

# Master Gardeners of Bergen County

## April 2022 – Potting Shed Mid-Month Update

### EARTH DAY



*Photo by Karen Riede, Class of 2017*

MG volunteers at Ridgewood's Daffodil Festival and Earth Day Fair April 10. Edith Terzano, Class of 2018 (second from left) with Class of 2022 interns, from left, Patricia Crossley, Debra Sweet, and Maria Elena Lobo. Karen Pennell, Class of 2009, also volunteered at the event.

### Do something for yourself and Planet Earth

April 22 marks the 52<sup>nd</sup> annual Earth Day, which was introduced in 1970 and is now celebrated worldwide. What can you do locally? Here are some recycling suggestions. Rid thyself of stuff and maybe earn money!

#### Tires, electronics, and paper shredding

Bergen County Utilities Authority will take your old tires (up to four), electronics, and unwanted medications, and will shred your paper at Bergen Community College (BCC) from 9 am-2 pm, April 24 rain or shine. Click [here](#) for the flyer. Proof of residency required. Meanwhile, the next hazardous waste collections will be May 14 at Campgaw Reservation, Mahwah, and June 12 at BCC. Click [here](#) for the 2022 schedule.

**Passaic County readers:** Click [here](#) for Passaic County information and your schedule of collection and recycling events.

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Links are clickable and are noted in **blue**.

### Virtual meeting – April 26

**Note the early time**

**Announcements at 4:50 pm; program to follow.**

Click [here](#) to join the meeting at 4:45 pm.

Meeting ID: 926 9258 8641; password: 692429

### Kerry Ann Mendez: Heavenly Plants for Tough Spots and Hellstrips

Landscaping in challenging sites can be an exasperating exercise. Even experienced gardeners can have spots in their landscape where plants just don't flourish. This presentation by Kerry Ann Mendez, an award-winning garden educator, author, and design consultant, features superhero plants that thrive in dry shade; hot, sandy locations; wet areas; on slopes; and in hellstrips between sidewalk and street curb.



**Kerry Ann Mendez**

No matter where you plant them — in challenging locations or great soil — they make landscapes beautiful both for gardeners and pollinators.

Kerry Ann, who calls herself a “passionate perennialist,” is the owner of Perennially Yours based in southern Maine. She has written four gardening books, the most recent is “The Budget-Wise Gardener.”

Visit her [website](#) to sign up for her newsletter.

## SPOTLIGHT ON . . . DAVIES



Photo by Jessica Wang, Class of 2014

Royal star magnolia in bloom at Davies Arboretum.

### **Davies Arboretum & Wildlife Preserve**

***This is the third in a series of features on MG of BC volunteer sites.***

**Volunteer days and hours:** We usually meet Mondays at 9:30-10 am, resuming in mid-May, but not everyone can make it so we let people have their special projects. The 18-acre Davies Arboretum & Wildlife Preserve is located at 9 Anderson Road, Demarest.

**What do you do during a typical volunteer shift?** Pruning and weeding as well as special projects. We work in any of the following areas: Tree grove, holly grove, bird garden, four-seasons garden, butterfly garden, children's garden, deer-resistant garden, vertical garden, and propagation garden.

**Typically, how many MGs show up per volunteer session?** Three to eight volunteers.

**Do volunteers work as a group? Individually? Please describe.** We prefer people to at least pair up, so no one is alone at the site, but that's not always possible.

**Are any special skills needed at your site?** Nope, just enjoy being out in nature.

**Is the work physically demanding?** No.

**What, if anything, should volunteers bring with them?** Pruners, garden gloves, water, and a snack if you wish to take a break.

**Where do you park?** There is parking right out in front.

**Are there any volunteer opportunities at your site that are not strictly gardening?** On rainy days we sometimes organize seeds at the nearby railroad station.

**Anything else you want to mention?** There is a 10-acre wildlife preserve (untouched) in the back that's fun to just walk around. Our butterfly garden is visited by many monarchs and dragonflies. There's no bathroom on site, but it's a three-minute drive to Borough Hall or Dunkin'.

**Site coordinator:** Jessica Wang, 201-600-8495, [jessica007wang@gmail.com](mailto:jessica007wang@gmail.com)

**- Information from Jessica Wang, Class of 2014**

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**(Earth Day, continued from page 1)**

### **Your working fridge or freezer might be worth \$\$\$\$**

Through June 30, PSE&G will come to your home (if you're a customer) to pick up your old, working refrigerator or freezer and pay you a \$100 rebate for each appliance. You can earn \$35 for each room air conditioner or dehumidifier picked up at the same time. The pick-up is free. Click [here](#) for more information.

### **Recycle rechargeable batteries, CFL bulbs, and cellphones**

**Lowe's** stores offer a recycling center (usually near the entrance) that accepts plastic bags, CFL bulbs, rechargeable batteries, and cellphones. Lowe's also accepts plastic planter pots and cases in the garden center for recycling. Follow instructions at the store or garden center entrance.

**Best Buy** will recycle your electronics, appliances, fitness equipment, and more for free. Click [here](#) for the list of acceptable/not acceptable products the retailer will take from individuals.

**Home Depot** works with Call2Recycle, a non-profit battery stewardship program, and will accept your rechargeable batteries and cellphones. Click [here](#) for more information and to search for a drop-off location by product.



## FIVE QUESTIONS FOR ...

*Robyn Lowenthal, Class of 2011, answers five questions for the Potting Shed. Robyn volunteers for the MG of BC Speakers Bureau and at the Holiday Open House.*

**1. What prompted you to become a Master Gardener?** After retiring from 38 years as an elementary school band director, one of the things on my “retirement list” was to become a Master Gardener. Honestly, I did not know what it meant, but I looked forward to learning more about gardening and spending time with folks who were passionate about gardening.



Robyn Lowenthal

**2. What’s the most important thing you’ve learned or been exposed to as a Master Gardener?**

I learned that the “job” of a Master Gardener is to educate Bergen County residents about techniques of gardening that will give them more success. I now participate, through the Speakers Bureau, in giving talks about vegetable gardening to various libraries, garden clubs, etc.

**3. Have your interests in gardening changed over time? If so, how?** I did quite a lot of my volunteer work at [Bergen] New Bridge Medical Center, in their Horticultural Therapy Department. I learned a tremendous amount about houseplants and plant propagation and saw the positive impact that working with plants can have on people with disabilities. This has brought me to a new post-retirement career running a therapeutic horticulture program at Spectrum for Living intermediate care facility in Closter

**4. Briefly describe your own garden.** My home garden is quite small. I have removed all the grass, replacing it with mulched paths and planting beds. I have the usual array of shrubs and perennials and a few specimen trees. Because I oversee coleus production for the Garden Club of Teaneck plant sale, I usually grow about 80-100 different varieties of coleus in containers and in the ground. I also grow herbs, some container vegetables, and a variety of flowering annuals. The shady part of my garden is the perfect summer “vacation” spot for my tropical houseplants.

We have a very small pond, with a mini river and waterfall, which provides water and a bathing place for the birds that live in our birdhouses and eat at our

feeders. Due to the ongoing “discussion” with the woodchuck and limited full sun, I maintain a vegetable plot at the Teaneck Garden Club. Although the plot is only 12 feet by 15 feet, succession planting and companion planting allow for a large harvest in a small area.

**5. Do you have a home garden project planned this season?** This season, I would like to transform the grassy (weedy?) strip between the sidewalk and the street into a more aesthetically pleasing little garden.

## WEBINARS

*All times are Eastern.*

**April 19, 6:30-7:30 pm:** Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Middlesex County sponsors The Time is Now to Start Your Vegetable Garden. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**April 19, 7 pm:** Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum sponsors Gardening in the Shade. Free. Click [here](#), then scroll down to April 19 in the left column for more information and to register.

**April 19, 7-8 pm:** Penn State Extension sponsors Countdown to Plant Sale Speaker Series - Container Gardening with Tomatoes, Herbs, and More. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**April 21, 10-11 am:** North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Buncombe County Center, sponsors Turf, Truth, and Transformation. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**April 25, 6:30 pm:** Rutgers Cooperative Extension’s Earth Day Every Day sponsors The Cost of Climate Change. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**April 26, 6:30-7:30 pm:** Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Middlesex County sponsors Benefits of Companion Planting. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**April 27, 7 pm:** Native Plant Society of New Jersey sponsors Native Plants for the Small Yard. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**April 29, noon-1:15 pm:** University of Maine Cooperative Extension sponsors Designing Welcoming Landscapes. Fee: Sliding scale from \$0 to \$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

## HORTICULTURE

### Nothing substandard about this subshrub



Photo courtesy of Bruce Crawford

The terminal flowers of *Pachysandra terminalis*.

Bruce Crawford, manager of horticulture, Morris County Park Commission, has chosen *Pachysandra* as his April plant of the month.

#### By Bruce Crawford

When the topic of groundcovers is breeched [CQ], there are certain plants that inexorably come to mind. These are the plants that were used time and time again until they rose — or should I say sank — to the point of monotony, resulting in a search by gardeners for more interesting options.

To my dismay, one of the options seems to have become shredded wood mulch, not a very sustainable option. Nature prefers to have plants covering the ground, which is why in time “weeds” start to grow through the mulch. Ground-covering plants often benefit taller shrubs and trees, as they aid in preserving soil moisture and enhance the subsurface mycorrhizal web. Historically, one of the most overly abused groundcovers was *Pachysandra*, yet within this genus there is an option many gardeners have overlooked . . . Click [here](#) to read more.

#### Order your soil test

You've promised yourself this is the year to find out what's wrong (or right) with your soil. Rutgers University Cooperative Extension/NJAES can test your soil for fertility, plant/soil suitability, soil health, and lead content. Here's what to do.

- Print the soil sampling [instructions](#) from the Rutgers Soil Testing Laboratory.
- Visit the “How to have your soil tested” [page](#). Scroll down and view the brief video on how to collect your soil. Soil must be dry and placed in a zip-type plastic bag.
- Print the soil test [questionnaire](#), another document from the Rutgers Soil Testing Laboratory. The questionnaire lists the services available and the cost of each.
- Send soil sample and questionnaire to the lab with payment for the tests you want. You can pay by check or with a credit card. The address is on the questionnaire.

### April garden chores

Visit the Garden Club of New Jersey website for [Gardening Notes](#), a list of things to do in the garden in April. The tips come from Bruce Crawford, manager of horticulture, Morris County Park Commission. If you follow Bruce's advice, you'll be doing lots of pruning, cutting back, thinning out, and mulching this month.

### Yummy or yucky?

In her April “President's Desk” column, Melody Corcoran asked whether readers had ever considered eating some of their weeds, including garlic mustard.

Barbara Pisacane, Class of 2009, shared a [recipe](#) for foraged garlic mustard pesto from the website Farm Steady. As Melody wrote: “Many common garden weeds are edible as long as pesticides, herbicides, and other chemicals have not been used in the area. Weeds can make tasty and colorful additions to a meal.” If you do make this recipe, please let us know the results.



Garlic mustard growing at Teaneck Creek Conservancy this month.

## HORTICULTURE GRAPEVINE

**April 20, 10:30 am: Leonia Senior Center**, 305 Beechwood Place, Leonia. Speaker: Linda Flynn, Class of 2016. Topic: Secret Life of Herbs. To attend, email [Maggie Browne](mailto:Maggie.Browne@nybg.org), senior coordinator.

**April 20, 6 pm: Hasbrouck Heights Garden Club**, Municipal Building, 320 Boulevard, 2nd floor, Hasbrouck Heights. Speaker: Marc Zukovich, president, Sterling Horticultural Services. Topic: Hydrangeas for Every Garden. Meet and greet at 5:30 pm.

**April 20, 6:30 pm: North Bergen Public Library via Zoom**. Speaker: Janet Schulz, Class of 1988. Topic: Potz 'N Around - How to Create a Successful Container Garden. Click [here](#) to register.

**April 21, 7:30 pm: Allendale Garden Club**, Trinity Episcopal Church, 55 George St., Allendale. Speaker: Linda Flynn, Class of 2016. Topic: Secret Life of Herbs.

**April 29, 10-11:30 am: Teaneck Public Library** auditorium, 840 Teaneck Road, Teaneck. Speaker: Anthony Bracco, Bracco Farms. Topic: Victory Garden. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

## THINGS TO DO

### NJBG/Skylands volunteer 'open house' - and get right to work in the gardens

New Jersey Botanical Garden volunteers bring delight to thousands of people. Come and see the many ways you can join the team. Many skills are needed in the various gardens. Learn more, meet the volunteers, and start working in the garden from 10 am-noon, April 16. Bring gloves and your favorite tools. Meet in the Carriage House. The address is 2 Morris Road, Ringwood.

### Sign up to work at the Trail Conference HQ

You can earn volunteer hours for working in the native plant habitat at the headquarters of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, an MG of BC volunteer site. This season-opener is from 9 am-noon, April 24. Bring work gloves and your favorite garden tools and dress for the weather. Plan to weed, plant, prune, and mulch.

Click [here](#) to register. Registration is required so participants can be notified if there are any weather-related changes. The Trail Conference is located at 600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah.

### MGs at the NYBG orchid show



Jeff Leatham's Kaleidoscope is the name of the 19<sup>th</sup> annual orchid show at the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory at the New York Botanical Garden. The color and the mirrors in back of us reflects the idea, said Jean Friedman, Class of 2004, far right. "It was one of the most well-done shows that I have seen at the NYBG in a long time. It was well thought out and beautifully laid out." From left, Lucy Malka, Class of 2005; Josie Ko (2013); Christiane Oliveri (2013); Risa Marlin (former MG of BC visiting from Florida); and Jean. The show runs through May 10. Click [here](#) for more information and to buy tickets.

### Editor's picks

**Hearts of Glass – A Vertical Farm Takes Root in Wyoming.** See the documentary about vertical farming on one-tenth of an acre in Jackson, WY, which supplies local restaurants and the public with vegetables year-round and employs developmentally disabled adults. Next viewing: 4:30 pm, April 29 on NJ PBS.

**Solar lights:** Take your solar path lights and turn them into garden and porch décor. Create cute (or kitschy, depending on your point of view) lighting projects using spray paint, twine, and dollar store finds. Click [here](#) for the short video on YouTube.

- *Miriam Taub, Class of 2011*