



# From the Potting Shed February 2021

Master Gardeners of Bergen County

## Virtual meeting – Tuesday, Feb. 23

Announcements at 7:20 pm; program to follow  
*See the February mid-month update for instructions to log in*

### Robert Lyons presents: Outstanding Herbaceous Plants - RX for Long-Lasting Color in the Landscape

Color, color, color has been the guiding mantra for gardeners and commercial landscapers alike for more than two decades. Dr. Robert Lyons, who last spoke to the MG of BC in November 2018, says this philosophy of gardening has led to an enthusiastic use of colorful plant materials in garden design and an expectation that brilliant color be present all the time.

Designing to meet the demands of this style may sound challenging, but not, he said, if you know the wide array of ornamental plants that will help you realize your goals. Robert's



Robert Lyons

talk will expose and highlight annual and tender perennial plants, both brand new and tried and true, which have long-lasting flowers, eye-catching foliage, unique ornamental features, and great potential for striking impact in the garden.

Robert is the former director of the Longwood Graduate Program in Public Horticulture and currently professor emeritus at the University of Delaware. He has served on the Boards of Advisors for the University of Delaware Botanic Gardens and Rutgers Gardens and currently sits on the board of the Delaware Center for Horticulture.

He has taught herbaceous plant materials for more than three decades and has been a photographer for more than 35 years.

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Links are clickable and are noted in [blue](#).

## From the President's Desk

*By Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016*

This past Christmas I purchased a gift for myself — a small table-top hydroponic garden. It's sitting in a corner of my kitchen counter and is currently growing parsley, thyme, dill, mint, and Genovese and Thai basil. It has been great to have these fresh herbs right there on my counter to easily snip and add to salads, sandwiches, and other dishes.



The best part of this garden is seeing these fresh, green plants happily growing in my kitchen. It's winter outside but spring in my house. The basil seedlings were up in just a few days; the others followed soon after. My husband, who is definitely not a gardener, was just as eager to see the new plants. He was pleased to discover the parsley and mint sprouting before I saw them.

All the plants are growing so well that I need to harvest some herbs every day to prevent them from outgrowing the size of the garden or crowding out the smaller ones. An unanticipated benefit of this garden is its bright LED grow lights. I have "sunshine" in a corner of my kitchen no matter how gloomy it is outside.

I don't have to wait for Punxsutawney Phil or Staten Island Chuck to tell me when spring will be here. Spring and sunshine are in my kitchen now.

Hoping that spring will arrive soon outside, too. Happy Groundhog Day to all!

**Event suspensions and site closures:** All in-person events, classes, programs, MG meetings and events, and other group activities organized by or under the auspices of Rutgers Cooperative Extension have been suspended through March 31, 2021.

## MG OF BC NEWS

### Keep a record of your education hours!

As you know, both volunteer and education requirements were suspended for 2020. While there's no volunteer requirement for 2021 — yet — we're hopeful that it will be reinstated this year. Meanwhile, keep a paper trail of your education hours until the new online system is open for the reporting of education hours.

To maintain your MG certification, you must complete 10 education hours a year. Education hours currently include events such as virtual MG lectures and those at other garden clubs; webinars (limited to a total of three hours); educational courses; and conferences. Once in-person activities resume, education hours also will include hands-on workshops and docent-led tours at almost any venue, such as Rutgers, NYBG, and NJBG.

If you need additional information, contact [Autumn O'Shea](#), volunteer reporting chair.

### **Consider a donation to the Center for Food Action**

For several years, members have brought donations of non-perishable food items to MG of BC meetings for donation to the Center for Food Action (CFA). No in-person meetings means no donations.

The MG of BC Board recently approved a \$250 donation to the CFA, and the board will consider an additional donation later this year. *Help the CFA feed the food-insecure in Bergen and upper Passaic County.* Visit the CFA [website](#) to make a donation.

### The Speakers Bureau needs you

**By Arnie Friedman, Class of 2004**

The Master Gardeners Speakers Bureau is the public's source for speakers at meetings sponsored by libraries, garden clubs, and other organizations. Since we've all moved to virtual talks our speakers have been in demand.

From now through May we've scheduled 12 speaking engagements. I need help! We need more speakers and new topics — in other words new blood. I'm limited to the subjects I'm knowledgeable about.

Can you spend a half-hour or so talking about growing houseplants, teaching gardening to children, poisonous plants, or anything else gardening related?

We have a large, bright, active membership. Some of you could volunteer, no doubt. All you need is

knowledge and some pictures about what you do or love. I'll be glad to help you shape your knowledge and pictures into a talk. Please come out of the (virtual) woods and help me with the Speakers Bureau. Contact me at [Arnie1@Mindspring.com](mailto:Arnie1@Mindspring.com) or 201-707-5149.



Photo by Arnie Friedman

### Click on these links for inspiration

At our January meeting, Arnie Friedman, Class of 2004 dazzled us with photos of water features at international venues as well as local sites, such as the fountain (above) he built for a client in Ho-Ho-Kus. Arnie explained that the trough was used for watering cattle in Belgium, circa the 1700s.

Water is continuously pumped from a reservoir hidden underneath the trough, up through a copper tube to spill out the lion's head (mounted on bluestone), and finally to overflow the trough. The trellis was made by a carpenter friend of Arnie's, and the vines are climbing hydrangea and clematis. If you've been considering a water feature for your garden, here are several sources for ideas.

#### Public gardens

- [Greenwood Gardens](#), Short Hills;
- [Innisfree Garden](#), Millbrook, NY;
- [Untermeyer Gardens](#), Yonkers, NY;
- [Grounds for Sculpture](#), Hamilton Township;

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- [New York Chinese Scholar's Garden](#), Staten Island, NY; and
- [Longwood Gardens](#), Kennett Square, PA.

#### Books

- "Rain Gardens" by Nigel Dunette. Visit his [website](#).
- "The Water Gardener: A Complete Guide to Designing, Planting, and Constructing Water Features" by Anthony Archer-Wills. Visit his [website](#).

#### ***A bird in the hand – literally***



*Photo by Tammy Laverty*

This little chickadee made the day for Tammy Laverty, Class of 2015, when it landed on her hand. "I was thrilled and giggled half the day," she reported.

### **SPOTLIGHT ON . . .**

#### **Bergen's MG Class of 2021 will join an 'entirely new' online pilot program**

The MG Class of 2021 will meet for its first session Feb. 2 in a Rutgers pilot program incorporating live speakers online. Joel Flagler, county extension department head, explained that students from three counties — Bergen, Passaic, and Union — will participate in this 18-week pilot training program that will run through June.

The class of no more than 15 students per county will meet virtually from 10 am-noon on Tuesdays using Rutgers' Canvas online learning management system. Speakers from the Rutgers NJ Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) will teach the classes, which will be recorded for future viewing or review.

Class topics include Basic Botany; Plant Pathology; Entomology; Soils; Plant Identification; Integrated Pest

Management; Tree Fruit and Vegetable Gardening; Lawn Care; Tree Care; Flower Gardening; Ticks and Invasive Pests; and Wildlife Management. The live classes will be for MG students only.

Karen Riede, MG Class of 2017 and the county's horticulture consultant, said that class members will be required to complete 60 volunteer hours "when in-person volunteering resumes."

Joel explained that this pilot program and a separate "home horticulture" training series favored by nine other counties will resolve two issues with the Rutgers MG training program.

One, he said, is that the MG program has no standardized training, curricula, or volunteer requirement across the 16 counties that have MG programs. "There are MG programs all over the state; each looks somewhat different," he noted.

Second, in-person activities and volunteering have been suspended since last March, so Class of 2020 students — and all other MGs — have been unable to complete their volunteering requirement creating what he called a "backlog." (At some point, MGs and students will have to make up for the lost volunteering time unless the requirement is suspended.)

Joel explained that a solution, beginning in 2021, is two-fold.

1. Nine counties have chosen to deliver the 18-week, online, evening "home horticulture" training series that's not called Master Gardeners "though the parallels are obvious," he said. There's no volunteering component for this training, which will be coordinated from the Sussex County Rutgers Cooperative Extension office.
2. Three counties — Bergen, Passaic, and Union — will participate in the pilot program that bears the MG name and is the only official MG program operating in 2021. A core curriculum developed by Rutgers will be used as the template for the training. Other topics will be added to those listed above to reflect local needs/activities, for example, hort therapy in Bergen.

The remaining counties may be continuing with their own local programs while they wait and see how the two programs above work out.

Joel said he's looking forward to the new program. "We are excited and nervous and lots of other emotions as we embark on a new delivery mode for one of the most popular and important Extension programs in the state," he said, adding that "MGs are recognized as a hugely important resource for the [Rutgers] University and the NJAES/Extension Service."

## THIS AND THAT



Photo by Joseph Cooper

### The Statue of Liberty outside *and* inside

Joseph Cooper, Class of 2008, takes on us on a tour of the Statue of Liberty, both outside and inside. Enjoy four minutes with Lady Liberty virtually even if an up-close-and-personal visit will have to wait. Click [here](#).

### Valley Health System programs – many are free!

Valley Health System is offering virtual programs on a variety of health and wellness topics, many at no cost. Samples of February programs include Managing Your Pain, Adult Diabetes Support Group, the Aging Eye, and more. Click [here](#) for the list and registration information.

### Tour New York's iconic neighborhoods virtually

"Walk" 17 neighborhoods from the Brooklyn Bridge to Museum Mile to Harlem to Jackson Heights with *New York Times* architecture critic Michael Kimmelman. Click [here](#) for the list of walking tours. These aren't videos, but each tour uses 3-D technology so you feel you're on site.

### Keep that eggplant fresh

Did you know that eggplants and sweet potatoes should be stored on your kitchen counter? Or lemons in the crisper drawer? Or pears on the refrigerator shelf. Click [here](#) for these and other suggestions for fruit and vegetable storage from [Misfits Market](#).

## WEBINARS

**Feb. 2, 7-8:15 pm:** Penn State Extension sponsors Houseplant Master Class - Specialty Plants with Focus on Flowers. Fee: \$5. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Feb. 3, 12:30-1:30 pm:** Ecological Landscape Alliance (ELA) sponsors American Oaks - Diversity, Ecology, and Identification. Fee: Free to members/\$10 non-members. Click [here](#) for more information, to register, and to join the ELA.

**Feb. 6, 9:30-11 am:** Rutgers Master Gardeners of Monmouth County sponsors Let's Talk Tomatoes - Be Inspired To Try Something New. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Feb. 6, noon-1 pm:** Adam Weiss, gardening coach and MG in Woodstock, NY, sponsors Selecting and Purchasing Your Vegetable Seeds for Indoor Growing. Free. Click [here](#) to register. Space is limited.

**Feb. 9, 6-7 pm:** Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) sponsors Houseplant Parenting 101. Fee: \$13.50 members/\$15 non-members. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. Visit the PHS [website](#).

**Feb. 9, 7-8 pm:** Jersey-Friendly Yards sponsors Myth Busters - The Truth About What's Bugging You. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Feb. 9, 7-8:15 pm:** Penn State Extension sponsors Houseplant Master Class - Propagation. Fee: \$5. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Feb. 13, 10-11 am:** Duke Farms sponsors Winter Sowing. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Feb. 16, 7-8 pm:** RCE of Ocean County sponsors Backyard Reptiles. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

### **11<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Garden Conference March 6 at 9 am (virtual this year)**

Sponsored by the Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum and RCE of Morris County. Fee \$25. Registration deadline is noon March 5.

Some sessions will be recorded while others will be live. Click [here](#) for the list of speakers and topics and registration information.

## VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

### Review the restoration of Teaneck Creek

The public is invited to learn about the ongoing restoration of Teaneck Creek Park, an MG of BC volunteer site, during a Facebook Live event at 6:30 pm Feb. 2.

Bergen County Department of Parks and Teaneck Creek Conservancy will welcome experts from the people doing the work — Biohabitats, SiteWorks, and the county parks department — who will discuss the \$5.6 million habitat restoration.

The Bergen County Department of Parks began restoring the habitat of Teaneck Creek Park in early September. This project will enhance the site's natural resources; increase biodiversity with native grasses, shrubs, and trees; improve stormwater management with natural infrastructure; and improve park access by repairing and replacing footbridges and addressing deficient trails that are inaccessible due to washouts.

During the restoration review, site experts will discuss the project design and implementation and how work is progressing. A live Q&A session will follow the presentation. Click [here](#) to attend the program or to learn more.

## 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 [Janet Schulz](#).*

**Feb. 9, 7 pm, Ramsey Area Garden Club via Zoom:**  
Speaker: Arnie Friedman, Class of 2004. Topic: Gardens on Tour - North America. Click [here](#) to join the meeting.

**Feb. 10, 7:30 pm, Bergen-Passaic chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey via Zoom:**  
Speaker: Dr. Susan Petro, professor of biology, Ramapo College. Topic: Beneficial Insects in the Garden. Click [here](#) to register.

## HORTICULTURE

### Test old seeds for their germination power

*From "The Mountain Gardener" newsletter, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Buncombe County. Reprinted by permission.*

A seed germination test may be helpful if you have seeds on hand that are more than a few years old, have enough to spare, and want to know how viable they are.



To test for germination place at least 10 seeds an even distance apart on a damp paper towel. Roll up the towel

and place it in a plastic bag. Leave the damp, rolled towel in a warm spot in the kitchen for two to five days or even longer depending on the seed.

Check the seeds every few days until the majority of the seeds have germinated. Calculate the percentage that germinated. If more than half of the seeds sprouted, you may need to sow more to compensate for the low germination rate. If less than half sprouted, you may want to purchase a fresh supply.

### 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

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