



## SAVE THE DATE

**Tuesday, Jan. 24 at 7:30 pm**

**1 Bergen County Plaza**

**1<sup>st</sup>-floor meeting room**

**Hackensack**

**Refreshments at 7 pm  
Announcements at 7:20 pm**



### EcoBeneficial Gardening 101: Boosting the Ecosystem in Your Own Yard

Even the most beautiful gardens are not always healthy ecosystems. Your yard is more than a combination of trees, shrubs, and perennials; it's a complex system where all living things are connected. Gardening with an ecosystem approach contributes to species diversity and attracting and supporting more birds, butterflies, pollinators, and beneficial insects.

Kim Eierman explains how the design choices you make, the plants you select, and the maintenance practices you use can make a huge difference in creating a beautiful, healthy ecosystem filled with life.

#### Useful Links

Many local garden centers give discounts to MGs. See the list at [mgofbc.org/useful-links.html](http://mgofbc.org/useful-links.html). Bring your membership card when shopping.

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Links are clickable and are noted in <a href="#">blue</a> .	

#### From the President's Desk

Happy New Year fellow master gardeners and friends!



I'm happy to report we had a wonderful holiday party at the Education Center in the Van Saun Park zoo. It was nice to see so many MGs and celebrate the end of another successful year. As to the actual volunteer numbers, we'll have them once all of us send in our reports. If you haven't done so already, please send them as soon as you can. Both paper and Excel forms can be found on the front page of our [website](#).

Another bit of good news: The Skylands Holiday Open House (HOH) raised more than \$10,500 for the New Jersey Botanical Gardens. Although the gross revenue was down from last year, this was the largest fundraising event of the year. Congratulations to all who made the event such a success. The YouTube videos of volunteers and decorations have been posted on our [website](#), so take a peek.

A special thank you to De Trezza and all of her helpers. We had an incredible number of volunteers this year and an abundance of decorations. I heard so many wonderful compliments, and I look forward to the Skylands HOH wrap-up meeting in two weeks to hear the details and decide on next year's theme.

Finally, registration for the [Rutgers 41st Annual Home Gardeners School](#) has been released, and we put the details on the [website](#). I have been going since I was a student and highly recommend it to anyone interested in gardening, horticulture, or the environment. Please note that attendance last year was around 850 people, and many workshops and lectures sell out, so register early. This counts for five to six education hours.

Wishing you a bountiful 2017!

**- Joseph Cooper**

## Bylaw Amendment Proposal

At the Jan. 24 meeting we will vote to update two sections of our bylaws. These two proposals have been approved by the MG Board for consideration by the membership.

Section 1b to be adopted, and (Section 1) to be updated to (Section 1a).....

### Article IV MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 Rutgers Certified Master Gardener – A Rutgers Master Gardener Training Program graduate who is an active volunteer and has completed the initial volunteer service requirement. To retain the Rutgers Certified Master Gardener status, a minimum of 25 hours of annual volunteer service hours and 10 hours of annual continuing education must be completed. Certification is valid for one year only; therefore, all Rutgers Certified Master Gardeners must be recertified every year. Submission of a regularly updated record of all volunteer activities and continuing education hours is required.

Section 1b **“Lifetime Master Gardener.”** This will be a designation bestowed to Rutgers Certified Master Gardeners who are active, dues-paying members for at least 20 years and who have accumulated a minimum of 1,000 hours over those 20 years.

### 2017 Slate of Officers for the Master Gardeners of Bergen County

President	Joseph Cooper
Vice President	Carolyn Gretchen
Recording Secretary	Suzanne Danzig
Corresponding Secretary	Serpil Leveen
Treasurer	Bruce Walencyk

#### Bergen County Rutgers Cooperative Extension Office

**Joel Flagler** Agricultural/Resources Management Agent & County Extension Dept. Head 201-336-6780  
**Joe Papa** Horticulture Consultant 201-336-6788  
Cooperating Agencies: Rutgers, the State University of NJ, US Department of Agriculture, and Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Rutgers Cooperative Extension educational programs are offered to all without regard to race, religion, color, age, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. Rutgers Cooperative Extension is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS



### Meet Pat Vellas Class of 2014

#### By Miriam Taub

Call Pat Vellas the queen of indoor plants. Plants live just about everywhere in the New Milford ranch house Pat shares with her husband, Ken Kochenburger, and their two rescued French poodles, Gigi and Fifi.

Scan the indoor horizon upon entering the house and you'll see cornstalk plants, palms, aloes, ponytail plants, Christmas cacti, orchids, crown of thorns — to name a few — some of which are 40 years old. Plants surround the dining-room table and fill the archway between the living and dining rooms. A garden window equipped with shelving provides southern exposure to light-loving plants. A sun porch holds more plants.

In the yard of their corner property, Pat and Ken created two patios separated by a hot tub with the garage wall for privacy. Plants abound in-ground and in pots along with bird feeders, garden ornaments, rain barrels, and storage sheds. On the north side of the house, Pat planted rose bushes grown from seed and, most recently, they installed raised beds. Then there are the grow lights in the basement. Pat and Ken – “he does the heavy lifting,” she says – bring in cold-sensitive plants from their yard for the winter. Among the inventory in bloom are tropical hibiscus, tree roses, gardenias, and several clivias that she adopted from a friend of a friend who didn't want them. (Yes, she is happy to take cuttings from other gardeners.)

And, come June when Pat attends the annual sale at White Flower Farm in Connecticut — where she found her artemisia and Superfinia® petunias (hundreds of blooms and no bugs, she points out) — she will add to her collection.

Pat, 65, grew up in Kearny and has a bachelor's degree in economics from Rutgers Newark, one of only three women economics graduates in her class. She also holds an MBA from Rutgers Newark. Pat worked as a national bank examiner with the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency for 40 years before retiring three years ago.

During her career, she said she was “probably involved in every economic crisis” in the United States, such as those in Texas and New England. She also helped the FDIC close numerous savings and loans in the South.

Her love of both indoor and outdoor plants was instilled by her mother. When her mother could no longer garden, Pat says, “She’d supervise me as far as what she wanted done in her garden.”

While Pat was still working, she came upon the Master Gardeners at the Washington Spring Gardens in Van Saun Park. She said she liked the idea of working in the park to keep her busy when she stopped working. Then, when she retired, she noticed the newspaper announcement for an upcoming MG class and sent in her application. As a Master Gardener, she volunteers at Washington Spring Gardens and at the Teaneck Creek Conservancy.

Pat is on the board of the Demarest Garden Club and is studying to be a garden consultant with the Gardening Study Schools at Rutgers University, a program of the National Garden Clubs. She’s taken classes in pruning, grafting, and container gardening. She’s also taken online courses, such as growing a layered garden and growing roses, through [Craftsy.com](https://www.craftsy.com).

Another hobby she’s had (since age 7) is embroidery. Numerous cross-stitch samplers are displayed throughout her home and, she says, she’s embroidered tablecloths and pillow cases as well.

The bottom line, though, Pat says, “Houseplants are my big thing.”

### Take the Bergen County Parks survey

The Rutgers Center for Urban Environmental Sustainability (CUES) wants to hear from you. CUES is leading a project team — on behalf of the Bergen County Parks Department — that will analyze existing strengths, programs, and opportunities as well as future active and passive recreational options for each of the county’s park properties.

This analysis will consider how the various parks can best be integrated into the overall Bergen County open space and recreational context. Demographic and economic trends will be considered to meet future needs of Bergen County residents.

Take the [online survey](#) and tell the CUES team what you think. You also can express your opinion by attending any of six public meetings scheduled in January to discuss the Bergen County parks system as it exists now and in the future. See the [flier](#) with the dates, times, and locations of the meetings.

## MG OF BC NEWS

### Time to Renew Your MG Membership

Membership renewals are due. Open the attachment sent with *The Potting Shed*, and please complete the renewal form. Be sure to make any changes to last year’s information as needed. Then mail the form with your check for \$20 payable to the Master Gardeners of Bergen County to:

John Walters  
6 Valley Road  
Glen Rock, NJ 07452



### Sunshine News – the late Carol Thielke

*To all Carol's dear friends and fellow Master Gardeners*

We want to thank you for your notes, flowers, support, and love to Carol these past months. We all miss her very much.

We know that you will keep her in your hearts by continuing her work at the Thielke Arboretum. We know you feel her presence there.

We are so grateful for all you have done for us and will continue to do.

*Sincerely,  
Kiki and John Thielke and the Thielke Family*

### Recipe for Praline Grahams (served at the holiday party)

Pat Knight, Class of 2009, [gspmk@hotmail.com](mailto:gspmk@hotmail.com), my grandma’s recipe)

#### **Stuff you’ll need**

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Nabisco graham crackers (15 whole rectangle crackers)  
Rimmed cookie sheet, greased (I use parchment paper instead of greasing.)

¾ cup light brown sugar packed (Don’t use dark brown sugar, trust me on this. I used it once and to me it didn’t taste as good.)

1 stick of butter

½ cup chopped nuts (I’ve used pecans, walnuts, or almonds.)

#### **Directions**

- Lay whole graham crackers on the rimmed cookie sheet. (I break additional crackers to fill gaps.)

- Add the following ingredients to a sauce pan and melt over low heat until a rolling boil:
  - ✓ ¾ cup light brown sugar packed
  - ✓ 1 stick butter
- Then add ½ cup chopped nuts to the melted butter/brown sugar mixture. Cook over low heat another few minutes.
- Spread the melted mixture evenly over the graham crackers (I sometimes increase the praline mixture to 1½ to 2 times the amount.)
- Put in a 350-degree oven for 8 minutes until bubbly.
- Take out of the oven and cool.
- Refrigerate a few hours or overnight (It's easier to break into pieces.)

## HORTICULTURE NEWS



### Growing amaryllis

*By Barbara J. Bromley  
Mercer County Horticulturist*

The tall trumpeted flowers of amaryllis (*Hippeastrum*) are truly regal and their ability to burst into bloom in mid-winter make them a natural for

banishing winter blahs. Flowering on 1- to 2-foot stalks (scapes) amaryllis produce giant, 6- to 10-inch trumpet-shaped flowers. Although red and scarlet are the most popular colors, flowers may be pink, white, salmon, apricot, rose, bicolor, or picotee (petals with a different edge color) and come in both single and double varieties.

Grown indoors the bulbs will bloom in about eight weeks. After they go dormant they can be brought out every winter to bloom again. Amaryllis can be purchased as bulbs or plants in or near bloom. If purchasing bulbs, be sure to leave half of the bulb above the soil when potting. Bulbs should bloom about one month after planting. Once the large bud emerges from the bulb, here's what the plant needs to flourish:

- **Light:** Bright, direct light from an east, west, or south window.
- **Temperature:** At night: 55-60 degrees F.; during the day, up to 75 degrees F.
- **Soil:** An all-purpose mix.
- **Water:** Keep evenly moist from November to August, then let dry for at least a month or two until the foliage yellows and dies. Resume watering after a dormant period of two to three months.
- **Fertilizer:** Feed monthly from January to August with an all-purpose houseplant fertilizer.

To ensure years of repeat blooms, keep the plants actively growing after they've finished flowering. Once the flower fades, cut back the flower stalk to about 2 inches above bulb. Then keep the plant moist and fertilized throughout the winter. Allow it to dry down between watering to prevent root and bulb rot. If desired, plants can be moved to a bright location outdoors from May to August. At the end of the summer, let plants dry for at least a month or two until the foliage yellows and dies. Resume watering after a dormant period of two to three months. *This dormant period is essential for bulbs to rebloom.*

Often the bulb will signal that it's coming out of dormancy by sending up the very tip of a flower stalk or leaf at the cut neck of the bulb. Then it's time to place it back in a sunny window and resume watering.

## SHOWS, CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS

### 41st Annual Rutgers Home Gardeners School, New Brunswick

**Saturday, March 18 9 am-4 pm**

**New for 2017: Plant 'Jeopardy' games and Rutgers Against Hunger food drive**

An addition has been made to the [Rutgers Home Gardeners School](#) schedule this year: Attendees can participate in plant "Jeopardy" games hosted by Steve Kristoph of Steven Kristoph Nursery, Millstone Township, and win plant prizes. There will be two games — one just before lunch and one immediately after lunch. These games will provide a new, interactive alternative for those who want to test their gardening knowledge against other plant lovers. Space is limited.

Separately, attendees are asked to help feed New Jersey families. Donate non-perishable food through [Rutgers Against Hunger](#) (a university-wide initiative to address the issues of hunger across the state), to make a world of difference to those in need. Bring your donation of canned or boxed food items to the RAH table (look for the green collection bins) at the Home Gardeners School, and your food will be donated to New Brunswick families in need. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

## FARMERS MARKETS

**Ramsey Farmers Market**, Eric Smith Middle School, 2 Monroe St. [www.ramseyfarmersmarket.org](http://www.ramseyfarmersmarket.org)  
Through March; Sundays 10 am-2 pm

## GARDEN CLUB GRAPEVINE

- Jan. 5**      **7:30 pm, Garden Club of Harrington Park**, upstairs in the Harrington Park Library, 10 Herring St. Members' night and winners and losers in the garden; a fun evening of "slide show and tell" of members' gardens, gardens visited, or anything garden-related followed by a discussion and/or Q&A and refreshments. Non-members welcome.
- Jan. 6**      **2 pm, Demarest Garden Club**, United Methodist Church, 109 Hardenburgh Ave. Speaker: Marc Gussen, Closter Nature Center naturalist, botanist, and former NASA consultant. Topic: Hydroponics - a gardening alternative to dirt; a presentation of why and how hydroponics can be incorporated into gardening plans.
- Jan. 17**     **6:45 pm, Hasbrouck Heights Garden Club**, meeting room, Hasbrouck Heights Library, 320 Boulevard. Speaker: Donna Cornelius. Topic: Workshop on whimsical flowers. Information Judy Mascis, 201-288-2615.

Contact Lucy Malka at [lhalka@optonline.net](mailto:lhalka@optonline.net) or 201-791-3562 to supply information for the Garden Club Grapevine. *Publication deadline is no later than the 25<sup>th</sup> of the prior month.*

## PLANT SOCIETY GRAPEVINE

- Jan. 25**      **7:30 pm, Bergen-Passaic Chapter of the Native Plant Society of NJ**, new location, headquarters of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, 600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah; building is located between Ramapo College and Ramapo County Reservation Park. Speaker: Carolyn Summers, adjunct professor for Go Native U, a joint project of Westchester Community College's Continuing Ed Program and the Native Plant Center (based at Westchester Community College), and author of *Designing Gardens with Native Plants of the American Northeast*. Copies of her book will be available for purchase and signing. Information at [http://npsnj.org/pages/events\\_01\\_january.html#bergenpassaic](http://npsnj.org/pages/events_01_january.html#bergenpassaic).

Contact Catie Farahat at [cwfarahat@scatteringlight.com](mailto:cwfarahat@scatteringlight.com) to submit information for the Plant Society Grapevine. *Publication deadline is no later than the 25<sup>th</sup> of the prior month.*

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As a reminder, the Master Gardeners of Bergen County does not share or sell its mailing list to non-members. We keep all membership information confidential and for use by members only. If you receive email from other organizations, we did not give permission for their use of our membership list. We would appreciate it if our members would not share our list with non-members or use it for any unauthorized purposes as it is for official MG use only. When sending an email to the MG mailing list, please remember to 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. We would all like to see photos of Master Gardeners at work either at volunteer sites or in home gardens.**