

## HORTICULTURE



Photo by Arnie Friedman

A meadow on the day it was planted by Arnie and his team.

### Turn a sunny strip into a meadow

**By Arnie Friedman, Class of 2004**

If you have a strip of sunny land in your yard, why not try putting in a “mini meadow.” What’s a mini meadow? It’s a mixed planting of flowering perennials, grasses, and the like that knit together over time to echo the effect of a natural meadow.

Any size piece of land could lend itself to being a mini meadow. Planting also can be done in any season as long as the meadow is watered for the first year after planting. Mulch is great to keep the weeds down and condition the soil naturally. The soil should not be tilled, and no fertilizers are needed. Meadow perennials don’t want or need a rich soil.

The benefit of this kind of planting is that over time the maintenance decreases relative to a grass lawn. If you use natives and flowering perennials it becomes a haven for butterflies and bees, a food source for birds, and a visual pleasure.

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### From the President’s Desk

**By Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016**

Everyone is aware of the need to plant milkweed for the monarchs. Varieties that are native to a particular area are always the best choice. For our area, common milkweed, swamp milkweed, purple milkweed, and butterfly weed are all excellent choices. Many gardeners also plant the annual tropical milkweed, *Asclepias ‘curassavica,’* which has beautiful red, yellow, and orange flowers.



Tropical milkweed is easy to grow, and the monarchs readily use it. There is, however, ongoing controversy concerning the use of this milkweed. According to several sources, problems with tropical milkweed can occur when it is left to grow all year in warmer climates, such as Texas and California. Even in our area, tropical milkweed may still be growing long after the native milkweeds have died back. There is concern that the monarchs will not migrate and will continue to breed when a ready source of food for their caterpillars is still available.

Cardenolides from the milkweed sap are the substances that makes monarchs toxic predators. Tropical milkweed can have higher levels of these chemicals than native milkweeds and may actually poison the caterpillars. The level of cardenolides may be increasing in these plants due to climate warming.

Tropical milkweed can also harbor higher concentrations of the protozoan parasite, *Ophryocystis electroscurra*, OE for short. OE can infect monarchs and cause shorter life spans, wing deformations that inhibit flight, and lower breeding and migration success. In locations where tropical milkweed doesn’t naturally die back with the

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## A sunny strip becomes a meadow

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Photo by Arnie Friedman

This planting was a month old when the photo was taken. Arnie used gallon-size plants to get a fast start. "Over time the plants will widen out and hopefully knit together into a lovely matrix," he said.

Maintenance is easy. Weeding in the early years is the hardest part. The meadow needs cutting back only once a year in late fall or early spring. Once established, meadows need much less water than a lawn and thrive on native soils with no additional fertilizer or soil amendments.

To learn more about meadows:

- Read Roy Diblik's book "The Know Maintenance Perennial Garden" and visit his [YouTube channel](#).
- Read any of Piet Oudolf's books on meadow plantings.
- Visit Nigel Dunnett's [website](#) to see his landscape projects. Click [here](#) for a look at the meadows he designed at his own home, Bramblewood Cottage.
- Visit landscape architect Larry Weaner's [website](#), Larry Weaner Landscape Associates, to view his work in Upstate New York and Connecticut.



This strip of meadow between houses was planted a few years ago at the home of one of our MGs. It is maturing nicely.

Photo courtesy of Arnie Friedman

## From the President's Desk

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onset of colder weather, high concentrations of OE can build up on the plants.

Some sources, however, say that it is climate change and global warming that is responsible for extended or non-stop breeding seasons and late or non-existent migrations.

At this time, there is no definitive answer as to whether tropical milkweed is yet another factor causing the decline of monarchs. So, what is a gardener and monarch lover to do? The current consensus is that the tropical milkweeds should be cut down — even if they are still growing and blooming — when the native milkweeds naturally die back.

For more information, visit the [Xerces Society](#) and the [Monarch Joint Venture](#).

## THINGS TO DO

### Hackensack River Greenway cleanups

The Friends of the Hackensack River Greenway through Teaneck will sponsor two upcoming cleanups. The goal is to pick up trash, free trees from invasives, and plant natives where possible. Bring gloves, loppers, and clippers. Masks are required. Register for the clean-up by sending an email to [teaneckgreenway@gmail.com](mailto:teaneckgreenway@gmail.com). Before attending, check the [website](#) for cancellations or schedule changes.

- **Aug. 1:** 10 am-noon, Mary S. Topolsky garden and trail, River Road, Teaneck. Park on Cadmus Court or across River Road on Kipp Street.
- **Aug. 14:** 10 am-noon, Riverside Drive Trail. Meet at the northern end of the trail on Cedar Lane at the Anderson Street bridge. Park on Pomander Walk.

### NJBG: Classic and folk-rock concerts

The New Jersey Botanical Garden/Skylands, has scheduled two outdoor concerts in August. A \$5 donation per person is requested for each concert. Bring a lawn chair. Rain cancels.

Rave On! features the music of Roy Orbison, Buddy Holly, and other classic musicians. Click here for a [preview](#) on YouTube. The concert is 6:30-8:30 pm, Aug. 6. If folk music is more your thing, the NJBG will sponsor Loretta Hagan from 6:30-8:30 pm, Aug. 20. Click [here](#) to visit her website.



## SPOTLIGHT ON . . . GARRETSON FORGE & FARM

For 25 years, Garretson volunteers have donated produce to a Paterson food pantry

**By Miriam Taub, Class of 2011**

Back in 1996, April Barth recalled, there were a handful of volunteers at Garretson Forge & Farm but “practically no gardeners.” April, Class of 2017, began volunteering at Garretson 30 years ago and is an advocate for all things organic. When she got involved in the farm portion of Garretson, she said she “insisted we had to be organic with no chemical inputs of any sort.”

The conversion to organic farming — the way it would have been done when the Garretson property was settled in 1719 — occurred over time. That first season (1996) April said she defined “organic” to fellow volunteers (no MiracleGro, for example). The second season she introduced open pollination (no hybrid plants, for example) so that seeds could be saved for planting the next season. And the third season she ended the practice of rototilling to suppress weeds. Instead, volunteers used and still use hoes, rakes, and hand-tillers to work the soil and salt-hay mulch to suppress the weeds.



*Photos by Miriam Taub*

MGs at Garretson Forge & Farm after harvesting produce July 22. Seated from left: Nicola Tutschek, Melody Corcoran, Terry Cohn, April Barth. Standing from left: Martha Carlucci, Barbara Patete, Lida Gellman (site coordinator), Noel Schulz, Patricia Brady, Arta Pagano.

“A big part of the reason we garden the way we garden is we’re a historic house/farm and we want to show the [farming] methods used in a colonial kitchen garden,” April said, referring to the garden area close to Garretson’s kitchen that would have been the source of vegetables and herbs cultivated for family use.

“Everything that was grown was open pollinated. People

saved their seeds. They grew the kinds of vegetables and herbs we grow now. The crops were indigenous or what they brought with them to the colonies from Europe.” One concession to the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that the pantry garden is fenced to keep out the deer and other critters.



“The pantry garden at Garretson, as it exists today, really took off when Master Gardeners got involved,” April added. The MG Class of 1999 adopted Garretson

and got it approved by Rutgers as a volunteer site. Lida Gellman, Class of 1999, became site coordinator, a role she fulfills to this day. A core group of MG volunteers expanded the pantry garden over the years providing continuity in planning, seed saving and seed starting, soil building, planting, and harvesting.

But back to 1996: In addition to volunteering at Garretson, April volunteered at the CDC (Community Development Corp.) men’s shelter housed at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Paterson, where she was a parishioner. Of course, she was familiar with the CDC’s emergency food pantry, a place clients came when they literally ran out of food.

April reckoned that growing organic vegetables and herbs at Garretson and then donating them to the St. Paul’s food pantry would make a “perfect match.” And now, 25 years later, the practice continues.

“The things we grow are those that would have been grown in that time period [1700s-1800s] at this site, but we emphasize things that recipients would like,” April said. During the growing season, a food pantry client might get peas, lettuce, tomatoes, summer squash

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## Spotlight on Garretson Forge & Farm

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(yellow and zucchini), beans, cucumbers, peppers, and kale as well as packets of culinary herbs such as basil, rosemary, cilantro, sage, parsley, and oregano. The amount of produce donated varies each week from up to about 10 pounds of a lightweight crop like lettuce to 30 or more pounds of cucumbers or squash.

MG volunteers harvest what vegetables and herbs are ready. Then they pick over the produce so “only the best” goes to the food pantry, April said. If needed, the produce/herbs are washed and dried, then bagged, tagged, and delivered. Volunteers take the blemished produce home.

Lida Gellman, reflecting on why so many MGs have volunteered at Garretson, said: “We get a great deal of satisfaction in being able to provide fresh, organic produce to people who otherwise would not have access to it.”

Kim Arias, the St. Paul’s CDC food pantry manager, said the pantry serves 500 to 600 families a month. During the height of Covid, the pantry was supplying food to as many as 800 to 900 families a month. Recipients receive a week’s worth of food, based on family size, which usually includes poultry and fresh produce.

The [St. Paul’s Community Development Corp.](#) is a secular, not-for-profit organization that includes the food pantry; the emergency men’s shelter; community development to revitalize and provide affordable housing in Paterson; workforce development to help clients get and hold jobs ending the joblessness cycle; and other assistance programs.

By the time clients arrive at or are referred by social service agencies to St. Paul’s, they have pretty much exhausted every other way to get help, April said, adding: “When people sign up for food stamps, they don’t get them right away.”

MGs at [Garretson Forge & Farm](#), 4-02 River Road, Fair Lawn, volunteer Thursdays from 10 am-2 pm and the second and fourth Sunday from 1-4 pm. Contact [Lida Gellman](#), site coordinator, for more information.

## The most in compost



Photo by Lida Gellman

Garretson Forge & Farm volunteers, above from left, Terry Cohn, Nicola Tutschek, and Noel Schulz, prepare to enrich the soil in the garlic bed with compost after a recent harvest.



Photo by Miriam Taub

The hardneck garlic, left, is now drying at hearthside in the farmhouse, in preparation for Garretson’s fall festival Oct. 10. Come the fall, another garlic crop will be planted in the composted bed.

## WEBINARS

**Aug. 4, 6:30-7:15 pm:** Penn State Extension sponsors Caring for Your Established Garden. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Aug. 9, noon:** National Garden Bureau sponsors Ask the Experts - Sunflowers. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Aug. 10, 7-8 pm:** Jersey-Friendly Yards sponsors Designing and Planting with Native Plants - Creating a Native Habitat. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

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**Aug. 17, 6-7 pm:** Pennsylvania Horticultural Society sponsors Art in the Garden - Teresa Shields. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Aug. 17, 7-8 pm:** Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Ocean County sponsors All About Bulbs. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Aug. 20, noon:** National Garden Bureau sponsors Ask the Experts - Melons and Watermelons. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.



*Photo courtesy Don Torino, Bergen County Audubon Society*

### ***A visitor to the Butterfly and Native Garden***

Tammy Laverty, Class of 2015, made friends with a mourning cloak butterfly at the Butterfly and Native Garden at Overpeck Park. Volunteers added two plant beds this year with both new and tried-and-true natives.

Help remove invasive plants and make friends with butterflies. Volunteers meet Tuesdays from 8:30 am-1 pm. Contact [Pat Knight](#), or [Tammy](#), the site coordinators, for more information. The garden is located at 40 Fort Lee Road, Leonia. It's against the far chain-link fence behind the Bergen County Equestrian Center.

***- Pat Knight, Class of 2009***



*Photos by Sharon Ma*

### ***Van Saun Park Zoo garden cleanup***

Above, from left, Class of 2018's Sue Robertson, Sharon Ma, and Marsha Mandel, after "a lot" of weeding and transplanting in the perennial garden. Next step: The herb garden. Below, from left, Sue Robertson, Sharon Ma, and Edith Terzano after attacking weeds in the pollinator garden but leaving the milkweeds in the rear of the garden for butterflies.

Sharon reported that the MGs plan to reorganize the existing plants, "which are growing voluntarily everywhere without a structure" and then add more flowering perennials to attract pollinators and birds before mulching. Contact [Jeffery Chan](#), site coordinator, to set up a time to volunteer.

***- Information from Sue Robertson and Sharon Ma, Class of 2018***





## Sprucing up Washington Spring Garden



Photo by Suzanne Danzig

Anita Pazcoguin, Class of 2020, left, and Maureen Fruhling, a friend of the garden since 2009, weeded the front entrance of Washington Spring Garden in Van Saun Park, 216 Forest Ave., Paramus. Volunteers meet Thursdays from 9 am-noon. Contact [Suzanne Danzig](#), site coordinator, for more information.

- *Suzanne Danzig, Class of 2008*

## THIS AND THAT

### Joel Flagler featured in Cook Campus magazine

Read an [article](#) about Joel Flagler in the spring issue of "Explorations," the George H. Cook Campus magazine. Joel is a 1974 graduate of Cook College. The article focuses on Joel's history with horticultural therapy.

### Know your hardiness zone

Bergen County is divided into two US Department of Agriculture hardiness zones. For example, Lyndhurst, Teaneck, Alpine, and Saddle River are in Zone 7a, while Wyckoff, Oakland, Mahwah, and Allendale, are in Zone 6b. Check the hardiness zone of any zip code by using the [USDA Hardiness Zone Finder](#) in the National Gardening Association's Learning Library.

You can also check out the association's plant database; plant care guide; and vegetable, fruit, and herb guide.

### A guide to too much mulching

Mulch, if applied improperly, can kill your trees and shrubs. Rutgers Agricultural Experiment Station has

revised its fact sheet titled "Problems with Over-Mulching Trees and Shrubs." Click [here](#) to read it.

## FARMERS MARKETS

**Englewood Farmers Market**, Depot Square Park, North Van Brunt Street and Demarest Avenue. Fridays, 11 am-6 pm through Oct. 29.

**Paramus Farmers Market**, Petruska Park hockey rink, 475 Farview Ave. Wednesdays, noon-6 pm through Oct. 13.

**Ramsey Farmers Market**, Main Street train station. Sundays, 9 am-2 pm through November. For a list of rules, vendors, and other information, click [here](#).

**Ridgewood Farmers Market**, train station parking lot, Godwin and West Ridgewood avenues. Sundays, 8:30 am-2 pm through Nov. 21.

**River Vale Farmers Market**, Town Hall parking lot, 406 Rivervale Road. Thursdays, 2-6 pm through October.

**Rutherford Farmers Market**, Williams Center Plaza. Wednesdays, 11 am-6 pm; Saturdays, 8 am-2 pm through October.

**Teaneck Farmers Market**, municipal parking lot, Garrison Avenue and Beverly Road. Thursdays, noon-6 pm through October. Face coverings and social distancing required; no pets.

**Thank you, Master Gardeners**, for contributing to this month's *Potting Shed*: April Barth, Melody Corcoran, Suzanne Danzig, Arnie Friedman, Lida Gellman, Liz Gil, Pat Knight, Sharon Ma, Karen Riede, and Sue Robertson.

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