Did my plant receive too much water, not enough water, or the light wasn't right?
- Was its location well-drained? Was the soil too slow to drain so the plant's roots sat in water and rotted in soggy soil? Or maybe the soil drained too quickly and my plant's roots were unable to absorb the nutrients they needed?
- Did I amend the soil properly by adding organic matter? Plants need oxygen as well as nutrients and water. Too little or too much of any results in stress, which leads to diseases and death.
- Was direct sun the problem and my plant cooked, or maybe it didn't receive enough sun? My planting zone is 6 [using the USDA hardiness zone map prior to 2012], meaning the coldest temperature is 10 degrees to 0 degrees F. in winter. If the soil is not well-drained that could be a problem. The temperature is only one factor, drainage is another. What could it have been?
- Did my plant have time to become established before the ground froze?



If you don't have luck with a plant, "plant" a flag.

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Links are clickable and are noted in [blue](#).

Meeting reminder: Tuesday, Feb. 22

Announcements at 7:20 pm; program to follow.

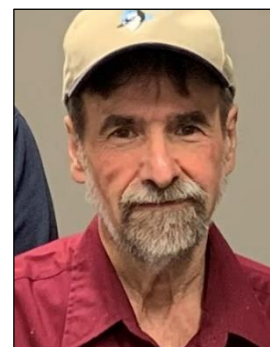
Click [here](#) to join the meeting at 7:15 pm.

Meeting ID: 926 9258 8641; password: 692429

Gardening for Butterflies

Don Torino, president of the Bergen County Audubon Society (BCAS), will present information on how we can turn our yards into magical places for butterflies and at the same time restore much-needed biodiversity to our area in his talk titled Gardening for Butterflies.

Don will discuss specific native plants that are both host plants and nectar sources for our butterflies. Visit the BCAS [website](#) for instructions to turn your garden into a Certified Wildlife Garden.



Don Torino

Don has been president of BCAS for about 10 years. He writes a [blog](#) called Life in the Meadowlands and recently published a book titled "Life in the Meadowlands" available for purchase via the blog.

About those in-person events . . .

MG of BC monthly meetings will continue virtually for now. While Rutgers has authorized the return to in-person events (with the wearing of face masks, social distancing, and following all county or location policies), the MG of BC won't meet indoors yet. We'll notify you when in-person indoor meetings will resume. Meanwhile, looking forward to seeing you at our Feb. 22 meeting via Zoom!

(Horticulture, continued from page 1)

- Did I mulch it after the ground was frozen? Yes. I said *after* the ground was frozen. Newly planted shrubs and perennials ought to be mulched *after* the ground freezes to keep the ground frozen. This prevents frost heave. Frost heave happens when the soil melts and refreezes repeatedly during the winter months. One of the ways to winter-mulch is to cover the newly planted perennials with evergreen branches. This will prevent frost heave, which is fatal.

I can't remember which of the above questions I failed to answer, but I surely will try not make the same mistakes again.

Air plants – a trendy plant with a long story



Photo courtesy of Bruce Crawford

Tillandsia harrisii perched in a jade plant.

Bruce Crawford, manager of horticulture, Morris County Park Commission, has chosen the air plant (Tillandsia) as his February plant of the month.

By Bruce Crawford

It is no secret that plants, much like clothing, go through trends. In fact, plants that are popular during one decade may not even be seen at nurseries during the decades to follow. Air plants, botanically known as *Tillandsia*, were a mere curiosity 10 years ago, and now are a “houseplant” of great demand. Its interest lies in the plants’ mysterious ability to seemingly live on air without any soil nor obvious root system. Of course, it does not really live on air, so what is the mysterious story behind the life of this plant that has captured the curiosity of so many? . . . Click [here](#) to read more.

Start sharpening those tools

It's February and time to sharpen saws and pruners, says Bruce Crawford, manager of horticulture, Morris County Park Commission. Click [here](#) to read Bruce's “gardening notes” on the Garden Club of New Jersey

website. His “to-do” list will keep you busy for the rest of the month.

WEBINARS

All times are Eastern.

Feb. 17, 6:30 pm: University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension sponsors Indoor Seed Starting. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Feb. 17, 7 pm: Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum sponsors Creating a Cottage Style Garden. Free. Click [here](#), then scroll down to Feb. 17 in the left column for more information and to register.

Feb. 19, 9:30-11:30 am: Master Gardeners of Monmouth County sponsors Native Grasses for New Jersey Landscapes. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. Download the handout found below the “event description” on the registration page.

Feb. 19, 11 am: Rockbridge Area (VA) Master Gardeners sponsors Feeding Birds Naturally (a virtual plant clinic). Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Feb. 23, noon-1 pm: Ohio State University Extension sponsors Lunch and Learn - Perennial Update 2022. Free. Click [here](#), then scroll down to Feb. 23 for more information and to register.

Feb. 23, 6-7 pm: Holy Name Medical Center sponsors Building a Regenerative Garden at Home (speaker from the Teaneck Creek Conservancy). Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Feb. 24, 7 pm: Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum sponsors Fabulous Gardens of Southeast England. Cost: Free for members/\$10 for non-members. Click [here](#), then scroll down to Feb. 24 in the left column for more information and to register.

Feb. 25, noon-1:15 pm: University of Maine Cooperative Extension sponsors Spring Has Spawned - Getting Your Garden Ready for Mushroom Cultivation. Fee: Sliding scale from \$0 to \$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Feb. 26, 9:30-11:30 am: Master Gardeners of Monmouth County sponsors Natural Born Killers, Body Snatchers, and the Crawling Dead - A Mind-Blowing Look at Beneficial Insects. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. Download the handout found below the “event description” on the registration page.

The eagle has definitely landed



Photo courtesy of Diane Tagliabue

Bald eagle cams provide a live look at breeding pairs of *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*. Visit the [Duke Farms](#) eagle cam. Click here for the American Eagle Foundation [cam](#). Diane Tagliabue of Bogota photographed the eagle above near the Hackensack River last spring. It's one of a breeding pair she nicknamed Ozzie and Harriet. Not sure who's pictured above.

12th annual Community Garden Conference

Sponsored by the Frelinghuysen Arboretum and Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Morris County. Some presentations will be live while others will be recorded for this virtual conference.

Speakers/topics include:

- Niki Jabbour, author of "Growing Under Cover";
- Ellen Ecker Ogden, author of "The New Heirloom Garden," her latest book;
- Peter Nitzsche, Morris County ag agent: Findings from the season-long Rutgers 250 Tomato Project "To Prune or Not to Prune";
- The "Dirt" on Soil;
- What's Eating my Vegetables and Plants?;
- Grow and Preserve Culinary Herbs;
- Taking the Mystery Out of Organic Gardening.

Fee: \$30. Click [here](#), then scroll down to March 12 in the left column for more information and to register. Registration deadline is March 11.

HORTICULTURE GRAPEVINE

Feb. 16, 6 pm: Hasbrouck Heights Garden Club, Municipal Building, 320 Boulevard, 2nd floor, Hasbrouck Heights. Topic: Armchair gardening (participants will discuss 2022 garden plans). Refreshments at 5:30 pm.

Feb. 17, 7 pm: Garden Club of Teaneck via Zoom. Speaker: John Culpepper, Compost for Good project. Topic: Composting. Click [here](#) to join the meeting. Meeting ID: 8591731 5051; password: 550373.

THIS AND THAT

Ideas for garden tool organization and making your own tools

Organize your long-handled garden tools in a barrel using only a drill and a hole saw. Watch this 90-second how-to [video](#) on YouTube.

You'll wish you'd taken metal shop in high school. Watch the practical garden tools you can make with power tools and some rusted rebar in this YouTube [video](#).

Janet's method of tool organization

By Janet Schulz, Class of 1988

I picked up my carrier years ago at a garage sale. The owner told me it was a carpenter's carryall. I store my most-often-used tools in it close to my back door. (No, I do not carry it around with me.) I select a tool or two that I might use when I enter the garden.

There are days I make multiple trips to the toolbox, but by taking only one or two at a time I'm more likely to return them to the

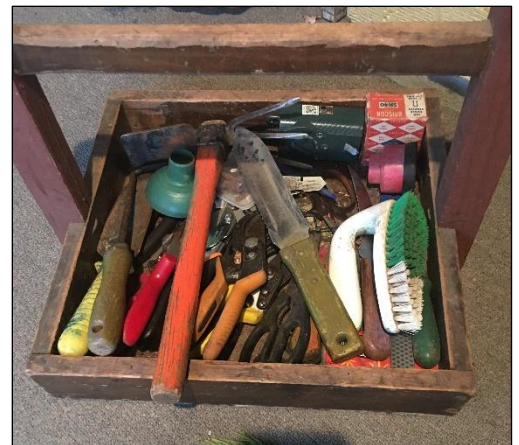


Photo by Janet Schulz

box. I've spray-painted the tool handles from time to time so it's easier to locate those I laid down somewhere. You can see almost all the paint has worn off. Time to respray all the handles so I won't lose them in the garden! The scrub brush is always on hand for the birdbath.