

### MG of BC meeting – Feb. 21

1 Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack  
1<sup>st</sup>-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 is the curatorial director of horticulture at Reeves-Reed Arboretum in Summit. He teaches horticultural therapy and other gardening-related classes at the New York Botanical Garden and teaches Sustainable Garden Design at Sussex County Community College.



John Beirne

John has worked in the horticultural therapy and horticultural worlds for several decades. Before Reeves-Reed, he was the superintendent of horticulture for Bamboo Brook and Willowwood arboreta, both located in Chester and managed by the Morris County Park Commission.

Previously John worked for more than 20 years at NewBridge Services where he designed, implemented, and managed the Enrich Horticultural Therapy Program for adults with severe and chronic behavioral health issues in their individual recovery and pre-vocational programs. John designed a restorative garden at the cancer center of Mountainside Medical Center, Montclair, and designed a therapeutic garden for the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission at the Green Residential Community Home, Ringwood.

Earlier in his career, John was an assistant garden editor at Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia. John has been a gardening and hort therapy instructor at the NYBG where he was named “instructor of the year” in 2012. Most of all, John enjoys gardening, woodland hiking, garden photography, and especially planting trees (which he said he’s been doing since about age 8). John lives in Sussex County.

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

### From the President’s Desk

**By Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016**

Our January general meeting, the first in-person meeting in three years, was well attended. Both old and new Master Gardeners and interns were there. With so many people turning out, it looks like our MGs are ready to get back to gardening.



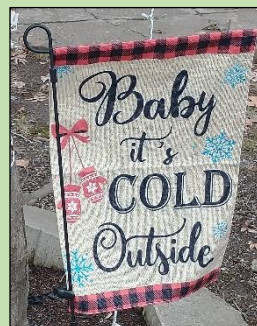
But gardening is not all we do. We have committees that need volunteers to chair them. We need volunteers to help the committee chairs. Trips and Tours and Publicity are two committees that have been inactive for years.

The Trips and Tours committee has not had a chair since late 2017. I am pleased to announce that Janet Schulz, Class of 1988, has volunteered to chair Trips and Tours for a year and plan a few garden tours for us. Our garden tours have always been a pleasant way to spend the day with other MGs and get education hours if there is a formal, docent-led tour. Thank you, Janet.

*[Editor’s note: Are you interested in garden tours? See article on page 6.]*

*(Continued on page 3)*

### Spring forward



Sure, it’s cold now, but soon we’ll be back in our gardens and volunteer sites. See upcoming issues of the Potting Shed for information about spring events and clean-ups at our sites. Send your site event information to [Miriam Taub](#), Potting Shed editor, Class of 2011.

## IN OUR COMMUNITIES

*This is the first of an occasional column focusing on what our Master Gardeners are doing in their communities. Ben Weiner has been a member of the Wyckoff Environmental Commission since 2019. Contact [Ben](#) for more information.*

### **By Ben Weiner, Class of 2020**

Wyckoff's Environmental Commission has a Junior Commissioner program to engage several high school students each year in a unique project related to the environment.

Each junior commissioner, with mentoring from members of the commission (who are appointed), selects a topic for a project in the spring, develops and implements it during the year, and makes a final presentation to the commission, community members, and, of course, proud parents in December.

Any local high school student from Wyckoff in grades 9-11 may apply for this calendar-year program. The commission interviews the applicants and then selects a few to participate.

As with many environmental initiatives, there is often overlap with local gardening programs. For example, a 2017 junior commissioner project about backyard composting has evolved into a backyard composting workshop open to area residents each spring at no cost. At the workshop, participants can pick up a variety of educational materials, such as those from the original junior commissioner project, and some that I added from the Rutgers Cooperative Extension office. The Earth Machine compost bin, available from the Bergen County Utilities Authority (BCUA), is also on display.

Many of the junior commissioner projects involve producing educational materials and presentations for Wyckoff's K-8 students. For example, one of the three 2022 projects, this one by Sebastian Dash, a senior at Ramapo High School, included a PowerPoint presentation and animated video that he created on the importance of pollinators and how to support them. The video was shared with students and teachers in the elementary and middle school classrooms in fall 2022. Click [here](#) to view the video on YouTube.

The other two 2022 projects were:

- The importance of trees, which was also presented through the schools; and
- A community green fair held at the Wyckoff Public Library in November in which the Wyckoff Area Garden Club participated.



*Photo by Mindi Weiner*

**Ben Weiner in his Wyckoff Community Garden planting bed. He donated 20 pounds of potatoes to Wyckoff's Families for Families last year.**

Some prior-year projects included backyard composting; a plastic film/bag collection drive; and a series of public service announcements on various topics shared within the K-8 schools.

While the 2022 projects have been completed, a follow-up to plant pollinators in the Wyckoff Community Garden, located at Eisenhower Middle School, is planned for the spring. The garden has 10 planting beds, four reserved for the science teachers and the rest can be assigned within the community. I did one last year for the first time. My best crop was potatoes, and I donated 20 pounds to Families for Families, which operates a small food pantry in Wyckoff.

Any municipality or gardening club can create a similar program. All it requires are some willing and interested high school students and a commitment to provide appropriate oversight and guidance.

*Are you a certified Master Gardener involved in your community? If so, we'd like to hear about your volunteer work. Contact [Miriam Taub](#), Potting Shed editor, Class of 2011.*



### **Oh dear!**

We tried! In the January Potting Shed, we asked why do we spend good money to place decorative deer *in* our landscapes when we hate what deer do to our landscapes? Only one person responded: Janet Schulz, Class of 1988. Janet wrote: "These deer

do not eat anything, nor do they leave messes. Wishing the real ones would follow their lead."

## WEBINARS

*For your convenience, all times are Eastern.*

**Feb. 4, 9:30-11 am:** Rutgers Master Gardeners of Monmouth County sponsors Flabbergasting Ferns: Primeval Plants in the Home Landscape. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Feb. 6, 6:30-8 pm:** Penn State Extension sponsors Winter Wonderings: Creating an Edible Landscape. Fee: \$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Feb. 8, 7:30-9 pm:** Native Plant Society of New Jersey sponsors Don't Treat Your Soil Like Dirt: Building on a Foundation for Your Jersey Friendly Yard. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Feb. 9, 2-3 pm:** The Garden Conservancy sponsors The Crevice Garden. Fee: \$5 members; \$15 non-members. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Feb. 9, noon:** Smithsonian Gardens sponsors Jazz Up Your Landscape. Free. Click [here](#), then scroll down to Feb. 9 for more information and to register.

**Feb. 11, 9:30-11 am:** Rutgers Master Gardeners of Monmouth County sponsors Honeybees: Our Powerful Pollinators. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Feb. 11, 10-11:30 am:** Penn State Extension sponsors Second Saturday Gardening Series: Pruning Primer. Fee: \$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**Feb. 16, noon:** Smithsonian Gardens sponsors Basic Landscape Weed ID and Management. Free. Click [here](#), then scroll down to Feb. 16 for more information and to register.

**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. AARP membership not required.

**Feb. 23, 2-3 pm:** The Garden Conservancy sponsors Beauty of the Wild. Fee: \$5 members; \$15 non-members. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**See more webinars in the February Mid-Month Potting Shed.**

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***(President's desk, continued from page 1)***

The Publicity Committee has been inactive since the end of 2019. Do you know Facebook and/or Instagram? Do you have other ideas for how we can promote the MG of BC and our events? If you are interested or have experience in publicity, contact [me](#). We need to get the word out about the Rutgers Master Gardener program, our MG of BC organization, and our outreach events.

Community Outreach was looking for coordinators for the outreach events we staff in the spring and the fall. Thank you to Bernadette White, Class of 2021, and Laurie Carty, Class of 2009, for volunteering to be coordinators for these events. They will be recruiting and scheduling people to transport our event supplies and to set up and take down our tents, tables, etc., at the events. If you can help coordinate, transport supplies, set up or take down, or if you have an SUV or pickup that can be used to transport larger items, contact [me](#) and I will get your information to them.

If it is difficult for you to make your volunteer hours at our gardening sites because of work or other commitments during the week, working on one of our committees might be the answer for you. Any time spent working on these committees counts as volunteer hours toward the 25 hours needed annually to maintain Master Gardener certification.

Want to help? Need more information? Contact [me](#).

## VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS



Volunteers mulched the trails at Thielke Jan. 10. From left, Zoran Vukasovic, Class of 2019, Anita Pazcoguin (2020), Barbara Piscacane (2009), Marie Alfano (2019), Herb Arbeiter (2019), Caroline Newman (2019), John Thielke (2023), and Keith Mazanec (2019).



Photo by Elmer Platz, Mount Vernon Farms

From left, Herb Arbiter, Keith Mazanec, and Zoran Vukasovic transported the balsam fir from Mount Vernon Farms to Glen Rock.



### **Thielke Arboretum: Winter trail maintenance and tree planting**

**By Jean Epiphan**

This winter we planted a balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) for educational purposes and as a specimen to add to our growing tree collection. It was donated to Thielke Arboretum by Elmer Platz, owner of Mount Vernon Farms, Vernon. Balsam fir is a common tree of northern conifer and boreal forests and commonly farmed for Christmas trees.

Balsam fir is actually native to New Jersey's cooler Highlands in the northwest corner, the southern cusp of its range. It is listed as endangered in New Jersey as it is not tolerant of our hot summers. Furthermore, it is not climate-change tolerant and cannot withstand severe drought combined with heat waves, which are ever-growing issues. We do not recommend planting this tree in typical landscapes of Bergen County.

Jean Epiphan is pictured at left with the balsam fir. Jean is the stewardship director, forest ecologist, and tree and plant curator at Thielke Arboretum.

Join Thielke volunteers year-round, weather permitting, from 9 am-noon, Tuesdays and Saturdays. If you're new to Thielke, you must register as a volunteer. Click [here](#) for more information about volunteer opportunities. Thielke is located at 460 Doremus Ave., Glen Rock. Visit the [website](#).

### **Maple sugaring at the Hermitage Feb. 18**

The annual maple sugaring event will take place in three sessions at 1, 2, and 3 pm, Feb. 18 at the Hermitage, 335 N. Franklin Turnpike, Ho-Ho-Kus. Click [here](#), then

scroll down to Feb. 18 for more information and to buy tickets. Rain date is Feb. 19. To volunteer at this event (no ticket needed), contact Hermitage site coordinators Liz Gil, Class of 2019, at 908-456-5245, or Nancy Moses at 201-445-2532.

## SPOTLIGHT ON ... MG OF BC SPEAKERS BUREAU

*Six Master Gardeners volunteer their time for the MG of BC Speakers Bureau. This issue features Janet Schulz. If you're interested in volunteering for the Speakers Bureau or have a topic to suggest, contact [Arnie Friedman](#), Speakers Bureau chair and Class of 2004. Arnie can help you structure a presentation. Check out the [Speakers Bureau section](#) of our website.*

### Janet Schulz, Class of 1988

**Janet's topics:** Down and Dirty: How to Do It in the Shade; Potz 'N Around: How to Be Successful Planting in Pots; Beyond Daffodils; A Collectors Point of View; This and That in the Garden; Hints for a Successful Garden; Cool Plants and Shady Bloomers; Rare and Unusual Plants in My Garden; Art and Design in the Small Garden; Preparing Your Garden for Winter; Spring Ephemerals and Seed Disbursement.



Janet Schulz

**Janet's back story:** Before becoming an MG, I worked at D'Angelo Farms in Dumont as their wholesale manager. I heard about the [MG] program from Ralph Pearson, who was county agent at the time. After the first semester Ralph retired and Joel [Flagler] came on board and I was in his first graduating class.

I have always been inquisitive, so it was natural that my knowledge of plants grew as my job responsibilities grew. I have lived in Wyckoff since 1976 and in my present house since 1987 and neither house had a sunny yard.

Back in the '80s, I started collecting the most popular shade perennial of the time: Hosta. In 1984, I attended the Perennial Plant Association symposium in Michigan. This is a professional organization for growers, designers, and retailers in the garden industry.

It was there that I learned there were more varieties of hosta than the four my employer grew. I became a collector. Tissue culture was just starting and that led to the availability of so many varieties. There were no local

hosta societies at that time so in 1984 myself and a few other collectors started the Tri-State Hosta Society with members from New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut.

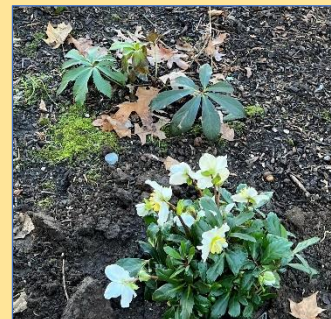
Knowing there are many other shade plants to choose from I began collecting as many as I can. I now have about 120 varieties of hosta; 20-plus kinds of ferns, and many rare and unusual perennials as well as some old favorites.

**Janet in a nutshell:** I am, I guess, what you would call a plant-a-holic. To this day if I visit a garden center and see a plant I don't have and I can afford it, I *have* to buy it. There is always room for one more. I may divide an existing perennial to make room for the new one and give the division to another gardener. There is a little of my garden scattered all over Bergen County.

## HORTICULTURE

### Happy hellebores

Who would believe that on Jan. 1 you could be planting in New Jersey, but I did that. I had purchased a hellebore from a local supermarket just before Christmas as I have in the past.



Usually, I keep them in an unheated porch.

But this year the weather was so mild, and it was predicted that we would have unseasonably warm weather, so I decided to risk it rather than try to get it through the winter on the porch.

On Jan. 1, I planted it outside. On Jan. 10, I purchased another hellebore from a different supermarket. As I removed the wrapper from the pot, I noted the grower's name and I visited its website where I found a great instruction sheet on how to care for my newly purchased plant. It said as long as you can get a shovel in the ground it's safe to plant hellebore. So, on Jan. 11, I planted the second hellebore outside.

- Janet Schulz, Class of 1988

*(Continued on page 6)*

*(Horticulture, continued from page 5)*

## Gearing up for the gardening season

William Errickson, agriculture and natural resources agent for Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Monmouth County, writes about the many things you can do from the comfort of the indoors to prepare for the upcoming gardening season, all while the soil is still frozen. Click [here](#) to read his suggestions in the Rutgers Agricultural Experiment Station online newsroom.

## Joel featured at horticulture webinar

Joel Flagler will speak on Horticulture for the Health of It at a webinar Feb. 23 from 7-8 pm. Sponsoring agencies are Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Ocean County and the Rutgers Master Gardeners of Mercer County. Learn how gardening indoors and outdoors can improve everyone's life on many levels in this people-plant relationship. Click [here](#) to register for this free webinar.

## Jason Grabosky, the sidewalk tree guy

Jason Grabosky, a professor in urban forestry at Rutgers University, spoke at our January meeting — our first in-person meeting in three years! Do you want to learn more about his topic: Giving Trees Space and Watching Them Grow? If so, click [here](#) to send an email to Miriam Taub, Potting Shed editor. Type "JASON" in the subject line and send. She'll send you the link to a shared drive. Jason's PowerPoint presentation is too large to send in an email. The link will be available until Feb. 17.



Jason Grabosky

## Do you go crazy with seed catalogs?

Garden writer Margaret Roach interviews an expert who says it's OK to get carried away when you're ordering seeds. Click [here](#) to read her Jan. 11 New York Times interview with Andrew Schuyler of Untermyer Gardens Conservancy, Yonkers, NY. Click [here](#) to visit the Untermyer Gardens website.

**Note:** If you're not a New York Times subscriber, you're limited to the number of articles you can read online.

## ***Are you interested in area garden tours?***

Janet Schulz, Class of 1988, has agreed to chair the Trips and Tours committee for one year. She needs to know if any of the following locations are of interest to you: Laurelwood Arboretum, Leonard J. Buck Garden, Reeves-Reed Arboretum, Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, Van Vleck House and Gardens, and Greenwood Gardens.

All of these venues would be asked to provide docent-led tours. Attendance would qualify for one hour of education credit. No dates/times or cost has been determined. The cost of the tour would be divided among the attendees. Attendees would drive individually or possibly carpool.

If you're interested in participating, click [here](#) to send an email to Janet, type "YES" in the subject line and send. Your responses will give Janet an indication whether there's enough interest to arrange a tour.

## **GARDEN CLUB MEETINGS**

**Feb. 3, 1:30 pm: Demarest Garden Club,** United Methodist Church, 109 Hardenburgh Ave., Demarest. Speaker: MG Linda Flynn, Class of 2016. Topic: The Secret Life of Herbs.

**Feb. 6, 4 pm: Sundial Garden Club,** Hillsdale Public Library, 509 Hillsdale Ave., Hillsdale. Speaker: MG Lynne Proskow, Class of 2022. Topic: Regenerative Gardening: How You Can Help Create Biodiverse Ecosystems.

**Feb. 14, 7 pm: Ramsey Area Garden Club,** Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, 55 Wyckoff Ave., corner of Woodland Avenue, Ramsey. Speaker: Philip Peters, club co-president. Topic: Don't Mess with Mother Nature: History of the Green Harvest, Pollination, and How We Are Changing the Nutrition of Our Food Supply.

**Feb. 15, 6 pm: Hasbrouck Heights Garden Club,** Hasbrouck Heights Public Library, 320 Boulevard, Hasbrouck Heights, second floor meeting room. Speaker: Chris Raimondi, Raimondi Horticultural Group. Subject: Interior Blooming Plants. Refreshments at 5:30 pm.