

Virtual meeting – Tuesday, Jan. 25

Announcements at 7:20 pm; program to follow.

Click [here](#) to join the meeting at 7:15 pm.

Meeting ID: 926 9258 8641; password: 692429

Mushroom Mania

Fungi connect to more than 80% of the world's plants through their roots, called mycorrhizae. Dorothy Smullen, mushroom lover and nature and garden club speaker for



Dorothy Smullen

35 years, will discuss the fungi kingdom and its importance in our world. She'll cover morels to bracket fungi to puffballs during her PowerPoint presentation.

Dorothy will include applications such as dyeing wool and silk with specific fungi and papermaking using shelf fungi.

After moving to New Jersey from Brooklyn in 1969, Dorothy noticed that after

rainstorms many mushrooms appeared by the Passaic River near her home in Millington. "I was curious to identify them and bought a field guide," she said. Wanting to confirm her identification of various mushrooms, she called Rutgers University to ask for the name of a professor who was knowledgeable in the fungi field.

That's when she met Dr. Gene Varney, plant pathologist, who told her about the [New Jersey Mycological Association](#). She's been a member since 1975 and a past president. (Dr. Varney died in 2014.)

"Most members join the club wanting to know which ones they can eat whereas I am interested more in diversity and identification," Dorothy explained. Only once, she added, did she grow Shiitake mushrooms in her backyard. "I used my home-grown Shiitake for food and gave some away to friends. The logs produced mushrooms after a rain for three years."

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

From the President's Desk

By Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016

The holidays are over, and winter is officially here. It's time to curl up with a cup of hot cocoa, an afghan on your lap, and the seed and gardening catalogs that are filling your mailbox. Planning and researching additions or changes to next season's garden is always fun and a great way to spend a gray winter's day.



My garden wishes are always bigger than my garden. I read the description of every vegetable in the catalogs even though I don't have the space or the sun and way too many critters for a vegetable garden. But it's fun to dream anyway. Making a garden plan or diagram is on my winter gardening to-do list.

Every spring, I have to wait until the plants are several inches tall to identify them. Is that spiderwort or chives? Rudbeckia or penstemon? Where did I plant that aster last fall? This spring I will complete my diagram as I identify the plants. Next year, except for the volunteers that pop up in unexpected places, I will know who is growing where.

One more thing to do this winter is to plan "where will I volunteer in 2022." During the past two years of Covid, we have missed our gardens and our gardening buddies. And our gardens have definitely missed us.

The MG of BC [website](#) lists all of our volunteer locations. The information for each site includes address, directions, website (if there is one), meeting times, site coordinator contact information, overview of the site, and volunteer activities. Check out the websites and contact the site coordinators for any additional information that you may need.

Seriously consider volunteering at a site you have never been to before. Plan on attending any special events that a site may be hosting. Then, when the weather warms up, get out there and help our volunteer sites get back into tip-top shape.

(Mushroom Mania, continued from page 1)

Dorothy also learned about craft applications from the [International Fungi & Fiber Symposium](#) (IFFS), which meets every two years. The group is tentatively scheduled to meet in October in Port Townsend, WA.

Meanwhile, Dorothy explained that the New Jersey Mycological Association has maintained a macro-fungi herbarium (“or rather a fungarium,” she called it), since 1978 in the [Chrysler Herbarium and Mycological Collection](#) at Rutgers University. She said the association has contributed more than 3,000 specimens.

Dorothy, a retired high school science teacher, is a part-time teacher/naturalist at NJ Audubon’s Scherman-Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary in Bernardsville. She’s a member of the Washington Valley Garden Club (District 4).

MG OF BC NEWS

MG Speakers Bureau needs you and you and you!

By Arnie Friedman, Class of 2004

We need your help to expand the Speakers Bureau. I’m the MG Board chair in charge of Outreach. Outreach means bringing the knowledge and information that we Master Gardeners have gathered from our Rutgers training, work at volunteer sites, and our life experience as gardeners and plant lovers out into the community.



Arnie Friedman

I do this by giving talks to garden clubs, library gatherings, and other community groups. In fact, I coordinate a dedicated group of MGs called the Speakers Bureau and arrange talks on different topics either via Zoom or in person for the organizations that request our lecturers. Unfortunately, as speakers have retired, our Speakers Bureau has shrunk in size and our repertoire is limited. We need new blood and new topics!

There’s a big demand to hear talks on vegetable gardening, raising herbs, butterfly gardens, horticulture therapy, composting, garden pests, native plants, and much more. I know that within the 150 or so active Bergen County Master Gardeners there’s a vast pool of knowledge.

Volunteering as a Master Gardener is not just about pulling weeds and planting trees. It’s about giving back to the community in other ways, too. The knowledge locked up in your brains can make a big difference. Why not share it with a larger audience? For almost 20 years I have been giving talks in the NY-NJ area. I promise you there are people who want to meet you and hear what you have to say about your life as a gardener.

Are you afraid of speaking to a group of 10 or 20 people like yourself? No problem! The Speakers Bureau will collaborate with you. If you want to create a visual presentation, I will build it with you. If you need support in the beginning, we will go with you to your talks and be a friendly face in the crowd. Oh, did I mention giving talks is a great way to accumulate volunteer hours?

Please come out of the garden and join us. Call me at 201-707-5149 or email me at arnie1@mindspring.com. Check out the Speakers Bureau [page](#) on our website. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Have you visited the MG of BC website recently?

2021 brought a new [website](#) to the MG of BC. Our website has a new look and, as of December, an expanded “members” section that includes back issues of the Potting Shed; bylaws; minutes of MG of BC and Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey (RMGANJ) board meetings; and names of past officers and Award for Excellence winners.

Usernames and passwords did not carry over from the old site to the new one. If you have yet to designate a username and password, here’s how:

- Send an email to info@mgofbc.org with the username and password you want to use.
- Usernames can be any length. Passwords are limited to 10 letters and/or numbers. No characters are permitted in the password.

Rutgers Covid guidelines

Due to anticipated dramatic spikes in Covid disease Rutgers University issued the following guidelines: No in-person activities including teaching and extension programs through Jan. 7. Anything scheduled during this time must be moved to an online format or be canceled; no exceptions. Additional guidelines will be forthcoming. It’s expected the entire RCE community, including our volunteers, will follow Rutgers directives.

- Joel Flagler

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Time to renew your membership

We hope you'll renew your 2022 MG of BC dues of \$20 for the year. Dues are to be paid by current MGs and those who have recently been certified from the Classes of 2020 and 2021. Thanks to those who've already paid!



Please complete the membership renewal form sent with the *Potting Shed*, make your check payable to the MG of BC, and mail to a *new address* — MG of BC, PO Box 71, New Milford, NJ 07646 — which is on the form.

You can also find the form on the home page of our [website](#). As you scroll down the home page, a box will pop up with the headline “Renew your membership now.”

WEBINARS

All times are Eastern.

Jan. 3, 6-7:15 pm: University of Maine Cooperative Extension sponsors Growing Microgreens. Fee: Sliding scale from \$0-\$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 4, 7-8 pm: University of Iowa Extension and Outreach sponsors Planting Design Tips. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 5, 1-2 pm: Kansas State University Garden Hour sponsors Vegetable Varieties for Bountiful Harvests. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register for the 2022 series.

Jan. 6, noon-1 pm: Holy Name Medical Center sponsors Prebiotics, Probiotics, and Post Biotics - What Are They. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 8, 11 am-12:30 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors New Year's Resolutions for Your Yard. Fee: \$4. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 12, 5-6 pm: Holy Name Medical Center sponsors Feeling Strong - Brain Food. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 12, 7:30 pm: Bergen-Passaic Chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey sponsors Unique Plants and Wildflowers of Barrens and Bogs. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 13, 7 pm: Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum sponsors Secrets of Orchids. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 13, 7 pm: Wild Ones sponsors America's Public Gardens - A Resource for Native Plants. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 18, 3-4 pm: Hackensack University Medical Center sponsors Understanding Memory Loss. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 18, 7-8 pm: University of Iowa Extension and Outreach sponsors Planting Design Graphics. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 19, 7 pm: Native Plant Society of New Jersey sponsors Backyard Transformation in Just 3 years - Re-creating Nature. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 23, 3 pm: University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension sponsors How Native Plant Cultivars Affect Pollinators. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 24, 6-7:15 pm: University of Maine Cooperative Extension sponsors Hydroponics at Home. Fee: Sliding scale from \$0-\$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 25, 2:30 pm: University of Illinois Extension sponsors Spring Ephemerals. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 27, 1 pm: University of Florida Master Gardener sponsors Urban Ecology for Citizens and Planners. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

North Jersey Ornamental Horticulture Online Symposium, 9:30 am-noon, Jan. 10-12

2022 marks the 61st year of the symposium, though this year it will be virtual. The program is aimed at professionals in the green industry and features leading experts from Cooperative Extension, state government, and private industry. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. The fee is \$40 a day. A brief look at the schedule: Jan. 10 is Turf Day; Jan. 11 is Tree Day; and Jan 12 is Landscape Day.



Stars, cows, and candleholders were among the decorative and functional items crafted from the Hermitage's sugar maple tree.

SPOTLIGHT ON . . . THE GEORGE WASHINGTON TREE

Own a piece of history from the Hermitage

By Kathleen Sullivan, Class of 2010

In 1771, a sugar maple seed started to grow at the Hermitage. By the time it was a sapling, soldiers during the Revolutionary War passed it marching up and down what's now called Franklin Turnpike. (Franklin Turnpike was named later for William Franklin, son of Benjamin Franklin.)

Seven years into its lifetime, the tree bore witness to an extraordinary event. General George Washington, his aide-de-camp Alexander Hamilton, the French Marquis de Lafayette, and future US President James Monroe



Photos by Kathleen Sullivan

took a four-day respite from their valorous efforts to make this an independent country. At the invitation of the lady of the house, Theodosia Prevost, wife of a British officer, the men camped and enjoyed themselves and went on to win the war, as recounted in "A Revolutionary Relationship: Theodosia Prevost, Aaron Burr, & The Hermitage" by Henry Bischoff.

The tree lived through more stormy times — the Civil War and World Wars I and II — and endured many

lightning strikes, ice storms, and hurricanes over more than two centuries. Master Gardeners have tapped it for maple syrup, and it became known to school groups visiting the Hermitage as "the George Washington Tree" because of its storied history. But trees don't live forever. During Hurricane Isaias in August 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, our sturdy witness came crashing down. We couldn't let it go.

To the rescue came the brave men of the [North Jersey Woodworkers Association](#) and their power tools and artistry. With the permission of the NJ Division of Parks and Forestry, which owns the Hermitage, woodworkers took choice limbs and trunks to their mill in Hawthorne. Downes Tree Service donated the transport. There they cut and sorted the best pieces and took them home to make these beautiful ornaments, candleholders, bowls, stars, and even a pool cue.

Friends of the Hermitage sold most of the items to help recover financially from a 15-month Covid shutdown. Buyers now own a piece of history.

[Editor's note: Visit the Hermitage [website](#) to purchase books about the home's history. For more about the history of Franklin Turnpike visit the Patch [website](#).]



John Bender of the North Jersey Woodworkers Association proudly displays this pool cue he made from the sugar maple.

THIS AND THAT

Armchair visit - 'Let It Glow' at Van Saun

News 12 New Jersey captured the lights and action at the Let It Glow event at Van Saun Park Zoo. Click [here](#) to see the larger-than-life animals made of lanterns and lights. Click [here](#) for ticket information. The event runs through Jan. 30

'On deck' with Surinder Chadha

Surinder Chadha's containers of annuals made their way onto Fine Gardening's website as the "plant photo of the day." Surinder, Class of 2016, estimated he had 150 containers on his deck and framing the front door of his Old Tappan home. Click [here](#) to view the photos and get inspired for annual season.

Are your plants a threat to your pets?

The ASPCA lists the plants that are toxic and non-toxic to dogs, cats, and horses. Click [here](#) for the list. The toxic plants are listed first followed by the non-toxic plants. The ASPCA's 24-hour poison control hotline is 1-888-426-4435.

Ramsey Farmers Market is open year-round

The Ramsey Farmers Market is open from 10 am-1 pm — its winter hours — Sundays at the Main Street train station except when severe weather is expected. Visit the market's [website](#) for the list of vendors. You can also sign up for a newsletter.



Great garden hacks!

You'll never look at an eggshell, a one-liter bottle, or a cellulose sponge the same way after you see these great garden hacks for growing vegetables and fruits, among other things. You'll love the pot-within-a-pot for growing potatoes.

Click [here](#) to view on YouTube. Disclaimer: We're not sure how long it will take to grow a citrus tree in Bergen County.

Better late than never



Photo courtesy of Bruce Crawford

Dyckia "Grape Jelly" expands to the size of the pot.

Bruce Crawford, manager of horticulture, Morris County Park Commission, chose the sawblade plant (*Dyckia*) as his December 2021 plant of the month. Click [here](#) to read more.

Thank you, Master Gardeners

for contributing to the January *Potting Shed*: Surinder Chadha, Melody Corcoran, Donna Faustini, Arnie Friedman, Tammy Laverty, Karen Riede, and Kathleen Sullivan.

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