

Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey

Minutes of RMGANJ, July 14, 2022 Meeting

Attendance:

Atlantic:	
Bergen:	Herb Arbeiter
Burlington:	Nick Hendershot, Tracy Kilmer
Cumberland:	Keiko Warner
Essex:	Trina Ehntholt
Hunterdon:	Dewey Goodwin
Mercer:	Judy Colburn, Betty Scarlata, Sudi Solomon
Middlesex:	Jerri Barclay
Monmouth:	Bob Magovern, Gayle Williams
Morris:	
Ocean:	Suzanne Keane, Roberta Quinn
Passaic:	
Somerset:	Cindy Hedin
Sussex:	
Union:	Deb Murphy
Rutgers University:	Nick Polanin

Nick Hendershot called the Zoom meeting to order at 9:05 AM and welcomed the group to the meeting, He commented on the extreme dryness and welcomed Tracy Kilmer, a guest, and possibly a new delegate, from Burlington County.

Secretary's Minutes from RMGANJ June 9, 2022 Meeting: Cindy Hedin, Recording Secretary, reported that she had emailed the June RMGANJ meeting minutes. Some attendance corrections will be made pending information from Keiko, otherwise all names in red will be deleted. A later reading will not be necessary. A motion to accept the minutes was made, seconded and approved. Nick H. reminded folks to sign in in the chat. A request was made that, for clarity sake, the Nicks will be distinguished by using a last initial.

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 Hendershot welcomed Nick Polanin as our new old Master Gardener Coordinator. Nick P. reported Jan Zientek's official retirement date to be Aug. 31, but considering unused sick days & vacation time, he will be out of office for the rest of July & August.

Nick P. congratulated Master Gardeners statewide for the successful navigation from in-person to virtual & hybrid programs back to a combination of all during Covid, observed that much excellent work had been and continues to be done. Virtual programs allow for wider audiences and reduced travel. Recording of programs and lectures allows for repeat viewing. Despite the restrictions of Covid, Master Gardeners' good work should be recognized and praised. Brian Schilling would like the 2022 annual reports submitted by coordinators to highlight those efforts and include photos of same. He urged Master Gardeners to remind their coordinators to emphasize all those good efforts.

The state has taken over the ordering and distribution of years of service recognition pins. Contact Talia for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 year pins.

Better Impact has been implemented statewide.

Many personnel changes are in the future. At present, searches are underway for a coordinator in Somerset (Nick will be leaving the position.) There are also positions to be filled in Morris County, fruit IPM technicians and others. Because of the hiring freeze, the Chancellor Provost must approve each posting, thus it takes longer for job posting and filling. Morris, Cumberland, Cape May and Salem counties have pre-tenured staff.

In response to a question, Nick P. affirmed that the annual reports are the responsibility of the county coordinators, and repeated his request that all the good efforts of the Covid years be included in those reports.

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Old Business -- Conference Planning:

The Save-the-Date flyer was discussed. The title of the Conference is "Back to the Garden!" A \$5.00 fee will be paid by all registrants. Refreshments consisting of a beverage and/or munchie will be available for those attending in person. **All** registrants will receive the link to the virtual conference. All Master Gardeners should receive the flyer shortly. It will be distributed through the county coordinators Nick H. requested clarification of Rebecca Magron's title.

In light of the ongoing Covid issue, it is possible the in-person part of the conference could be cancelled. Rutgers' policies and procedures will prevail.

Nick P. will check with Jan and Talia regarding the sending of the registration information and the details of the food & beverage service for the conference, and also the parking areas available for those attending in person.

Check-in will begin at 8:00 AM, the program at 8:30.

Other:

In response to a question, Nick P. discussed briefly funding for the various programs. Rutgers CES gets about \$4 million in federal funds and about \$20.7 million from the state. The latter is down from about \$28 million in 2008. County funding has varied.

Herb Arbeiter asked if a 35 year pin was available.

From the Chat: Deb Murphy asked that counties share what they are doing to inform residents about spotted lantern fly management. "For example, are you having any public sessions to educate? demonstrate how to make traps? Do you have any ready resources to hand out or just direct them to Penn State Extension? Do you have resources on your MG website?"

COUNTY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

Atlantic – no report.

Bergen -- MG of BC had no meeting in July. Meetings will resume in September, hopefully in-person/hybrid mode. We are also planning to have an outdoor lunch gathering in late September or early October for members to get reacquainted and to meet recent graduates from the MG program.

The bi-monthly newsletter, "the Potting Shed", is issued throughout the year.

Pollinator Week, June 20 – 26, was celebrated with special tours at the Overpeck Park Butterfly and Native Garden, and at Thielke Arboretum in Glen Rock.

Burlington – no report

Cumberland

Essex - no report.

Hunterdon -- Applications are being accepted for our new class to start in the fall

Our Education Garden team is working in small groups to upgrade our gardens around our office, including a Shade garden, and continues to make progress.

Our new interns are working to achieve their certifications.

Our outreach and community events are ongoing and our presentation Team has received request from the several community organizations.

Our Helpline is manned several days per week, and is receiving numerous questions.

Our Hunterdon Central team has completed their spring semester and is preparing for the summer and fall semester.

We will man a booth at the annual 4H Fair in Aug.

Mercer - The July General Meeting of Mercer County Master Gardeners was conducted solely via Zoom due to room availability constraints at the Extension office. Eighty Master Gardeners attended.

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Helpline & Better Impact - An electronic client inquiry data form/questionnaire developed by Dr. Homa is undergoing initial testing by the MG's Information Resources Committee (IRC). The questionnaire is intended to guide/encourage clients to provide comprehensive, relevant and specific information regarding their questions/concerns, and also to encourage the submission of photographs – all in order to facilitate a more rapid response to the client.

Three trial sessions to test the concept of remote Helpline shifts are being conducted. MGs are working together via Zoom in three-hour shifts to address email inquiries selected and forwarded to each session's participants by Dr. Homa, who attends all sessions. Policies surrounding remote Helpline work are in development.

To reinforce earlier training, another Better Impact training session was conducted in early July by Dr. Kathryn Homa via Zoom.

2022/23 Master Gardener training - Dr. Kathryn Homa has revised both the Master Gardener program admissions process and the 'pacing' of in-class and volunteer work for certification. For the first time, all candidates will be interviewed by Dr. Homa as part of the acceptance process for Mercer MG training. As of mid-July, interviews of prospective candidates were nearing completion.

The class schedule has been compressed from its traditional structure: classes (beginning September 13) will be held twice-weekly, on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. In-class work will therefore be completed by year-end, giving the interns more time (10 months) to fulfill their volunteer requirements.

While classes will be conducted on an in-person basis, work is underway to have the classes recorded for certified MGs' viewing for continuing education credit.

The 2020 Class is Graduating...November 16! - For the first time, graduation will be celebrated during the annual Awards Night, for an evening of celebration at the County Extension office on November 16. As of mid-July most of the members of the Class of 2020 were well on their way to completing their requisite volunteer work.

Volunteer of the Year Award...from the Boys and Girls Club of Mercer County

Jeanne Mroczko and Tarry Truitt were awarded Volunteer of the Year Awards by the Boys and Girls Club of Mercer County. The Awards were in recognition of their hours of work developing and leading a gardening program for the Club, and also their successful cultivation of gardens for the children (two locations). The gardening program has become one of the Club's most popular programs.

Tours of other county's MG gardens...sharing experience and providing inspiration

Mercer County Master Gardeners toured the Somerset County Master Gardeners' (incredibly creative!) Teaching and Demonstration Gardens on June 10.

A tour of Middlesex County's gardens has been planned for July 21.

Coming Mercer Attractions...

Evening in the Garden (July), garden tours (August and September) and Insect Fest (September). The meeting concluded with a presentation on butterflies, specifically skippers: "Don't Skip the Skippers" by Mercer County MG Theresa Knipper.

Middlesex -- The Rows for the Hungry harvested almost 1,000 pounds in their first harvest week. In an effort to curb food insecurity in Middlesex County the fresh-from-the-garden produce was delivered to Elijah's Promise in New Brunswick and replenish the county's Emergency Food network.

The Butterfly House is back in full force with a large crowd of visitors and a beautiful post Covid design. Be sure to stop in for a guided visit Saturdays and Sundays from 10-12 this summer.

The MG Team is hard at work preparing for the Middlesex County Fair. Plants, people and information booths are on the way for August 1 - 7th as we greet the public and assist with their questions on plants, gardening and landscaping issues.

August 20th is Open House at the EARTH center. Our gardens will be the star of the show along with food, music, activities and garden tours.

The Native Plants team is currently underway redeveloping the Native Plant Garden. Come and see the new and exciting developments in this project developed with the Master Gardeners and Environmental Stewards of Middlesex County.

The Children's Garden team has completed work on several redevelopment projects. This garden is open every day and is a favorite for kids and parents alike.

And all Summer, tours and visitors abound! Teaching, sharing information and building community is our mission.

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Monmouth -- In June our Junior Master Gardener Program finished up their program with a congratulatory get together with parents and students to celebrate their completion of the program. During the summer months the children are welcomed to come back on Saturday mornings to weed and harvest what is ready in their garden plots. The week of the County Fair students who would like to enter the competition at the Fair will meet with mentors to choose their best vegetables to enter in the contest. It's all very exciting, and in the past, JMG children have done very well earning many ribbons for their efforts!

On June 29th at our general meeting we awarded five students who will be continuing their education in the field of horticulture with our Scholarship. The scholarship is named in honor of Howard Bodner, a Master Gardener since 2006, who passed away suddenly and was a big proponent of further education. We were very glad that his wife, Sheila Bodner, was able to join us that day to say a few words to our awardees.

Our Hort. Enrichment Committee is completing a cycle at The Chelsea at Shrewsbury. Working with the residents the past few months has been fun and rewarding for everyone! The School Program Committee will be working with those schools interested in designing a school garden and finishing up projects started during the year.

The Speakers Bureau was busy this month as well bringing twelve programs both virtually and in-person to garden clubs. Diane Larson, our Coordinator, and Laura Dreifus continue to hold virtual Helpline sessions through our county libraries. At the Ag. Building grounds, the gardens are starting to burst! The PAR is getting ready for the heavy-duty crops to start producing...tomatoes, potatoes, peppers and zucchini. Our interns and PAR mentor, Geoff, have done a wonderful job out in this garden! The Herb, Monarch Waystation, Rain, Memorial and Native Gardens are all so lovely and full thanks to the TLC that our MGs bring to all of our projects! Thank you to all of you. And, to our delight, our Trips and Tours Committee set up a lovely day at the Philadelphia Flower Show. It was probably the first time that many of us had been there in years! A good time was had by all!

In July we will take our place at the County Fair with the theme of our state fruit, The Blueberry. We will also man a Helpline station, JMG and composting tables. We are excited to be back at the Fair and able to have all of the events we've missed the past two years!

Morris

Ocean -- Most committees are active now. Helpline and Tick Lab are busy. Interns are eagerly volunteering and some from the 2020 class have completed their 60 hours for certification. The Display Garden is showing off its various plants suitable for Ocean County thanks to the efforts of MG and Intern volunteers. The IPM team had a 2nd workshop and will continue in the Fall. Sue Masoorli, a MG, gave a great presentation for RCE on "Edible Flowers: Color, Fun, Flavors" which was enjoyed by all those present. MGs could attend for CEUs.

Our Installation of Officers and Awards Ceremony is taking place this afternoon at our Ocean County Park facility.

Passaic – no report

Somerset – no report

Sussex

Union – no report.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 9:49 AM. The next meeting is August 11, 2022 at 9 am by Zoom.

Respectfully Submitted
Cindy Hedin, Recording Secretary