

Save the dates!

Sept 7: Another 'blast' at Teaneck Creek Conservancy

Volunteers are invited for a second "blast" in the Peace Labyrinth at Teaneck Creek Conservancy. Come to weed, earn volunteer hours, and meet other MGs and interns. Spend as much time as you can Sept. 7 from 9 am-1 pm. Teaneck Creek Conservancy is located at 20 Puffin Way, Teaneck.

Bring gloves, bug spray, small hand tools, water, and a snack/lunch. Park in the lot in front of 20 Puffin Way. Bathrooms are located in the building. Click [here](#) to register. Be sure to record your volunteer hours in [Better Impact](#).

Sept. 19: We're back! MG of BC meeting

1 Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack, 1st-floor meeting room. Speaker: Eric Rohsler of Rohsler's Allendale Nursery. Topic: Artistry in the Garden. Come at 7 pm for refreshments; announcements at 7:20 pm. The meeting will follow.

Sept. 22-24: Bergen County Fall Harvest Festival

New location: Overpeck County Park, 199 Challenger Road, Ridgfield Park. See flyer accompanying the Potting Shed for details.

Webinars

All times are Eastern.

Aug. 17, 10-11 am: North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Buncombe County Center, sponsors Update on Oaks: Trees in Transition. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Aug. 17, 1 pm: Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation sponsors The Paradox of Fire: A Threat to Pollinators Yet a Key Process They Need. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Aug. 29, noon-1 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors Why We Should Be Making Small Pruning Cuts. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

At Washington Spring Garden



Photo by Suzanne Danzig

Our dedicated and oh so strong volunteers Janet Stofkoper (left) and Jeanne Etter, both Class of 2023, collected so much debris from pruning and cleaning out beds at Washington Spring Garden in Van Saun Park that it filled the park's dump truck. We're so grateful for their hard work and smiling faces each week. Congratulations to Janet who recently became a certified MG. Join our group Thursdays from 9 am-noon.

- Suzanne Danzig, Class of 2008 and site coordinator

Events

Aug. 25-Sept. 10: Van Vleck House and Gardens sale of mums, bulbs, and mixed planters. Order online and pick up at the gardens, 21 Van Vleck St., Montclair. Click [here](#) for more information.

Aug. 30, 1-7 pm: Snyder Research & Extension Farms open house and tomato tasting, 140 Locust Grove Road, Pittstown. Enjoy tasting 50+ tomato varieties. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. Sponsored by Rutgers NJ Agricultural Experiment Station and Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

Blueberries: More than pies, cakes, and muffins!

[Editor's note: Lourdes Osorio, Passaic County MG, created the [Native Plant Channel](#) on YouTube.]

By Lourdes Osorio, Class of 1996

When trying to help pollinators, we often think of flowering perennials and fail to consider shrubs. Rarely do we think of fruit-bearing plants. It's time to think beyond perennials and include blueberries, one of the most important plants one can grow to help specialist bees. In addition, highbush blueberries are native to New Jersey!



Photos by Lourdes Osorio

Blueberry blooms in early spring.

Blueberries flower early in the spring offering nectar and pollen to many insects. According to Doug Tallamy, the leading expert on native plant and insect interactions, in the mid-Atlantic region blueberries support nine different specialist bees that can't survive without blueberry pollen.

You see, as babies these bees obtain protein from pollen but can only use the pollen of blueberries. There are other specialist bees with similar relationships to other plants, but blueberries are one of the top plants for specialist bees.

Blueberry shrubs also support numerous butterflies and moths, including the spring azure, a diminutive butterfly that is often noticed by gardeners. The caterpillars of these lepidoptera feed on the leaves of blueberries. If you grow these plants, you are aware that they are highly desired by birds. In fact, it is likely that the birds got to them before you did! If this is the case, know that you are contributing to helping our avian friends.

In nature, blueberries can be found in oak forests. Since blueberries prefer acid soils, they can be grown in gardens with many conifers where soils tend to be acidic. Highbush blueberry can be used as a hedge and its leaves provide attractive fall color. Depending on the species of blueberry, they

can grow in dry to moist soils and full sun to partial shade.

New Brunswick, Canada, has a cautionary tale for us. Years ago, pesticides being used to manage the spruce worm almost completely wiped out the native bees that pollinated blueberries, thereby decimating this crop. The plants themselves appeared healthy yet failed to produce fruit.



Who'll get there first: Lourdes or the birds?

Blueberry farmers sued in a case that made it to the Supreme Court of Canada and eventually got the government to restrict the use of pesticides. It would take a number of years before the population of native bees would increase enough to produce a bountiful blueberry crop once again.

Consider helping bees, lepidoptera, and birds by planting blueberries. As a bonus, you might even be able to bake a pie!

For more information on blueberries, specialist bees, and other top plants for specialist bees, watch [Gardening for the Bees](#) on Lourdes' Native Plant Channel.



All about bees

Rutgers will offer a self-paced online course titled Bee-ginners Beekeeping: The Basics of Apiculture, which will teach you how to start, maintain, and care for a honeybee colony. Course dates are Oct. 2-31. Click [here](#) for more information and to

register. The cost for Master Gardeners is \$275.

Meanwhile, learn more about our native bees through the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service Pollinator Partner Publication. Click [here](#) for the booklet.