

Soon to be in bloom: WSG



Photo by Suzanne Danzig

By Suzanne Danzig, Class of 2008

Washington Spring Garden sometimes gets lost in the list of our volunteer sites as it's a seasonal site. That said, please put Washington Spring Garden on your radar. This is a beautiful garden in the middle of Van Saun Park that's cherished by so many county residents. We'll begin our spring clean-up in early April; details will be forthcoming.

If you're looking for a tranquil garden bursting in spring color with azaleas and rhododendrons and a natural spring, then WSG is the place for you. We meet Thursday mornings from 8:30 am-12:30 pm, but any volunteering you can put in during that time frame is most appreciated. Pat Vellas, Class of 2014, and I are the site coordinators, and we look forward to seeing old friends as well new faces. Click [here](#) to contact me.

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MG of BC meeting – Feb. 21

1 Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack
1st-floor meeting room

Refreshments at 7 pm; announcements
at 7:20 pm; program to follow

John Beirne: For the Love of Flowering Trees

John Beirne, curatorial director of horticulture at Reeves-Reed Arboretum in Summit, will share photos of his favorite flowering and ornamentally significant trees while discussing the particular group the plants are in and their genus, species, and cultivar names.



John Beirne

“Although this is certainly a subjective list, I discuss important accompanying issues such as landscape ornamental value, wildlife relevance, invasive status, nativity, disease and insect susceptibility, IPM management issues, specific cultural needs, historic and popular relevance, and personal experience growing each tree,” he said. John makes a point of showcasing only trees that he has personally grown so he knows their true performance in the garden setting.

“Trees are a passion of mine, and I really enjoy showcasing my favorites while discussing their discovery, propagation, and development journeys,” he said.

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“In sharing the stories of these dynamically beautiful plants I hope to inspire my audience to learn more about them and possibly plant them in their own gardens.”

John teaches horticultural therapy and other gardening-related classes at the New York Botanical Garden. This semester he teaches Sustainable Garden Design at Sussex County Community College.

We're voting on a change in bylaws

Below are proposed changes to the MG of BC bylaws, which will be voted on by the membership at our Feb. 21 meeting.

Currently, all MG of BC officers (president, vice president, treasurer, recording secretary, and corresponding secretary) can serve no more than two consecutive two-year terms.

If these proposed changes are adopted by the membership, the treasurer, recording secretary, and corresponding secretary could serve multiple consecutive two-year terms. The president and vice president would be limited to two consecutive two-year terms.

Below is the language to be voted on at the Feb. 21 meeting:

Article II, Executive Board, Section 3

The term limits of officers shall be:

A. Officers shall be elected for a term of two years at the October general meeting and will take office after installation at the regularly scheduled January meeting. The election of the offices of President and Vice President shall alternate years with the election of the offices of Treasurer, Recording Secretary, and Corresponding Secretary.

B. The president and vice president may serve no more than two consecutive terms. There are no term limits for the offices of Treasurer, Recording Secretary, and Corresponding Secretary. No one may hold more than one elected office at a time.

To review the MG of BC bylaws in their entirety, visit our [website](#). After signing into the Member section, click on “Documents” and then, under “MG of BC,” click on “Bylaws.”

If you're a certified MG of BC member who is current on dues and you don't have a username and password for the Member section of the website, click [here](#) to request them.

WEBINARS

For your convenience, all times are Eastern.

Feb. 16, 10-11 am: North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Buncombe County, sponsors Fruit Trees for Home Gardens. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Feb. 17, noon-1 pm: Aspetuck (CT) Land Trust sponsors Advancing the Habitat Gardening Movement, One Yard at a Time. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Feb. 17, 1 pm: National Garden Bureau sponsors Ask the Experts About Cool New Houseplants. Free. Click [here](#) to register.



Snowdrops in Wyckoff Feb. 9.

Feb. 18, 9:30-11 am: Rutgers Master Gardeners of Monmouth County sponsors Time to Get Growing! Spring Vegetables for Every Garden. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Feb. 22, 6:30 pm: AARP Virtual Community Center sponsors Understanding Orchids. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Feb. 23, 7-8 pm: Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Ocean County and the Master Gardeners of Mercer County sponsor Horticulture for the Health of It. Free. Click [here](#) to register.

Feb. 25, 9:30-11 am: Rutgers Master Gardeners of Monmouth County sponsors Bedazzling Dahlias: Adding Delightful Drama to Your Garden. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Feb. 25, 9:30-11 am: Penn State Extension sponsors Propagation of Native Plants from Seed. Fee: \$5. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Feb. 28, 7 pm: Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum sponsors Avoiding Garden Bloopers ... aka Right Plant, Right Place, Right Effect. Free. Click [here](#), then scroll down to Feb. 28 for more information and to register.

SPOTLIGHT ON ... NATIVE PLANTS THAT FEED OUR BIRDS

[Editor's note: Lourdes Osorio, Passaic County MG, created the [Native Plant Channel](#) on YouTube.

**By Lourdes Osorio
Class of 1996**

"For the birds" is an idiom used to describe something as trivial or nonsense, originating during World War II and believed to be in reference to birds pecking at manure to find birdseed. It is erroneous to call them trivial as birds add so much to our landscapes and ecosystems, not to mention the pleasure they bring to birdwatchers.

Birds contribute to the ecosystem by dispersing the seeds of plants to faraway locations and keeping populations of insects and rodents in check by feeding on them. They are vital to the economy both by keeping pests in check and through the billions spent annually by birdwatchers on seeds, birdfeeders, photography, and travel to interact with our feathered friends. Yes, that is billions!

Birds are literally the canaries in the coal mines and warn us of environmental dangers. It was the decline of bald eagles, osprey, and other birds that signaled DDT was a hazard and led to it being banned. Vultures prevent rabies, tuberculosis, and other deadly diseases by cleaning up dead animals. In 1994, a decrease in vultures in western India led to an outbreak of bubonic plague that killed dozens of people and cost the country \$2 billion. ("[Analysis: The Economic Value of Birds,](#)" Cornell Labs All About Birds.)

Birds have been warning us about out-of-balance ecosystems through the decline in their numbers. While conservation efforts have helped ducks and



Photo by Lourdes Osorio

A cedar waxwing enjoys the garden.

other waterfowl increase their numbers, the journal Science reports that 1 in 4 North American birds have disappeared over the last 50 years. Imagine how quickly action would be taken to solve the problem if we were to lose 1 in 4 humans?

One way we can help birds is through our gardens, especially during the winter. Bird feeders are not the solution, as the congregation of birds helps spread disease, and those birds that eat fallen seeds become vulnerable to cats. Yes, outdoor cats are believed to be the second-largest threat to birds behind habitat loss, so please keep your cat indoors. Don't clean up the garden; leave plants standing to provide seeds for birds during cold winter months. Don't rake leaves. There is a lot of life hiding in these leaves over the winter, such as caterpillars, that help feed birds.

As for plants that will sustain birds from late fall to winter, American holly (*Ilex opaca*) provides shelter as well as berries for them over the winter. Winterberry (*Ilex*

verticillata) is a deciduous holly whose bare branches hold on to its berries until the birds get to them. Native viburnums — such as highbush cranberry (*Viburnum trilobum*), nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*), and blackhaw (*Viburnum prunifolium*) — are important food sources, especially to migrating birds in the fall.

Bayberry (*Myrica Pensylvanica*) and Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), a native vine with beautiful fall color, are also helpful. Don't be fooled by berry-producing plants that are not native, as the berries these plants produce have been found to be higher in sugar whereas our native berries are higher in fat, which is needed by our overwintering birds.

When considering plants for your garden, plant native trees and native berry-producing shrubs that will help feed our declining bird populations. Avoid pesticides as these harm and kill birds. This effort is not at all trivial. Learn more about helping birds during the winter months in this [video](#) on the Native Plant Channel.



Allow your leaves to remain in the garden; they make perfect hiding places for overwintering insects.

MG OF BC NEWS

Better Impact: Tips for entering hours

By Suzanne Danzig, Class of 2008, and Volunteer Records Chair

I received several new entries into Better Impact this month. Some of you were entering hours for the first time, and some of you seem to be just catching up. Well done, and thank you for entering your hours.

I would like to suggest and clarify a few things regarding your Better Impact entries.

It would be most helpful for both you and me to enter your hours as you go or at least weekly or monthly. In January, there were more than 500 entries for 2022 hours. That's a lot of entries to get through, as I have to read and confirm each one. And if I need additional information, I need to send emails asking for clarification.

By waiting until the last minute (that is, entering 2022 hours in 2023) my reports are not accurate. The volunteer hours reports would be so impressive if I had all your hours each month rather than the following year. Our volunteer hours are most valuable to both Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Education as well as Bergen County, so please try to enter them as you go.



Tips for entering 'Continuing Education' hours

In Better Impact, when you click on "Please select an activity," you'll see two categories listed under "Continuing Education":

1. For the "Continuing Education" category, be sure to provide the details requested in the information box that will pop up. Click on the "i" to the left of the box for the list of items needed to be entered, such as name of speaker, title of program, etc.
2. For the "MG of BC monthly meetings/programs" category: You don't have to enter any details as we have the information on file making that entry very easy.

We so appreciate all of our MGs and want to give everyone, as well as our organization, the credit they deserve. As always, please do not hesitate to [email](#) or call me at 201-218-4093 if you have any questions.

2 MGs receive Bergen Audubon award



Photo courtesy of Bergen County Audubon Society

Tammy Laverty, Class of 2015 (left), and Pat Knight, Class of 2009 (right), received the 13th annual Harold Feinberg Conservation Award for 2022 from Don Torino, president of Bergen County Audubon, for their work at the Butterfly and Native Garden in Overpeck Park where they're the site coordinators. Don said: "Pat and Tammy work year-round at restoring and preserving the butterfly/pollinator habitat at the garden and educating the public on the benefits of native plants and the wildlife that visit the garden." Congratulations Tammy and Pat!

Please pay your 2023 dues

Your MG of BC dues of \$20 a year pay for lots of things: Speakers at our monthly meetings; refreshments at our meetings and the Fall Festival; website-related fees; supplies, such as our new tent to be used at outreach events; supplies for the Holiday Open House; mailbox rental; and other administrative-type expenses.

Please pay your 2023 MG of BC dues of \$20. Click [here](#) to visit our website, scroll down to the bottom right, and print the Membership Renewal Form. Mail the completed form with your check for \$20 to MG of BC, PO Box 71, New Milford, NJ 07646. Instructions are on the form.

*If your dues aren't received by Feb. 28, you'll no longer receive the Potting Shed and other MG of BC communications in your inbox or have access to the Member section of our website. **Note:** MG lifetime members and interns aren't required to pay dues.*

HORTICULTURE

Dividing spring ephemerals

By Janet Schulz, Class of 1988

You may be asking exactly what is a spring ephemeral? Spring ephemerals are plants that make leaves, flower, and set seed usually before our deciduous trees are in full leaf. Usually native to woodlands they make great plants for shady woodland gardens. Trillium is a perfect example.



Photo by Janet Schulz

Trillium, center; hellebores are on top and Solomon's seal and hostas are on the bottom.

Most spring ephemerals start to shut down and go dormant as our weather warms. You want to divide them before the plant starts shutting down, so the best time is when it is in flower.

To divide, dig the clump up as soon as flowers appear. You will be able to tease the plants apart and make smaller clumps. Replant immediately and water well.

I started with one clump and, by dividing every few years, I now have multiple clumps of trilliums scattered throughout the garden.

Bruce Crawford's 'plants of the month'

Bruce Crawford, manager of horticulture, Morris County Park Commission, chose the following "plants of the month" for January and February:

January: Plum yew (*Cephalotaxus*). Click [here](#) to read what Bruce wrote about the plum yew, which he said "has rapidly become one of my favorite evergreens for the winter garden."

February: Arborvitae (*Thuja*). Click [here](#) to read about this evergreen familiar to just about every gardener. "One might say that arborvitae provides some much-appreciated 'life' to the dormant winter garden, proving it is the 'tree of life' on many levels," Bruce wrote.

Flower and garden shows

Feb. 18-April 23: [New York Botanical Garden Orchid Show](#), 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, NY.

Feb. 23-26: [Connecticut Flower and Garden Show](#), Connecticut Convention Center, 100 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT.

Feb. 24-26: [NJ Home and Garden Show](#), NJ Convention and Exposition Center, 97 Sunfield Ave., Edison.

March 4-12: [Philadelphia Flower Show](#), Pennsylvania Convention Center, 1101 Arch St., Philadelphia, PA.

March 26-April 9: [Macy's Flower Show](#), Macy's Herald Square, 151 W. 34th St., New York, NY.

GARDEN CLUB MEETINGS

Feb. 16, 7 pm: **Garden Club of Teaneck**, Rodda Center, 250 Colonial Court, Room MP 2B, Teaneck. Speaker: Tony Bracco, owner of Bracco Farms. Topic: Seed Saving Basics-Saving Seeds From Your Garden.

Feb. 21, 7 pm: **Garden Club of Hackensack**, Hackensack Recreation Center, 116 Holt St. Topic: Community Garden registration and upcoming events. Light refreshments.

EVENTS

Feb. 18, 10-11:30 am: New Jersey Botanical Garden Carriage House, Morris Road, Ringwood. Beekeeper Frank Mortimer presents the ABCs of Honeybees. Fee: \$5 members; \$10 non-members. Click [here](#) for more information. Snow cancels.

March 4, 9 am: Frelinghuysen Arboretum, 353 E. Hanover Ave., Morris Township. 13th annual Community Garden Conference. Attend in person or virtually. Fee: \$75 with lunch; \$60 without lunch or for virtual attendance. Click [here](#), then scroll down to March 4 for more information and to register. See the flyer attached to the email that came with the Potting Shed for the list of topics and speakers.