

SPOTLIGHT ON . . .

Elaine Silverstein, Native Plant Society of New Jersey Bergen-Passaic Chapter

By Miriam Taub, Class of 2011

When Elaine Silverstein moved to her home in Glen Rock 27 years ago, the property was “nothing but lawn,” she recalled. Today, she said, her garden is home to one birdbath, absolutely no chemicals, and approximately 200 species of shade- and sun-loving native trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses, and ferns.



Elaine Silverstein

[Jersey](#) is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to the appreciation, protection, and study of the native flora of New Jersey. It was founded in 1985 and has 12 chapters. The other co-leaders of the Bergen-Passaic Chapter are Tom Bender and Vicky Katzman. The three divide their volunteer duties so one person isn't overwhelmed. (All chapters of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey have co-leaders.)

Among other things, Bergen-Passaic Chapter members help maintain the native plant garden at the NY-NJ Trail Conference headquarters in Mahwah in exchange for free meeting space in the building (currently closed). This native plant garden is the newest of the MG of BC volunteer sites, and it's a volunteer site for the MG of Passaic County as well.

“I believe in sustainable gardening,” said Elaine, one of three co-leaders of the Bergen-Passaic Chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey. “I don't amend the soil in any way. After a plant is established, I don't water it except under the most dire circumstances.”

The [Native Plant Society of New](#)

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From the President's Desk

By Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016

Ever heard of jumping worms (*Amyntas* spp.)? I only just learned about them when I found them in my compost pile. They are non-native invasive earthworms from Asia and have been present on the East Coast for decades. They live in leaf litter, the first few centimeters of the topsoil and, sadly, my compost.



The worms are about 1½ to 8 inches long, reddish-brown on top, lighter underneath, and have a pale ring around their body near the head. They don't actually jump, but they wriggle around like crazy when disturbed.

The castings that they leave look like coffee grounds, not the typical earthworm castings that you are familiar with. Their castings are light and easily washed away with rain causing any nutrients left in their castings to be lost.



Photo by Melody Corcoran

A jumping worm, one of many that invaded Melody's compost pile.

The jumping worms change the physical, chemical, and biological composition of the soil. In areas that have an abundance of these worms, the leaf litter is often gone; there may be few plants because the

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worms have eaten the plant roots; and the soil may be compacted and depleted of nutrients.

The worms are parthenogenic; they can reproduce without mating. The worms do not overwinter; they are killed by freezing temperatures. However, their tiny, dark brown cocoons, which are virtually invisible to the naked eye, do overwinter. Both adult worms and cocoons are easily transported in mulch, soil, and plants; cocoons can also be carried on tools, shoes, car tires, etc.

How do you know if you have jumping worms? Besides actually seeing the worms and/or their castings, mix 1/3 cup of dry mustard in one gallon of water and pour some of this mixture on the suspect area. The mustard does not hurt plants but does irritate the worms. They will appear in a short time wriggling on the soil surface.

Currently, there is no easy way to get rid of these worms other than manually removing them. Put them in a plastic bag and seal it up, place the bag in the sun for 10 minutes or so until the worms are dead, and then discard the bag in the trash. They can also be killed by placing them in isopropyl alcohol.

I am putting my current compost pile in black plastic bags, placing the bags in the sun for a few days to kill the worms and cocoons, and then throwing the bags in the trash. And then I am going to order an above-ground composter and start my composting all over again.

There is plenty of information available on jumping worms. For starters view the YouTube [video](#) "University Place: Invasive Jumping Worms," with speaker Brad Herrick, ecologist. Also see the [fact sheet](#) from Cornell University.

THINGS TO DO

Warwick gardens open to the public

Tour selected gardens in the Warwick, NY, area, during the 27th annual countryside garden tour sponsored by Warwick Valley Gardeners from 9 am-4 pm July 10. Rain date is July 11. Click [here](#) for more information. Tickets are \$20 and will be available from 9 am-2 pm the day of the tour at Warwick's Railroad Green, 30-98 Railroad Ave., Warwick. With your ticket, you'll receive a booklet describing the gardens, map, and wristband for entry into the gardens.

Herbal vinegar workshop at Duke Farms

Make the most of your herb garden with herbal vinegars in a workshop from 10:30 am-1 pm July 18 at Duke Farms, 1112 Dukes Parkway West, Hillsborough. Fee is \$20. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. The class will be outdoors; masks and social distancing are required.



Photo by Janet Schulz

Hosta sieboldii 'Elegans,' part of Janet's extensive collection of hostas.

2 MG gardens on display July 31

Visit the gardens of Janet Schulz, Class of 1988, and Paul Sisko, Class of 2021, who will open their gardens to MG of BC members July 31. See times below.

Janet Schulz, 16 Colonial Drive, Wyckoff; 1-4 pm; park on the street. About 35 years ago Janet moved into the house she now occupies and started collecting plants: Hosta first, then ferns, aresima (jack-in-the pulpits), and any other plant she didn't have.

Janet's garden is primarily a collector's garden. Pushing the envelope trying to grow as many kinds of plants that might tolerate the sun and soil conditions and still look good together are what she strives for. A member of the Tri-State Hosta Society since its inception she has run out of room but continues to hunt for the unusual.

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Paul Sisko, 113 Fardale Ave., Mahwah; 10 am-3 pm; see parking instructions below. Thirty-five years ago, the now Sisko property was a totally wooded 3½-acre sloped area except for a moderately sized contemporary home refurbished from a then 125-year-old farmhouse.

Paul, who needed a larger space for his architectural sculptures and furniture, built his new studio on the lower level of the property and then transformed the home and property into a beautifully terraced landscape, moving more than 300 tons of stone to develop the property as it is today. Most of the work on the studio, property, and home was done by Paul with occasional helpers.

His is now one of the premier gardens in the county with his sculptures throughout the grounds and with Paul taking care of almost all the gardening. The newest addition is that of a hillside vegetable garden he built last summer using some 100 landscape ties, additional raised beds, and a 10-zone watering system.

Parking: Upon entering the driveway between the stone walls, please park on the mulched soil or white stone area on the right or far left or continue straight and park on the grassy areas along the drive or at the barn/studio and turnaround area near the end by the large red sculpture. Enter from either the front or rear of the garden; entrances will be marked. If you have difficulty walking from either location, call Paul at 201-280-5764 (cell) for an additional parking area.

HORTICULTURE



Photo by Melody Corcoran

Who am I?

Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016, found this half-inch-long bug on a white snakeroot leaf minding its own business at McFaul Environmental Center. If you can identify it, send an email to [Miriam Taub](mailto:Miriam.Taub) with its name. It will be ID'd in the July Mid-Month Update.



Photo by Arnie Friedman

Hypericum in bloom: In the June *Potting Shed*, Arnie Friedman, Class of 2004, wrote about Hypericum, or St. John's wort, a lovely group of plants with an awful name. Above, H. 'Hidcote' is a shrubby version of the plant.

WEBINARS

July 7, 6:30-7:45 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors Gardening for All Seasons - Managing Problems in the Garden. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

July 8, 10 am-noon: Mt. Cuba Center sponsors Hydrangeas for Every Garden. Fee: \$29. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

July 8, noon: National Garden Bureau sponsors Ask the Experts About Brassicas. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

July 10, 10-11 am: Penn State Extension sponsors Butterflies and Blooms. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

July 13, 1-3 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors A Review of the Summer's Hottest Ornamental Plant Pests. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

July 13, 7-8 pm: Jersey-Friendly Yards sponsors Designing Gardens to Support the Native Web of Life. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

July 14, 7-8:30 pm: Mt. Cuba Center sponsors Native Annuals - An Underutilized Resource. Fee: \$24. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

July 15, noon: Denver Botanic Gardens sponsors Fearless Shrub Pruning. Fee: \$33. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

SPOTLIGHT ON . . .

Elaine Silverstein, Native Plant Society (Continued from page 1)

The local chapter also has meetings/speakers and native plant exchanges. See the "Horticulture Grapevine" column on page 5 for information about the chapter's next meeting July 14.

Elaine, 70, is "semi-retired" and has been interested in native plants for at least 25 years. It was about 10 years ago, she said, that she began thinking about what she'd do when she retired from the publishing business. In preparation for the post-work stage of life, she invited a group of friends to her home, provided dinner, and "picked their brains." The conclusion? She decided to obtain credentials that would allow her to work in the horticulture field and started taking courses at the New York Botanical Garden.

She had been volunteering at Thielke Arboretum (then called the Glen Rock Arboretum) for many years and had joined the Native Plant Society of New Jersey. Elaine, along with MG volunteers at the arboretum, noticed there were active Native Plant Society chapters in South Jersey but none in North Jersey.

As a result, she and fellow arboretum volunteers formed the Bergen-Passaic Chapter about a decade ago. Pat Knight, MG Class of 2009, was the chapter's first leader, followed by Bronwyn Sutherland and then Diane Van Kempen. The latter two were members of the MG of BC but have since moved out of the area.

Interest in native plants is strong, Elaine confirmed. The chapter has a distribution list of about 400 members and draws close to 100 for its virtual meetings vs. 30-50 who used to show up in person. As many as 500, she said, tune in for Native Plant Society of New Jersey meetings, up from 100-150 who typically came to pre-pandemic statewide meetings.

How Elaine got started with native plants

Reading "Noah's Garden" by Sara Stein (now deceased). Sara transformed her property in Pound Ridge, NY, into a native plant paradise. The book is out of print but is available from online sources. Google "Noah's Garden." Sara's property, now owned by James and Ellen Best, will be open to the public July 25 during the Garden Conservancy's Open Days program. Click [here](#) for more information and to register for the tour. Fee is \$10 a person.

"Native plants are one of the ways we will save the environment," she said. "This is not an ornamental issue; it's not a side issue. If you have native plants, you have insects, you have birds. Insects are the basis of the food web."



Photo courtesy of Elaine Silverstein

Elaine's Glen Rock backyard is filled with native trees, shrubs, and flowers.

Just like children, she continued, birds and caterpillars need protein. For birds, "Seed is not going to do it," she added. If you have a garden with all non-native plants, you won't have that basis of the food web, no caterpillars, and no birds.

Elaine's picks: Where to order native plants

- [Izel Native Plants](#); mail order only.
- [The Pollen Nation](#), Bridgeton; mail order only.
- [Toadshade Wildflower Farm](#), Frenchtown; mail order only.
- [Wild Ridge Plants](#), Pohatcong (Warren County); mail order and curbside pickup.

Over time, Elaine has earned two certificates from the New York Botanical Garden: Sustainable Landscape Management and Urban Naturalist. She has "a small horticulture practice" in which she designs native plant gardens. And she is co-chair of the Glen Rock Shade Tree Advisory Committee.

Elaine also frequently speaks to garden clubs and community groups about native plants and sustainability in the home garden, among other topics. She will speak at our Sept. 28 meeting; her topic is Designing and Planting with Native Plants: Creating a Native Habitat.

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Back in Elaine's garden, it thrives, she explained, because she's planted what's appropriate for the site. Since it's a dry location, she nixed the idea of wetlands plants, for example.

But despite her best efforts, she admitted, not everything in her garden has survived. Over time, she did lose three large Norway maples that preceded her ownership of the property. She replaced them with native oak and ash trees. "I'm delighted," she said.

Why aren't more native plants available in area nurseries?

Elaine responds: "It's not the way the industry is set up. Nurseries make more money selling cultivars and hybrids. Natives are pure species [so] no one has to pay someone who developed the cultivar or hybrid."



Photo courtesy of Elaine Silverstein

Native border in Elaine's backyard. From left, *Monarda 'Fistulosa'* (bergamot), *Oenothera 'Fruticosa'* (sundrops), and *Asclepias 'Tuberosa'* (butterfly weed). The grasses in front are little bluestem.

Elaine's tip: You're better off buying a small native plant than a larger one. The smaller plant will be easier to install, suffer less transplant shock, and will grow faster.

FARMERS MARKETS

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.

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.*

HORTICULTURE GRAPEVINE

July 14, 6:30 pm, Native Plant Society of NJ, Bergen-Passaic Chapter. Outdoor meeting in the native garden of the NY-NJ Trail Conference headquarters, 600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah. Plant exchange (natives only), refreshments, and catching up. Click [here](#) for more information. RSVP to bergenpassaic@npsnj.org.

Did you know?

The *Potting Shed* is available on the home page of our [website](#). The link is under the photo of the goldfinch along with the link to the latest Mid-Month Update. Past issues of the *Potting Shed* are available in the Members section of the website. If you haven't requested access to the Members section yet, send an email to info@mgofbc.org. In it, designate the username and password you want to use. Passwords are limited to 10 letters/numbers. No special characters are permitted in passwords.

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VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

It's great to be back in the weeds

Volunteers at Garretson Forge & Farm (below) and McFaul Environmental Center (bottom) enjoyed every bit of digging, weeding, raking, and mulching after 16+ months away from their sites.

At Garretson, volunteers pose (below left) before tackling the weeds. The weeded area (below right) will be planted with a cover crop. Garretson volunteers meet Thursdays from 10 am-2 pm. Contact [Lida Gellman](#), Class of 1999 and site coordinator, if you'd like to volunteer at Garretson. Garretson photos by Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016.



From left: Patricia Brady, Class of 2020; Bernadette White, Class of 2021; Arta Pagano, Class of 2016; and Chris Belli, Class of 2015.



From left: Gary Puzio, Nicola Tutschek, and Bernadette White, all Class of 2021; and Patricia Brady, Class of 2020.

At McFaul, MGs assess the thistle, perilla, and white snake root (below left) and then conquer (below right). Oakleaf hydrangeas are being considered for the bed. McFaul volunteers meet Wednesdays from 8:30 am-noon. Contact [Joseph Cooper](#), Class of 2008 and site coordinator, if you'd like to volunteer at McFaul. McFaul photos by Joseph Cooper.



At left in both photos, Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016, and Gimai Ma, Class of 2021.