

### 3 MG of BC sites to reopen

#### NJBG, Garretson, and Washington Spring Garden welcome volunteers

Three MG of BC volunteer sites will reopen this week. New Jersey Botanical Garden/Skylands volunteers meet June 2, while the Washington Spring Garden and Garretson Forge and Farm volunteers meet June 3.

Coordinators for these sites have registered their site as having met the Rutgers Cooperative Extension safety protocols required for the site to open.

#### Hello gorgeous!



Photo courtesy of Roberta Chopko

'Hello Gorgeous' is the name of this hosta. See page 4 for an interview with Roberta Chopko of the Tri-State Hosta Society.

As announced several months ago, the Master Gardener volunteer requirement is suspended for 2021 and you aren't required to participate in any volunteering this year.

Please view this brief [video](#) on YouTube about the RCE guidelines for MGs. In brief, those guidelines for MGs are:

- Volunteer activities are limited to a maximum of 25 people per site, which includes volunteers, site coordinator(s), and staff, as applicable.

(Continued on page 2)

Contents	Page
Horticulture	2-3
Spotlight on . . . Tri-State Hosta Society	4-5
Webinars	5-6
Horticulture Grapevine	6
Farmers Markets	6
Save the Date	7
MG of BC News	7

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

### From the President's Desk

#### By Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016

There has been an experiment going on at Michigan State University since 1879.

William James Beal, a botanist, wanted to learn how long seeds of various local weedy plants would be viable — years, decades, possibly centuries?



He buried 20 bottles containing the seeds at a secret location on the campus. Every 20 years using what is basically a treasure map, MSU botanists have been digging up another bottle to test. This April, as in past years, seeds of *Verbascum 'blattaria'* (common name moth mullein) once again sprouted — 142 years after being buried!

The persistence of plants can be amazing. Some plants that the animals keep on eating, no matter how much repellent spray I use, reappear every year (Solomon's seal). Some plants that the squirrels insisted on digging up when I first planted them last year and that I insisted on replanting still survive (bloodroot). And a few plants in my garden that had disappeared several years ago made an appearance this spring (cup plant and sweet woodruff).

Look carefully around your garden and you may be surprised at what you find.

More information about the ongoing experiment at MSU can be found in the following New York Times articles:

- ["One of the World's Oldest Science Experiments Comes Up From the Dirt,"](#) April 21, 2021, by Cara Giaimo.
- ["One of the World's Longest-Running Experiments Sends Up Sprouts,"](#) May 11, 2021, by Cara Giaimo.

### 3 MG of BC volunteer sites to reopen (Continued from page 1)

- On each day you volunteer, you must complete an RCE Covid-19 Health Screening [Form](#) to get a green check mark, which will permit you to enter the volunteer site. Take a screen shot of the check mark with your phone or print and bring a copy of the form with you. Your site coordinator will look at the check mark on your phone or on the form. If you aren't feeling well and/or answered "yes" to any of the questions on the Health Screening Form, please don't attend the activity. **Note:** No one is permitted to ask your vaccination status.
- Masks must be worn and social distancing of 6 feet must be observed at all MG volunteer sites.
- Attendance will be recorded for contact tracing purposes.
- In addition to your mask, bring hand sanitizer, tools, and food/beverage. Food won't be provided at any volunteer site and sharing of food isn't permitted.

**NJ Botanical Garden/Skylands, 2 Morris Road, Ringwood:** Volunteers are welcome Wednesdays from 9 am-noon. Bring gloves, a hat, and your favorite tools. "Let's get going!" said Dania Cheddie, site coordinator. For more information, send an email to [Dania](#).

**Garretson Forge and Farm, 4-02 River Road, Fair Lawn:** Volunteers are welcome Thursdays from 10 am-4 pm. Sunday hours won't resume until further notice. Masks are required. Bring your own pruner and some form of trowel since small tools won't be shared. "We look forward to getting back to work and meeting with old and new volunteers," said Lida Gellman, site coordinator. If you plan to join the Garretson group, send an email to [Lida](#).

**Washington Spring Garden in Van Saun Park, 216 Forest Ave., Paramus:** Volunteers meet Thursdays from 8:30 am-12:30 pm. You can stay as little or as long as you'd like. Bring gloves, weeding tools, water, and a snack if needed. "We will focus on weeding and trimming dead branches," said Suzanne Danzig, site coordinator. For more information, send an email to [Suzanne](#) or call her at 201-218-4093.

Site coordinators will contact their volunteers when their sites are ready to reopen. However, if you're interested in volunteering at a new site, visit the Volunteer Sites [page](#) of our website and then click on the "Volunteer Sites PDF List" for the names, description, and contact information for each site.

**Note:** Both Davies Arboretum and the Butterfly and Native Garden aren't reopening yet.

## HORTICULTURE

### Rhubarb revealed

In the May *Mid-Month Update*, we asked you to identify the plant, at right, which Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016, found at Garretson Forge and Farm. The flower is about 1 square inch.



Photo by Melody Corcoran

Maggie Raywood, Class of 2021, identified this flower as a bolting rhubarb.

Here are some rhubarb facts provided by Melody:

- Botanically, rhubarb is a perennial vegetable.
- Rhubarb is a member of the buckwheat family.
- Rhubarb leaves are toxic; they contain oxalic acid. *Don't eat them.*
- Citing rhubarb's most common uses, in 1947 the US Customs Court in Buffalo, NY, declared rhubarb a fruit for tariff purposes. This saved importers of the fresh stalks from paying the higher tariff imposed on vegetables.

### Bugleweed: Friend or foe

From "*The Mountain Gardener*" newsletter, May 2021, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Buncombe County. Reprinted by permission.

Ajuga or bugleweed, a member of the mint family (which should tell you something) is a fast-growing ground



Bugleweed: Pretty in purple but a space invader.

cover tolerant of varying soil conditions. Most happy in shady sites with moist soils, this plant can quickly get out of hand.

Bugleweed can jump from the garden into the lawn and become an unwanted invader. There are a number of cultivars on the market with varying leaf, flower color, and growth habit. Click [here](#) to read more before you buy.

## Hypericum: A lovely group of plants with an awful name

By Arnie Friedman, Class of 2004

Hypericum (St John's Wort) is a very large group of plants with an awful name. The family of Hypericum ranges from soft perennials to woody shrubs and even to



Photos by Arnie Friedman

H. 'Summer Boulevard.'

some tree forms. They are found on most continents; some are invasive and should *not* be used. Some are considered medicinally useful and some with red sap in their veins evoke a

religious connotation, thus the Medieval reference to the martyred St. John and his blood.

For the New Jersey gardener, some of the more available Hypericums like H. 'Aubrey Purple,' H. 'Prolificum,' and H. 'Calycinum,' are very lovely and useful additions to the landscape.



Hypericum flower and berry.

My introduction came years ago by way of Bill Kolvek Perennials, which many Master Gardeners were familiar with. It was Bill's sister Mary who gave my wife Jean a sample of the 'Aubrey Purple' variety that had come from their mother's garden. It's a low-growing herbaceous variety with dark green and purple-edged leaves that has a lovely bright yellow flower mid-summer and a red berry that lasts through fall.

Not only was this plant hardy — reappearing every spring and a lovely ground cover — but it's also not eaten by the deer that freely graze my front yard. Loving this Hypericum I looked around for others of this family.

When traveling to Europe I began to see larger shrub-like varieties used in parks and as hedges. They all had that distinctive yellow flower — some larger, some smaller — but all very lovely. Walking around my local wholesale nursery I have in the last couple of years found bushier varieties on sale from Monrovia and Proven Winners like H. 'Hidcote' or H. 'Sunny Boulevard.'

A very useful ground cover version of Hypericum, which spreads laterally like pachysandra and the like, is H. 'Calycinum,' which I have used very successfully to cover a hillside in part shade at a client's house.

Recently, I bought a tray of Hypericum 'Prolificum' from a grower in what's called landscape plugs. I get these 32 at a time and plant right into the garden. I used a few at several clients this spring and put in a few at my house. They're only a couple of inches tall now, but hopefully by late summer they'll start to grow into small shrubs and increase in size next year.

Hypericums are easy to care for. Most die back to the ground in fall That's true for some of the bushier ones I've used. We cut them back almost to the ground but early in the spring they show new growth coming up from the base.

Try some. I promise you'll love them, and the deer will hate them.

### Resources to cope with spotted lanternfly

Join the battle to beat the bug — the spotted lanternfly that is. Bergen is one of 12 New Jersey counties with "confirmed small spotted lanternfly populations and/or regulatory incidents," according to the NJ Department of Agriculture.

The NJDA website offers photos, life stages, a reporting tool and toll-free number to report a spotted lanternfly sighting, and other information about this invasive, which is native to China, India, and Vietnam. Click [here](#) for the NJDA spotted lanternfly home page.

How to beat the bug? Click [here](#) for the NJDA homeowner resources page.

The New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station's spotted lanternfly [page](#) offers information and videos from a 2018 New Jersey Landscape Association workshop.

## SPOTLIGHT ON . . .

### Roberta Chopko, Tri-State Hosta Society

*By Miriam Taub, Class of 2011*

According to the “Hosta” [page](#) of the New York Botanical Garden website, “There are around 45 species of hostas with over 7,000 cultivars.”

Roberta and Dave Chopko of the [Tri-State Hosta Society](#) have more than 3,000 varieties on their one-acre property in Parsippany. “I lost count,” said Roberta, 75, the society’s newsletter editor who alternates as society



*Photos courtesy of Roberta Chopko*

**Roberta and Dave Chopko of the Tri-State Hosta Society.**

president with husband Dave, 76. She admitted that she and her husband are “obsessed” with hostas.

What’s the attraction of these leafy gems? “Hostas are beautiful and calming,” Roberta said. Years ago, she recalled, during a visit to her property from a rock garden society, one member walked to the back of the property and returned scoffing. “You only have hostas,” she said before she left. Concluded Roberta: “You either like ‘em or you don’t.” It’s a man’s plant, she added, because it’s not about the flowers.

In the society’s most recent newsletter, the Tri-State Tribune, Roberta wrote the following as another reason to plant hostas: “They have been known to resurface a year after being tossed on the compost pile. They re-emerge in the spring after deer have chewed them to the ground the previous season. You can step on them, divide them, share them, cut them to the ground, and yet they return.” (Voles can be more of a problem than deer, she pointed out. Voles will eat the hosta roots, and then the plant will die.)

#### How it all started

Forty-two years ago, Roberta and Dave bought their property, which was described as a mini farm. The previous owner grew vegetables, and the weeds were “as tall as I am, 5 foot 3,” Roberta said. A few varieties of hosta (‘Sieboldiana elegans’ and ‘Undulata’) were

scattered about. “Nothing special at all,” she noted. Little by little, vegetables disappeared and hostas appeared. Since hosta varieties at local nurseries were and are limited, the Chopkos would shop for hostas in North Carolina when visiting friends who were members of their local hosta society.



**One view of the Chopkos’ hosta garden.**

Around 1996, at the Plant Delights nursery in Raleigh, NC, they learned that the Tri-State Hosta Society for residents of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut had been organized in Morris County. They joined shortly after. Roberta and Dave take turns as the society’s president. “I do four years and then he does four years,” she said. The society has 150 members and, like many organizations, has its share of challenges attracting new members.

Prior to the pandemic, the group would meet three times a year (fall, winter, and spring) at the [Frelinghuysen Arboretum](#) in Morris Township. (The organization hasn’t had virtual meetings.) During the summer they schedule tours of members’ gardens — one each in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. This year’s Jersey tour will be at the home of Janet Schulz, Class of 1988, one of the first members of the Tri-State Hosta Society who joined in 1993.

Roberta noted that while they’ve visited some members’ gardens in the past, there’s always something to learn on a return visit, for example, a design or style tip or seeing a new variety of hosta.

#### Are you hosta curious?

If hostas have piqued your curiosity, Roberta suggested that you start by visiting the hosta garden at the [New Jersey Botanical Garden/Skylands](#), which is maintained by Dave Chopko and another member of the Tri-State Hosta Society. Then, she said, buy what you like and have the room for. For example, if you have a small garden, don’t buy ‘Empress Wu’ since the plant can grow up to 60 inches wide. “It’s HUGE,” Roberta warned.

*(Continued on page 5)*

(Continued from page 4)



Photo courtesy of Roberta Chopko

'Mito No Hana' – "This one you won't find in any garden center, local or otherwise." – Roberta Chopko

For smaller gardens, mini hostas, such as 'Blue Mouse Ears' and 'Country Mouse,' are immensely popular since they can be grown in containers and in borders, she said.

When shopping locally, you'll probably find only 20 to 30 hosta varieties in New Jersey, Roberta estimated. Why? Area nurseries all tend to deal with the same wholesalers, such as Walters Gardens, Proven Winners, and Monrovia, she said. And, because of the "deer issue," hostas aren't selling like they used to.

"That's the biggest complaint we get — that hostas are deer food. Though there are many deer deterrents on the market, fencing is the only thing that is 100% effective," she added.

For hostas that are out of the ordinary, the Tri-State Hosta Society will hold its annual hosta sale (previously held in the Frelinghuysen Arboretum auditorium, which is closed) at 11 am June 12 at the B&B Livestock Farm, 425 Little Brook Road, Glen Gardner, 08826. Hostas will be coming from Green Hill Farm in North Carolina. If you get lost, call Roberta at 201-446-1184. *Masks and social distancing rules apply.*

You must be a member to purchase hostas, but you can buy a one-year membership for \$10 at the sale. Otherwise, you can join the society for \$25 for a three-year membership. Visit the "[Memberships](#)" page of the hosta society's website for an application.

What's Roberta's favorite hosta? "It's like asking which is your favorite child," she replied, adding she doesn't know where to start. She likes ruffled hostas like 'Wheee' (those three "e's" are correct) and 'Bridal Falls.' She likes 'Tattoo' but warns it's hard to grow. "If you are a quitter, not willing to put the time in and deal with the deer issue,

then perhaps growing hostas is not for you," Roberta advised.

If hostas weren't enough, Roberta said she has an extensive fern collection though Dave tends to move her "stuff" to make way for more hostas. "It's no longer our garden," she said. "It's Dave's garden."

## WEBINARS

**See more webinars in the June Mid-Month Update.**

**June 2, noon-1 pm:** Ecological Landscape Alliance sponsors Rain Garden Primer - A Good Option for Your Landscape? Free. Click [here](#) for more information, to register, and to join the ELA.

**June 2, 6:30-7:45 pm:** Penn State Extension sponsors Gardening for All Seasons - Container Gardening. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**June 3, noon-1 pm:** Smithsonian Gardens sponsors Creating Dynamic Shade Gardens. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**June 3, 6:30 pm:** Rutgers Family and Community Health Sciences sponsors Preserving Herbs. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**June 3, 7 pm:** Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum sponsor Virtual Tour of Gardens in Cornwall and Devon in June. Free to members/\$10 non-members. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. Then scroll to June 3 in the left column.

**June 4, 11 am:** National Garden Bureau sponsors Gardening with Children. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**June 7, 10-11 am:** North Carolina State Extension, Buncombe County Center, sponsors Introduction to Botanical Dyeing. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**June 7, 11 am-noon:** Penn State Extension sponsors Healthy Living for Your Brain and Body. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**June 8, 7-8 pm:** Jersey-Friendly Yards sponsors Ferocious Dragons and Dainty Damsels. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**June 9, noon-1 pm:** Ecological Landscape Alliance sponsors Native Plants for Bird Friendly Communities. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

**June 10, noon-1 pm:** Smithsonian Gardens sponsors Let's Talk Gardens - Cicadas. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**June 10, 7 pm:** Caldwell Environmental Commission sponsors The Future Will Belong to the Nature Smart with Richard Louv, author of "Last Child in the Woods." Free. Click [here](#) to register.

**June 12, 10-11 am:** Penn State Extension sponsors Creating a Small Bog Garden for Carnivorous Plants. \$5. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**June 15, 7-8 pm:** Rutgers Cooperative Education of Ocean County sponsors Rain Barrels FAQs. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**June 16, noon-1 pm:** Penn State Extension sponsors Urban Tree Pest Update - Insects that Harm Trees. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

## HORTICULTURE GRAPEVINE

**June 8, 7-8 pm, Bogota Public Library via Zoom:** Speaker: Janet Schulz, Class of 1988. Topic: Gardening in the Shade. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**June 9, 6:30 pm, Native Plant Society of NJ, Bergen-Passaic Chapter:** Outdoor meeting in the native plant garden of the NY-NJ Trail Conference headquarters, 600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah. Plant exchange (native plants only), refreshments, and catching up. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

### Bergen County Rutgers Cooperative Extension Office

**Joel Flagler** Agricultural/Resources Management Agent/County Extension Dept. Head  
201-336-6780

**Karen Riede** Horticultural Assistant 201-336-6788

Cooperating agencies: Rutgers, the State University of NJ, US Department of Agriculture, and Bergen County Board of Commissioners. Rutgers Cooperative Extension educational programs are offered to all without regard to race, religion, color, age, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. Rutgers Cooperative Extension is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

## What a bloomer!

In the May *Potting Shed*, we featured the indoor garden of Surinder Chadha, Class of 2016. Among his favs is this Canadian cactus, aka, spring/Easter cactus whose blooming season is March-May. He pointed out that among the differences between Canadian and Thanksgiving/Christmas cactus are the leaf shape, leaf ends, bloom time, and number of blooms. His Canadian cactus blooms bi-annually with



two to five small, star-shaped flowers at leaf-end, which open at sunrise and close at sunset.

"I can say with certainty my Canadian cactus had about 500 flowers." About 150 flowers remained when he took this photo.

Surinder reported that he's had this plant for "well over 20 years. The plant itself is not very pretty. My wife always tells me to get rid of it. I hide it from her in my sunroom where it gets the most sun and where she cannot see it. I bring it down in February when buds start forming and then watch for the beautiful parade of flowers beginning in March."

## 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](#).

**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.*

## SAVE THE DATE



Photo courtesy of Paul Sisko

One view of Paul Sisko's garden and his sculpture.

### Tour members' gardens July 31

Two members, Janet Schulz, Class of 1988, and Paul Sisko, Class of 2021, will open their gardens to members July 31.

Janet's shade garden in Wyckoff will be open from 1-4 pm, while Paul's garden, in Mahwah, will be open from 10 am-3 pm.

See the July *Potting Shed* for addresses and other details. Please wear a face covering if you're not fully vaccinated.

## MG OF BC NEWS

### Have you visited our new website?

The MG of BC [website](#) awaits your visit. Check out the public section, which has general information, volunteer site descriptions (though most sites are still closed), the most recent *Potting Shed* and *Mid-Month Update*, and other stuff. The members-only section gives you access to the online Member Directory, organization documents, meeting minutes, and past issues of the *Potting Shed*.

For access to the members-only section, send an email to [info@mgofbc.org](mailto:info@mgofbc.org) with the username and password you want to use. Passwords are case-sensitive and limited to 10 letters/numbers (no special characters). Usernames and passwords didn't carry over from the old website.

### 'We planted a ton of native plants'



Tammy Laverty, Class of 2015 (left), and Pat Knight, Class of 2009, were among the volunteers who planted "a ton" of native plants at the Bergen County Audubon Society's event at the Butterfly and Native Garden in Leonia in May. Tammy reported the group planted shrubby St. John's wort, skullcap, white and

purple Veronica, Culver's root, Joe Pye weed 'Baby Joe,' cardinal flower, swamp milkweed, agastache, spirea, and more.

### Thanks, y'all

Thanks to the following for contributing to the June *Potting Shed*: Melody Corcoran, Surinder Chadha, Dania Cheddie, Suzanne Danzig, Arnie Friedman, Lida Gellman, Tammy Laverty, Maggie Raywood, Karen Riede, Paul Sisko, and Janet Schulz.

To suggest a story idea or to submit information for the *Potting Shed*, contact [Miriam Taub](#), editor. The deadline for the July *Potting Shed* is June 26.