

SPOTLIGHT ON . . .VOLUNTEER SITES



Photo courtesy of the NJBG website

The hosta and rhododendron garden at the NJBG.

New Jersey Botanical Garden at Skylands: Themed gardens off the beaten track

Volunteer days and hours: Volunteers usually meet on Wednesdays, 9 am-1 pm. Volunteers who work in the hosta and rhododendron garden meet Tuesdays. Volunteers work on weekends during public events. The GPS address for NJBG-Skylands is Morris Road, Ringwood. Visit the [website](#).

What's unique about your volunteer site? On a back road in Ringwood, seated on 96 beautiful wooded acres and showing off several themed gardens sits Skylands, the garden of the Garden State. New Jersey's state botanical garden is highlighted not only by its beautiful gardens but also by a Tudor manor house dating to the early 1900s and featuring antique European interiors.

On a lovely early spring day when there's still a nip in the air or a sunny summer concert eve or a snowy winter day when the cross-country skiers come out, it is gratifying to see how many people — families sharing a walk, solitary individuals in peaceful silence, or celebration parties taking pictures — have responded to the welcome of Skylands and to know we, as volunteers, make this garden of ours such a wonderful experience for the thousands who visit annually.

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From the President's Desk

By Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016

When I visited another Master Gardener's home several years ago, I was intrigued by this one plant with huge heart-shaped leaves at least 12 inches across. I was invited to dig some up to take home. I thought that these plants would look great mixed in with my ferns. Another MG warned me that these plants were invasive and would take over. I didn't listen. I should have.



The plant is *Petasites hybridus* or butterbur. In the past, its large leaves were used to wrap butter in hot weather, giving rise to the common name butterbur. In the fairytale "The Ugly Duckling," the ducklings are described as being born under its leaves.



Photo by Melody Corcoran

The butterbur has taken over in Melody's garden.

Butterbur is originally native to Southern Europe and Western Asia. It is now considered invasive in Northern Europe and parts of North America.

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AROUND THE STATE

Mercer Educational Gardens: Horticultural information/programs for the community

By Miriam Taub, Class of 2011

What unites more than 200 active Rutgers Master Gardeners of Mercer County?

It's the Mercer Educational Gardens (MEG), a two-acre site containing annual, butterfly, cottage, herb, native plant, and perennial gardens as well as a meadow and composting site adjacent to the Mercer Equestrian Center in Pennington. The gardens are maintained by the MG of Mercer County and supported by the Mercer County Park Commission.

MEG was started on a lot filled with weeds, brush, bushes, and trees in 1997 and officially opened in 1998. Over the years, individual gardens were developed. Gardens were added as the MGs worked with the land, and the Park Commission assisted with the development. For example, water from a nearby well was extended to the garden; a compost area was created; an electrical outlet was added; a kiosk with educational signs was built; and gravel paths were installed. Later, when the well ran dry, water tanks were installed and, even later, hydrants were extended to the gardens.

- Visit the Mercer Educational Gardens [website](#) where you can find a list of plants in each garden.
- Watch a [video](#) on YouTube of the Mercer Educational Gardens recorded in June 2021 immediately after Covid restrictions were lifted. This video reflects the damage when the site was closed. Since then, the gardens have been restored after many hours of labor.

Kathryn Homa, program associate and Mercer County horticulturist, explained that each specialty garden is managed by a committee of 10 to 20 MGs who meet year-round and primarily work in the gardens from spring to fall; some MGs participate in multiple gardens. The season concludes in the fall with an annual Compost Learning Day.

Each MEG committee oversees a specific garden. These committees coordinate MG workdays and public activities at the site as well as ensure that the appropriate signage is available and current and that the plants and site are properly maintained.



Photo courtesy of Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County

The Cottage Garden: Click [here](#) for a list of plants that create a cottage-style garden.

As the horticulturist, Kathryn is the liaison between the MGs and the Mercer County Park Commission, among other roles. Prior to joining Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County in January, Kathryn had done pesticide research at Rutgers University. She holds a bachelor's degree from Delaware Valley University in ornamental horticulture and a master's and doctorate from Rutgers in plant pathology.

At the start of each season, Kathryn explained, the committees take a "plant inventory" of their respective gardens and decide what needs to be replaced or added. The annual garden is begun anew each year. Typically, MGs donate plants from their home gardens to the cause. Equipment and additional plants are purchased with money from fundraisers, such as the annual Spring Plant Expo where MG-grown perennials, shrubs, and trees are sold on site, she said.

The committees also decide on a theme for an annual "Evening in the Garden" event; this year's theme is pollinators. MGs from each committee will explain how their garden's plantings encourage and promote pollinators. The event, which is free and open to the public, will be 6:30-8 pm, July 14.

Separately, Kathryn said that this year the Mercer MGs will invite other MG associations to learn about MEG and its history. The first visitors were from Somerset County in May. The hope is that other MG associations will invite the MGs from Mercer County to their counties to learn about their gardens and/or activities.

"Each garden has placards explaining the garden so the public can come in and learn," Kathryn said. "In the middle is the compost area where we have information about different methods of composting."

(Continued on page 3)

(Mercer Educational Gardens, continued from page 2)



Photo courtesy of Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County

Bird's eye view of the two-acre Mercer Educational Gardens in Pennington.

And, speaking of compost, the MEG committees are holding a contest this year to see which one produces the most compost by weight. Each committee uses a different type of compost bin, either homemade or donated. The purpose is to teach the public the benefits of composting and that anyone can learn how to compost, Kathryn pointed out.

MG interns are required to spend five hours in the gardens working in the composting area or performing site maintenance. For certified MGs, all work in the gardens counts toward the 25 volunteer hours required each year to maintain their certification. Do many devote more than 25 hours to their gardens? Absolutely!

Kathryn said of the MGs who participate: "They're all friends and working at MEG helps them feel good and accomplish goals. They all work together to promote their garden. Seeing the beauty of their garden for the public to enjoy is their reward."

(President's desk, continued from page 1)

Michigan and Vermont have declared it invasive; several states in the Pacific Northwest consider it a noxious weed, potentially invasive, or invasive.

In the Middle Ages, monks introduced it to Northern Europe as a medicinal plant used to treat plague and fever. Butterbur leaves and rhizomes are currently used in the treatment of migraine, asthma, and hay fever. There is little evidence that it is effective in these conditions and some butterbur preparations may contain potentially toxic alkaloids.

As you can see from the picture [on page 1], it is an impressive plant. The front and center leaf measures 17 inches across; its stem is 26 inches tall. Also impressive is how it spreads from its rhizomes and seeds. Butterbur normally grows along streams and ponds and forms large colonies. Because the growth is dense and the

leaves are large, *Petasites* can shade out any plant growth underneath leaving bare soil that can erode.

The butterbur grew and spread spectacularly in my garden. I am now in the process of attempting to corral it in one small area, pulling out rhizomes that can be several feet long. I will also be removing the flowers next spring before they go to seed. This will undoubtedly be a yearslong project because I am not willing to use herbicide to control it.

The next time someone warns me that a plant is invasive, I should definitely pay more attention.

FIVE QUESTIONS FOR . . .

Gimai Ma, Class of 2021, answers five questions for the Potting Shed. Gimai volunteers at Garretson Forge & Farm and McFaul Environmental Center. She also assisted at the NJBG's Harvest Festival.

1. What prompted you to become a Master Gardener? Playing with soil (not dirt) gives me joy!

Tending my garden makes me forget my troubles and gives me a sense of freedom in my inner peace. The Master Gardeners I have met in the past have inspired me so much with their knowledge and creativity. MG was on my to-do list for over 20 years and Class of 2021 was my year.



Gimai Ma at Acadia National Park in Maine in September 2021. Gimai and her husband Hogan celebrated their 37th anniversary there.

2. What's the most important thing you've learned or been exposed to as a Master Gardener?

The Rutgers 250 tomato project in 2021 was a huge success for me because it was my best harvest ever! It was a big confidence booster for me that I actually did it. The exposure of volunteering opportunities was most important to me. Being able to apply my newly acquired knowledge and skills to serve the local community brings me pleasure. I am thankful for all the volunteer leaders for their kindness, patience, and guidance.

3. Have your interests in gardening changed over time? If so, how? For years I have wanted to have healthy lavenders in my garden but did not have much success. I was so inspired by the beauty and the lovely scent of the lavenders, I decided to give it another try. I am delighted to see the abundance of healthy flower buds that are about to bloom.

4. Briefly describe your own garden. Do you have a home garden project planned this season? If so, tell us about it. There is no symmetry or color pairing in my garden so far. I like to think that nature's colors always go well together and do not clash. There is so much to learn and experiment within the garden. This season, I have started a new herb garden by organizing the herbal plants together.

The potted lemon thymes are now growing along with the mints, and the garlic chives are put next to the purple flowering chives. The lavenders, lamb's ears, ajugas, and feverfew will also be incorporated to complete my new herb garden.

5. Do your interests in gardening extend beyond the MG of BC and your own garden? For example, do you visit gardens and arboretums?

NYBG, NJBG, and Longwood Gardens are my favorite gardens to visit. As a member of NYBG, I often invite friends along on my visits to share and appreciate the garden's natural beauty. Gardening has always been a part of me, and it's deeply rooted in my heart.

WEBINARS

For your convenience, all times are Eastern.

June 1, 1 pm: National Garden Bureau sponsors Ask the Experts About Shade Gardening with Perennials. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

June 2, 4-5 pm: AARP Virtual Community Center sponsors Gardening Bugs - Friend or Foe? Free. AARP membership not required. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

June 7, 1 pm: National Garden Bureau sponsors Ask the Experts About Phlox. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

June 8, 6:30 pm-7:45 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors How to Incorporate Cut Flowers into the Home Landscape. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

June 10, noon-1 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors Garden Hotline Live - Solving Summer Bumpers. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

June 14, 3-4 pm: Oregon State University Extension sponsors Irrigation Choice and Design for the Home Garden and Landscape. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

June 14, 7-8 pm: Jersey-Friendly Yards sponsors Minimize Risk When Managing Pests. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

June 30, 3 pm: National Garden Bureau sponsors Ask the Experts About Roses. Free. Click [here](#) to register.

(Spotlight on volunteer sites, continued from page 1)

What do you do during a typical volunteer shift?

How many MGs show up? NJBG is a high traffic — or should we say a high walk — public garden. It offers many and varied volunteer activities. Among them garden maintenance in one of the themed gardens, which include the perennial, annual, pollinator, moraine, lilac, and hosta and rhododendron garden.

The number of volunteers working on a given day varies depending on the individual gardens.

Do volunteers work as a group? Individually? Please describe.

Volunteers work in groups sharing the camaraderie of gardening, maintaining the gardens, planting new stock, and sharing their enthusiasm with visitors. At other times volunteers may work alone based on their schedule or the needs of their area of interest.

Is the work physically demanding? Like any gardening work, it may have its physical element at times, but as is said, “Many hands make light work.”

Are any special skills needed at your site? No special skills are required, just an interest in gardening or an interest in the various non-gardening opportunities offered at NJBG.

Are there any volunteer opportunities at your site that are not strictly “gardening”? Adding variety to the volunteer experience are opportunities to help organize and work in one of many non-gardening/public events, such as an annual plant sale; Harvest Fest; summer concerts; garden tours; manor tours; group tours; family hikes and walks; greenhouse work; wreath-making; fund-raising; gift shop; and administrative support.

The final event of the year is the annual Holiday Open House. This event is unique because it brings together garden lovers from across New Jersey to work on a project. Each room in the manor house is decorated by gardeners from NJBG; Bergen and Passaic County Master Gardeners; and gardeners from various New Jersey garden clubs and other organizations.

What, if anything, should volunteers bring with them? Volunteers work out of the historic Carriage House, where kitchen and restroom facilities are available. Water is available in the kitchen. Tools are readily available. Some volunteers may also bring snacks and lunch.

Where do you park? You may park in the volunteer parking lot behind the Carriage House, or you may park in any of the public lots if they are closer to the garden in which you’re working.



Photo courtesy of the NJBG website

Details in the wildflower garden at the NJBG.

Anything else you want to mention? You can visit the News12 New Jersey [website](#) for a short feature on the NJBG that first aired May 19.

Site coordinator: Dania Cheddie, danial.cheddie@gmail.com

Note: New volunteers must complete and return the [NJBG/Skylands Volunteer Application](#) to the address on the form or fax the form to 973-962-1553. The form will be forwarded to Dania Cheddie, who will contact you. Call the NJBG at 973-962-9534 for more information.

- Information from Dania Cheddie, Class of 2013

Hackensack River Greenway Through Teaneck offers a special garden

Volunteer times and location: Cleanups are scheduled on the first Sunday and fourth Saturday of each month at 10 am. Visit the [website](#) for locations. However, the Friends of the Hackensack River Greenway Through Teaneck can accommodate your schedule, and dates and times can be arranged for individual Master Gardeners or a group of Master Gardeners.

What makes this site unique? The one section of the Greenway that would most interest Master Gardeners is the Mary S. Topolsky Garden and Trail at 640 River Road, Teaneck. This site was designed by Mary, a landscape designer, who was very knowledgeable about native plants and their impact on the habitat for birds and wildlife along the river. (She died in 2015.) Some natives have already been established and need care. The Friends of the Greenway has funds to increase native plantings and recently installed a rain barrel as a water source. Benches and sitting areas are located at the site, but there are no bathroom facilities.

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(Hackensack River Greenway, continued from page 5)



The Mary S. Topolsky Garden looking west to the Hackensack River.

What do you do during a typical cleanup? The Greenway along the Hackensack River has many invasive plants, particularly those that cover trees, which need to be removed and replaced with native plants. Cleanups also include trash removal, which we coordinate with the [Bergen County Clean Communities Program](#). All tools, such as grippers, gloves, and trash bags, are provided.

Is the work physically demanding? No. Most of our volunteers are seniors.

What tools should volunteers bring?

Bring gloves, loppers, and clippers, if available.

Where is the parking? Parking is available at all cleanup sites on the side streets that intersect River Road in Teaneck.

Anything else that's noteworthy? Friends of the Greenway work with Nancy Slowik, coordinator and instructor in the Urban Naturalist Certificate Program at NYBG, to identify plants and to advise on plantings. Nancy is available to consult with MGs. The Friends of

the Greenway could use the help and support of trained Master Gardeners. You will enjoy spending time along the Hackensack River creating a supportive and beautifully renewed habitat.

This garden needs a site coordinator to assess the garden's needs, coordinate volunteers, and design and plan how to make this garden and trail shine. Candidates should be certified MGs who are current on dues. If interested, contact [Liz Gil](#), Class of 2019, and our volunteer site coordinator.

Site coordinators: Marie Warnke, 201-835-8224; mariewarnke@optonline.net and Richard Karp, Class of 2011, 201-294-4453; richk1201@gmail.com

- Information from Marie Warnke

MG OF BC NEWS

A note about travel time/volunteer hours

Each year, travel time of up to one hour to and from each MG of BC-approved volunteer activity may be counted as volunteer hours if both of the following criteria are met:

- You have completed the 25 volunteer hours required for annual certification; and
- You have spent a minimum of two hours at each volunteer activity. Example: After the completion of 25 volunteer hours required for annual certification in any calendar year, you continue to volunteer. Your drive to and from Garretson Forge & Farm takes 20 minutes in each direction. You work at Garretson for four hours. Your total volunteer time for that day is four hours and 40 minutes. The following week you volunteer at the Butterfly and Native Garden for two hours. Your round-trip drive takes 30 minutes. Your total volunteer time for that day is two hours and 30 minutes.

You may continue to count your travel time as volunteer hours for the remainder of the calendar year if you spend a minimum of two hours at each MG of BC-approved volunteer activity.

Note: For the New Jersey Botanical Garden (NJBG) only, the above criteria do not need to be met. All travel time to and from NJBG may be counted as volunteer time.

This policy was approved by the MG of BC board Oct. 19, 2021.

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Help wanted!

The MG of BC needs your help with two volunteer programs. For more information, contact [Liz Gil](#), Class of 2019, and our volunteer site coordinator.

Mary S. Topolsky Garden and Trail at Hackensack River Greenway needs a site coordinator

The Mary S. Topolsky Garden and Trail, part of the Hackensack River Greenway Through Teaneck, needs a site coordinator to assess the garden's needs, coordinate volunteers, and design and plan how to make this garden and trail shine. Candidates should be certified MGs who are current on dues. The garden is located at 640 River Road, Teaneck. You can park on Kipp Street across from the garden. Read the feature about this site beginning on page 5.

Work with 4-H members

Work with younger gardeners in cooperation with 4-H youth development to encourage them to connect with nature and develop a passion for gardening and the gardens of Bergen County.

A new Green Thumbs 4-H Club is being created to respond to requests for school gardens and related projects. New Jersey 4-H, a program of Rutgers Cooperative Extension, will train MGs. As MGs, we encourage this collaboration. A background check is required to work with youth.

THIS AND THAT

Here's to your health in the garden

When was your last tetanus shot?

While most people associate tetanus with stepping on a rusty nail, there are other ways to get tetanus. Tetanus spores are everywhere, such as in soil, dust, and animal waste, according to the [Cleveland Clinic](#). If you get a wound or scratch while gardening, you may be susceptible to tetanus.

If you haven't been immunized for tetanus recently, check with your doctor whether to have a Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) shot or Td (tetanus and diphtheria) shot. Recommended frequency is every 10 years, the Cleveland Clinic advises.

11 ways to avoid injuries in the garden

- Bend at the knees when lifting.
- Carry loads close to the body.
- Carry more light loads rather than fewer heavy loads.
- Use a wheelbarrow to transfer heavy objects.
- Engage your core to protect your back.
- Use tools that are lightweight and have longer handles.
- Frequently take breaks, stretch, and change position.
- Mix up tasks to work various muscle groups.
- Drink water, use sunscreen, and use bug repellent for ticks.
- Ask for help or hire service when needed.
- Know when to stop and smell the roses.

*Courtesy of the Mountain Gardener newsletter,
May 2022, NC Cooperative Extension,
Buncombe County Center*

A fitness coach can help correct your bad habits (hips don't lie!)

Garden writer Margaret Roach explains how a fitness trainer taught a retired public-relations executive and avid gardener to avoid common garden-related injuries. Read Margaret's [article](#) in the May 11 edition of the New York Times. **Note:** If you're not a Times subscriber, you are limited to the number of articles you can read online.

The gardener, Madeline Hooper, thought her friends should have the same useful information. Together, Madeline and fitness trainer Jeff Hughes created a new PBS show called GardenFit. The show's mission: Taking care of your garden while taking care of your body. Each episode starts with a tour of a garden and then Jeff provides tips and techniques to the garden owner to avoid stress and injury. Watch [GardenFit](#) episodes on the PBS website.

Rutgers develops a dipping strawberry

This season, Rutgers researchers unveiled a new varietal that's been 15 years in the making: Rutgers D'Light, bred for its flavorful sweet fruit and ideal for dipping in chocolate. Click [here](#) to read more.



Photo courtesy of Pete Nitzsche, NJAES

THINGS TO DO



Photo by Paul Sisko

One of the many sections of Paul Sisko's gardens.

Visit Paul Sisko's gardens in Mahwah

Paul Sisko, Class of 2021, will open his 3.5-acre gardens and sculpture site to Bergen and Passaic County MGs and interns from 10 am-2 pm, June 18. The address is 113 Fardale Ave., Mahwah.

Enter the driveway between the stone walls and park along the driveway. If you have mobility issues, park on the right prior to the red steel and stone sculpture. Follow the signs.

Take a tour of 7 Bergen gardens

The Wyckoff Area Garden Club's "Step into our Gardens" self-guided tour will feature the gardens of seven area residents from 10 am-4 pm, June 12. Tickets purchased by June 1 are \$25 each. Tickets purchased June 11 and 12 at the Wyckoff Public Library are \$30 each. Children age 16 and under are free. Visit the club's [website](#) for ticket information. The club will accept payment via Venmo.

Gardens on the tour are located in Franklin Lakes, Mahwah, Upper Saddle River, Waldwick, and Wyckoff. The event is a fund-raiser for the Sally Ditton Memorial Scholarship. Sally was a club member and a Bergen County Master Gardener who died in 2015.

Yoga outdoors at Garretson

Yoga fans of all levels have a new venue: Garretson Forge & Farm offers outdoor yoga from 9-10 am, Saturdays under the chestnut tree, weather permitting. If a class is canceled, it will be posted on Garretson's

Facebook [page](#) by 8:15 am. Suggested donation is \$10 per class, but you can pay what you wish. All proceeds go to the farm, located at 4-02 River Road, Fair Lawn. After the class, enjoy iced tea made from farm-grown herbs. **Note:** Garretson always has plants for sale.

- Lida Gellman, Class of 1999

Artists: GC of Hackensack wants you

Garden Club of Hackensack is participating in Arts Amble 2022. This free outdoor event will take place in the Hackensack Community Garden, Johnson Park, 444 River St., Hackensack, from 11 am-4 pm, June 11. Rain date is June 12. Park in the Sears lot on River Street.

If you're an artist in any medium and interested in displaying and selling your work in the club's Community Garden section, write to the [club](#) for more information. Any sale of artwork is between the artist and buyer. The [Arts Amble](#) is a countywide event of Creative Bergen, an NJ non-profit that promotes and supports art and artists in Bergen County.

- Edith Terzano, Class of 2018



The old barn and the Sears Roebuck silo at Sun Valley Farm in Mahwah.

50th anniversary of the Hermitage museum

The Friends of the Hermitage are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the museum at Sun Valley Farm in Mahwah from 1-4 pm, June 11. This 200-acre private farm, preserved from development under the [New Jersey Farmland Preservation Program](#), is a showcase of Bergen County farming life in the 20th century.

Explore the old barns and the Sears Roebuck silo, antique automobiles, and farming equipment while listening to live country music and enjoying lunch by the Ramapo River. Click [here](#) for more information and to buy tickets.

- Kathleen Sullivan, Class of 2010