



Photo by Morgan Friedman

Arnie Friedman with his new hobby: Bonsai.

Virtual meeting – March 22

Announcements at 7:20 pm; program to follow.

Click [here](#) to join the meeting at 7:15 pm.

Meeting ID: 926 9258 8641; password: 692429

Beginners' Bonsai

Arnie Friedman, Class of 2004, has — in his words — been bitten by the bonsai bug. As chair of the MG of BC Speakers Bureau, Arnie's always looking for new topics to offer to the public and new speakers to give those talks.

His new talk is called "Beginners' Bonsai" and it's the story of how he got bitten by the bonsai bug. "I started out thinking bonsai masters have a lot to say about pruning, soils, and plant root growth, but as I watched YouTube videos and looked at Facebook groups I got interested in trying it myself," he explained. "Now I'm a novice with a new hobby and a new world to explore.

"I'm finding bonsai is not just about growing plants," he continued. "It's a thousand-year-old discipline that embodies principles of Zen and eastern philosophy."

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From the President's Desk

By Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016

Tea bags in the compost – do they belong there? The answer is "it depends." The majority of tea bags are made of compostable filter paper that is a mix of vegetable and wood fibers. Tea bags can also be made of cotton, muslin, hemp, and other plant fibers. All of these tea bag materials are good to compost.



The fancy, silky-feeling tetrahedral tea bags are another matter. These tea bags can be made of nylon, Soilon or even silk. Silk is compostable but takes a long time to break down. Nylon is made from oil and is neither biodegradable nor compostable. Soilon is a silky mesh made of polylactic acid (PLA), a thermoplastic polymer made from corn starch or sugar cane; it is biodegradable but not compostable. Soilon and similar plastics leach microparticles.

Billions of micro- and nano-plastic particles are leached from these tea bags - into compost and into each cup of brewed tea. Also, some tea bags are sealed with polypropylene, another plastic, which is biodegradable but not compostable. All compostable materials are biodegradable; but all biodegradable materials are *not* compostable.

Compostable material is composed of organic matter, decomposes through biological processes and yields organic humus. Biodegradable material also decomposes through biological processes and yields natural compounds such as water and carbon dioxide. However, biodegradable materials do not form organic humus and may leave toxins behind.

Look for information online listing which tea bags are fully compostable and which are not. Individual tea purveyors can also be contacted for further information. When in doubt about your tea bags' "compostability," empty the leaves into the compost and toss the bag.

(Beginners' Bonsai, continued from page 1)



Photo by Arnie Friedman

Arnie's bonsai-in-progress: From left black pine, umbrella pine, bald cypress, and Japanese maple (cultivar unknown). Rear left, dwarf crape myrtle.

Arnie is a New York Botanical Garden certified landscape designer and former NYBG instructor. He's the owner of Landscapes By Design. His design services encompass creating entire landscapes to small, intimate plantings and solving issues like excess storm water, old out-of-control gardens, and building features of natural stone.

He has a strong commitment to the environment and tries to build gardens that are sustainable and welcoming to dwindling wild bird and native plant species. He's been pioneering the replacement of lawn and turf with meadow-like environments of native, deer-proof, and easy-care plantings.

Arnie lectures around the region on landscape design, outdoor construction, and environmental issues. As he explained, his newest interest is the ancient art of bonsai and how it can influence us as gardeners and add a new dimension in being mindful of the living world.

WEBINARS

All times are Eastern.

March 2, 1-2 pm: Kansas State Research and Extension sponsors Garden Hour - Landscape Design 101. Free. Click [here](#) for the list of topics in the 2022 series and to register.

March 4, noon-1:15 pm: University of Maine Cooperative Extension sponsors How Not to Kill Your Houseplants. Fee: Sliding scale from \$0 to \$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Native Plant Society of NJ 2022 Conference - March 5, 8:50 am-4 pm It's free and virtual!

Speakers and topics are:

- Doug Tallamy: The Nature of Oaks
- Jay Kelly: Impacts of Overabundant Deer and Invasive Species in Northern NJ: Strategies for Forest Restoration
- Don Torino: Creating a Certified Wildlife Garden
- Rebecca McMackin: Brooklyn Bridge Park Lessons (so far) in Constructed Ecology

Click [here](#) for the schedule, speaker bios, and to register.

March 8, 7-8 pm: Jersey-Friendly Yards sponsors Start With Healthy Soil. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 9, 7:30 pm: Bergen-Passaic Chapter of the Native Plant Society of NJ sponsors Native Host Plants for New Jersey Butterflies. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 10, 9 am-1 pm: Pennsylvania Horticultural Society sponsors Growing Organics - High Tunnels. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 11, noon-1 pm: Penn State Master Gardeners sponsors Spring Problems, Spring Solutions. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 12, 9:30-11:30 am: Penn State Extension sponsors A Four-Season Garden - Secrets of Success. Fee: \$5. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 17, 7 pm: Friends of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum sponsors Spring Gardens. Free. Click [here](#), then scroll down to March 17 in the left column for more information and to register.

March 23, 7-8 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors Gardening with Perennials. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

March 23, 7-8 pm: Wild Ones sponsors Weed Ordinances. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

See additional webinars in the March Mid-Month Potting Shed.

SPOTLIGHT ON . . . GARRETSON'S COMMUNITY SEED LIBRARY

Do your part: Help restore global seed diversity, and the seeds are free

By Liz Scholl, Class of 2011

The Garretson Community Seed Library, located at Garretson Forge & Farm, 4-02 River Road, Fair Lawn, is celebrating its seventh year as a resource for free heirloom and open-pollinated seeds and a source of information about the importance of maintaining local seed varieties and preventing the loss of genetic diversity among seeds and plants.

While Garretson's seed library was the first of its kind in the North Jersey area when established in 2015, there are now a growing number of seed libraries in our area as well as across the country. Seed libraries house collections of vegetable, fruit, herb, and flower seeds and offer these seeds free of charge to the community. Ideally, members obtain small packages of seeds to



Photo by Liz Scholl

grow, and — if successful — collect the seeds at harvest and return seeds to the seed library.

We at Garretson all feel strongly about using heirloom seeds as we are an historic site and an organic, small farm. We are supporters of seed preservation and seed diversity.

Why have a community seed library?

One of the motivating factors in establishing the seed library was to encourage community members to come to the farm and see an historic site and organic farm that many people who grew up in Fair Lawn never knew about. Our hope is that some will become members and some will even volunteer.

Some things a community seed library can do are:

- Prevent the loss of local seed varieties and the loss of genetic diversity;
- Generate and share seed that is adapted to thrive in local soils and climates;
- Offer access to free seed for all, including first-time, low-income, and school gardeners;
- Educate the community about how to save seed as well as connect them to our collective history of seed as a shared resource;



Photo by April Barth, Class of 2017

A variety of tomatoes, cucumbers, and squash grown from the Garretson Community Seed Library's seeds.

- Strengthen local food systems and increase food security starting with seed;
- Raise awareness and mobilize action around seed issues such as GMOs and patenting; and
- Create friendships and partnerships among volunteers, neighbors, schools, other non-profits, community garden members, gardeners, and anyone who wants to make friends.

The Community Seed Library at Garretson stocks open-pollinated seeds, which are seeds that produce plants true to the seed they are grown from. Heirloom seeds fall into this category. Open-pollinated seeds are not hybrid seeds or genetically modified seeds. We receive generous donations of unique and interesting seed varieties from companies such as [Seed Savers Exchange](#) and [High Mowing Organic Seeds](#).

Don't have experience or haven't had much luck starting plants from seed or saving seed?

Workshops at Garretson Forge & Farm this season will include seed-starting and seed-saving techniques. (Workshop dates TBD.)

For a list of available seeds and other information, contact [Liz Scholl](#). The seed library will open from 1-4 pm, March 20, which is also Garretson's annual Pea Day. (Feel free to bring a trowel and lend a hand!) Beginning in late March, stop by Garretson Thursdays from 10 am-2 pm to peruse the seed collection.

THIS AND THAT



Photo by Joseph Cooper

The Christmas tree on the porch off the Main Hall at the 2021 Skylands Manor Holiday Open House.

Relive the 2021 Holiday Open House

Joseph Cooper, Class of 2008, has created three videos celebrating the tree, the decorations, and the volunteers of the 2021 Skylands Manor Holiday Open House. 2021 marked the 32nd HOH event. The theme was “An Artist’s Holiday.” MG of BC volunteers decorated the Great Hall.

Joseph’s videos are available on Vimeo as well as YouTube. The links below are for Vimeo, where you can download the videos.

- Click [here](#) to view a time-lapse video of volunteers assembling the massive Great Hall Christmas tree.
- Click [here](#) to view a video of the decorations.
- Click [here](#) to view a video of the volunteers decorating 11 rooms of Skylands Manor.

Your gardening wardrobe matters

Mosquitoes detect us via odor; then they scan for specific colors. The color you wear could encourage or discourage mosquitoes, according to a University of Washington study. Click here to read more from [Sci-News](#).

- From Terry Cohn, Class of 2020

Make a messy wildlife garden look good

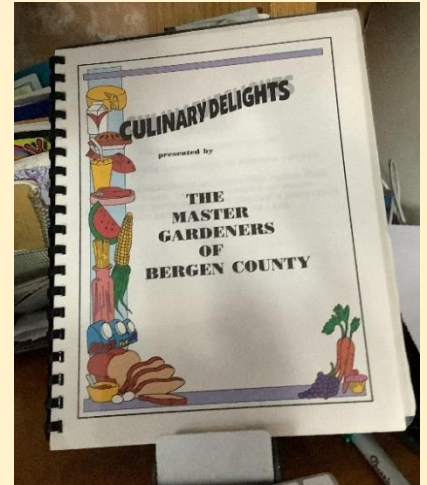
Visit the Cornell University All About Birds [website](#) to read how to make a messy wildlife garden look good. Tips: Space plants wisely, for example, and don’t space annuals too far apart.

- From Liz Gil, Class of 2019

Going back in time: The MG of BC cookbook

By Marilyn Guidetti, Class of 1990

I cannot remember the year, and we did not put a year in the book because it was a fund-raiser. If we were going to sell it for a few years we would not date it. Gerald Anthony was the president of the [MG] Executive Board then. In that period of time, we did have a few fund-raisers, tables at fairs, etc. I love to cook so I got this brainstorm. The Executive Board said OK, but I would have to get it together.



At first, all went well collecting the recipes, but it seemed not enough members had (or wanted to share) recipes.

However, I was determined to make this work.

As I said, I love to cook so I have many, many recipes. I decided to use them, but I did not want my name on all of them and I did not want to make up names, so I used many names of the women in my family, just picking at random. With the help of one of my sons we got the book done, made the copies, and it was a success. It sold for \$8 and later for \$10.

A few months later I got a call from a relative living in South Jersey telling me she heard about the cookbook from a friend here in North Jersey and she would like to purchase one. I could not believe that she was one of the few relatives that I did not include in the book. (Also, her feelings get hurt easily.) I decided to print up a page about table settings and crafts and put her name on it.

Since the cookbooks had plastic spiral spines, I was able to insert a new table of contents and that craft page in the book I sold her. It kept the peace.

Editor’s note: In 1995, Gerald Anthony was president of the MG of BC and Marilyn Guidetti was recording secretary.

If you have a story about the “good old days” of the MG of BC, contact [Miriam Taub](#).

THINGS TO DO

The MG of BC volunteer sites below have scheduled upcoming events. MG students, here's a chance to earn volunteer hours. All MGs are welcome to volunteer.

Hackensack River Greenway cleanups

The Friends of the Hackensack River Greenway Through Teaneck has scheduled cleanups along the river from March-November. Here are the March events:

- March 6, 10 am-noon at Terhune Park, River Road, Teaneck, across from Terhune Street. Park on the side streets along River Road. Meet at the park's southern entrance by the Bogota border.
- March 26, 10 am-noon at Mary S. Topolsky Garden & Trail, 640 River Road, Teaneck, across from Kipp Street. Park on the side streets along River Road.

Volunteers pick up trash, free trees from invasives, and plant natives where possible. Bring gloves, loppers, and clippers if available. Check the Greenway [website](#) for any schedule changes before coming to the event.

Garretson volunteering begins with the annual pea planting

Garretson Forge & Farm will kick off the volunteering season with its annual Pea Day planting from 1-4 pm, March 20. In addition to planting peas, there's much spring cleaning to do in the other planting beds.

After that, regular volunteer hours will be 10 am-2 pm Thursdays beginning March 24 and 1-4 pm the second and fourth Sundays, rain or shine, since there's a small greenhouse and plenty to do even in inclement weather. Bring gloves and small hand tools, such as pruners and trowels. Garretson supplies the rest.

Volunteer bonus: You can pick up free herb, vegetable, and flower seeds from the Garretson Community Seed Library, which opens on Pea Day. [See story on page 3.]

Garretson is located at 4-02 River Road, Fair Lawn. Contact [Lida Gellman](#), site coordinator, if you have any questions. Visit Garretson's [website](#).

- Lida Gellman, Class of 1999

Maple sugaring help needed

Volunteers are needed to collect the sap for processing into maple syrup at the Hermitage. Contact [Nancy Moses](#), site coordinator, for information.

FIVE QUESTIONS FOR ...

Terry Cohn, Class of 2020, answers five questions for the Potting Shed. She volunteers at Garretson Forge & Farm and Thielke Arboretum and recently became site coordinator for the NY-NJ Trail Conference headquarters.

1. What influenced you to become a Master Gardener?

I have always been interested in nature and the intersection between the manmade and natural environment. My knowledge of plants was lacking so becoming a Master Gardener seemed like a good idea.



Terry Cohn

2. What have you found most valuable in your volunteer experience?

I was never aware, until I started volunteering, of the importance of native plants and the harmful effects of invasive plants. I have also learned the proper way to plant and care for trees, perennials, vegetables, and herbs.

3. Are you an indoor or outdoor gardener at home? Briefly describe your own garden.

I love plants and am surrounded by them. I have house plants that date back to my college years. I also have a plot at the community garden in Fair Lawn where I grow vegetables and herbs. My yard is small, but over the past few years I've introduced many native perennials.

4. Do you have a project planned for your garden this season? If so, what is it?

Every year I try something new. Last year I started vegetable seeds indoors. This year I'm experimenting with winter sowing of native plants.

5. What do you look forward to now that in-person volunteering has resumed?

The participants in Master Gardener classes in the last two years missed a lot due to Covid. So much learning comes from being in the field and learning from others. There is also a very strong bond and sense of community that develops among volunteers. I look forward to seeing my garden "family" again as the weather warms and Covid recedes.