



# From the Potting Shed December 2017

Master Gardeners of Bergen County

## SAVE THE DATE



### MG holiday party Students welcome

Tuesday, Dec. 5 noon-2 pm

Van Saun Park Zoo, Education Building

**Sandwiches and beverages  
will be provided.**

**Please bring one of the following based on  
the first letter of your last name:**

**A to F      dessert**  
**G to L      appetizer**  
**M to Z      salad**

The following MGs will be recognized as lifetime members, a new designation: Janet Austin, Cliff Gerenz, John Grill, Barbara Johansson, and Robert Schneider.

### From the President's Desk

Well, after serving two years as vice president and four years as president, I'm done! Kind of . . . .



I have to say it's been a tremendous experience, and although my time is up, my last task is to oversee the development of our volunteer reporting online.

Even though my volunteer load will lighten, I will still be serving our organization as webmaster, state delegate, and site coordinator for the McFaul Environmental Center. So I will still see everyone at the meetings, events, and work details.

I have to thank so many people for having the faith in me to head up our organization, and I would like to start with Jane Furman, Carol Thielke, and Joel Flagler, without

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Links are clickable and are noted in [blue](#).

them I would not have taken the vice president position that led to me becoming president.

I'd be remiss not to thank our past presidents, not only for their service but also for their guidance, experience, and advice: Cliff Gerenz, Janet Austin, Andrea Kanoc, Arnie Friedman, Jane Furman, Barbara Johansson, and Karen Pennell.

I also applaud our past and present board members. Running an organization of this size cannot be done without the dedicated members who share our vision and give generously of their time and talents.

Over the last six years it's been a pleasure to work with the Master Gardeners of Bergen County board members, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Rutgers Master Gardeners Association of New Jersey, MG of BC site coordinators, and most of all, our members.

I'm delighted to see so many newer graduates step up and chair positions on the board, and I look forward to handing the reins over to our vice president, Carolyn Gretchen. With Carolyn's experience, commitment, and dedication, I'm confident we will be in good hands.

Thank you all so much.

**- Joseph Cooper**

### Master Gardeners of Bergen County elect officers for 2018

President	Carolyn Gretchen
Vice President	Melody Corcoran
Treasurer	Bruce Walenczyk
Recording Secretary	Suzanne Danzig
Corresponding Secretary	Smadar Shemmesh

All officers will take office after installation at the regularly scheduled January meeting.

## MG OF BC NEWS

### Meet Karen Riede, Class of 2017



#### **By Miriam Taub**

Karen Riede describes 2017 as a year of personal transformation: She eliminated sugar from her diet, lost weight, and had the chance to get back into the work force. Before Karen received her Master Gardener certificate at the November graduation ceremony, she had the job as the Bergen County Rutgers Cooperative Extension horticulture

consultant replacing Joseph Papa, Class of 2015, who died in August.

Her job includes identifying plants, insects, and diseases; distributing fact sheets, soil tests, and pesticide manuals; collecting data; doing outreach; answering the hotline; assisting Joel Flagler with the MG classes; and attending the MG of BC board meetings.

Karen, 59, a resident of Ridgely, had a career as a nurse and has been active in the environmental community for more than a decade. She grew up in Palisades Park, the youngest of five children. Her mother, Ann Krueger, had great passion for a small plot where she grew vegetables and flowers. The yard had three fruit trees, lilac bushes, and a large azalea bush that turned red in the spring.

From early on, Karen said there was “no wavering” in her desire to become a nurse. She volunteered as a Candy Striper at Englewood Hospital while in high school. She earned a BS degree in nursing at Rutgers Newark in 1980. Once a nurse, she worked on a cancer floor at Englewood Hospital and then moved on to the emergency room at the Level 1 Trauma Center at University Hospital in Newark. Karen’s ER training and experience came in handy when she volunteered as an EMT for the Ridgely Volunteer Ambulance Corps. It was there she met her husband Bruce, who was also an EMT volunteer. They have been married for 26 years.

In 2004, her life took a new trajectory, as she put it, when she was appointed to the Ridgely Environmental Commission. She was the group’s chair from 2005-2014 and continues to serve as an adviser. She has been on the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) Advisory Council since 2012.

Education-wise, Karen was a member of the first class (2005) of Rutgers Certified Environmental Stewards. She has an Organic Land Care Certificate through the RCE of Morris County and has received forestry credits from NJ Shade Tree Federation conferences. Enrolling in the MG Class of 2017 “cemented everything for me,” she said. The MG program was the “missing link in putting all this experience and knowledge together.”

Karen and her husband are life members of the NJ Audubon Society and she is on the board of the Bergen County Audubon Society, which has designated their Ridgely backyard as a Certified Wildlife Garden. The Riedes also are active in St. John’s Lutheran Church in Jersey City and with the Hackensack Riverkeeper. In the past, Karen volunteered at the Bergen County Zoo (for 15 years) where she took small animals to a nursing home as part of the zoo’s Animal Encounters Program.

Growing up, in addition to a dog and cats and a budgie that she found when she was 5 that had been hit by a car, Karen also claimed a snake, rabbit, and a mouse as pets. At 11 years old, she recalls taking seven guppies from an uncle’s fish tank. To this day, she still has descendants of those guppies swimming in her fish tanks.

Karen credited “leafy green suburbia” and spending time at her grandfather’s property in the Catskills in Schenevus, NY, with shaping her love for animals and the environment. “When I hear a song sparrow and see Queen Anne’s lace I’m transported to being a child and walking along that country road again,” Karen said.

### Speakers Bureau seeks educators

#### **By Arnie Friedman**

The Master Gardener Speakers Bureau would like to offer gardening-related presentations for children ages K-8. If you’re a current or retired educator, the MG of BC needs your help to develop presentations suitable for various age groups from kindergarten through middle school.

Even if you may not have enough content to build your own talk, we can help. We need your experience and knowledge to captivate children’s attention and choose material appropriate for the age group. If you can help, contact Arnie Friedman, chair of the Speakers Bureau, at 201-707-5149 or [Arnie1@mindspring.com](mailto:Arnie1@mindspring.com).

Meanwhile, if your local garden club or other organization is seeking a speaker, the Speakers Bureau has two speakers and seven topics to accommodate you.

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Generally, talks are booked months to a year in advance, but last-minute talks may be arranged depending on the time and season. There's no charge for a speaker.

Contact Arnie at [Arnie1@mindspring.com](mailto:Arnie1@mindspring.com) if there's a talk you'd like to create so you can speak on behalf of the MG of BC at area clubs. Here's a list of the current speakers and their topics:

#### Wiebke Hinsch, Class of 2001

- "Gardening with bulbs through the year" presents the multitude of options to make the garden bloom almost year round.
- "The garden under the microscope" is a lecture about the macro and micro world in the Hinsch garden. It's a collaboration of Wiebke's gardening efforts and her husband Jan's skills as a microscopist.

#### Arnie Friedman, Class of 2004

- "History of landscape design" covers landscape history and its application to a home garden. (Arnie gives this presentation to the current MG class each winter.)
- "Lawns...where they came from and strategies for eliminating environmentally unfriendly turf grass."
- "Storm water management" discusses creating water features that use recycled storm water.
- "Stone in the landscape" covers how natural stonework adds both practical and esthetic beauty to a garden. This talk covers stacked stone walls, patio and walkway surfaces, and much more.
- "Garden ornaments and details" discusses the ornamental details that give a landscape the personalized touch. This talk surveys garden ornaments, fountains and ponds, and many things that add interest to a design.

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

### Renew your MG membership for 2018!

Don't let your MG of BC membership lapse. Click [here](#) to download the membership renewal form for 2018. Mail the completed form with your check for \$20, made payable to the MG of BC, to Terri Pegg, 54 W. Magnolia Ave., Maywood, NJ 07607. You can include an additional amount as a donation to the MG of BC. Donations are welcome!

### It's that time! Volunteer hours are due

#### By Donna Karpel

If you've completed your volunteering for 2017, please send in your V&EAR form this month to Donna Karpel at [donna9189@gmail.com](mailto:donna9189@gmail.com). If you have volunteer commitments for December, you can send the form in January. Do not send partial reports; wait until you've completed your volunteering for the year and entered your data before sending.

The MG of BC uses the information from the V&EAR for our Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) and Rutgers University reports as well as for the annual recertification of Master Gardeners. RCE receives additional funding based on total number of reported volunteer hours.

Here are the two ways to report your hours:

**1. Excel form:** You can use the form on any PC and e-mail it to Donna. This is the easiest and most accurate way to track hours. (Do not create your own spreadsheet.)

**2. Paper form:** Paper has to be mailed, and you need to keep a copy for your records. The mailing address is on the form.

Both the Excel and paper forms can be found on the home page of our [website](#) under "Volunteer Reporting Forms." You can access the forms without logging in. If you haven't downloaded the new forms (particularly the paper form) recently, be sure to download the current versions. The November 2017 Excel form has the most accurate list of approved sites, which are the only entries that should go under the location column.

When using the Excel form, remember to change the file name from "V&EAR Email Form" and save with your name and year of reporting. Example, Mary Smith 2017. Send the entire report as one spreadsheet in one email. Do not separate your education and volunteer hours into two or more reports. Do not skip lines when you enter data or enter more than one day per row.

Education hours are based on lectures or docent-led tours, such as MG-sponsored trips and tours, at any venue. Do not include travel time to/from the site, lunch or breaks, or socialization before or after the event.

Examples of volunteer and education forms can be found under MG of BC forms in the "Documents & Forms" section of our [website](#). They may answer any questions on how to list volunteer or education activities. If you have questions or need more help, contact Donna Karpel at 201-327-8835 or [donna9189@gmail.com](mailto:donna9189@gmail.com).

## HORTICULTURE

The following article appeared Oct. 16, 2017, in a blog called *Garden Rant*. Submitted by Arnie Friedman and printed by permission of the author.

### The case against earthworms

**By Thomas Christopher**

When I dug in my Berkshire garden this summer I found a host of earthworms. That, it turns out, is bad. I was raised to regard earthworms as the gardener's best friend. It's true, these benevolent creatures (or so I regarded them then) aerate the soil with their tunnels and eat organic litter from the surface of the soil, carrying it back underground to excrete it as "castings" that are full of nutrients for plant roots.

My mother, a devoted gardener and my first horticultural instructor, always impressed on me the beneficial role that earthworms play in the garden. Later, when I had graduated college and was studying horticulture at the New York Botanical Garden, my favorable view of these creatures was reinforced by a book written by no less an authority than Charles Darwin: *The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Worms, with Observations on their Habits*.

In this book, Darwin cited calculations that the population of earthworms in the average garden numbered some 53,767 per acre and calculated from his own observations that, depending on the quality of the soil, worms deposited as much as 18.2 tons of castings on the surface per acre per year.

Darwin regarded this as marvelously beneficial, which in some settings it is. But in the northern United States these industrious creatures are a catastrophe from an ecological perspective. For earthworms are not indigenous to the northern United States; they were wiped out by the glaciers of the last ice age. And although there are many species of earthworms that are native to the southern parts of our country, most of the ones we find up here are introductions from Europe or Asia.

Native or foreign, though, earthworms can have dramatic effects in changing the quality of the soil, consuming and decomposing much of its organic content. This transformation has an adverse effect on native vegetation. Especially harmful are some of the non-native worms, which are enthusiastic and efficient consumers of organic litter on the forest floor.

This layer of fallen leaves and twigs acts as a mulch and a reservoir of nutrients for surface-rooted trees, ferns,

and wildflowers. Eliminating it can drastically affect the survival of these species. Nor are the natives the only plants at risk. I know of one gardener in Connecticut whose woodland perennial garden was overrun by the large, hyperactive Asian earthworms popularly known as "jumping worms" or "crazy snake worms" (*Amyntas agrestis*).

In a matter of months the shredded oak leaves with which this gardener had mulched her beds disappeared, and the soil was so over-aerated that plant roots dried out. She no longer mulches — that just incites a worm population explosion — and periodically applies a tea seed meal-based plant food, Early Bird Natural Organic Fertilizer, which is toxic to earthworms.

In this way she keeps the population of jumping worms in check, but she will never eradicate them entirely. It's easy to introduce earthworms unintentionally to your garden, as I have learned. The ancestors of mine — ordinary nightcrawlers (*Lumbricus terrestris*) — probably arrived in some truckload of compost or the decomposed manure I brought in from a horse farm.

My friend in Connecticut suspects that the Asian worms arrived in her garden in the soil around the roots of a plant shared by another gardener or container-grown nursery stock. Often, though, worms are deliberately introduced. Leftovers from a fishing trip are dumped into the woods or garden, or worms escape from tubs or beds in which they have been cultivated to help compost kitchen and garden debris.

Hopefully, the cold winters in my Zone 5 garden will help to slow the earthworms' spread, and I intend to spread the tea seed meal. I like my woods as they are — worm-free and full of native wildflowers.

## VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

### Flat Rock Brook Nature Center

**Thursday, Dec. 21, 5:30-7 pm: Winter solstice walk**

The winter solstice is the longest night of the year. Many cultures around the world have celebrated the winter solstice for hundreds, even thousands of years as they watched the days grow shorter and wait patiently for the sun to return. Join Flat Rock Brook staff for a program of folklore and hiking on the center's trails. This event is for adults and teens.

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Registration required by calling 201-567-1265 or clicking [here](#). Registration closes at 2 pm, Dec. 19. Free. The address of the [Flat Rock Brook Nature Center](#) is 443 Van Nostrand Ave., Englewood.

## The Hermitage



Photos by Kathleen Sullivan

From left, Arta Pagano, Melody Corcoran, Varda Gold, and Monica Buesser at the Hermitage.



*MGs made natural wreaths and other decorations for the Hermitage Nov. 14 as the holiday season got under way at the National Historic Landmark in Ho-Ho-Kus, 335 N. Franklin Turnpike.*

Arta Pagano (left) and Melody Corcoran.

Seasonal events at the Hermitage are:

- Through Dec. 3, the 38<sup>th</sup> annual holiday craft show; \$8 per person; children under 12 free. For more information, click [here](#).
- Through January, a “Roaring Twenties Christmas Party” exhibit of flapper dresses and men’s cutaways once owned by Bergen County socialites; house tours Wednesday – Sunday at 1:15, 2:15, and 3:15 pm. For more information, click [here](#).
- Dec. 17, 1-3 pm, Santa’s workshop; includes tour of the house; \$6 adults; \$4 children 6-12; 5 and under free. For more information, click [here](#).

## Maple sugar event

The Hermitage MGs are planning a second maple sugaring over President’s Day weekend Feb. 17-18. If you can help collect the sap from the 15 trees that will be tapped, contact Melody Corcoran at [mmegnin@verizon.net](mailto:mmegnin@verizon.net).

## Garretson Forge and Farm

**Saturday, Dec. 2, 10 am-4 pm: Dutch Christmas**

Come see the house at [Garretson Forge and Farm](#), 4-02 River Road, Fair Lawn, in all its splendor. The holiday sale will include craft vendors along with Garretson goods, gift shop goodies, our hand-crafted wreaths, a bake sale, and, of course, Sinter Klass holding court by the fireplace. Bring the little ones for a great photo op.

## New Jersey Botanical Garden - Skylands

**Thursday, Nov. 30-Sunday, Dec. 3: Skylands Holiday Open House**

Be sure to mark your calendars for the annual Holiday Open House at the [NJBG - Skylands](#). This year’s theme is “A Magical Holiday.” Bergen County MGs are decorating the Great Hall around the theme of “The Nutcracker Suite.” NJBG/Skylands is located at 2 Morris Road, Ringwood.

Here’s the schedule of events:

- **Self-guided tours**, Nov. 30-Dec. 3, 10 am-4 pm: Enjoy a self-guided tour of the splendid decorations at your own pace. No baby strollers are allowed in the manor. The last ticket is sold at 4 pm. Cost: \$10 adults; \$8 seniors; \$5 children 6-12; under 6 free.
- **Group tours**, Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, 10 am-4 pm: Bring your group to enjoy this holiday delight together. Call 973-962-9534 for details.
- **Evening reception**, Dec. 2, 6-8 pm. The manor will be yours for a leisurely stroll with champagne, light refreshments, and valet parking. Reservations required. Cost: \$40 members; \$45 guests and non-members. Individual, senior, and student members may buy one ticket for any evening at the member price; family and other member categories may buy two tickets at the member price. Tickets are available by calling 973-962-9534 or, to order online, click [here](#).

## HORTICULTURE GRAPEVINE

**Dec. 7**      **7:30 pm, Harrington Garden Club.** “Make it and take it” workshop to make a centerpiece or wreath. Theme is Williamsburg (lots of apples and fruits). The club will supply the greens, floral foam, some ribbon, and plastic containers to use for a centerpiece. However, if you have a favorite bowl or container for a centerpiece, bring it along. Also, bring pruners, do-dads, favorite ribbon, garden gloves, and extra greens from your garden. If you plan to make a wreath, please bring three coat hangers.

***Deadline for the Horticulture Grapevine is the 25<sup>th</sup> of the prior month.***

- To submit information about garden club meetings, contact Josie Ko at [josie\\_ko1@hotmail.com](mailto:josie_ko1@hotmail.com).
- To submit information about plant society meetings, contact Catie Farahat at [cwfarahat@scatteringlight.com](mailto:cwfarahat@scatteringlight.com).

The Master Gardeners of Bergen County doesn't share or sell its email/mailling list/membership directory to non-members or to other organizations. Our membership information is confidential and for use by members for official MG use only. Please don't share our list with non-members or use it for any unauthorized or commercial purposes. When sending an email to the MG list, address it using the “bcc” option instead of “to” in order to keep the list of recipients from being visible.

**Please share photos of your volunteer work or of your garden. When submitting photos, please identify everyone in the photo. Submit photos to [janet-schulz@yahoo.com](mailto:janet-schulz@yahoo.com).**