



# From the Potting Shed April 2020

Master Gardeners of Bergen County

## FROM THE GREEN SIDE

### Your garden is calling

By Arnie Friedman, Class 2004

Trying to keep active while social distancing and maybe even being quarantined doesn't mean we can't be out in our yard doing active things. This is a great month to get a head start on the season's work and maybe even try new things because we have the time. So here are some of my suggestions.

#### Start an eco-friendly lawn

Eco-friendly means no chemicals, using a grass mix that needs less water and stays green all summer, and no fertilizers. Aside from buying a new grass seed mix there's nothing you'll need but a good rake and some energy. So, here's what you can do now at the beginning of April.



Arnie Friedman

Give your lawn a good raking. Gather up any loose thatch — that's the dead grass that accumulates at the base of the lawn. Wherever there are bare spots scrape or loosen the soil. Using a seed mix that is labeled **tall fescue mix**, seed the bare spots heavily and broadcast handfuls of seed over the remainder of the lawn. If the bare spots are big, lightly rake the seed so it mixes with the loose topsoil.

This will help keep the birds from eating it and help keep the seed damp. If you don't have a tall fescue seed mix you can order it online from Loew's or Home Depot. You might even get it delivered to you from a good local hardware store like one in the True Value group.

You don't need to put down weed killer, and you certainly don't need to add fertilizer. Adding fertilizer only encourages extra green growth, which means you'll be mowing more frequently all summer. It's amazing how well my own lawn has done in the past 15 years since I stopped all feeding and chemicals. I only have to cut my lawn about twice a month, and it's green spring through fall.

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### From the President's Desk

By Melody Corcoran

Florida is calling. Hank Annunziata, Class of 2010, has resigned as Hospitality chair. He has held this position since 2011. Thank you, Hank, for everything you have done to make the hospitality portion of our meetings and events run smoothly. Good luck and best wishes from all the Master Gardeners of Bergen County.



Everyone please welcome Sandi Liberti, Class of 2019, as our new Hospitality chair. Thank you, Sandi, for stepping up and accepting this position.

A thank-you also goes out to Diane Van Kempen, Class of 2019. She is now the site coordinator for the NY/NJ Trail Conference headquarters Habitat Helpers Crew. This site is a great place to learn about native and invasive species.

Get outside and garden!



#### Who am I?

Melody Corcoran found this creature in her yard. She knows what it is, but do you? If you can identify

"Brownie" above, send an email to [Miriam Taub](mailto:Miriam.Taub@bergenmg.org). Brownie will be ID'd in the next *Potting Shed*.

#### Event suspensions and site closures

All in-person events, classes, programs, club meetings, and other group activities organized by or under the auspices of Rutgers Cooperative Extension have been suspended through at least May 31. This includes all MG meetings and events. In addition, all MG volunteer sites are closed through May 31 as per Rutgers and Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

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Sure, I have weeds, but they're green and blend right in. Seeding heavily in spring and fall helps squeeze out other plants because they have a hard time competing with the tall fescues. Because I haven't killed off the clovers and my soil is alive with worms, nematodes, and good bacteria, there's a natural production of nitrogen and other minerals going on that the lawn needs. Every couple of years I do run an aerator over the lawn to help get air and water into the soil. If you have access to an aerator it would be a good thing to do this spring before seeding.

### Prune your shrubs

Many shrubs should be pruned at the end of the winter or in early spring. Pruning falls into two categories. There's regular pruning done to keep shrubs under control and to encourage summer flowering and pruning done to renovate older plants.



Look closely: Tree hydrangea pruned in early March exhibits new growth.

Renovation pruning can be done to most shrubs now, and you can remove up to a third of the plant's stems at one time. These are general rules though, and you should check online about the shrub you're renovating if you aren't familiar with that variety.

The most important thing to consider before pruning is when does this shrub flower and does it flower on this year's new growth or has it already set buds on last year's growth? Being aware of this is important because if you prune, say, azaleas or rhododendrons now you'll be removing the buds that were set last summer and they won't flower this season.

However, in the case of, say, rose of Sharon, Hydrangea paniculatum (tree hydrangea, for example), or roses, pruning now is great because it will encourage more flowering and lots of new growth this summer.

Sometimes when a shrub is so overgrown or in need of a hard renovation pruning — no matter if it has new buds or not — you can sacrifice one season of bloom to have a better-looking shrub in future years.

### Divide ornamental grasses and perennials

Early spring is a great time to divide those ornamental grasses that are getting big or have hollow centers. Just

take a shovel and slice them in half or even thirds or quarters and replant the pieces in new spots in your garden. Many perennials as they start to green up this month can also be divided and the parts used to fill in or extend your garden.

Plants like hosta, lirioppe, echinacea, and so many more do very well when divided now and will flower this summer right on schedule. If you have more division than you have room to replant, think about leaving them on your neighbor's doorstep.

### Convert spring leaf cleanup into garden mulch

As you rake and clean winter debris just rake the old leaves onto the lawn and run your mower over them. The mower will grind up this debris, and it can be raked or blown back into the beds as a great mulch. Instead of filling our landfills with this waste you'll be converting your waste into a great source of natural fertilizer. As the ground-up leaves rot, they create a good source of nitrogen and as the soil organisms draw this mulch down into the soil it improves the soil texture and breaks up heavy clays.

Finally, please have fun in your garden and stay safe and healthy.

## HORTICULTURE

### Orchid resources from Carrie Buchman

Orchid expert Carrie Buchman, who had been scheduled to speak at our March meeting, has been rescheduled for Nov. 17. Carrie,

president of the North Jersey Orchid Society, has some 300 orchids growing in her home. This beauty, at right, is *Aerangis punctata* whose leaves she described as 1-inch-long, reddish-gray paddles. The flower is about 2.5 inches across with a 6-inch nectary. Carrie specializes in miniature and micro-miniature orchids.

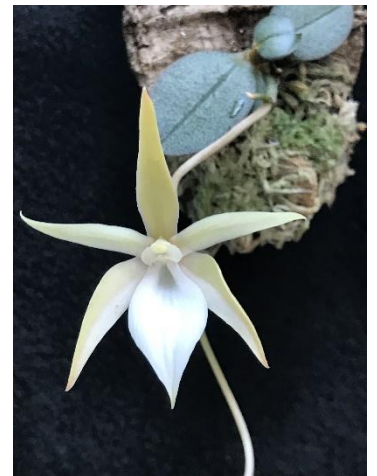


Photo courtesy Carrie Buchman

If you're ready to adopt your first orchid or you're a seasoned orchid collector, Carrie recommends the following two online orchid resources:

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- The [“all about orchids”](#) section of the American Orchid Society includes culture sheets for most genera, a newsletter for beginners, and lots of good information for novice and experienced growers.
- The North Jersey Orchid Society’s [“orchid resources”](#) page contains a list of orchid-related websites.

In addition, the New York Botanical Garden offers six orchid [guides](#) from orchid basics to troubleshooting. And, take a 21-minute [virtual tour](#) of this year’s NYBG orchid show titled “Jeff Leatham’s Kaleidoscope.”

## Native plant database

Use the Audubon Society’s [native plant database](#) to explore the best native plants for our area (based on zip code). You’ll get the names of hundreds of plants and the birds they may attract. **Note:** The list of places to buy natives locally is not all-inclusive.

## THINGS TO DO

### More garden tours from Joseph Cooper

*Joseph Cooper, Class of 2008, takes us on three delightful, relaxing garden tours in Philadelphia, Washington, DC, and Littleton, CO.*



*Photo by Joseph Cooper*

### Shofuso Japanese House and Garden on [YouTube](#)

Located in Philadelphia’s West Fairmount Park, the [Shofuso Japanese House and Garden](#) is a traditional 17th century-style Japanese house and garden on the site of the Centennial Exposition of 1876. Shofuso was built in Japan in 1953 using traditional techniques and

materials. It was shipped to New York and exhibited in the courtyard of the Museum of Modern Art before it was moved to West Fairmount Park in 1958.

### United States Botanic Garden on [YouTube](#)

Established in 1820 and located in Washington, DC, the [United States Botanic Garden](#) is the oldest continuously operating botanic garden in the United States. The USBG has three main sections known as the conservatory, the national garden, and Bartholdi Park. Here you can find fountains, terraces, an amphitheater, paths, and diversified gardens.

The conservatory features 28,944 square feet of space divided into two courtyard gardens and 10 growing rooms that include plants from Hawaii, the tropics, the desert, and the Mediterranean as well as rare and endangered species.

### Hudson Gardens on [YouTube](#)

Located in Littleton, CO, the [Hudson Gardens & Event Center](#) comprises 30 acres of garden exhibits, trails, water features, and event venues. Features include a rose garden, apiary, Monet garden, wetlands, songbird garden, pumpkin patch, and more.

### Raised bed gardening webinar

Charlie Nardozi, who spoke about container gardening at our April 2019 meeting, will present a webinar on raised beds from 7-8:30 pm Thursday, April 9. The webinar will be recorded so you can watch again and again. In fact, you don’t have to be present during the live event.



**Charlie Nardozi**

**Cost:** \$9.99 by April 1; \$11.99 April 2-9. For more information and to register, click [here](#).

### A walk through the garden

The [Ecological Landscape Alliance](#) is sponsoring a series of four free webinars at noon April 8, 15, 22, and 29. Each one-hour webinar will offer communal walks through gardens, plant discussions, garden tips, and other gardening inspiration.

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Click [here](#) for a brief description of each webinar. Then, click on the name of each virtual walk for details and a link to register. *Registration is required.*

The mission of the Ecological Landscape Alliance is to advocate for ecological landscape practices through education, collaboration, and outreach. It's based in Sandown, NH.

### Rutgers AES offers videos, too

Visit the Rutgers NJ Agricultural Extension Service [YouTube channel](#) for videos on a variety of topics. The Master Gardener section, which is the first on the page, has five videos including one on a sensory garden created by the MGs of Hunterdon County.

### Happy trails to you at NJBG

The gardens at the New Jersey Botanical Garden are open; the buildings, including restrooms, are closed. Visit the NJBG gardens at 2 Morris Road, Ringwood. However, check the [website](#) for any updates before you go.

### Visit your local nursery

Visit our [website](#) and, in the "For Members" section, click on "Shopping Discounts." This section lists the area nurseries and garden centers that offer a discount to MGs. Click on each business's website to find out whether the business is open for walk-in customers or limited to online ordering and delivery or contactless pickup. *Nurseries and garden centers are considered essential businesses.*

### Eagle cams live!

View bald eagles live via the [eagle cam](#) at Duke Farms. The [American Eagle Foundation](#) has four live web cams and a fifth camera in its [Pick-a-Mate](#) enclosure, which is home to eligible bachelor and bachelorette eagles at Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, TN.

### Bergen County Rutgers Cooperative Extension Office

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## A VIEW OF OUR GARDENS

By Janet Schulz



Photos by Joseph Cooper

Eranthus is a tuberous perennial, also known as winter aconite. It's one of the first to bloom in my garden. Eranthus ordered from a bulb catalog seldom grow because the tubers should not dry out. The best way to get them is from a friend. Plant 1 inch deep in good light. They spread very quickly.

Hellebore is a deer-resistant evergreen perennial. They prefer shade and are easy to grow. They're also known as Lenten rose (orientalis) or Christmas rose (niger). Niger begins to flower in our area in mid-November whereas Orientalis (now called hybridus) usually blooms in mid-March. At right is Pink Frost, a variety of hybridus. Hellebore are best grown as woodland plants and require some shade and moist, well-drained soil enriched with compost. Contact [Janet Schulz](#) if you have any questions or comments about Hellebore.

