

Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

Minutes of RMGANJ Meeting, August 12, 2021

Dierdre Gallagher called the Zoom meeting to order at 9:03 am, and welcomed the group to the meeting.

Attendance:

Atlantic:	
Bergen:	Herb Arbeiter, Suzanne Danzig, Karen Pennell,
Burlington:	Nick Hendershot
Cumberland:	Betsey Simpson, Keiko Warner
Essex:	Terry Felper; Alice Poueymirou
Hunterdon:	Tricia Deering, Dewey Goodwin
Mercer:	Judy Colburn, Betty Scarlata, Sudi Solomon
Middlesex:	Jerri Barclay,
Monmouth:	Bill Schutte, Gayle Williams
Morris:	Deirdre Gallagher, Diane Muenzin
Ocean:	Suzanne Keane, Roberta Quinn
Passaic:	
Somerset:	Cindy Hedin
Sussex:	
Union:	Dolores Batz-Culp, Deb Murphy
Rutgers University:	Jan Zientek

Secretary's Minutes from July 8, 2021 RMGANJ Meeting: Cindy reported the Excel spreadsheets containing delegates'/alternates'/coordinators'/agents' information was emailed to the GoogleGroups list with reply requested. Only 18 of the 37 on the list replied. What to do about non-repliers? How is one to determine who is receiving the emails? Is the GoogleGroups list useful? Jan will ask the county coordinators to email Cindy (cphedinb@icloud.com) a list of delegates & alternates with their email addresses.

Cindy reported that she had emailed the July RMGANJ minutes after receiving some changes to the county reports. A motion to accept the minutes as emailed on August 11 was made, seconded (Gail/Karen) and approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Roberta Quinn, Treasurer, reported that the current balance is \$14,018.30 . 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. Most county coordinators are planning on starting new classes in 2022, some starting in the fall. Instruction will be a mix of online & in-person. Morris is doing in-person, their room is large enough to allow for social distancing of 25 people. Concerns re: Covid & variants are causing counties to make changes in policies/restrictions from day to day.

Old Business

Conference Planning: Dierdre stated that a March 2022 event is not feasible due to virus concerns and changing health regulations. We will look to October 2022 and begin planning for a wonderful, in-person event similar to past events. There were no objections.

New Business

Dierdre asked for brief comments on what's going on in each county.

Ocean--Roberta-HelpLine in Ag Center, Tick lab in mornings-9-12. In-door meetings must be masked. Will be holding outside installation of officers. Speakers Bureau is doing programs. Indoor meetings of Exec. Com., Bd. Of Dir. & small groups will begin shortly.

Hunterdon—Tricia-Doing virtual programs & in-person outside at Anderson/Halfway House outside. HS program carried on outside and probably will continue in fall including inside. Coordinator is doing
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HelpLine. Garden projects are being maintained. Public is not allowed in the building. Monthly steering committee meetings being held outdoors and via Zoom. General meetings with speakers-- attendance 30-40-50 folks

Monmouth—Gayle—Coordinator does HelpLine and at libraries. Speakers Bureau active. Many garden projects continuing, but limited participation. Monthly OPS & General mtgs via Zoom. Will resume Coffee Talks in February. From Bill--Storm damaged shed. Eagle scouts built a new one. It's great!

Mercer—Masks in building. Meredith Melendez stepping in for departed horticulture person, M. Pickoff. HelpLine – in-person in the building, no in-person contact. Garden workers welcome as they are comfortable. Monthly “newsletter” of webinars/events—sign up for it at mgofmc.org, top left of page

Jan's comments-Some decline in interest among existing MGers, but many folks on waiting list for new classes. Will poll the coordinators about interest level.

Burlington--Nick—outdoor event for MG candidates in Sept. to maintain interest

Morris—Diane – Zoom has been a good thing! Lots of offerings! Morris County College online course. Could MGers get into such courses at reduced price? Ways to share and spread the word about offerings, ours and other organizations'.

Somerset—Cindy—Our coordinator Roslyn has worked with a tech person to create short Instagram videos on garden topics, eg., poison ivy identification, and spotted lantern flies.

Perhaps RMGANJ could have Instagram account, and/or Facebook. Monmouth has a Facebook page. Hunterdon too. Essex too.

We will meet via Zoom in January and February, 2022.

The speaker for October 2022 could be Brian Schilling on how the Master Gardener program connects to Rutgers. Will there be an educational component?

Caring and Sharing:

COUNTY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

Atlantic – no report.

Bergen--Two Master Gardeners, Janet Schulz and Paul Sisko, opened their gardens for private viewing. About 35 years ago, Janet moved into the house she now occupies and started collecting plants: Hosta first, then ferns, arisaema (jack-in-the pulpits), and any other plant she didn't have. Janet's garden is primarily a collector's garden. Pushing the envelope trying to grow as many kinds of plants that might tolerate the sun and soil conditions and still look good together are what she strives for. A member of the Tri-State Hosta Society since its inception she has run out of room but continues to hunt for the unusual.

The Sisko property was a totally wooded 3 ½ -acre sloped area except for a moderately sized contemporary home refurbished from a then 125-year-old farmhouse. Paul, who needed a larger space for his architectural sculptures and furniture, built his new studio on the lower level of the property and then transformed the home and property into a beautifully terraced landscape, moving more than 300 tons of stone to develop the property as it is today. Most of the work on the studio, property, and home was done by Paul with occasional helpers. His is now one of the premier gardens in the county with his sculptures throughout the grounds and with Paul taking care of almost all the gardening. The newest addition is that of a hillside vegetable garden he built last summer using some 100 landscape ties, additional raised beds, and a 10-zone watering system.

Garretson Farm held an Herbal bitters workshop in July. They explored the history and traditional uses of digestive bitters. Participants harvested herbs to create a seasonal bitters blend for use as a tonic and for digestive support in any beverage or as a cocktail ingredient. Each then formulated and blended a bottle of bitters to take home.

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Hackensack River Greenway held 2 cleanups at Terhune Park, and the Mary S. Topolsky garden and trail in Teaneck. The goal: pick up trash, free trees from invasives, and plant natives where possible. Bring your own gloves, loppers, and clippers. Masks required.

It's great to be back in the weeds: Volunteers at Garretson Forge & Farm and McFaul Environmental Center enjoyed every bit of digging, weeding, raking, and mulching after 16+ months away from their sites. At Garretson the weeded area will be planted with a cover crop. At McFaul, MGs assess the thistle, perilla, and white snake root and then conquer. Oakleaf hydrangeas are being considered for the bed.

Volunteers at Thielke Arboretum were not discouraged by the hot, sticky weather in July as they tidied up a divinely fragrant stand of milkweed. The milkweed is a recent addition to the rounds. As they worked, several monarchs were flitting from one flower to the next. It didn't look like they were stopping for nectar, but perhaps the ladies were dropping eggs.

Burlington – Volunteers have returned to work at the Burlington County Agricultural Center and the Butterfly Gardens at Smith Woods. Plans for a return to work at the Rancocas Nature Center are underway. Burlington County Master Gardeners will be meeting outdoors at the Agricultural Center in September, and Master Gardener candidates will be meeting at the Agricultural center for a program/class update, also in September. The Burlington County Extension Office vestibule and lobby are open to the public (masks are required); helpline and samples are still handled by Office staff. The "Ask A Master Gardener" program with the Moorestown Library on Zoom continues every first Wednesday of each month, with the MG coordinator and three Master Gardeners on the panel (we average about 12 participants per program). Also with the Library, every third Wednesday of each month via Zoom we hold a Master Gardener talk program on a variety of topics; we average about 14 participants for each talk.

Bill Bamka, Burlington County Extension AGent, held an IPM walk and talk at the Burlington County Agricultural Center on August 5 (Master Gardener candidates attended along with current Master Gardeners).

Cumberland -- We generally do not meet as a group during the summer but we have had folks working on the gardens at RCE, weeding and what not. We just received notification that Wes Kline will be doing his pepper picking trials at the farm in Upper Deerfield sometime during the week of August 16th. We are hoping to have someone on deck as our new coordinator this fall. Who knows where things will go with this new uptick?

Essex - no report.

Hunterdon --- In person volunteer gardening opportunities are happening with our Sensory garden, and Educational Garden at the RCE building,

Some outreach programs are starting on a limited basis.

Our Citizen Science team has been busy reaching over 14K people since early July.

Hot topics on our Helpline include; brown patches in turf grass, Emerald Ash Bore, Spotted Lanternfly cicada damage, wasp and hornet ID, tent caterpillars, black knot.

Mercer Consistent with prior years, there was no August meeting.

Mercer County Horticulturalist, Margaret Pickoff's last day with Mercer County was July 16. Margaret did return in August, however, to conduct her last webinar in her Veggie Basics series: Harvesting Crops and End of Season Tasks!

Meredith Melendez, County Agricultural and Natural Resources County Agent II, is conducting the search to fill the position of County Horticulturist and has assumed oversight of the Mercer MG program. The County Horticulturalist position announcement is being re-circulated as response to the initial posting was less than hoped-for.

Activities/volunteerism

Helpline, which commenced limited operations on July 27, continues to be staffed exclusively by members of the Helpline Mentors committee. Mentors are in the Helpline office on Tuesdays and

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Thursdays from 12:00 – 3:00 p.m. Members of the public may visit the office by invitation only. Requests received by phone/voicemail and email are being addressed by return phone calls during office hours.

The Helpline Mentors have begun to plan for intern 'on the job' training under the direct tutelage of Mentors. Based on input from the Mentors membership, it has been decided to delay training until Helpline volumes decline from current, high levels. The volume of inquiries and the County mask mandate were deemed too challenging to provide a positive training experience for interns at this time. Work to restore the Mercer Educational Gardens has accelerated in anticipation of Mercer's first in-person community education event – a composting demonstration – scheduled for September 25. Scheduled workdays continue to be well attended, with strong intern participation in both the Educational Garden restoration and in committee work.

Helping the interns progress through their requirements for Helpline and general service hours continues to be a priority.

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

Middlesex

Monmouth

Our JMG (Junior Master Gardener) garden has been weeded, planted and is now producing very well thanks to many volunteers led by Farmer Tom Lang. In addition, the garden is getting a new shed built by the Boy Scouts who have taken this on as an Eagle Scout project. Last winter a rather large tree fell in the Rain Garden area and demolished the JMG shed that our MGs had built a few years ago. The county removed the tree and now the Boy Scouts have taken on this project to help us. We are truly grateful!

Mentored by Geoff Bray, the interns and veterans alike have worked the PAR garden and it has been producing and the produce has been delivered to a local food bank. Aside from the potato beetles and the monumentous, never-ending task of weeding, chasing a rabbit visitor has been part of the work-out routine in the PAR!

Our School Program Committee has been working with the Brielle Library creating adult and children's programs. The Speakers Bureau has been asked if they would address the adult program portion, while the children's programs will be addressed by the School Program Committee. This committee is also working with Monmouth Cares who is looking for children's outside garden activities. Our Speakers Bureau has had seven presentations in July and three are scheduled for August. They continue to give excellent presentations at our monthly general meetings as well.

Monmouth Master Gardeners have been invited to participate in the fall at the Cheesequake State Park Earth Care Day with a children's craft table and native plant garden information table. We have on-going projects at St. Anselm in Tinton Falls, Jackson Woods in Long Branch, and Lake Como. It is rewarding to know that during the time we all were quarantined, folks were anxious to get back to unfinished projects and presentations that they feel important enough to ask for advice and help from us Master Gardeners. It is nice to know we are on their "go-to" list!

In our last report we noted the passing of our very dear friend and former Ag. Agent, Rich Obal. A special edition of our newsletter was dedicated to Rich and put out by Estelle Lumer. In it were many photos and the sharing of feelings and experiences our Master Gardeners had for Rich. Many thanks to Estelle for this edition and to all of our MGs who contributed their thoughts, feelings and stories.

Morris

Masks have returned for all indoor events, regardless of vaccination status. The RMG Help-Line continues remotely.

WPS training is still available and there are opportunities for volunteer work at Snyder Farm both in the deer resistant gardens and in the agricultural fields for various tasks as needed. Currently, volunteers are assisting with apple tree pruning. Snyder Farms will be hosting a Tour of the Farm on Tuesday, August 24th from 2-7pm. This replaces the Tomato Tasting event usually held at the farm at the end of August.

The Speaker's Bureau is scheduling both in person and remote lectures.

Several classes that may be of interest to RMGs will be held in the Fall at Morris County College. These are non-credit classes and include Plant ID and Plant Palettes (100% remote), Landscape Design

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using Dynascope (on campus). The college also offers a pre-vocational course for developmentally disabled adults (on campus) FYI.

As mentioned last month, a new class of MGs will begin in September in a hybrid format—part in person, part remote.

Ocean

We are slowly reopening. Our Helpline and Tick ID services began this week with one MG in each station. Our Speakers Bureau has in-person presentations scheduled into November. The Education Outreach Committee is working on three projects. Our once-a-month webinars continue. The gardens are being revived by many MG helpers. Next Monday, we will Install our officers for the '21- '22 year at a potluck luncheon at the Ocean County Park facility. We hope to have our meetings for the rest of the year at the RCE (Ag) building. It has a new bog garden which we are anxious to see.

Passaic – no report

Somerset – Our monthly meeting was held via Zoom. Katie Bliss presented an excellent slide show entitled “Gardening Through the Year”

Our HelpLine Team is responding to telephone and email questions and holding weekly live call-in help sessions. There has been an excellent response.

The Teaching Garden teams continue whipping the various beds into shape with prodigious weeding, thinning and planting. The strawberry bed, after producing a good crop in June, has been groomed so as to be ready for 2022! The propagation bed has been inventoried and plans for division and sharing are in the works. The long-awaited storage shed is scheduled for delivery in late September.

Team meetings are being held in person and via Zoom.

Sussex

Union – no report.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 9:51 am. The next meeting is Sept. 8, 2021 at 9 am by Zoom.

Respectfully Submitted
Cindy Hedin, Recording Secretary