

# Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

## Minutes of RMGANJ Meeting, June 9, 2022

Nick Hendershot called the Zoom meeting to order at 9:05 AM and welcomed the group to the meeting. He commented on the intensity of the rain last night and encouraged folks to sign in with their name & county in the Chat.

### Attendance:

Atlantic:	
Bergen:	Herb Arbeiter
Burlington:	Merry Bogert, Nick Hendershot
Cumberland:	
Essex:	Trina Ehntholt
Hunterdon:	Tricia Deering, Dewey Goodwin
Mercer:	Judy Colburn, Betty Scarlata, Sudi Solomon
Middlesex:	Jerri Barclay, Kathy Dopart
Monmouth:	Bill Schutte, Gayle Williams
Morris:	
Ocean:	Suzanne Keane, Roberta Quinn
Passaic:	
Somerset:	Cindy Hedin
Sussex:	
Union:	
Rutgers University:	Jan Zientek

**Secretary's Minutes from RMGANJ Meeting, May 12, 2022:** Cindy Hedin, Recording Secretary, reported that she had emailed RMGANJ 6/9/22 minutes and asked for any last minute changes. A motion to accept the minutes was made, seconded and approved. Please let Cindy know if your name is missing from the Attendance list.

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

**MASTER GARDENER'S COORDINATOR'S REPORT:** Nick praised Jan's help and support in past years and wished him well in his future endeavors. In his final report, Jan Zientek commented that Rutgers University Policy continues to reflect the current status of Covid, in-person activities are being permitted. Some MG units seem reluctant to resume "normal" activities. We seem to be on track for an in-person fall conference. Jan should receive the draft "Save The Date" flyer. Cindy will send it ASAP.

### Old Business

**Conference Planning:** Two speakers have committed to the event. Bryan Schilling's topic is The Future of Master Gardening in NJ, and Rebecca Magron will speak on plant pathology/diagnostics. A third will be lined up soon, topic to deal with turf grass. These subjects were chosen because of their frequent appearance in HelpLine question. The conference is to end at 1:00. The room has been reserved with hybrid technology available. Registration will be online, thus simpler than in previous years. The committee will meet soon. Considerable discussion focused on the title of the conference. The consensus was to go with ***Back to the Garden!!!***

Greeters to tally attendees as they enter will be the volunteers from the last meeting.

Gayle reported on several comments received on the draft Save The Date flyer. Those suggestions and concerns will be addressed before the final version is distributed. (Deb Murphy Union comments, speakers' title & affiliation, hybrid, Tricia-location specifics, Cook Student Center. Trina-lunch??? Social gathering after speeches)

### New Business

We assume our 2023 conference will find us back to normal and thinking in terms of statewide program.

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### ***Caring and Sharing:*** What's happening??

Gayle from Monmouth--Activities are resuming: Jr MG in full swing, 14 students harvested radishes, roasted with garlic & olive oil; good plant sale, lower attendance; general meetings in-person & via Zoom; scholarship awards to be announced; some Zoom programs; coordinator does helpline from library.

Nick from Burlington-- meeting outdoors, helpline at libraries

Cindy from Somerset--Mercer hosted Somerset MGers at Mercer garden, and will visit Somerset's garden soon. Somerset County's computer system was hacked thus cutting off all Master Gardener email and internet use for about 2 weeks.

### **COUNTY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:**

***Atlantic*** – no report.

***Bergen*** - MG of BC continued to hold virtual meetings in June. There will be no meetings in July and August. We hope to have in person meetings when they resume in September.

June

Guest Speaker: David Robinson, distinguished professor of geography at Rutgers University and New Jersey's state climatologist for the last 30 years, presented "New Jersey's Changing Climate". He emphasized weather and climate impacts on agriculture and gardening and provided information on how interested individuals can contribute to the monitoring of weather/climate conditions in local regions by participating in the Community Collaborative Rain Hail and Snow Network and how they may follow current weather conditions via the Rutgers New Jersey Weather Network.

Joel Flagler, RCE Bergen County program leader, reported that RCE Bergen is initiating a new partnership between the MG program and the 4-H program. Now, Master Gardeners who wish to do volunteer time in school gardens and related activities can get credit toward their MG certification.

#### Outreach Events:

EarthFest Overpeck took place on May 15, celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BC Parks Dept. and also the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hackensack Riverkeeper.

Ridgefield Park Earth Day on May 31.

***Burlington*** – no report

***Cumberland***

***Essex*** - no report.

***Hunterdon*** - Our Helpline continues to increase handling a wide variety of topics.

Our educational garden team continues to clean up.

Our Century garden team is doing plant identification and mapping out the garden

Hunterdon Central team continues to work with the students and teachers planting their garden

Communities events are beginning to ramp up and our teams are working with various groups.

***Mercer*** - The June General Meeting for Mercer County was accessible both in-person and via Zoom. Meeting attendance, 89 Master Gardeners -- 70 online and 19 in-person.

Helpline & Better Impact...call for increased engagement

Attendees were encouraged to sign up for Helpline shifts, as Helpline remains relatively lightly staffed.

MGs were also reminded to record their volunteer hours in Better Impact; hours recorded seem to be under-running hours worked/contributed.

Work to add an electronic client inquiry data form and an electronic Helpline logbook to the Mercer MG website is nearing completion. Once uploaded, Mercer MGs will test/trial the electronic forms before they go 'live'.

2022/23 Master Gardener training

A new Master Gardener training class will begin in mid-September. Notice has been sent to those asking to be wait-listed during the pandemic, with an expression of interest requested by June 17. As of early

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June, over 30 requests for enrollment had been received. Each candidate will be interviewed by Dr. Homa; enrollment will be limited to 20-25 students. Classes will be held twice-weekly from 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

National Urban Extension Conference... "Urban Extension Collaborations in Trenton" Rutgers hosted the 2022 National Urban Extension Conference (NUEC) in Camden. Mercer Master Gardeners leading the Children's Programs and School Gardens presented to the conference attendees from around the country who had signed up to tour Trenton Urban Collaboration sites (see program excerpt below). "...innovative programs of Extensionists and community groups working with residents to transform lives and urban neighborhoods in the Camden-Philadelphia metro area!" -- NUEC



Images from NUEC conference brochure

### Plant Expo and Garden Market...a Herculean effort and a tremendous success

The 2022 Plant Expo and Garden Market was well-supported by Mercer Master Gardeners and a select group of four outside vendors providing native plants, vegetables and annuals. The event was well-attended by the public; despite the rain, ~400 people attended the sale on May 14. They bought ~2,000 plants donated by Mercer County Master Gardeners from their home gardens and from the gardens tended at the Mercer Educational Gardens – over 230 varieties in all. For the first time, an inventory of plants available for sale was made available online in advance of the sale and a (very) dedicated team of MGs prepared standardized labels (2,400 in all), reflecting common and botanical names, cultural needs as well as (also new this year) icons identifying native plants/pollinator value/deer resistance.

President's Volunteer Service Award goes to...Catherine Horgan, Master Gardener of Mercer County

The President's Volunteer Service Award honors individuals whose service positively impacts their communities -- and inspires those around them to action. Past President, Catherine Horgan (class of 2005) was honored for her 4,061 hours (and counting...) of volunteer work – generously sharing her broad experience and deep expertise and knowledge: leading, mentoring, educating both her fellow Master Gardeners and the community.

Tours of other county's MG gardens...sharing experience and providing inspiration Somerset County Master Gardeners toured the Mercer Educational Gardens on May 26, with a reciprocal tour/visit scheduled for June 10. A tour of Middlesex County's gardens is planned for July 21.

Coming Mercer Attractions... "New Day, New Disease" – presentation by Kathryn Homa; Evening in the Garden and Insect Fest.

The meeting concluded with a presentation: 'A Year in the Life of a Peony Gardener' by the Mid-Atlantic Peony Society.

**Middlesex** - The Rows for the Hungry is 95% planted and looking good. Last week 45 people from L'Oreal partook in their Day of Service at the Rows. We welcomed their help and they told it was more fun than their company picnic!

This week over 100 8th graders from New Brunswick are touring the EARTH Center to learn about food insecurity, community engagement and, of course, agriculture and gardening.

After being closed for two years, the Butterfly House opened on June 4! It will be open from 10-12 on Saturdays and Sundays during the months of June, July and August. Stop by for a visit and be sure to bring your camera.

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The Children's Garden is up and running. It's open daily with fun for children of all ages. Using plants as teaching tools, children touch, play and learn in this very popular garden.

June 11th is Celebrate Middlesex County Day. It's a free, family-friendly event focused on showcasing the unique programs, services and people of Middlesex County government. The Master Gardeners will be in attendance interacting with the public and our famous EARTH Center honey bees. In cooperation with Rutgers Extension, we will be holding a strawberry tasting of the famous Rutgers strawberries.

Want to see the EARTH Center? The Somerset and Mercer County Master Gardeners will be joining us for a tour on June 26th. Tours can be arranged with Dave Smela. [david.smela@middlesex.nj.us](mailto:david.smela@middlesex.nj.us)

**Monmouth** - Our Spring Garden Days plant sale was successful and our residents were so glad we were back! It was a lot of fun working with fellow MGs again, teaching customers about best practices in the garden, where to plant and when and giving information for a successful growing season. Providing programs of interest were our Speakers Bureau speakers with helpful and relevant talks for their garden picks or how to install a drip irrigation system. All worked hard and enjoyed the sale along the way!

After our May 25<sup>th</sup> meeting, we all adjourned to the Memorial Garden where we took a few moments to remember the MGs who have passed. The garden was in bloom, the day was clear and perfect and all had time to reflect and remember those who have passed.

The Interns have been working very hard in the PAR and have made several deliveries of lettuces to the local food bank. Potatoes, peppers and tomatoes have all been planted as well as many other vegetables. The garden looks terrific and ready for some summertime action! Nearby is the JMG (Junior Master Gardener) garden, students made their first harvest on June 4<sup>th</sup> of radishes. One parent shared with me that she roasted her radishes with parsley and garlic and it was delicious! Our children's program will continue until the end of June and conclude with a "graduation". Students will leave with a binder of what was taught, photos of activities and recipes that include vegetables grown in their garden.

All other Ag. Property gardens are looking wonderful! The Rain Garden was in quite an awful state as during the pandemic a large tree fell during a storm and crushed one of our sheds as well as all vegetation in its path! Not to mention that the weeds were having a party there too! However, with a lot of elbow grease and a ton of tools and equipment, it is looking like a Rain Garden again! Thank you to Juanita and Rita for their TLC!

The Horticultural Enrichment Committee will be finishing up their cycle at a rehabilitation center and have been enjoying each session with the residents. The School Program Committee is winding down the school year and will be working over the summer months with those interested in creating and planning a school garden. Our coordinator, Diane Larson, continues to hold a virtual Helpline through our Monmouth County Library system. In the community, projects are on-going and community gardens are all greening-up! Our Helpline Roundtable monthly meetings continue virtually refreshing our memory or teaching us about new plants/diseases. This month, Bird's Eye Trefoil, Acanthus Mollis (Bear's Breeches), the artichoke and Rose Slug Sawfly were discussed.

On June 29<sup>th</sup> at our General Meeting we will be awarding five scholarships to deserving students continuing their education in the field of horticulture and related fields. We are glad we can continue to offer our scholarships. Thank you to our Scholarship Committee for their time and effort in their selection process.

Soon our Interns will be finishing up their classes and will have the opportunity to man the Helpline. Their graduation is an event we're all looking forward to!

### **Morris**

**Ocean** - It is exciting to get back to what Ocean County MGs like to do. Our Community Garden which raises produce for food pantries has new planting beds. They are experimenting with growing potatoes in barrels. New blueberry bushes will be planted soon.

Forty-five new native plants were recently added to our display garden, located in front of the Agriculture Center.

We will be doing Ask a Master Gardener events at the garden in June.

The public can explore the garden with its botanical labels and ask questions.

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There are usually many Outreach events this time of year at the shore. This year, they have returned after a pandemic hiatus. Interns have been helping at these events.

Speakers have been requested over the summer months, with an increase in library talks. An IPM workshop was held to familiarize MGs with plant pests and diseases.

***Passaic*** – no report

***Somerset*** – no report

***Sussex***

***Union*** – no report.

**ADJOURNMENT**: The meeting adjourned at 9:44 AM. The next meeting is 7/14/2022 at 9 AM by Zoom.

Respectfully Submitted  
Cindy Hedin, Recording Secretary