

Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

Minutes of RMGANJ Meeting, July 8, 2021

Deirdre Gallagher called the Zoom meeting to order at 9:00 am. Nick Hendershot welcomed the group to the meeting, commenting on the weather & the challenges of a year's+ absence from garden projects. Karen Pennell introduced Elizabeth Gill.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Roberta Quinn, Treasurer, reported that the current balance is \$14,018.30. A motion to accept was made, seconded and approved.

Secretary's Minutes from June 10, 2021 RMGANJ Meeting: Cindy Hedin, Recording Secretary, reported that she had emailed RMGANJ minutes July 7 after receiving one more county report. Cindy noted that the Google Groups email address list was not easily deciphered. Frequently, messages go astray. A motion to accept Draft 4 of the minutes was made, seconded and approved.

Attendance:

Atlantic:	Belinda Chester
Bergen:	Karen Pennell , Herb Arbeiter
Burlington:	Merry Bogert, Nick Hendershot
Cumberland:	Keiko Warner
Essex:	Terry Felper; Alice Poueymirou
Hunterdon:	
Mercer:	Judy Colburn
Middlesex:	Jerri Barclay
Monmouth:	Bob Magovern, Bill Schutte, Gayle Williams
Morris:	Deirdre Gallagher
Ocean:	Suzanne Keane, Roberta Quinn
Passaic:	
Somerset:	Cindy Hedin
Sussex:	
Union:	Dolores Batz-Culp, Deb Murphy
Rutgers University:	Jan Zientek

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 has changed. County-level approval is needed for resumption of activities and programs, with appropriate health checks and attendance reporting. Some county fairs will be held. Essex plans to resume classes online in September, and in-person in January. The Tomato Project has hit a few bumps, but Pete & Jan have learned from them. Vines should be showing fruit soon. We're looking toward a Rutgers Basil Project in 2022. A comment was offered that the Rutgers basil grown in 2020 was excellent.

Old Business

Celebratory Event:—The possibility of a Celebration Event in Fall 2021 was discussed. In response (finally!) to Deirdre's inquiries, Rutgers Gardens stated no plans or events are being considered before July, 2021. In light of the short time for planning, it was moved and seconded (Gayle/Suzanne) that we suspend planning for a 9/21 event. The motion carried.

The Exploratory Committee (Betty Scarlata, Keiko Warner & Deirdre Gallagher) met & discussed various options for an event that would welcome Master Gardeners back to active engagement. A March '22 event emphasizing communication/networking/reconnecting & education was suggested. Concerns about conflict with Mercer's conference were expressed. Jan emphasized this would be separate from the usual annual conference, hence, in 2022 there would be 2 RMGANJ events, the fall event would be what it has always been, with emphasis on education. Re: the spring event, it was moved and seconded

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(Dolores/Nick) that planning should continue, taking into consideration weather factors, other garden-related conferences/activities and the constraints of possible venues. The motion carried. Deirdre asked that anyone wishing to help with planning the event please email her (deirgal@gmail.com).

Annual Conference: It was moved and seconded (Karen/Herb) that we will begin planning for an October '22 Annual Conference. The motion carried. (note-this will probably be an indoor event)

New Business:

Will we be meeting in August? Yes, probably online.

Regarding the impending March '22 event, Dolores asked that, in light of the need for planning, we consider holding meetings in January and February, 2022. Yes, probably online.

Several counties offered brief summaries of their activities:

Somerset-Newsletter and HelpLine are continuing. Garden clean-up is a monumental chore. Planning for a new class to begin in September.

Burlington-Office remains closed, garden clean-up has begun.

Monmouth-Coordinator is the HelpLine, weeding a major effort, junior MG garden is looking good. The untended-since-2019 garlic bed yielded 16 lbs.! Speakers Bureau getting requests for talks & programs. 7 schools have requested garden assistance. Rich Obal passed and will be sadly missed.

Mercer-Office has re-opened, HelpLine in operation. Polling MGers as to comfort level with opening programs.

Ocean-Building still closed, Weed & Feed project is proceeding, along with garden clean-up set for July 12. Officer installation in Aug., both outdoors.

Bergen-Lots of weeding! Newly redesigned web site (mgofbc.org) very well designed, contains monthly newsletter.

Essex-Many projects starting up: Turtle Back Zoo, Glenmont, Rose Garden and more! Monthly newsletter continues. Planning outdoors September graduation.

COUNTY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

Atlantic – no report.

Bergen- Please visit our newly updated website--mgofbc.org--it's beautiful!

You may view the current issue of the Potting Shed newsletter by scrolling down to the photo of the goldfinch and clicking on "View the current Potting Shed". A group that was led by Miriam Taub worked on the new website and released it April 1st. Miriam is also the editor of our newsletter. Monthly meetings will resume in September, and we may continue to meet virtually. Seven of our Volunteer sites have opened, and Master Gardeners are slowly returning, however, the weeds have come back in full force. You will see some impressive before/after pictures in the July newsletter.

Burlington – no report

Cumberland

Essex - Virtual Monthly meetings with speakers afterward (Mary Jasch -Tropicals for your Indoor Garden)

MGEC will have recognition and BBQ on Saturday Sept 11, 2021 and will be the first in person meeting Master Gardeners write and submit tips and highlights from their projects and gardening activities for the MGEC newsletter

The Riker Hill Community Garden is in full swing as one of the newer gardens on the Volunteer Projects list in Essex County and hosted a workshop entitled "All About Tomatoes" led by Jim Myracle

The Brookdale Rose Garden has received some well deserved attention from the hard working volunteers and produced beautiful roses for the public to enjoy this season
o report.

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Hunterdon Some in person opportunities are becoming available as we slowly get back to normal. The teams at Anderson House and Hunterdon Central are meeting with their groups in person this summer.

Our Educational Garden team has been working on the gardens on Tuesdays.

Our Sensory Garden team is also back with new mulch to spread.

We planning for a new class in the fall,

We hope to re open our Helpline in the coming weeks.

Mercer

Administration, training and communications--The Executive and General meetings were held via Zoom on July 12, with close to 80 members attending the General Meeting, which closed with a presentation on Forest Therapy and Forest Bathing.

Having previously announced her resignation as Mercer County Horticulturalist, Margaret Pickoff bid the Mercer County Master Gardeners farewell at the July meeting, her final day with the County being July 16. Meredith Melendez, County Agricultural and Natural Resources County Agent II, will oversee the Mercer MG program until Margaret's successor is on staff.

Activities/volunteerism -- Extension personnel returned to their offices in early July; the Master Gardeners have been granted permission to resume in-person Helpline operations.

Questionnaires were sent to Helpline mentors to assess their readiness to return to in-person Helpline staffing and intern training/mentoring. Questionnaires also went to each member of the organization to assess each MG's comfort with in-person meetings and volunteer activities. The more than 100 responses indicated a wide range of comfort/confidence levels across the organization. Further, responses were uniformly distributed across the ranges: there were no significant majorities or minorities of responses in any categories. Clearly, there were MGs that were ready to move forward and return to 'conventional' operations.

While no MGs will be penalized for not participating/engaging, leadership believes it is important to re-open Helpline quickly, as there is a significant need for MG expertise on the part of the public, and many MGs are ready to return. *Note: Helpline operations recommenced July 27, to be staffed through August exclusively by Helpline mentors. Office hours for July and August are Tuesdays and Thursday from 12:00 – 3:00 p.m.*

Work to restore the Mercer Educational Gardens is underway. Scheduled work days to date have been exceptionally well attended, with much accomplished – and much still to be done.

Helping the interns progress through their hours requirements for certification remains a priority. The interns continue to help with the restoration of the Mercer Educational Gardens and to engage in committee work. The hope is that the interns will be able to receive their certificates by the end of the year.

For the immediate future, Executive and General meetings will continue to be held virtually.

Middlesex Because Rutgers has loosened their restrictions, we are now able to hold in-person activities at the EARTH Center, The Master Gardener Class of 2020 has resumed their training and the Vegetable Demonstration Garden looks amazing, thanks to their efforts! We will be starting a new Master Gardener volunteer training class this September, a Fall Picnic in September and Halloween Howl in October are in the planning stage.

Training videos, materials and sessions to assist volunteers in logging their 2022 hours on Better Impact are on the way.

The gardens are open, and many volunteers have come to beat back the weeds that have taken over many of the gardens- and we're making good progress! The gardens may not be what they were but with hard work and determination, we will have the gardens back to their former glory by next season.

Upcoming volunteer opportunities include Middlesex County Fair August 2-8 and Open House on August 21.

Monmouth Monmouth County MGs continue to meet virtually for monthly Ops and General Meetings. Much is happening in our Ag. Building gardens now that we are able to get together and work in them. It
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has been so exciting to see and work with each other after such a long time! The PAR garden is looking good and has already produced 16 lbs. of garlic from the seed stock that the class of 2019 planted as a legacy crop. The JMG garden has peppers and other greens to be harvested...all of which were donated by MGs when the gardens opened. The Native and Memorial gardens are looking mighty fine with less weeds and mulch provided by the county for all gardens. The Monarch Waystation has been well tended to also, several plants moved around and eggs have been spotted on the milkweed, so we are all about to be grandparents of lovely Monarch butterflies!

Our School Program Committee continues to work with county schools who are interested in school gardens or possible in-school programs for the fall. The Helpline Roundtable committee continues to meet monthly bringing us topics that come up through emails on our Helpline. And, with all the hustle and bustle going on outside of our building, the Speakers Bureau has scheduled seven presentations either virtually or in-person to garden clubs or the Monmouth County Library. We are so pleased that folks in Monmouth County continue to request and have such an interest in our selection of interesting talks!

In June we had the awarding of our scholarship to three deserving students who are continuing their education in the field of horticulture or related fields. Thank you to our Scholarship Committee for getting our scholarship information out to the public and the time and effort it took as a committee to screen all applications. Congratulations to: Olivia Davidson, Andrea Sandoval and Alexis Serido for being this year's recipients!

On a sad note, Monmouth has lost a very dear and special person, Rich Obal. He was our Ag. Agent for many years and was one of the founders of our Monmouth County Master Gardeners Program. He was always glad to share his wealth of plant knowledge with everyone, couldn't wait to help when a question came up in the Helpline Room, loved dahlias, corn hole games, people in general...but very especially, us, and life itself. We will miss our very dear friend.

Morris

Ocean The cleanup and repair of our gardens begun in June is continuing. We are having a Weed and Feed session July 12th to get a lot of people to help. We are looking forward to the installation of Officers at our August meeting online or otherwise. We do not meet in July.

Members shared beautiful pictures of what is blooming in their home gardens for the July newsletter. The newsletter has been a great way for our members to connect, since many do not want to attend virtual meetings.

Passaic – no report

Somerset – no report

Sussex

Union – no report.

Planning for the Celebratory Event (March) and Fall Conference (October) will continue. Please email Deirdre (deirgal@gmail.com) if you wish to help.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 10:23 am. The next meeting is 8/12/2021 at 9 am by Zoom.

Respectfully Submitted
Cindy Hedin, Recording Secretary

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