



## Nobody doesn't like Bruce Crawford *Former Rutgers Gardens director has new public-facing role*

**By Miriam Taub, Class of 2011**

Bruce Crawford, former director of Rutgers Gardens, has a new job at Rutgers as the state program leader in home and public horticulture. In addition to research, Bruce will continue his teaching and public speaking roles. This is good news for MG associations and garden clubs since he's always in demand as a speaker.

Donna Faustini, MG of BC program chair, noted that attendance increases when Bruce is on the calendar. Bruce most recently spoke about the wonder of plants at our September 2019 meeting.



**Bruce Crawford**

Bruce's new job was once held by Donald B. Lacey, an extension specialist in home horticulture, who retired in the 1980s and for whom the [Donald B. Lacey Display Garden](#) at Rutgers Gardens was named. When Lacey retired in the 1980s, his job was never filled. Bruce explained it was, in part, the public's demand for gardening information during the pandemic that prompted Rutgers to fill this public-facing role.

Bruce operated his own landscape design business when he began teaching at Rutgers in 1987. He was named director of Rutgers Garden in 2005 and then to the new post in March. He continued at Rutgers Gardens for a few months, working on the plant sale, for one thing.

Since the transition to his new job in early June, Bruce said he's been writing, planning, and answering questions from his home in Allamuchy until he can move into his new office in Martin Hall. "I'm looking forward to working with everyone and bringing to light new and unusual plants, even some native plants," he said.

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## From the President's Desk

**By Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016**

I have just finished reading Douglas Tallamy's latest book, *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard*. As with his previous book, *Bringing Nature Home*, his emphasis is on how everyone can play a part in conserving the natural world through the use of native plants.



He proposes the idea of a "Homegrown National Park" in each yard. Our National Park system is not sufficient to conserve our wildlife. But if each homeowner did their part by planting natives and reducing turf grasses, wildlife conservation would get a real boost.

The food web depends on insects, and insects depend on plants. More native plants lead to more native insects and a larger and more diverse food web. There are many native plants in my yard, but are they the right natives? Are they the plants that Mr. Tallamy refers to as keystone plants, the native plants that support a large number of insects each?

Mr. Tallamy and his research assistant, Kimberly Shropshire, have created a database that ranks native plants, trees, and shrubs by the number and kind of caterpillars that each plant hosts. Still a work in progress, the database is searchable for each county in the United States. There are pictures of many of the plants and insects listed. The work to create this database was supported by the U.S. Forest Service and developed by the National Wildlife Federation. [Click [here](#) for the plant finder.]

When I looked up some of my native plants, I found that goldenrod is an excellent host. Goldenrod is a keystone plant and can support 121 species of butterflies and

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moths. Joe Pye weed can support 32 species of butterflies and moths. Milkweed supports not only the monarch butterfly but also 12 other species, including the Isabella tiger moth whose caterpillar is better known as the woolly bear.

My oak, maple, and wild cherry trees together can support an incredible 1,213 species of butterflies and moths. Even natives, such as hyssop, which support only one or a few caterpillars, are used by generalist pollinators such as bees and wasps.

The [Bergen County Cooperative Library System](#) has both of these books available in print and *Nature's Best Hope* available as an e-book.

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## 'Bruce Crawford,' continued from page 1

Bruce, who is 62 years old, identified four parts to his new job:

- **Teaching:** He'll continue to teach courses such as Herbaceous Plants and Public Garden Management.
- **Public interface:** He'll continue to speak to MG associations and clubs.
- **Writing:** Among other things, he'll review and update the [fact sheets and bulletins](#) produced by the NJ Agricultural Experiment Station, some of which date to the 1990s. His first update was the fact sheet on [outdoor container gardening](#). He's working on a fact sheet about garden design, an area in which he admits the fact sheets are deficient. Since he loves photography, Bruce said he's considering adding photographs to the fact sheets.
- **Research:** "I have ideas at the back of my mind for good research topics that would be beneficial to homeowners and people in the nursery industry," he said.

"One key role of this job is to promote and bring attention to good plants," Bruce said. As a result, he'll continue to present a "plant of the month" as he's done for years. You'll find the monthly plant in the online Gardener News newspaper, which appears on the home page of [GardenerNews.com](#), and under the [News/Blog](#) section of the Rutgers Gardens web site.

He's looking forward to teaching a new class, Public Garden Display, which will cover how to design display gardens like you'd see at Chanticleer and Wave Hill.

Bruce recently wrote a paper to answer the age-old question of when to prune hydrangeas. At Rutgers Gardens, he said, they observed 28 varieties



Photo by Bruce Crawford

Advice from Bruce: Plant *Verbena bonariensis* at the front of a border. It adds depth to a garden, and you can see through it.

of *Hydrangea paniculata* — some pruned to the ground, others pruned moderately, and others not at all — to see how pruning affected the flower. The conclusion is that the "best" pruning depends on the density of the flower. For example, he said, you wouldn't hard prune Limelight, with its flowers of densely packed sterile florets, because the weight of the flowers would bow them to the ground. Rather, he said, trimming back lightly allows the flowers to be held upright on old wood.

Among the research topics on his short list is whether ground covers and weed mats keep a plant "happy." After completing a landscaping job on an estate in Bernardsville years ago, Bruce noticed that the rhodies seemed more robust and vigorous with a ground cover than no cover. As a result, he said, research can determine whether mats and ground covers affect the passage of leaves, mulch, and worms from underground to the surface and vice-versa, improving the health of the soil and the plants.

Other potential topics: Can *Waldsteinia fragarioides* (barren strawberry) keep out *microstegium* (stilt grass) and weeds? Does *Iris cristata* (crested iris) compete with weeds? "There's tons of questions," Bruce said. "Every research project is built out of a question." Bruce said he's thought of enough topics to keep him busy for 10 years.

In his spare time, Bruce works with a volunteer group at Rutgers Gardens on Saturdays. Lately, he's had more time for his own garden, which he uses as a test plot for new and different plants and then writes about and photographs his results. Currently, he's looking at various deer-resistant plants. He's planted *Orixa japonica* (Japanese orixa), which he'd seen at several arboretums. "So far the deer haven't touched it, but they ate the *Geranium* x 'Rozanne' right next to it," he pointed out.



## THIS AND THAT



*Photo by Joseph Cooper*

One view of Bunny Williams' garden.

### A peek at a private garden in Connecticut

Click [here](#) for a peek into the Williams gardens, as photographed by Joseph Cooper, Class of 2008. The gardens, located on 15 acres in Falls Village, CT, was designed by owner Bunny Williams, who is an interior designer and author of garden books.

The property includes a rustic pool house, studio, barn, parterre garden, vegetable garden, formal garden, elaborate chicken coop, greenhouses, woodland garden, and more. The Williams' garden is occasionally open to the public during the Garden Conservancy's open days. Click [here](#) for a description of the books she has written.

### Cygnets take their first dip

Watch this sweet nine-minute video of black swan parents trying to coax their five cygnets into the water for the first time. View on [YouTube](#).

### Do *not* open unsolicited seed packages from China!

The NJ Department of Agriculture has received reports of people receiving unsolicited seeds in the mail from China. Packages often are labeled as jewelry. Unsolicited seeds could be invasive, introduce diseases to local plants, or be harmful to livestock.

Click [here](#) for instructions on what to do if you receive unsolicited seeds from another country.

## TRIPS AND TOURS

### Attention day trippers: NYBG and Grounds for Sculpture have reopened

The [New York Botanical Garden](#) has reopened. Visit the [reopening page](#) for hours, a brief video about the reopening, and to buy tickets. You must purchase a timed-entry ticket in advance. A limited number of tickets will be sold each day. The NYBG is open from 10 am-6 pm Tuesdays-Sundays and certain Monday holidays. The address is 2900 Southern Blvd., Bronx, NY.

And, if you don't want to visit the NYBG in person, you can take a virtual walk through a number of the gardens by clicking [here](#).

The [Grounds for Sculpture](#), a museum, sculpture garden, and arboretum in Mercer County, is open for visitors from 10 am-6 pm Thursdays-Mondays. You must buy a timed-entry ticket in advance. A limited number of tickets will be sold each day. Click [here](#) for the guidelines and to buy tickets. The address is 80 Sculptors Way, Hamilton.

### *Suggestions for seed pods*

*By Janet Schulz, Class of 1988*

When your peonies have finished blooming, cut off the seed pods, strip them of their leaves, and store in a vase to dry. Come the holidays spray paint them gold or silver and use them to decorate your holiday wreaths.



It's also time to remove the seed pods from your columbine.

To save the seeds, cut the entire stem of seed pods and place upside down in a paper bag. All the seeds will drop to the bottom and you should scatter them where you want them next year.

## Dig those delphiniums!

By Suzanne Danzig, Class of 2008

My beautiful delphinium blue lace was at its peak when a torrential rainstorm came and snapped the stalks — now if that isn't a heartbreaker. I enjoyed its iridescent blues for over a week here in Stowe, VT. The only gardens I have been to this summer are my own, here in Stowe, along with the Trapp Family Lodge. The grounds at the lodge are absolutely magnificent, not to mention the views of the Green Mountains are probably among the best views in all New England. When things are back to normal it is worth a trip in the mid- to late summer.



## WEBINARS

Here's a sampling of webinars available online for your educational enjoyment.

**Aug. 4, 7-8 pm:** Jersey-Friendly Yards sponsors The Buzz with Bees: Native and Managed Pollinators. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Aug. 5, 5-6 pm:** Rutgers Home Gardeners School @Home Edition sponsors Pruning - Not a Mysterious Art. \$35. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Aug. 6, noon:** The Smithsonian sponsors Garden Photography Tips. Free. Click [here](#) to register.

**Aug. 11, 7-8 pm:** Jersey-Friendly Yards sponsors Plant This Not That: Deer Resistant Alternatives to Invasive Plants. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Aug. 12, 1-2 pm:** Rutgers Home Gardeners School @Home Edition sponsors Designing the Yard of Your Dreams. \$25. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Aug. 19, 5-6 pm:** Rutgers Home Gardeners School @Home Edition sponsors Native Plants for NJ Gardeners. \$35. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

## FARMERS MARKETS

All farmers markets are practicing social distancing, require masks to be worn, and require vendors to serve you (no self-service).

**Englewood Farmers Market**, Depot Square, North Van Brunt Street and Demarest Avenue; through Oct. 30; Fridays 11 am-6 pm rain or shine. Park free in Lot B by the railroad tracks.

**Oradell Farmers Market**, 618 Veldran Ave. (post office parking lot); through Nov. 22; Sundays, 10 am-3 pm.

**Ramsey Farmers Market**, Main Street train station; through November; Sundays, 9 am-2 pm. Click [here](#) for the complete list of rules and other information.

**Ridgewood Farmers Market**, train station parking lot, Godwin and West Ridgewood avenues; through Nov. 22; Sundays, 9 am-3 pm weather permitting.

**River Vale Farmers Market**, town hall parking lot, 406 Rivervale Road; through Oct. 29; Thursdays, 2-6:30 pm. Click [here](#) to preorder from a list of vendors.

**Rutherford Farmers Market**, Williams Plaza, Park Avenue and Glen Road; through Oct. 31; Wednesdays, 11 am-4 pm and Saturdays, 8 am-2 pm.

**Teaneck Farmers Market**, municipal parking lot, Beverly Road and Garrison Avenue; through Oct. 22; Thursdays, noon-5 pm.

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