

Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

Minutes of September 10, 2020 RMGANJ Meeting

Deirdre Gallagher called the Webex meeting to order at 9:05 am. Deirdre reported that since the July meeting Pat Schanzlin has been elected to fill the vacant Vice President position. She thanked everyone for handling the nomination and election process. Pat Schanzlin welcomed the group to the meeting.

Secretary's Minutes from July 2020 RMGANJ Meeting: Tricia Deering, Recording Secretary, reported that she had emailed out version 3 of the July RMGANJ minutes after receiving some minor changes. A motion to accept version 3 of the minutes was made, seconded and approved.

Attendance:

Atlantic:	
Bergen:	Karen Pennell
Burlington:	Sharon Astorino, Merry Bogert, Nick Hendershot
Camden:	Tom Gurenlian
Cumberland:	Keiko Warner
Essex:	Terry Felper
Hunterdon:	Tricia Deering, Dewey Goodman
Mercer:	Judy Colburn, Betty Scarlata, Sudi Solomon
Middlesex:	Jerri Barclay, Kathy Dopart
Monmouth:	Gayle Williams, Bill Schutte
Morris:	Deirdre Gallagher, Diane Muenzin
Ocean:	Suzanne Keane, Roberta Quinn
Passaic:	Joe D'Errico
Somerset:	Cindy Hedin
Sussex:	Jane Gardner, Pat Schanzlin
Union:	Deb Murphy
Rutgers University:	Jan Zientek

TREASURER'S REPORT: Roberta Quinn, Treasurer, reported that the current balance is \$14,018.30 which is no change from the prior month. A motion to accept was made, seconded and approved.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Deirdre Gallagher reported on Old Business below.

MASTER GARDENER'S COORDINATOR'S REPORT: Jan Zientek reported that Rutgers University Policy regarding the pandemic continues the prohibition of non-essential, in person events by Rutgers faculty, staff and volunteers until further notice. Any changes to the policy will be shared with the Rutgers Master Gardeners as soon as possible.

Master Gardener county coordinators and RCE faculty are making progress with an online Master Gardener training to be available in 2021. The real challenge is how to comply with public health policy (and RU policy) to safely provide the "hands on" experience and mentoring that are critical components of the RMG training.

Online activities and outreach efforts will be increased during the fall and winter.

Betty Scarlata asked whether non-active Master Gardeners can be considered certified. Jan responded that if they are not active, they are not certified. She also asked whether a gold badge grants any special privileges? Jan clarified that it does not. Finally she asked if terms such as intern, alumni, etc. be made consistent across the counties. Jan replied that, yes, that is the goal.

New Business

Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

Deirdre Gallagher reported that due to problems with the RMGANJ Google Group, she will be switching from Google Groups to Microsoft Teams.

Old Business

Sharon Astorino reported on the 2021 RMGANJ Conference Committee progress. Members include Dave Parsons, Sharon, Judy Kelley and Dennis Lenahan. The team had put together a Power Point, included below, with proposed decisions and critical decision points. Sharon reported that the decisions/critical decision points are as follows:

1. Theme: the same as previously planned for October: Garden Pests?
2. Format: 4 separate webinars?
3. Time of day: early evening?
4. Schedule: mid-May?

Deirdre Gallagher asked if all the counties had provided input. Sharon said she was not sure who Dave had reached out to. As a reminder, Dave had requested that each county send him a representative for the conference planning team. Deirdre also asked whether they reached out to the previously lined up speakers. Sharon replied that they had not, and that the team did not consider that to be within their scope.

Discussion followed and included but was not limited to the items below.

- The question of how breakout sessions sharing county experiences/projects fit into the proposed theme/format was asked. Deirdre replied that she is interested in sharing experiences across counties and having breakout sessions. Several agreed that sharing across counties is a good idea. An example is the session on horticultural therapy/county programs on special needs that was planned for the October conference. It had been envisioned as a presentation by an autism and horticultural therapy expert, followed by reports from different counties that have special needs programs and then discussion. It was agreed that the term “breakout session” was not appropriate for a virtual conference. A different term is needed.
- Deirdre asked for opinions on the May date. Several opinions were expressed including but not limited to the following. May has a lot of outdoor activities – earlier might be better. Also, earlier may be better to get ahead of the gardening season but it is less time for preparation. Concern was expressed about all the webinars that are available online and competition in general and specifically in the May time frame. We need to offer something that is highly attractive to Master Gardeners. The question of whether Master Gardeners would get continuing credit for the conference was raised – this might make it more attractive.
- Dealing with neighbors using pesticides was suggested as a topic and possible subject for breakout sessions.
- It was suggested that a session on updates on the latest invasive pests would be good.
- Sharon pointed out that we have lots of technical options available to us, such as having pre-recorded sessions for sharing followed by Q&A in chat. An opinion was expressed that recording seems like a good idea as it adds flexibility. Concern over technological issues was expressed. Can we get help from Rutgers staff who have experience with remote conferences? There are a lot of things we can take advantage of. Deirdre will check with Jan on this.
- The opinion was expressed that Garden Pests as a topic seems too focused and perhaps limiting.
- Concern was expressed about counties that are shut down – how will they participate?

Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

- The question of whether we will still charge was raised There are so many free webinars, charging may be an issue. We will need to charge something if we get outside speakers.
- Deirdre asked whether the group felt she should send a questionnaire out. Opinion was mixed.

Jane Gardner made a motion to hold the conference in mid-May. The motion was seconded. Discussion followed. There was concern that the date was selected based on the topic and the topic is open. Some felt that October may be better due to so many uncertainties and the fear that mid-May may be ambitious.

A suggestion was made to cancel for 2021 and plan for the next conference to be in person in 2022. Several expressed the opinion that they would hate to see this go to 2022 - MGs need to be kept engaged.

Pat Schanzlin proposed that we take the existing motion off the table and task the committee with coming back with a definite proposal regarding date/dates/times, topics, format (how many presentations and in what form (speakers/breakouts, etc.)). They should send out the proposal in advance of the next meeting. A motion was made, seconded and approved unanimously.

The Historian topic was tabled.

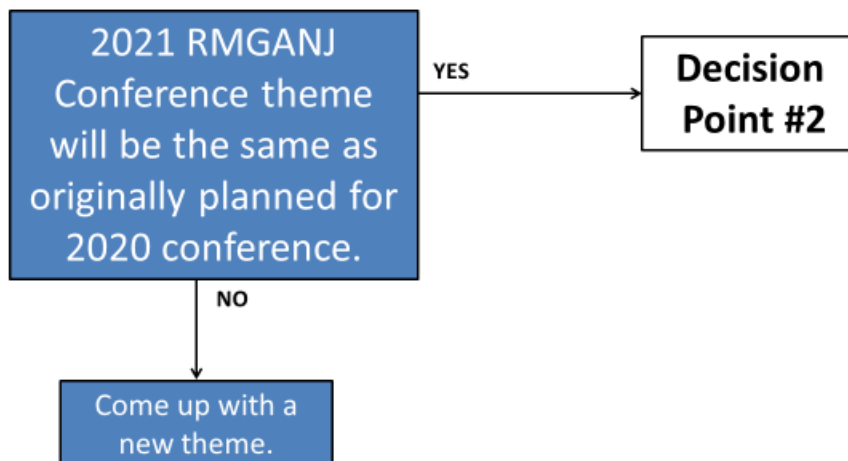
Deirdre reported on the By-laws committee – the team hopes to have a change summary out in time for a vote at the October meeting.

It was decided to skip the county reports because the meeting had run too long.

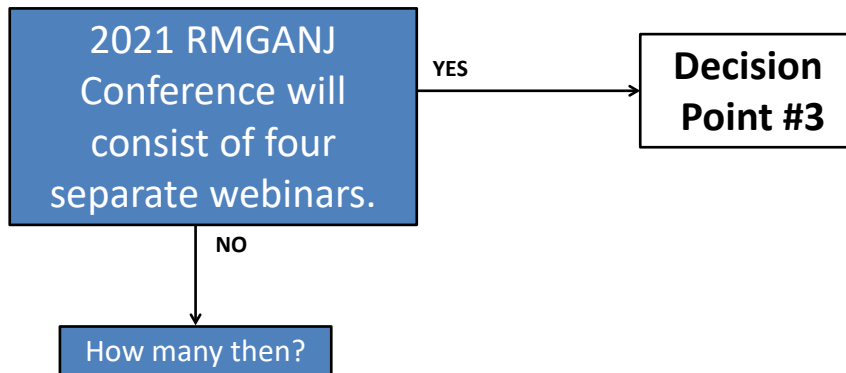
It was pointed out that a Nominating Committee needs to be formed to work on the officer election in December. A motion was made to form a nominating committee with Jerri Barclay as the chair. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

The conference power point slides follow:

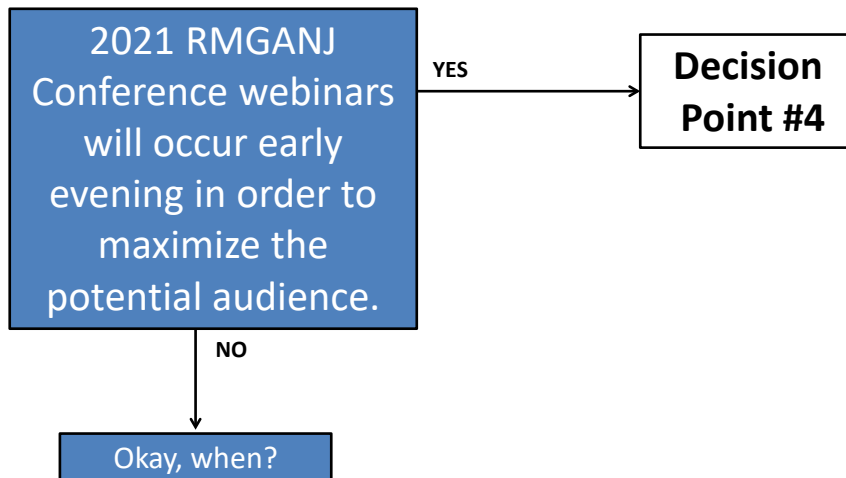
Decision Point #1



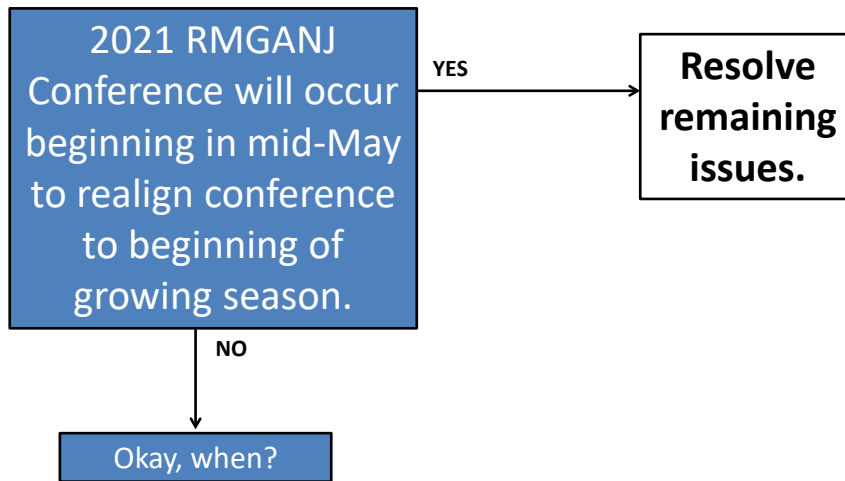
Decision Point #2



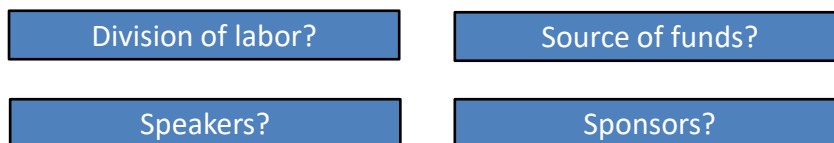
Decision Point #3



Decision Point #4



Remaining issues to be resolved for RMGANJ Conference 2021



Caring and Sharing:

No discussion.

COUNTY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

Atlantic – no report.

RMGANJ September 10, 2020 Minutes Final

Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

Bergen

We held our first virtual board meeting on August 25th. Going forward, monthly meetings, both board and educational will be conducted virtually. Our wonderful writers and editor continue to produce the newsletter each month with articles of interest and notifications of online webinars. All volunteer sites are closed per RCE policy.

Burlington

Once again, all projects have been suspended due to Covid-19. There is an at-home pepper trial going on with various peppers distributed to volunteers but no results reported to date.

Camden

The following are taking place:

Weekly Webex Check-ins.

Weekly Webex book club meetings: Current Book: Bringing Nature Home by Douglas W. Tallamy

Utilizing RC Extension Online Programs: RU Ready to Garden

Soil Lectures Series

And others based on interest.

Cumberland

Master Gardener: Highlights for August 2020

- Continue to offer research based educational opportunities to the MG's from a variety of resources
- State Webex meetings include: Bi- Weekly MG Program Coordinators meetings; Weekly Policies & Procedures committee
- Continue to encourage MG's to submit garden photos for Facebook posts

Home Horticulture: Highlights for August 2020

- 17 radio spots were recorded for POP 99.9 FM Power of Positivity
 - live-streams on Facebook and Comcast Channel 22
- 27 Facebook posts with 1224 reached and 289 engagements, per data retrieved from Facebook
 - "Reached" is the number of people who saw the content
 - "Engagements" is any action someone take
- Researched and provided recommendations for 32 inquiries from clients on the Helpline
- Presented 2 one-hour virtual presentations for WheatonArts virtual Eco Fair
 - Monarchs with 46 clients
 - Native Plants with 83 clients
- Published seasonal newsletter for fall 2020
 - 288 sent via email
 - 298 sent via snail mail

Essex - no report.

Hunterdon

Hunterdon teams are meeting where possible via Webex.

Our citizen Science Team has published many Facebook posts on the Hunterdon RCE page.

Our presentation team has been giving remote presentations.

The Anderson House team continues to provide on-line support for the women.

Our Education Garden team has completed a catalog of the native plants in the garden.

Our Help Line has been fielding many questions regarding the spotted lanternfly and fall plantings.

Continuing education programs have been arranged via Webex.

Steering Committee meetings continue via Webex.

Mercer

We continue to hold Executive Board and General Meetings via Webex. The next General Membership meeting is September 15.

Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

Helpline inquiries from the public continue to arrive steadily through email to the county horticulturist. They are then posted on Canvas Virtual Helpline and Helpline Committee members research and our horticulturist then responds.

Most committees use Zoom or Webex to hold meetings virtually.

We continue to send information to our Constant Contact list. Our recent flyer was on timely tips for September gardening and online webinar opportunities. We continue to post on Facebook and Instagram with links to online webinars, current flowers in bloom and invasives.

County Horticulturist Margaret Pickoff hosted a Zoom presentation on Veggie Basics, Harvesting Crops and End of Season Tasks on September 1. She also presented on Zoom for the Annual Garden Committee, open to all Mercer MGs, on Soil for Perennial Gardens.

Ms. Pickoff also sends periodic emails to the MGs about new and ongoing continuing education opportunities.

Middlesex

Our remote Helpline has been unusually busy - a large number of the calls coming from new gardeners. One of the positives of the Covid 19 has been a renewed interest in gardening.

On August 6 "R U Ready to Garden" Webex Training Session 15 on Invasive Insects: Identification and Control was held. After a short break, the online webinars will continue October 1st. Schedule coming soon. If you missed a lecture, all the previous RU Ready to Garden Webinars can be viewed on YouTube. Follow the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbN3SBMZ4LK5jSjinf4EeOS1W2woCAUAO>

Our Master Gardener training program will be postponed until at least January since the coordinators are working on an online program.

Monmouth

Monmouth County continues to meet for our General Meetings via Webex and this month we will have Steve Kristoph, of Kristoph Nursery, speaking on "Pollinators and Their Plants". Also at this month's General Meeting our President's Award will be given to two outstanding MGs for their long and continued service. **Congratulations to Linda Balzer and Karin Poorvin, this year's President's awardees!**

Our Speakers Bureau also continues to present virtually and has been asked to make several presentations with Ocean County.

And, as with all of us MGs throughout the state, we miss our gardens...PAR and otherwise and wish we could get in there and work the soil at our Ag. Buildings! In our PAR garden, despite that no plants were planted, there are potatoes, gourds and zinnias as well...so reported our coordinator, Diane Larson. And, as always, our weeds have muscles! I know we are all eager to get back to our county gardens and make them beautiful and productive. Stay safe and well!

Morris –

IPM Team Report

Our award winning IPM Team have been busy monitoring for pest and diseases but because of Covid-19 restrictions, the team only reports on problems they observe in their own vegetable garden plots rather than inspect community gardens. The weekly reports are sent to 35 Community Garden managers, all Morris County RMG's, and the State Coordinators.

Helpline Report

Big thanks to Sally Hensen and Tracy Wadhams for monitoring the helpline remotely with all the challenges that entails.

Sally and Tracy report that questions have been on a wide range of subjects with no special trends of note.

Speakers Bureau Report

Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

It was extremely sad for all of the Speakers involved to have to cancel 27 of our scheduled lectures for 2020. The good news is that people are starting to get outside into their yards or just on their porches and balconies and want to grow things.

On an even brighter note, many libraries have contacted the Speakers Bureau wishing to schedule "Virtual Speakers Bureau Lectures". Most libraries have "Zoom" subscriptions and want to be able to offer their patrons more interesting diversions and think that gardening is the perfect stress reducer. Of course, we already knew that! The Speakers Bureau has about 15 lectures currently booked and attendance at the virtual lectures is almost double what we normally get in person.

The Speakers Bureau members are: Gail DiDomenico, Veronica Dengler, Anna Hackman, Diane Lattanzio, Brian Monaghan, Bill Moran, Ilona Ontscherenki, Grace Tshanakas, Cheri Wilczek, Linda Zenkert and myself.

Intern Project

All the intern RMG's were recently sent a project they could do at home by themselves to earn some of the volunteer hours needed to fulfill their initial volunteer commitment hours. I will let you know how many decided to volunteer for this project at the next meeting.

Ocean

Nothing to report due to Covid-19

Passaic

We continue to be operating on a limited basis with no physical assemblies in accordance with the Rutgers guidelines. The hotline is still being operated on a remote basis, with master gardeners responding to queries from their own homes. We convened our first Virtual Board Meeting in September and will continue to meet in this fashion each month going forward. During this meeting, a committee was named to determine a method to entertain a virtual meeting for the entire membership.

Cecilia Diaz, Master Gardener Coordinator Passaic County, is utilizing the high tunnel to grow vegetables for local food pantries. This activity is in coordination with another group in the Passaic County Extension.

Somerset – no report

Sussex

Nothing to report. Sussex has suspended all activities.

Union – no report.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 10:50 am. The next meeting is 10/8/2020 at 9 am by Webex.

Respectfully Submitted
Tricia Deering, Recording Secretary