



# From the Potting Shed February 2019

Master Gardeners of Bergen County

## SAVE THE DATE

### MG meeting – Tuesday, Feb. 26

1 Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack  
1<sup>st</sup>-floor meeting room

Refreshments at 7 pm; announcements  
at 7:20 pm; program to follow

### Jean Epiphan presents: Native ferns of Bergen County

Jean Epiphan, a trustee and land and stewardship manager at Thielke Arboretum of Glen Rock, will discuss local native fern species, all of which are ecologically significant plants in our natural forests as well as enchanting additions to our home gardens.

She will review why we should plant native plants to support our local ecosystems and how we can add many of these native ferns to our own gardens. She will review planting requirements, such as soil type, light requirements, and moisture needs for each species. She also will describe how to identify and differentiate each fern by its subtle, yet unique, characteristics.



Jean Epiphan

Jean is a staff ecologist and research project coordinator for Rutgers University in the Department of Evolution, Ecology, and Natural Resources. She is a member of a consulting team at Rutgers that advises management at numerous parks about new native landscape plantings. Jean is involved with numerous local non-profit groups by leading nature walks and working on large-scale clean-up events and long-term ecological restoration projects.

At Thielke, Jean is developing long-term tree collection and forest management plans to control invasive plant populations; restoring native habitat; and demonstrating

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Links are clickable and are noted in blue.

only native and sustainable plant choices. Jean received her undergraduate degree from the University of Vermont where she majored in forestry with a concentration in geomorphology.

### From the President's Desk



#### **By Carolyn Gretchen**

Taking our cue from nature, the winter months are a time of rest and reflection. Yes, our gardens are sleeping, but this gives us time to go within and tend to our house plants. Do they need repotting, more moisture, misting, more humidity? Clustering them together will create a mini ecosystem. To increase humidity, place your plants on a tray covered with pebbles, then add water to the tray. As the daylight hours lengthen, you may be rewarded with some flowering.

Tired of staying indoors? Later this month take a walk to your favorite place on a sunny day. You'll see some signs of approaching spring. Notice the leaf and shrub buds swelling. Hellebores, witch hazel, and even that infamous skunk cabbage will be in bloom.

Don't forget the upcoming flower shows to garner new ideas. Check the websites for additional information.

- The [Connecticut Flower and Garden Show](#), Feb. 21-24.
- The [Philadelphia Flower Show](#), March 2-10.
- The [NJ Flower and Garden Show](#), April 25-29 (at the NJ Convention & Expo Center in Edison).

Sketch out your new garden designs, and order your seeds and plants to be shipped when available. It's never too early to shop for your treasures!

Enjoy winter. Every season has something to offer to us gardeners.

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

### To-do list essentials: Renew membership; submit hours now

#### Membership renewal; do it now

Click [here](#) to download the MG of BC membership renewal form for 2019 so your membership doesn't lapse. Mail the completed form and your check for \$20, made payable to the MG of BC, to Terri Pegg, 54 W. Magnolia Ave., Maywood, NJ 07607. You can also include an additional amount. Donations to the MG of BC are always welcome!

**2018 graduates:** You're now Master Gardeners and must send your dues to Terri Pegg and report your volunteer and education hours to Donna Karpel. Without both, you won't be considered certified. See item below on how to report volunteer hours.

#### Volunteer hours are overdue; remit now

##### By Donna Karpel

Your 2018 volunteer hours were due in January.

To maintain your certified Master Gardener status, each year you must:

- Send in your 25 volunteer hours and 10 hours of education.
- Pay your dues (see article above).

Without completing and reporting both the full volunteer and education hours, plus dues, you aren't considered certified. *Don't lose your certified Master Gardener status!*

Both the Excel and paper reporting forms can be found on the left side of the home page of our [website](#) under "Volunteer & Education Reporting Forms." *No password is needed.* There are two ways to report your hours.

1. Excel form: The form can be used on any PC and emailed. *The Excel form is the easiest and most accurate way to track hours.* Do not create your own spreadsheet.
2. Paper form: Paper has to be mailed and you need to make a copy for records. The mailing address is on the form. Please write neatly. *If I can't read it, I can't enter it.*

*Do not use the online reporting system as it's not ready for data entry!*

When using the Excel form, remember to change the file name from "V&EAR Email Form" and save with your

name and year of reporting. Example, Mary Smith 2018. If you need help renaming your form, please ask me. Send the entire report as one spreadsheet.

Do *not* separate your education and volunteer hours into two or more reports; do *not* save your file as a pdf and send; and do *not* send as a shared (Google) drive. Enter only one date per line, especially if you're submitting a paper report.

#### Under education hours you can include the following:

- Any MG workshops and lectures at the meetings;
- Lectures, educational courses, conferences, and docent-led tours at almost any venue including, but not limited to, garden clubs, Rutgers, NYBG, NJBG, association meetings, guided tours, seminars, workshops, etc.; and
- Up to three webinars.

#### Do not include any of the following:

- Travel time, lunch, or socializing;
- Tours of other MG gardens or Garden Conservancy open garden tours; and
- Online research and reading (online or magazines, books, etc.).

If you have any questions or need help, don't hesitate to contact me: Donna Karpel, 201-327-8835 or [donna9189@gmail.com](mailto:donna9189@gmail.com).

## MG OF BC NEWS

### Meet Sal Lagattuta, Class of 2015

#### By Miriam Taub

You could say one college science class changed the course of Sal Lagattuta's life. Sal was a student at Seton Hall University where he enjoyed classes in physics, biology, and inorganic chemistry but not organic chemistry. As a result, he changed direction from pure science to the social sciences where he ultimately had a 40-plus year career in social work.

Sal, who is 66, was born in Sicily and came to the United States when he was 3 years old with his parents, Mario and Domenica, younger brother, and paternal grandparents. They settled in Garfield where others had previously emigrated from their Sicilian village of Mezzojuso. Another brother and sister were born in the United States.

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The Lagattutas lived with some relatives for a few years, and then briefly in a small frame house with a wood stove on property that had been a farm. A large tool shed in the backyard served as a club house for Sal and his brothers as youngsters. A few months later, Mario (who owned a mason construction company) removed the original farm house and built the brick home that Sal lives in today.



**Sal Lagattuta**

Mario's backyard garden was all about the vegetables — tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, squash, and basil — while Sal and his brothers were their father's assistants.

Sal went to Garfield High School where he played tennis and soccer on some regional championship teams. He worked his way through Seton Hall University as a pre-med major until the organic chemistry episode. That's when, he said, he switched to psychology (his major), sociology (his minor), and research (his concentration).

For the first four years after college graduation, Sal held several jobs as a group home/transitional residence manager working with staff for clients with developmental and psychiatric disabilities. He followed up by obtaining a master's degree in social work from Rutgers University.

He soon obtained a position at United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) in New York City, an agency that, at the time, served more than 3,000 developmentally disabled clients who had been "deinstitutionalized" from Willowbrook Developmental Center in Staten Island. His job was to travel to numerous group homes and supervised apartments in upper Manhattan and the Bronx; to perform intakes and quarterly assessments; and to supervise learning programs for the clients. To be closer to his job, he moved to the Riverdale section of the Bronx where he lived for 32 years.

After seven years at UCP, Sal became a medical social worker at Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx, where he worked for 25 years until retirement. When he started in the medical field, he said, regulations were flexible and healthcare was more humane, but then "everything became about numbers." Meanwhile, advances in technology over several decades, have resulted in more effective medical interventions and less invasive surgical

procedures, he said, yielding better outcomes and less downtime for patients. During his career, Sal said he had the opportunity and pleasure of servicing many thousands of hospital patients, from poor and homeless persons to wealthy and famous people.

Sal retired in July 2014 and returned to Garfield having inherited his deceased parents' home. To rekindle his interest in gardening, he investigated whether there were any greenhouses in the area. He discovered a nearby greenhouse at the Garfield Middle School — site of the MG hort therapy program — and learned about the Master Gardeners. During his interview with Dail Reid and Joel Flagler, Sal said that he wrote a check "on the spot" to enroll in the Class of 2015.

Most of Sal's volunteering is done at Garretson (since it has vegetable gardens and is close to home) and at the Hermitage where he says he beautifies the grounds and conducts gardening classes for mildly developmentally disabled young adults. Sal is also a member of the Glen Rock Garden Club, Garden Club of Teaneck, and Greenwood Gardens.

While he's kept some of the backyard lawn at home, Sal returned to his roots by growing tomatoes, vegetables, and herbs as well as flowers. He has also planted fig and fruit trees and keeps a garden space for prayer and meditation. To supplement the MG classes, Sal began buying gardening books and has a collection of more than 500. Besides practical gardening handbooks and horticultural references, some books review the history of gardening, especially gardening trends over the centuries, he said.

Sal's other interests include astronomy; he has been a member of the Amateur Astronomers, Inc. for close to 40 years. He's been working on his family genealogy since 1995 and can trace the Lagattuta line back to 1651. He's been a member and officer of the Italian Genealogy Society of New Jersey for some 25 years. Sal enjoys reading biographies as well as detective and science fiction novels and still loves the sciences — but not organic chemistry.

## HORTICULTURE

**Do you recognize me?**

**By Edith Wallace**

Croton (*Codiaeum variegatum* var. *pictum*) (pictured on page 4), a member of the vast family Euphorbiaceae, is originally from the Pacific Islands. I was surprised the first time I saw it in bloom, and even more surprised to find it blooming in my home.

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There are many horticultural varieties with leaves of various colors, sizes, and shapes (from broad oval to lobed to long and narrow). The inexperienced observer might not identify some plants with different-looking leaves as crotons.



Long-term maintenance of full foliage and color can be difficult. As crotons are inexpensive they can be considered “temporary” houseplant additions with their spectacular leaves making a contrast to the usual houseplant greenery. They need bright light, but not direct sun, when it’s hot. Room temperature is fine if it never goes below 60 degrees F. The soil should not be allowed to dry out. Pests of croton include red spider mites, mealy bug, and scale.

If light or water is insufficient lower leaves will drop. The plants respond well to frequent washing or misting of the leaves. A well-cared-for plant may grow 4 feet tall and have leaves to the base of the stem. If you garden in Key West you can have crotons outside.

## OUT AND ABOUT

### Frelinghuysen Arboretum

*Frelinghuysen Arboretum is located at 353 E. Hanover Ave., Morris Township. All events are held in the Haggarty Center. Visit the [website](#).*

### Is a fig tree in your future?

Growing figs in New Jersey is a challenge, but Bill Muzychko, owner of [Bill's Figs](#) in Flemington, has developed a system that extends the growing season and encourages rapid growth. Learn how he does it and how to best care for these beautiful trees from 1-2:30 pm Sunday, Feb. 17.

Earn 1.5 Rutgers MG CEUs. The cost is \$15 for members/\$20 for non-members. To register, click [here](#). Then scroll down to Feb. 17 in the left column.

### New Jersey vs. invasive plants

Michael Van Clef, owner of Ecological Solutions, LLC and science director of the [NJ Invasive Species Strike Team](#), will review New Jersey’s invasive species. Mike

has worked extensively in the evaluation and management of rare and invasive species and has consulted with many NJ organizations including the NJ Invasive Species Council for which he prepared the New Jersey Strategic Management Plan for Invasive Species.

The program will be 7-8:30 pm Tuesday, Feb. 26. Earn 1.5 Rutgers MG CEUs. The cost is \$15 for members/\$20 for non-members. To register, click [here](#). Then scroll down to Feb. 26 in the left column.

### The Hermitage

### Volunteers needed for maple sugaring event

In preparation for the annual maple sugaring event Feb. 16, the Hermitage has scheduled an instructional meeting for volunteer MGs the day before. The Hermitage is located at 335 N. Franklin Turnpike, Ho-Ho-Kus.

Come to the Hermitage from 1-3 pm Friday, Feb. 15 where you’ll learn maple sugaring’s history and process, from tapping to boil-down, so that you can answer questions from the people who’ll attend the event the following day. Dress appropriately for the weather as you’ll be shown the 15 maple trees to be tapped.

The Maple Sugaring Event will be 1-4 pm Saturday, Feb. 16. Volunteers are needed at 11 am to set up; during the three-hour event; and at 4 pm to clean up. Rain date is Sunday, Feb. 17.

From Feb. 17 until early March individual volunteers will be needed to collect the sap, take it home, and boil it down. You can collect your sap at any time from 9 am-5 pm. If you plan to collect the sap, start saving gallon-size water jugs (not milk jugs).

In mid-March, volunteers will have a boil-down in the Hermitage kitchen and will bottle the syrup.

### NJ Botanical Garden/Skylands

### Owls of New Jersey

Don Torino of the Bergen County Audubon Society will offer an indoor photo presentation in the Carriage House on these fascinating raptors at 1 pm Sunday, Feb. 24. He’ll touch on the many different species that inhabit our

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### Useful links

Many local garden centers give discounts to MGs. See the list on our [website](#). Bring your membership card when shopping.

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region. Snow cancels. NJBG is located at 2 Morris Road, Ringwood. Parking is free at this time of year. Visit the [website](#).

## Thielke Arboretum at Glen Rock

### Build a rain barrel, save water

One rain barrel can help save 1,400 gallons of water from April through October. To help residents build rain barrels for their homes, the arboretum is partnering with the NJ Watershed Ambassadors, Americorps, and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.

You can build your own barrel at a workshop from 1-2:30 pm Sunday, Feb. 24 at the arboretum, 460 Doremus Ave., Glen Rock. The cost is \$30 per barrel. All supplies will be provided, and participants will be taught how to assemble the barrels.

You must register prior to the event so a rain barrel or barrels will be available for you. Click [here](#) to register and pay for your rain barrel in advance. For more information or to register and pay at the door, send an email to [ambassador@pvsc.com](mailto:ambassador@pvsc.com) with your name and the number of rain barrels you wish to reserve.

## Washington Spring Garden

### By Suzanne Danzig

The photo below shows what you can expect this spring when you join the volunteers at Washington Spring Garden in Van Saun Park, one of the most beautiful gardens in Bergen County. This is a special place and,



to date, it has been maintained by a small, dedicated crew of MGs.

We could use your help. We meet from 8:30 am-noon, or any time you can

spare, on Thursday mornings. We'll begin at the end of February or beginning of March, subject to Mother Nature's whim. I'm the site coordinator. Please contact me with any question at [suzannedanzig@gmail.com](mailto:suzannedanzig@gmail.com).

## VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

### NJ Botanical Garden/Skylands

#### By De Trezza and Laura DeFlora

#### Co-chairs Skylands Holiday Open House Decorating Committee

As a result of the MG of BC's participation in the annual Skylands Manor Holiday Open House, a fundraising event that benefits the NJ Botanical Garden, we received a certificate of appreciation from the Skylands Association. The 2018 event raised more than \$13,000, which will go toward improvements of the garden.



fox, which manages to get away.

For the event, which usually takes place the first weekend of December, area organizations each decorate a room based on a central theme. The 2018 theme was "A Country Manor Holiday." Our group of very talented decorators/gardeners transformed the Great Hall into a scene reminiscent of a Downton Abbey fox hunt gathering, complete with

Thanks to the following for their many hours of plotting, planning, and sourcing as well as installing and then breaking it all down and putting it away: Sue Sheridan, Josie Ko, Fran Langendoen, Sandy Pancrazi, Susan Gurak, and Christiane Olivieri.

None of this would have been possible without the help of all the MGs who volunteered to haul items to Skylands, put up lots of trees, string lights, climb ladders, and hang ornaments from the 18-foot center tree. In addition, we'd like to thank the MGs who volunteered as docents for the four days of the event.

Finally, we'd like to thank Joseph Cooper without whose Spider-Man-like talents we would never be able to install the tree topper or decorate the mantel. He's pretty good with a camera, too. Click [here](#) to view his YouTube video of the event.

## SHOWS, CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS

Several conferences and workshops are scheduled for the winter and spring. Mark your calendars if any of these interest you. Early registration is advised.

### Rutgers Home Gardeners School

Saturday, March 23, 9 am-4 pm (check-in begins at 8 am). Hickman Hall, 89 George St., New Brunswick 08901. **Note:** Some workshops have been filled.

The Home Gardeners School is made up of 40 individual workshop sessions covering an array of horticulture topics. You select the four workshops that are most relevant to your gardening interests to create a customized schedule. You have the option of attending two keynote presentations during lunch.

Fee for MGs: \$65 if registered on or before Feb. 28. You must use promo code MG2019 and fax proof of MG certification to 732-932-8726. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

### Beekeeping for beginners

May 2-3, 9 am-4 pm and May 4, 9 am-noon. Check in May 2 is at 8:30 am. Rutgers Eco-Complex, 1200 Florence-Columbus Road, Bordentown 08505.

This 2½-day course will cover everything you need to know to further your hobby or get your business off the ground. You'll get hands-on training on topics such as assembling hives and opening and examining colonies. Fee for MGs: \$300. Click [here](#) to view the list of course topics, directions to the venue, and to register. A short video about beekeeping is also available. *You must preregister.*

### International MG Conference

June 17-21, Valley Forge Casino Resort, King of Prussia, PA 19406. **Note:** Registration closes May 23 and some tours have already been filled.

This conference is held every two years, and covers just about everything: Speakers, field study, pre- and post-conference tours, evening programs, and a marketplace. Examples of the range of seminars are witch hazels, climate change, carnivorous plants, bog gardening, vegetable diseases. The list goes on.

Fee: \$350 for early registration by April 14; \$390 April 15-May 23. Other fees may apply. Click [here](#) to visit the website and to register.

## FARMERS MARKETS

**Ramsey indoor farmers market**, Sundays, 10 am-2 pm. Eric Smith School, 2 Monroe St., Ramsey.

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### Bergen County Rutgers Cooperative Extension Office

**Joel Flagler** Agricultural/Resources Management Agent & County Extension Dept. Head 201-336-6780  
**Karen Riede** Horticulture Consultant 201-336-6788  
Cooperating agencies: Rutgers, the State University of NJ, US Department of Agriculture, and Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Rutgers Cooperative Extension educational programs are offered to all without regard to race, religion, color, age, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. Rutgers Cooperative Extension is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

## HORTICULTURE GRAPEVINE

**Deadline for the Horticulture Grapevine is the 25<sup>th</sup> of the prior month. Submit information about garden club meetings that are open to the public to [Miriam Taub](#).**

- Feb. 4**      **7 pm, Sundial Garden Club**, Meadowbrook Elementary School, 50 Piermont Road, Hillsdale. Speaker: MG Bert Taylor, club member. Topic: The beauty of English country gardens and the Chelsea Flower Show - a photographic slide show of his recent tour.
- Feb. 7**      **7:30 pm, Garden Club of Harrington Park**, upstairs in the Harrington Park Library, 10 Herring St., Harrington Park. Speaker: MG Kathleen Sullivan, site coordinator of the Hermitage. Topic: Plants from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to World War I - creating historical gardens.

- Feb. 11**      **7:30 pm, Garden Club of Bergenfield**, Cooper's Pond, 133-153 W. Church St., Bergenfield. Speaker: Linda Williams, chair, Bergenfield Barrier Free Committee. Topic: The play-for-all park designed as an inclusive playground and sensory garden for all abilities.
- Feb. 12**      **7 pm, Ramsey Area Garden Club**, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, 55 Wyckoff Ave., corner of Woodland Avenue, Ramsey. Speaker: Don Torino, president, [Bergen County Audubon Society](#). Topic: Facts about hummingbirds and how to attract them to your garden.
- Feb. 13**      **9:30 am, Wyckoff Area Garden Club**, Wyckoff Public Library, 200 Woodland Ave., Wyckoff. Speaker: Anthony Bracco, [Bracco Farms](#), Orange County, NY. Topic: Adapting small farm methods to a backyard garden. Refreshments at 9 am.
- Feb. 13**      **10 am, Oakland Garden Club**, Oakland Public Library, 2 Municipal Plaza, Oakland. Speaker: Mary Jo Sichak, Passaic County MG and club member. Topic: Slide show of North Jersey insects that she photographed. Refreshments served. For more information, call 201-337-7285.
- Feb. 13**      **7:30 pm, Bergen-Passaic chapter, Native Plant Society of NJ**, NY-NJ Trail Conference headquarters, 600 Ramapo Valley Road (Route 202), Mahwah. Park in the lot or the Ramapo County Reservation, a short walk through the woods. Parking and trail are not lighted, so bring a flashlight. Speaker: Paul Kubarych, landscape architect. Topic: What's in a name? Distinguishing native plants from non-natives using Latin names.
- Feb. 14**      **7:30 pm, Garden Club of Teaneck**, Rodda Center, Room 2B, 250 Colonial Court, Teaneck; enter on Palisade Avenue. Use upper parking lot for handicap accessibility. Speaker: Sharon Lynch, Bergen County African Violet Society. Topic: The magic of African violets. Bring your problem/sick African violets for a diagnosis. Attendees will take home a plant. Register by sending an email to [gardenclubofteaneck@gmail.com](mailto:gardenclubofteaneck@gmail.com) to assure enough materials are available. Refreshments at 7 pm.
- Feb. 25**      **7:30 pm, Ho-Ho-Kus Garden Club**, Ho-Ho-Kus Community Church, 400 Warren Ave., Ho-Ho-Kus, entrance on Sycamore Avenue. Speaker: Bill Sheehan, Hackensack Riverkeeper. Topic: A virtual tour of the Hackensack River Watershed.
- March 1**      **2 pm, Demarest Garden Club**, United Methodist Church, 109 Hardenburgh Ave., Demarest. Speaker: Jim Wright, birding columnist for The Record. Topic: Birds. Club meeting at 1 pm.

**Please share photos of your volunteer work or of your garden. When submitting photos, please identify everyone in the photo by first and last name. Submit photos to [janet-schulz@hotmail.com](mailto:janet-schulz@hotmail.com).**

**The Master Gardeners of Bergen County doesn't share or sell its email/ mailing list/ membership directory to non-members or to other organizations. Our membership information is confidential and for use by members for official MG use only. Please don't share our list with non-members or use it for any unauthorized or commercial purposes.**