

From the Potting Shed

May 2024

www.mgofbc.org



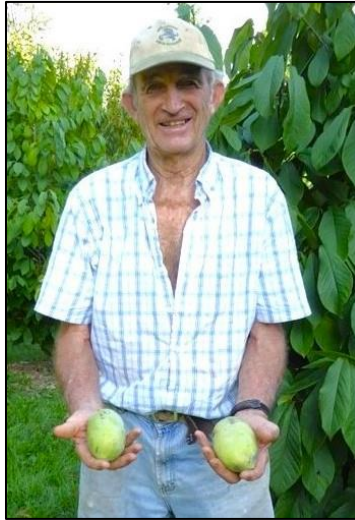
Meeting news: Tuesday, May 21, 7:20 pm

Dr. Charlie West Pawpaws and American Persimmons: Underutilized Native North American Fruit Trees

By Miriam Taub, Class of 2011

As a child, Dr. Charlie West foraged for pawpaws and American persimmons on his family farm in Ohio. As an adult, he has grown them on his farm in Branchburg (Somerset County) for more than 15 years.

“The underappreciated fruit that nobody knows about,” is how Charlie West referred to pawpaws and persimmons during a telephone interview. In his upcoming presentation, Charlie will discuss the history and basic biology of propagation, flowering, and fruit production of the poorly known and underused pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), the largest native North American fruit, and the even lesser-known American persimmon.



Charlie West and pawpaws.

Our May 21 MG of BC meeting will be in the 4th-floor learning center at 1 Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack. Refreshments are at 7 pm with announcements at 7:20 pm. Charlie West will follow at about 7:30 pm.

“When we purchased this farm over 40 years ago, it was being used for conventional cropping and a small ornamental horticulture nursery,” he writes on his [website](#). “The corn fields and Christmas trees are gone, and the land is devoted to wildlife habitat improvement, a pawpaw orchard, and a small hybrid chestnut grove.”

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

From the President's Desk

By Theresa Schneider, Class of 2016

A big thank you goes out to Janet Schulz and Donna Faustini for their leadership and dedication to the MG of BC and its members as well as their service to the Bergen County community. They have resigned their board positions.



Janet Schulz, Class of 1988, is our longest-serving MG and has held a variety of roles in the association including Potting Shed editor. Most recently, she was the garden club liaison and a member of the Speakers Bureau. Janet's insight and historical knowledge has been invaluable to the MG of BC. She plans to continue attending meetings and to participate but not in any official capacity.

Donna Faustini, Class of 2012, has worked diligently over the last nine years to provide relevant and engaging continuing education programs. Her efforts as Program chair enabled MGs to meet their annual continuing education requirements and provided free gardening education to the public.

Donna has been replaced as Program chair by Donna Dorgan, Class of 2018. Donna Dorgan served as her class liaison to the MG of BC board.

Thank you to Janet, Donna F., and Donna D.!

WEBINARS

All times are Eastern.

May 2, noon: National Garden Bureau sponsors Ask the Experts About Lilies. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

May 2, 2-3 pm: The Garden Conservancy sponsors Noguchi's Gardens: Landscapes as sculpture. Fee: \$5 Garden Conservancy members; \$15 non-members. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

May 2, 7-8:15 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors Water Features in My Garden. Fee: \$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

May 8, 7-8 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors Good Gardening: Vegetable Plant Partnering Based on Science. Fee: \$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

May 9, 2 pm: National Garden Bureau sponsors: Ask the Experts About Squash. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

May 11, 10 am-noon: Penn State Extension sponsors Good Gardening Saturday: A Homeowner's Guide to Mosquito Control. Fee: \$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

May 15, 7-8 pm: Penn State Extension sponsors Bring Back the Pollinators. Fee: \$5. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

May 15, 7-9 pm: Native Plant Society of New Jersey sponsors Connecting Kids to Nature: Creating and Maintaining School Gardens. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

May 16, 11 am-noon: AARP Virtual Community Center sponsors Nature's Remedies: Herbs That Help You Detox. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. AARP membership not required.

May 20, 6:30 pm: Rutgers Earth Day Every Day sponsors Down to Earth Soil Management. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

May 23, 1 pm: Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation sponsors In the Life of Nocturnal Pollinators. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

A pond for the Butterfly Garden



Photo by Tammy Laverty

Pete Cammarano, Class of 2023, and Terry Campbell (2018) review their work after installing a new pond liner at the Butterfly and Native Garden in Leonia. (The installation wasn't quite finished in this photo.) The pond is intended for birds, deer, rabbits, turtles, frogs, dragonflies, and crane flies, said Tammy Laverty, Class of 2015, in other words "all creatures great and small." Prospective plant choices for the pond are duckweed, pickerelweed, blue flag iris, cardinal flower, swamp milkweed, and underwater oxygenation plants, Tammy reported. Rainwater and the occasional filling by volunteers with a hose will keep it attractive.

"It is a small pond that serves many ecological purposes and is pleasing to the eye, too," Tammy said. Join volunteers on Tuesdays from 10 am-1 pm. The garden is located at 40 Fort Lee Road, Leonia, behind the paddocks of the Bergen Equestrian Center. New volunteers should contact [Tammy](#) or [Pat Knight](#) (2009), site coordinators, before attending.

HORTICULTURE



Pixabay photo

Closeup of poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*). Note its similarity to Queen Anne's lace.

Don't be fooled by dangerous look-alikes

By Liz Gil, Class of 2019

Late last spring, I volunteered at Thielke Arboretum. One of the missions of the day was to try and eliminate an ever-increasing patch of poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*).

I had walked past that patch many times [so] the plants looked pretty and familiar to me. They reminded me of Queen Anne's lace or the carrots we planted that went to flower at the Hermitage garden the year before, so I didn't feel any reason to be alarmed until I learned more about the plant we were dealing with.

Poison hemlock is a highly toxic plant that's a member of the carrot family. It's commonly mistaken for wild carrot, wild parsnip, or wild parsley. This can lead you to accidentally eat it (ingestion). *Every part of the hemlock plant is poisonous — the seeds, root, stem, leaves, and fruit.* It can be fatal if ingested, according to the [Cleveland Clinic](#). This invasive plant is generally not deadly if touched, but it could be if you are sensitive to it.

The team took every precaution for the task. The plants were less than 2 feet tall, but I understand that they could grow up to 10 feet tall.

We were equipped with long sleeves and long pants, gloves, tools, and big black bags. We dug into the

earth to loosen it so that we could pull as many of the long roots as possible. The plants were promptly placed in the black bags to be disposed of in the trash.

Composting this plant would not eliminate the toxins and it would remain deadly. Pulling the plant emitted a "pretty," sweet fragrance but with a bit of an edge to it. Once you smell it, you won't forget it although it's difficult to describe. The plant is attractive, and the flowers would look great in an arrangement on your table, so it's no wonder why early settlers included it among the plants brought over from Europe.

Thielke Arboretum will be dealing with this infestation for years to come, and this country will surely never be able to eradicate the plant since it has become so widespread. The poison hemlock flowers and leaves are familiar to us because we've all seen them or something that looks like them and that is what makes them particularly dangerous. *Please be sure to identify any plants accurately before you forage them for your salad.*

Tend to your beautiful gardens, both private and public, but educate yourselves and be aware of the noxious plants that need to be avoided or eradicated.

Learn more about poison hemlock

- From [Purdue University Extension](#): General information and photos.
- From [Iowa State University Extension and Outreach](#): Wild parsnip and poison hemlock.
- From [University of Illinois Extension](#): Poison hemlock toxicity risk and control.

Just say 'no' to the Bradford pear



Pixabay photo

Bradford pear in bloom

Click [here](#) to read a story from The Record's April 12 edition about the invasive Bradford pear. Hint: It stinks!

Topiaries anyone?

Here's a topic we've never mentioned in the Potting Shed: Topiary. Click [here](#) for Margaret Roach's story in the April 28 New York Times about topiary creator Ken Selody of Atlock Farm in Somerset (no website). If you're not a Times subscriber, you're limited to the number of articles you can read online.

VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS



Photo by Stephanie Landau, Teaneck Creek Conservancy

Teaneck Creek Conservancy's Peace Labyrinth: Volunteers are needed May 17 to complete this native plant garden. See registration information below.

Let's finish the job: Teaneck Creek needs volunteers for another 'blast'

You meant to volunteer at the Teaneck Creek Conservancy "blast" in April, but it didn't happen. Here's your chance to do good, earn volunteer hours, meet other Master Gardeners, and have fun outdoors. Teaneck Creek Conservancy is seeking volunteers to help complete the native plantings in its Peace Labyrinth May 17 from 9 am-noon.

Click [here](#) to register. The event will be held in light rain or shine. All registrants will be contacted if the event is canceled due to extreme weather.

Come for the entire three hours or any portion of that time. Teaneck Creek Conservancy is located at 20 Puffin Way, Teaneck. Meet in the parking lot at 9 am. If you arrive later, follow the signs to the Peace Labyrinth.

Bring hand tools, gloves, sunscreen, bug spray, a refillable water bottle, and snacks. Teaneck Creek Conservancy will supply large tools, as needed, and water for your refillable water bottle. Dress in layers with closed toe shoes and a sun hat as the area is fully exposed to the sun.

Click [here](#) to email any questions to Teaneck Creek.

Habitat Helper workdays scheduled in May and June at the Trail Conference HQ

Volunteering will resume in the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference native plant garden twice a month on Sunday mornings. Upcoming dates are May 5, May 19, June 2, and June 9. Volunteering starts at 9 am or 10 am, depending on the date.

Volunteers will clean up the garden at the Trail Conference headquarters, 600 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah, by trimming stems, weeding, removing invasive plants, and mulching.

Click [here](#) to register. You earn volunteer hours by volunteering in the Trail Conference's native plant garden only. Contact [Terry Cohn](#), site coordinator and Class of 2020, for more information.

The Hermitage in bloom



Photo by Bernadette White

Pictured are some of the thousands of daffodils gracing the grounds of the Hermitage, 335 N. Franklin Turnpike, Ho-Ho-Kus. Irises, daisies, and various perennials are also spread throughout the 4-acre site. Join MG volunteers Tuesday and Wednesday from 9:30 am-noon.

- **Bernadette White, site coordinator, Class of 2021**

GARDEN JOURNAL

37 years of gardening and still planning, collecting, discovering

By Janet Schulz, Class of 1988

I had always liked planting and growing things but was not yet a gardener. To create a garden, you need to grow annuals, perennials, and shrubs with different heights, colors, and textures in a pleasing manner.



Photo by Janet Schulz

Pots are for more than plants.

pachysandra under shrubs that were trimmed to resemble meatballs, pyramids, and hockey pucks. I was so ready.

I had brought about 35 potted plants from our previous place to be planted, most of which were hosta. The new property was well-shaded as was the previous location, and hosta and fern grow best in those conditions.

I became an avid plant collector. It took me a while to convince my husband that pachysandra was not my favorite ground cover. Now, almost 50 years later, I have about 150-175 varieties of hosta and many somewhat rare and unusual perennials planted in the rear garden that's now protected by a deer fence. I am slowly replacing all the plantings in the front garden beds with *Helleborus* and plants that I know the deer will not eat.

Although I had always put plants in the ground, I did not always consider those things. In 1987, my husband and I were house-hunting, and we found the perfect place: A shady half-acre property in Wyckoff with a chain link fence in back, a split rail fence on one side and a 3½-foot-high stone wall dividing the upper part from the lower of a shaded back yard.

The house was a small Cape Cod with



Photo by Sharon Ma, Class of 2018

Janet Schulz in her garden: Yes, spring offers much color.

I worked at a garden center and knew the Bergen County ag agent, Ralph Pearson. He came on a regular basis to inspect the garden center's plants. We got to talking, and he told me about the Master Gardener program. I attended and, after one year, Ralph retired and Joel Flagler came to replace him. I graduated that same year [1988].

Meanwhile, I continued to collect plants at home, but now I started to consider color, height, and texture, and my yard was becoming a garden. I joined the local garden club and served as president for two terms: 2007-09 and again in 2011-13.

Sue Handley, a close garden friend, asked if I would open my garden for the Garden Conservancy Open Days program. I had no idea what that was but went along with it. I didn't feel my garden was worthy of being open to the public, but she convinced me otherwise. That started 25 years of opening the garden every year to the public.

(Garden journal, continued on page 6)

Janet's garden: The result of 37 years of discovering and collecting

(Garden journal, continued from page 5)



Photos by Janet Schulz

Primroses and boxwood abound.

My first Open Day was May 2006 with about 30-35 visitors. After an article appeared in the last New Jersey regional section of the New York Times April 29, 2009, about 150-200 visitors came that day.

Since then, I have averaged about 50 visitors on any Open Day each year. That does not include people from various garden clubs and local organizations that visit regularly.

One day while visiting another garden on an Open Day, I was really disappointed. I would *never* judge another garden because I'm there to observe and learn. But after paying an entrance fee to the Garden Conservancy, I had to let them know that a garden that still had fake Christmas decorations in the window box in mid-summer was not what I expected. I thought there ought to be parameters when showing a garden. That particular gardener was not invited to show their garden the following year, and I was asked — if I visited another garden that I thought ought to be shared — to let them know.

When I turned 80, I thought it was time to stop opening the garden to Garden Conservancy visitors. You have to commit in autumn of the prior year. At 80,

how could I commit not knowing if I would be able to maintain it as I would like?

The pandemic changed a lot of things. The Garden Conservancy went digital. That meant there were no more paper tickets to be purchased in advance. Ticket purchases were online, and a garden could be added or taken off the list in a timely manner. So, here I am, back showing my garden again. My garden is open twice this year: May 18 and July 13. To share my garden is one of my greatest pleasures.

Come visit! Yes, there will be weeds; yes, there are still things I want to do. Gardening is a living art form: Always changing with the seasons and years. Some plants do so well; others die. Trying to get it right, that's what gardening is all about.

Think about showing your garden, not necessarily opening it to the Garden Conservancy but to local garden clubs or other Master Gardeners. Open your garden not to be judged but to share your thoughts and ideas. Once you get over the idea that your garden is not good enough it will bring you a greater joy of gardening. This is how we learn. See you in the garden!

[Editor's note: Janet will open her garden to the public through the Garden Conservancy's Open Days program May 18 and July 13 from 10 am-3 pm. Her address is 16 Colonial Drive, Wyckoff. There's no entrance fee for Master Gardeners.]



Tulips grown as annuals adorn this center bed along with fernleaf peony, bush clematis, hostas, and ferns. That's a clematis in the metal tuteur.

GARDEN CLUB MEETINGS

May 6, 6:30 pm: Sundial Garden Club, Hillsdale Public Library, 509 Hillsdale Ave., Hillsdale: Speaker: Suzy Ludwig, Ramsey Area Garden Club member. Topic: Ephemerals: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow.

May 8, 6 pm: Wyckoff Area Garden Club, Wyckoff Public Library, 200 Woodland Ave., Wyckoff. Speaker: Lesley Parness, plant and garden history expert. Topic: Drama Queens: Dark Beauties for Your Garden.

May 14, 7 pm: Ramsey Area Garden Club, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, 55 Wyckoff Ave. (corner of Woodland Avenue), Ramsey. Speaker: Chris Raimondi, owner of Raimondi Horticultural Group. Topic: Unusual Exterior-Blooming Plants.

May 15, 6 pm: Hasbrouck Heights Garden Club, Hasbrouck Heights Library, 2nd floor meeting room, 320 Boulevard, Hasbrouck Heights. Speaker: Kathy Sauerborn, Passaic County MG. Topic: Gardening for Hummingbirds. Refreshments at 5:30 pm.

May 20, 7:30 pm: Ho-Ho-Kus Garden Club, Community Church, 400 Warren Ave., Ho-Ho-Kus; enter on Sycamore Avenue. Speaker: Jose German Gomez, founder of the [Northeast Earth Coalition](#). Topic: Community Gardening.

(Charlie West, continued from page 1)

The main focus, he wrote, “is on developing the North American pawpaw orchard, as well as propagating pawpaw trees for sale.” He sells several hundred fruit trees a year, and he’s already sold out for 2024.

Charlie explained that he spent six years at Rutgers University: Three as a graduate student and three as a teacher. Most of his career took place at City University, where he taught biology and horticulture. During that time, his West Farm Nursery was used for general farming and growing hay.

It was after retirement that Charlie said he began to grow both pawpaws and persimmons on the farm. While pawpaws are quite delicious, he said the problem is their limited shelf life. “You can’t pick them green, and if you don’t refrigerate them, they’ll last only a few days at room temperature,” he said. “They turn brown and ugly looking. They’re not something you’d buy at the ShopRite.”

The pawpaw season is September to late October followed by the persimmon season, which generally ends around Christmas, he said. Charlie named [Kentucky State University](#) as the place where new varieties are being developed along with processing methods. Pawpaw pulp and extract is sold for use in beer, wine, cider, and other alcoholic beverages as well as for baking and in ice cream. (The KSU website notes that pawpaws can be substituted for bananas in baking.)

Click here for a Penn State Extension [article](#) to learn how to use pawpaws in the garden and kitchen.

EVENTS

May 11, 10 am-3 pm: Celebrate Ridgefield Park Earth Day, 24 Industrial Ave., Ridgefield Park. Free. Shows: 11 am, “Mad Science” interactive show; 12:15 pm, live reptile show; 1:15 pm, Tenafly Nature Center raptor show; 2:15 pm, live bat show. In addition, local environmental organizations, vendors, music. Weather permitting, fishing lessons with the Hudson River Fishermen’s Association and mini eco cruises on the Hackensack River with the Hackensack Riverkeeper.

May 16, 11:30 am: Hear Lynne Proskow, MG Class of 2022, speak about Container Gardening and Self-Watering Containers at the Glen Rock Senior Center, municipal annex, 678 S. Maple Ave., Glen Rock. Free. Open to anyone 60 and older.

May 18, 10 am-4 pm: Spring festival and plant sale at Garretson Forge & Farm, 4-02 River Road, Fair Lawn. Open-pit cooking demo, spinning demo, New Jersey Revolutionary War re-enactors, tours of the home and gardens, kids’ activities. See page 8 for plant sale information.

May 19, 1-3 pm: Your Backyard Eden: Understanding Biodiversity, a symposium on/for creating habitat in your backyard sponsored by the Glen Rock Garden Club and the Friends of the Thielke Arboretum. At the Thielke Environmental Education Center, 460 Doremus Ave., Glen Rock. MG Lynne Proskow, Class of 2022, will speak about Regenerative Gardening: How You Can Help Create Biodiverse Ecosystems. Fee: \$20. Click [here](#) for the names of the other speakers and their topics and to register.

PLANT SALES

May 3, 10 am-4 pm; May 4, 9 am-3 pm: Master Gardeners of Essex County, Presby Memorial Iris Gardens, 474 Upper Mountain Ave., Montclair. Roses, MG-grown tomatoes, eggplant, and herb plants; curated selection of perennials, shrubs, and woodies; local honey and honey products; related gift items; a member beekeeper will be on hand. Cash, check, or credit card. Click [here](#) for more information.



May 3-5, 9-12, 10 am-6 pm: Garden Club of Teaneck, in the greenhouse at the east end of Lindbergh Boulevard, Teaneck. Vegetables, herbs, annual, perennials, and houseplants. Cash, check, or credit card.

May 4-5, 9:30 am-4 pm: New Jersey Botanical Garden, GPS address

Morris Road, Ringwood. Perennials, annuals, vegetables, herbs, trees, shrubs, vines, ground covers, potted plants, and hanging baskets. Master Gardeners on site to offer advice.

May 5, 9 am-2 pm: Ramsey Area Garden Club, Ramsey Farmers Market, Main Street train station, Ramsey. Park behind the farmers market or follow signs. Perennials from members' gardens; house plants; arrangements made by club members. Cash or check only.

May 9, 11 am-5 pm: Bergen New Bridge Medical Center auditorium, 230 E. Ridgewood Ave., Paramus. Plants from the horticultural therapy program's greenhouse including a home-grown selection of plant/flower seedlings; plants from wholesalers; flower-arranging station; nature/horticultural exhibits; refreshments.

May 10 and 11, 10 am-3 pm: Tenafly Garden Club, two locations: Davis Johnson Park and Gardens, Westervelt Avenue and Engle Street; Oresko Park, Tenafly and Riveredge roads, Tenafly. Annuals and hanging baskets. Cash only.

May 11, 8 am-4 pm: Sundial Garden Club, Hillsdale train station, Hillsdale Avenue and Broadway, Hillsdale. Annuals, deer-resistant perennials, hanging baskets; unusual perennials; houseplants grown by club members. Cash or check only.

May 11, 10 am-1 pm: Garden Club of Harrington Park, 363 High St., Closter (a member's home). Home-grown perennials; nursery-grown annuals; "garden treasure table" with pots, garden ornaments, and more (all garden related); garden-themed jewelry. Cash or check only.

May 11, 9 am-noon: Ho-Ho-Kus Garden Club, Town Green next to the Ho-Ho-Kus Inn, corner of Sycamore Avenue and Franklin Turnpike, Ho-Ho-Kus. Perennials and annuals; shrubs, trees, houseplants, window boxes; garden ornaments, tools, pots.



May 11-12, 9:30 am-2 pm: Laurelwood Arboretum, 725 Pines Lake Drive West, Wayne. Container gardens, hanging baskets, gifts for mom. Visit the [website](#).

May 11, 9 am-4 pm; May 12, 9 am-noon: Master Gardeners of Passaic County, Rutgers Cooperative Extension office, 310 Route 23 North, Wayne (behind Ski Barn and Gary's Wine). Annuals, perennials, vegetables, and herbs; Rutgers tomatoes; MG-grown plants; houseplants; baskets; unique and carnivorous plants; soil-test kits; kids' craft table; hand-tool sharpening May 11.

May 18, 8 am-noon: Allendale Garden Club, Lee Memorial Library grounds, 500 W. Crescent Ave., Allendale. Rain or shine. Native and pollinator plants from members' gardens; nursery plants, baskets, and containers at reasonable prices. Cash or check only.



May 18, 10 am-4 pm: Garretson Forge & Farm, 4-02 River Road, Fair Lawn. Perennials, natives, and pollinators, many of which are deer resistant. Bee balm, lemon balm, tansy, valerian, agrimony, wild ginger, orris, May apple, ferns, milkweed, and much more. Master Gardeners are available to help you choose the right plant. Cash or check only.

May 31, 9 am-3 pm; June 1, 9 am-noon: The Hermitage, 335. N. Franklin Turnpike, Ho-Ho-Kus. Annuals and perennials. Cash or credit card only.