

# From the Potting Shed May 2021

Master Gardeners of Bergen County

## Virtual meeting – Tuesday, May 25

Announcements at 7:20 pm; program to follow; click [here](#) to join the meeting before 7:20 pm

### Bruce Crawford - A Designer's Love Affair with Trees

When we evaluate and contemplate our gardens, one plant that we often consider last is the tree. Trees are the plants we should be considering first, said Bruce Crawford.

Whether it's for moderating the climate, carbon sequestration, or soothing our souls after a hectic day, trees enhance and add value to our homes in ways we often fail to consider. Bruce, state program leader for home and public horticulture with the NJ Agricultural Experiment Station, will evaluate and discuss the many ways trees enhance both our garden and our community.



Photo by Miriam Taub

Bruce Crawford when he last spoke to the MG of BC in 2019.

A longtime proponent of unusual and fun plants, Bruce had his own design/build garden design business for nearly 25 years that specialized in plantings for year-round interest. One of those gardens was published in *Fine Gardening* magazine. From 2005 to 2020 Bruce was the director of Rutgers Gardens, the botanical garden for Rutgers University. Last summer, he became state program leader for home and public horticulture.

Bruce has been an instructor in the Landscape Architecture program at Rutgers University since 1987. He says he has yet to find a plant he does not like.

**Note: This is our annual joint meeting with the MG of Passaic County.**

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

## From the President's Desk

By Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016

I just finished reading Doug Tallamy's latest book, *The Nature of Oaks*. The book describes what is happening with, in, and upon the oak trees in his yard throughout the year; how the oaks interact with the birds and insects; what the oaks are contributing to the ecosystem; and why everyone should plant oaks in their yard.



As with all his books, this one is full of great information.

Do you know what marcescence is? I am sure that you have observed it. When oak and beech trees do not drop their brown, dead leaves in the fall, those trees are exhibiting leaf marcescence. One hypothesis about the development of this characteristic is that the dead, dry leaves discourage browsing animals, such as deer, and so protect next year's leaf buds from being eaten.

There are no leaf-eating insects on tree branches in the winter, right? Wrong. Oaks support more than 500 species of moths and butterflies; many of these caterpillars can overwinter in crevices in the bark or just sit on twigs. The birds know where to find them.

Mr. Tallamy recommends that everyone plant oak trees in their yard. Think that your yard is too small for an oak? Not all oaks are giants. Best oak trees for different regions are listed by size — small, intermediate, and large. I recommend *The Nature of Oaks*, and all of Doug Tallamy's books, to everyone.

*The Bergen County Cooperative Library System (BCCLS) currently has one hardcover copy in the entire county system. I have recommended that they obtain the e-book edition.*

## SPOTLIGHT ON ....

### Indoor gardening from top to bottom



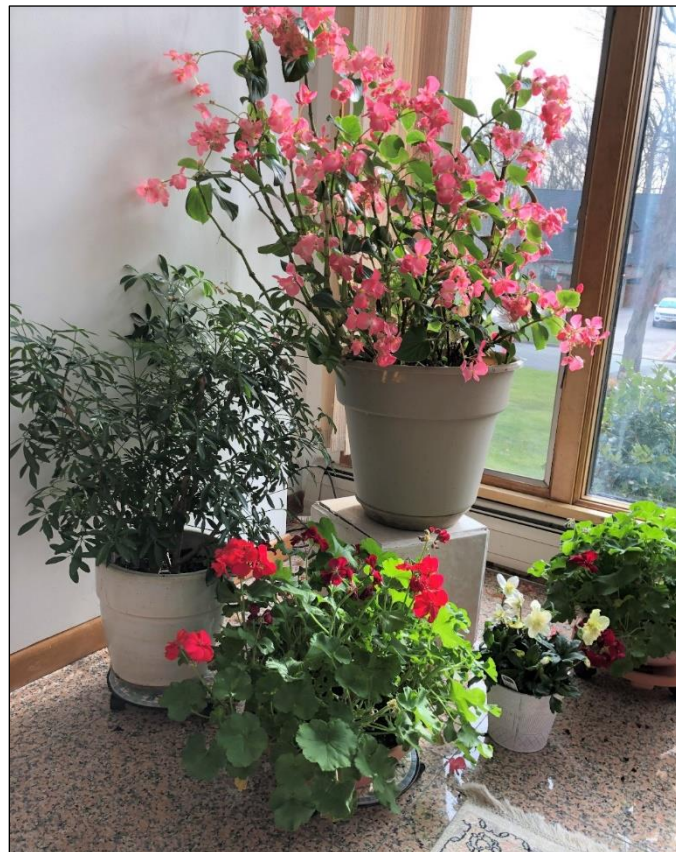
Photos by Surinder Chadha

Enter Surinder Chadha's Old Tappan home and you'll see plants in every direction — especially above. Surinder, Class of 2016, has been gardening for 65 years and collecting indoor plants for 48 years, beginning in 1973 at his former residence in Yorktown Heights, NY, and continuing when he moved to Old Tappan in 1982. His collection of approximately 100 indoor plants allows him to garden year-round.

While his home came with 16- to 18-foot ceilings, Surinder, a now-retired structural engineer, undertook two construction projects at his home including adding seven skylights. He first added 500 square feet for a sunroom and library with granite floors and three large skylights. Then, during the second project, he added 1,300 square feet, 6-foot windows all around, and four skylights, all of which help showcase his plants. Photos of Surinder's plants have been featured on the Fine Gardening website.

Surinder explained that he prefers 14-inch plastic pots for the hangers since 20-inch steel wire pots were too heavy for him to hang. (Yes, he hangs the plants himself.) He keeps the non-hanging plants primarily in ceramic containers from 6 to 20 inches.

Though most plants remain in place he does move some plants — ferns, for example — outdoors in May and brings them inside in October. "By now I pretty much know which plant likes which specific location," he said. "As an example, purple passion plant glows in full sun and thin-needle ferns like indirect sunlight and prefer [a] cooler area of my home."



This grouping enjoys the space and the light. Top row, *Schefflera arboricola* and geranium. Bottom row: Geranium, dragon wing begonia, and Helleborus.

As for watering, Surinder termed it a "big operation" aided by an 8-foot ladder. "I spread plastic sheets all around and cover them with towels to ensure no damage to carpets and furniture. I water all hanging plants once in two weeks and that takes at least four to five hours to water them. The plants on the floor and on plant stands take another one to two hours a week."

Surinder said he rarely buys indoor plants anymore since he owns enough to take cuttings, grow new plants, and discard older plants. "I have observed that many vines have a life of three to five years after which they start looking old and wrinkled," he observed.

His favorite plants? Jade plants because "they live forever" and begonias. Surinder said he has a beautiful angel wing begonia and two dragon begonias, which bloom throughout the year.

"Plants are like living beings," he said. "You love them, and they will love you and give you a great joy. It may be hard to believe that I have Thanksgiving/Christmas cactus that bloom from October to April in my home. Even jade plants bloom in my home. I believe they are sharing their love with me," he concluded.

## THINGS TO DO

### Earth Day-Green Fair in Ridgefield Park

Ridgefield Park's Earth Day-Green Fair is scheduled, rain or shine, for 10 am-4 pm May 1 at Riverfront Park, located behind the Department of Public Works building, 24 Industrial Ave. *Masks must be worn and other Covid guidelines followed.*

Among the activities are all-day fishing with the Hudson River Fisherman's Association; endangered live-animal show; bat show; raptor show; environmental exhibits; food; and music. See the attached flyer sent with the *Potting Shed* for show times and other information.

### Garden tours! Yay!

MGs Janet Schulz and Noel Schulz (no relation) are opening their gardens in May. Social distancing must be observed. For the safety and comfort of all, please wear a mask even if you've been vaccinated. Lots to ooh and aah about at both locations. Here are the details:

**May 15-16, 10 am-4 pm. Janet Schulz, Class of 1988, 16 Colonial Drive, Wyckoff.**

Janet's half-acre shade garden is about 30 years old with many rare and collectible plants. There are many places to sit and view the garden. You won't know where to look first!

**May 15, 10 am-4 pm. Noel Schulz, Class of 2016, 108 Lincoln Place, Waldwick.**

Noel has three separate gardens on his third-of-an-acre property. View the rock garden before entering a woodland garden and then emerge into a more formal space before coming to the vegetable garden.

### Hackensack River cleanups: Are you ready to get down and dirty?

The Hackensack Riverkeeper's River Cleanup Program, in progress through November, mobilizes more than 1,000 volunteers and removes 27,000-plus pounds of trash from the watershed from New York State to Newark Bay.

Individuals and small groups are invited to join the Riverkeeper's monthly cleanups, which take place on weekends in different communities along the Hackensack River watershed. To become a Hackensack Riverkeeper volunteer, you can register for one or more of the cleanups.

Registration helps the Riverkeeper know how many volunteers to expect and how to contact you if an event is postponed or canceled.

Dress to get dirty and work outdoors. The Riverkeeper will supply gloves, bags, pickup sticks, canoes, paddles, personal flotation devices, and pizza.

Click [here](#) for more information and the list of cleanup dates/times. You can register by clicking on the link for a specific date. Click [here](#) to visit the Hackensack Riverkeeper website.

## PLANT SALES

***Masks and social distancing are required at all plant sales.***

**May 2, 9 am-2 pm, Ramsey Area Garden Club,** farmers market near the train station, West Main Street, Ramsey. Perennials, annuals, hanging baskets, and plants from members' gardens.

**May 7-19, times vary, Garden Club of Teaneck,** greenhouse at the foot of Lindbergh Boulevard, Teaneck. You must register to attend. Click [here](#) for times, rules, and to register. During peak sale hours, registration requirement will be observed.



*Photo courtesy Anna Kurz*

**May 8, 9 am-noon, Ho-Ho-Kus Garden Club,** Village Green next to the Ho-Ho-Kus Inn, East Franklin Turnpike, Ho-Ho-Kus.

**The Garden Club of Teaneck is selling non-stop begonias.**

**May 15, 10 am-4 pm, Garretson Forge and Farm,** 4-02 River Road, Fair Lawn. Native plants; medicinal plants and herbs; and flowers and vegetables. Spring festival featuring garden tours and children's activities. Click [here](#) to visit the Garretson calendar for more information.

**May 22, 8 am-noon, Allendale Garden Club,** Lee Memorial Library, 500 Crescent Ave., Allendale. Perennials from members' gardens and local nurseries. Rain or shine.

## VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

### ***The Hermitage in yellow***



Photos by Kathleen Sullivan

**The results are in:** Hundreds of daffodils decorate the Hermitage, thanks to Daisy Scouts (who planted the bulbs over an eight-year period as part of the Hermitage scouts gardening program) and the MGs who supervised them. The daffodils were planted at both entrance gates to the property, along the dry-stone wall on Franklin Turnpike, around the slate patio and parking lot at the rear of the property, and at the well house (above left). More bulbs will be planted when the program is expected to resume in October. Visit the Hermitage [website](#).

## WEBINARS

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

**May 4, 11 am-noon:** New York Botanical Garden sponsors In the Shadow of Slavery - Africa's Food Legacy in the Atlantic World. Fee: \$15 members/\$18 non-members. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**May 5, noon-1 pm:** Ecological Landscape Alliance sponsors Beauty and Biodiversity at Cornell University's Mundy Wildflower Garden. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**May 5, 5-6 pm:** Holy Name Medical Center sponsors Discover the Benefits of Indoor Plants. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**May 5, 6:30-7:45 pm:** Penn State Extension sponsors Gardening for All Seasons - Kitchen Gardens. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**May 5, 7-8 pm:** Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Ocean County sponsors Breaking Ground on Composting. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**May 6, 6:30-7:30 pm:** Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Middlesex County sponsors Why Garden Off the Ground. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**May 11, 7-8 pm:** Jersey-Friendly Yards sponsors Attracting Bees and Beneficial Insects with Native Plants. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**May 12, noon-1 pm:** Ecological Landscape Alliance sponsors the Journey of Edible Landscapes. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**May 13, 11 am-noon:** Penn State Extension sponsors Protecting Yourself from Tick Bites. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**May 13, 6:30-7:30 pm:** Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Middlesex County sponsors Getting Back to Our Roots with Root Crops. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

## HORTICULTURE

### **The dreaded cicadas are returning**

2021 marks the return of the 17-year locust. Get ready for the ceaseless whirring of the male cicadas beginning in late May or early June. Click [here](#) to read the Rutgers Agricultural Extension Service's revised factsheet about these noisemakers.



Rutgers University photo  
Adult periodical cicadas.

### **Put a name to those weeds (instead of the usual expletive)**

**Reminder:** Rutgers Agricultural Experiment Station offers a rogue's gallery of 133 common weeds. Search by photo, Latin name, or common name from aster to sweet yellow clover. (No "Z" in the gallery yet.) Click [here](#) for the New Jersey Weed Gallery. Click on the thumbnail photos for larger photos and a description of each weed.

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## When is it time to repot?

Orchid expert Carrie Buchman, who introduced us to the world of orchids at our November 2020 Zoom meeting, advises when it's time to repot a *Phalaenopsis*. Contact [Carrie](#) if you'd like to chat about orchids.

*Dear Carrie,  
Since my orchid's roots are pressing against the wall of this pot, does it need a bigger pot?*



*This Phal does not need to be repotted!*

This looks like a nice healthy plant. Unless the bark is broken down, I would not repot it. There are really two indications for repotting:

1. The media is decaying, or
2. The plant is outgrowing the pot.

Most of us also try to use the last repot date to anticipate when the media will break down. For good-quality bark that can be three to four years! Most orchids like to be snug in their pots.

From the picture, the roots look good; eventually they grow to the point where they will start to push the plant out of the top of the pot in which case it is time. I'm surprised at how many Facebook postings I see of newly acquired Phals that that owner wants to repot immediately.

I'm not in favor of that unless there are extenuating circumstances such as those above. Bark as the potting medium that you can see through the pot is OK; it should be sufficient to not repot. However, if the Phal comes in one of the moss plugs so popular now in big box store Phals, I would repot *after* the blooms finish and, in the meantime, remove a few bits of the moss plug to create some air holes.

## HORTICULTURE GRAPEVINE

**May 6, 7:30 pm, Friends of the Teaneck Public Library via Zoom:** Speaker: Janet Schulz, Class of 1988. Topic: Potz 'n Around - Gardening in Pots. Click [here](#) for more information and the Zoom link.

**May 12, 7:30 pm, Native Plant Society of New Jersey, Bergen-Passaic Chapter, via Zoom:** Speaker: Don Torino, president, Bergen County Audubon Society. Topic: Creating a Certified Wildlife Garden. Click [here](#) to register.

**May 13, 7-8 pm, Bogota Public Library via Zoom:** Speaker: Janet Schulz. Topic: Potz 'n Around - Gardening in Pots. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**May 27, 7 pm meeting, 7:30-8:30 pm presentation, Garden Club of Hackensack:** Speaker: Don Torino, president, Bergen County Audubon Society. Topic: Creating a Certified Wildlife Garden. Click [here](#) to register via email; enter registration number CWG052021 in the subject line of the email. Zoom login codes will be sent to you two days before the event.

## MG OF BC NEWS

### ***Mgofbc.org – visit our website***

Our [website](#) has a new look! In the public section, you'll find descriptions of the MG volunteer sites with a photo of each, a summary of activities, and the name(s) and contact information for each site's coordinator(s). Though there's no volunteering yet, we're hopeful!

In the member section, you'll find the member directory; the list of nurseries that provide discounts to MG of BC members; past issues of the *Potting Shed* and *Mid-Month Update*; and meeting minutes of the MG of BC board and the Rutgers MG Association of NJ (RMGANJ).

**To use the member section:** Send an email to [info@mgofbc.org](mailto:info@mgofbc.org) with a username and password you want to use for this site. Passwords are case-sensitive and are limited to 10 letters/numbers (no special characters).

***Usernames and passwords did not carry over from the old website.***

You must be a 2021 dues-paying member to enter the member section of the website. *Life members and members of the Classes of 2020 and 2021 don't owe dues. For Class of 2020 members who paid 2021 dues, your dues will be credited toward 2022.*

# IN OUR GARDENS

## Sharon Ma is a fan of 'upcycling'



Photos courtesy Sharon Ma

*Sharon Ma, above, discusses how she turned some lumber and a window frame into a charming decoration for her Paramus garden. Her comments have been lightly edited.*

### By Sharon Ma, Class of 2018

I found the wooden window frame in a garbage pile laying on a curbside for garbage pickup one day as I was driving by. The larger wood frame is composed of two pieces of 4 x 4 x 6 feet for the two sides and a piece of 1 x 4 x 4 feet for the top beam. I bought the beam anchors at Home Depot, which you pound into the ground and then you can fit the 4 x 4 vertical beams on them. Then there are two screws that you tighten to secure the wood beams. The old window frame is just a regular old window, which is about 2 x 3 feet in size.

I prepared all the wood pieces by painting them with a primer first and then put on two coats of outdoor paint by Rust-Oleum in Gloss Apple Red.

I have sometimes found old garden furniture, pots, and garden decorations on the streets. I love turning garbage into something fun for my garden. I also found many

garden decorations in second-hand markets like Facebook Marketplace.

One of the upcycle projects that I made in my garden is the tire planters [that] I created along the edge of my lawn four years ago. It gives an interesting dimension in height and in materials. The ability to take garbage out of a landfill is most motivating.



Sharon upcycled old tires into planters.

My proudest project in my garden is the mosaic wall that I created in 2012. I turned broken china and pottery into something beautiful instead of putting them in the garbage.



Another upcycling project: Sharon's mosaic wall comprising broken china and pottery.

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