

From the Potting Shed

April 14, 2025

www.mgofbc.org



Cannabis on campus



Photo courtesy of Clare Kennedy

Clare Kennedy examines a hemp plant with John Jasinski, greenhouse manager at Bergen Community College. Clare will speak on the topic of Cannabis: Stigma to Science at our April 30 meeting to be held in the greenhouse. See story on page 7.

MG of BC interest survey results

Thank you to the 50 members who participated in our survey publicized in the Feb. 1 Potting Shed. Your insights will help shape the future of MG of BC programs and volunteer opportunities.

For a summary of the survey results, see the "MG of BC Feedback Survey" that were attached to the email with this issue of the Potting Shed.

Key takeaways

High demand exists for advanced gardening workshops, virtual learning, and professional

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Volunteer Opportunities Fair, April 15

Set your sights on a new site!

Want to add something new to your 2025 volunteering? How about venturing into a new volunteer site?

The MG of BC will sponsor a Volunteer Opportunities Fair Tuesday, April 15 at 7:15 pm via Zoom. This informative presentation, for MGs and interns, will provide the chance to learn about the volunteer opportunities available at our MG of BC sites.

"New growth begins with new opportunities," said Lisa Yoler, MG of BC vice president and co-chair of the Program Committee. "Step outside your routine, explore a fresh volunteer site, and discover where your passion can bloom. Join us on April 15 to learn how you can dig in and make a difference!"

During the meeting, site coordinators (or their representatives) will discuss what volunteer opportunities are offered at their respective sites. Each will answer a few basic questions, such as when the site is open for MG volunteers, what tasks are available at each site, and what to bring.

Whether you're completing your annual service hours, looking to try something new, or hoping to meet MGs with similar interests, this is the perfect chance to explore ways you can get involved.

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VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

Bergen County Rowing Center: We're rolling on the river

The Bergen County Rowing Center, part of Riverside County Park-South in Lyndhurst, is our newest MG of BC volunteer site and will officially welcome volunteers April 25. Karen Riede, site coordinator, credited Mary Orlando, a Lyndhurst resident and Class of 2023, with requesting a South Bergen site for volunteers. Before the Rowing Center, there had never been a South Bergen volunteer site.

Karen, who retired as horticultural assistant last fall, explained that after Mary's request she and Joel Flager, ag agent who retired March 1, discussed a suitable location in South Bergen with the Bergen County Parks Department. The Rowing Center, which opened in 2022 and had been newly landscaped and whose plantings required maintenance, seemed like just the right place.

Last May, Karen said, Joel designated the Rowing Center as a "special project," which is often a precursor to becoming a volunteer site. Karen had visited the site on a few occasions and knew the layout. She offered to find and oversee volunteers, whom she targeted because they were all interns living in the Lyndhurst-Rutherford area.

Once the volunteers were on board, the group chose Fridays as their volunteer day. The volunteers were Charlene Mariano, who is site coordinator with Karen; Mary Orlando; and Susan Petrillo.

As a group, they reviewed the site plans provided by landscape architect Kim Mitchell, who works for the Bergen County Parks Department, to understand what work would be involved.

The first job was to tackle the "abundant" crab grass, Karen recalled. Once the weeds were under control, Karen said the perennials planted two years before had emerged or were in bloom and volunteers saw which ones needed work. The plantings include iris, Joe Pye weed, astilbe, juniper, hydrangea, hosta, amsonia, oat grass, and ilex. Karen said the volunteers relied on various apps and the site plan to understand the plants and their needs.

Since the vegetation was still establishing itself, Karen noted that watering was critical. Last summer's heat



Photo by Bruce Riede

Karen Riede, site coordinator, at left, with Mary Orlando, Susan Petrillo, and Charlene Mariano after the first cleanup in 2024.

and drought made their work more difficult, especially since they were on site only once a week. (No deer visit the area so that eliminated one potential problem.)

Throughout the summer, the group kept in mind the upcoming regatta, held last Oct. 13 and based at the Rowing Center. Karen said the volunteers "made sure everything looked nice" for the event and created a display with pumpkins, mums, and hay bales.

For 2025, the goal is "to maintain what's there and work with the landscape architect to add more plants sometime in May," Karen said, adding. "It's interesting to be on the Passaic River, no doubt about it. It makes the conditions windy at times, and it may be cooler than normal."

Karen noted the site's potential as an educational site. She noted that she found at least five monarch caterpillars and sees the possibility as a monarch way station, too, especially since swamp milkweed was found naturalizing at the site.

If you're interested in volunteering at the Bergen County Rowing Center on Fridays 10 am-noon, contact [Karen Riede](#), 201-463-0771, or [Charlene Mariano](#), 201-264-0510.

The site will open April 25. Bring gloves and pruning shears. There's a bathroom with outside access at the Rowing Center.

- Miriam Taub with Karen Riede

VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

At McFaul: A drift of daffodils



Photo by Joseph Cooper

Volunteers at the McFaul Environmental Center are back at work for 2025. You're invited to join them on Wednesdays from 8:30 am-noon with a coffee and bagel break at 10 am. McFaul supplies an electric cart and tools, so all you need to bring are gloves and eye protection. Some volunteers also like to bring their favorite tools, such as pruners, hand saws, Hori Hori knives, and cultivators. McFaul is located at 150 Crescent Ave., Wyckoff, and volunteers meet at the visitor center. For details, contact Joseph Cooper, site coordinator, at joseph@mgofbc.org or 201-666-5111. By the way, the daffodils above are among more than 25,000 on site.

The Helpline is open!

Volunteers are needed to manage the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Helpline, which is open through September.

Alyssa Glynn, senior program coordinator for Rutgers Cooperative Extension and county extension department head, said that the Helpline needs volunteers Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 am-noon. Volunteers work in the RCE office on the fourth floor of 1 Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack. You can park in the employee garage.

Alyssa needs one to two people per shift and interns will get preference, but any MGs can sign up. To volunteer, send an email to Alyssa at alyssa.glynn@rutgers.edu or call the RCE office at 201-336-6780.

Volunteers will answer the Helpline phone; check the new email box for inquiries (bergenrmghelpline@njaes.rutgers.edu); refer callers to appropriate agencies; update and mail Rutgers fact sheets; and research and prepare answers to the email and phone inquiries for review by Rutgers staff before they are sent out.

Alyssa and/or Monique Bliss, 4-H program assistant, will be in the office to assist, as needed.

Sign up to earn your 2025 volunteer hours now.

MEETINGS/LIBRARY EVENTS

April 21, 1 pm: North Bergen Free Public Library, 510 81st St., North Bergen. Speaker: MG Robyn Lowenthal. Topic: Gardening the Green Way. Click [here](#) to register.

April 24, 1 pm: North Bergen Recreation Center, 1231 Kennedy Blvd., North Bergen. Speaker: MG Chris Kozar. Topic: Adding Natives to Your Garden.

April 28, 6:30 pm: Lyndhurst Garden Club, Lyndhurst Senior Center, Cleveland Avenue, Lyndhurst. Speaker: MG Chris Kozar. Topic: Deadheading, Dead Leafing, and Pruning.

April 28, 7:30 pm: Ho-Ho-Kus Garden Club, Ho-Ho-Kus Community Church, 400 Warren Ave., Ho-Ho-Kus. Speaker: Allie Lim, Hungry Harvest Garden. Topic: Vegetable Gardening: Lessons Learned.

Garretson Forge & Farm

**'Walk and talk' in the herb garden
with Liz Scholl, Master Herbalist and MG**

Learn about the traditional uses
of medicinal and culinary plants and how to grow them.

**April 27, 2 pm
4-02 River Road, Fair Lawn**

No registration required

RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION NEWS

Alyssa Glynn named Bergen County Extension department head

Alyssa Glynn, MG Class of 2024, and senior program coordinator for Rutgers Cooperative Extension, has been appointed county extension department head replacing Joel Flagler who retired March 1. Here Alyssa introduces herself and answers questions from the Potting Shed. Congratulations, Alyssa!

Please tell us a little about your background: Previous jobs, 4-H and/or other experience working with kids before you came to Bergen County.

Before coming to Bergen County Extension, I worked as a special education teacher both in Delaware and in New Jersey. I grew up in the Bergen County 4-H program and worked at our state 4-H camp in Stokes State Forest for seven years as both the waterfront and lifeguard coordinator and the counselor-in-training program coordinator before making the transition to full-time staff in the Bergen County office as the 4-H senior program coordinator. I've been in my current role for a little over a year and a half.

When did 4-H go from cattle, pigs, and chickens to STEM, community service, and programs for special-needs kids?

The great thing about 4-H, especially in New Jersey, is how diverse the programming really is. In central and southern New Jersey, showing and raising animals is still very much a normal part of the 4-H experience. Up here in Bergen County, that kind of programming just wouldn't make sense for us.

4-H programs are catered to fit the needs of the communities they serve. [Bergen County 4-H](#) has programs in teen leadership, community service, outdoor education and exploration, STEM, special education, and so much more. If someone comes to us with an interest in a club that doesn't exist, there's an easy solution. We create the club!

4-H focuses on using a thrive model, which is driven by finding the spark that inspires the youth we work with and creating lasting and inspiring youth-adult partnerships to encourage our youth to follow their goals and passions.



Alyssa Glynn with the 4-H Club pledge behind her in the Bergen County RCE office, Hackensack.

Bergen has eight active 4-H clubs and one on hiatus. How many children and adults participate countywide?

As of now, we have over 50 active youth participants and about 20 active adult volunteers in Bergen County. Most recently, I created the "Let 'Em Book" book club for high school students to explore genres and authors they may not be familiar with.

They discuss in a peer-led environment and as a group [and] choose the next book they would like to read and discuss. We also have a brand-new Air Rifle Club (it's not even on our website yet) that is based in Bogota.

Is participation in 4-H going up? Down? How do you publicize 4-H?

While our numbers after Covid did struggle, I am happy to report that our participation is once again on

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(Alyssa Glynn, continued from page 4)

the rise. We publicize through local schools, libraries, social media, news outlets, and by far our best promotional tactic is word of mouth. 4-H teaches incredible life skills that stand the test of time. And, interested parents and youth hearing that from someone already in the program is priceless.

Describe a typical day in the life of a 4-H coordinator.

On any given day, there are tons of detail-based tasks that I do like answering emails or taking phone calls from community partners. Much of what I do is create programming to benefit the community. Several days per week I am out at different organizations and schools teaching topics like STEM, leadership, teamwork, etc.

I work on creating programs that span to several counties, like our upcoming Agriculture Career Summit. I work with volunteers to get evidence-based curriculum for their club's interests and help to ensure that our county club members are aware of opportunities for them across the state and beyond.

We also hold countywide events, such as our public-speaking event in which every member of our 4-H community presents a topic that interests them for the opportunity to be recognized for their public-speaking skills on a state level. Every year, we also recognize each of our youth and our adult volunteers during the annual awards night.

In addition to being the Bergen County senior program coordinator, I am also the NJ state shooting sports coordinator. In that role, I organize matches,

training, risk management, invitationals, and so much more.

Do you have a favorite area of interest with the 4-H?

My major interests are working with individuals with special needs, outdoor education, and teen leadership. Combining these interests is not only beneficial for the participants but is also so much fun.



Alyssa Glynn, at right, with Monique Bliss, 4-H program assistant. Monique worked for 20 years with Joel Flagler, who retired March 1 as our ag agent.

Is there any overlap between 4-H and MGs where we can be involved?

Absolutely! If any Master Gardeners are interested in working with youth (and in getting trained to do so, including a background check), we'd love to have you. Whether you'd like to be a guest speaker at one of our events; a judge during our public-speaking event or during the Fall Harvest Festival; start a club of your own (with help and support from me and the office, of course); or any other creative collaboration ideas you come up with, I'm all ears and excited to work with you!

EARTH DAY EVENTS

April 22, 10 am-1 pm: Earth Day celebration at the Butterfly and Native Garden, behind the Bergen Equestrian Center, Overpeck Park, 40 Fort Lee Road, Leonia. Native garden tours, kids crafts, and more. Enter from Fort Lee Road, and follow the signs to park and walk to the Butterfly Garden.

April 26, noon-4 pm: Earth Day at Laurelwood Arboretum, 725 Pines Lake Drive West, Wayne. Educational displays; horticulture experts on site;

meet members of environmental and community groups; children's activities; free garden tours and more. Click [here](#) for more information.

April 27, 11 am-2:30 pm: Ridgewood Daffodil Festival and Earth Day Fair, Van Neste Square, Ridgewood Avenue and S. Walnut Street. Ridgewood. Petting zoo; live music; educational displays and programs; demonstrations and crafts; vendors specializing in sustainability and natural products and services; Daffy Dog Parade at 12:30 pm. Click [here](#) for more information.

See May Earth Day events in the May Potting Shed.

IN OUR GARDENS

It's spring – and I just enjoy

By Chris Kozar

Finally, after a dreary winter, that flush of spring is here. My ephemerals, like yours, are bursting into bright yellows, oranges, and whites, and I appreciate every sight of them.

And I count flower heads! Why? So I know which clump is performing as it should. One of the first signs that ephemerals need to be separated is a reduction in the number of blooms. I am making notes as to which group needs to be addressed. And I mean written notes, with exact locations, because there is no way I'm going to remember in the fall where they were and where I want them to go.



Photo by Chris Kozar

And I am also wandering around my yard to find those bare spots that need more daffodil color. While I love a multitude of ephemerals, daffodils are the only ones I can count on . . . deer browsing, of course. Daffodils are the main bulbs I will be planting in the fall. I make note of the bare spots and the type and color of bulbs that are blooming.

And then I wait. I wait for the blooms to fade. I wait for the foliage to brown. When I cut back the faded flowers, I don't cut back anything else. The plant needs all those leaves for photosynthesis, to return energy to the bulb for next year. It takes about six weeks for the plant to go dormant. I just hope that the growth of perennial leaves will cover the mess. But for now, I just enjoy!

Chris is a member of the MG of BC Speakers Bureau and is our Hospitality Committee chair.

(Opportunities fair, continued from page 1)

In the meantime, you can visit the "Volunteer Sites" section of our [website](#) for a description and photo of each site.

MG of BC board members will also be available to discuss how you can help on the board or on a committee or a subcommittee.

"There's something exciting about discovering a new place to volunteer — whether it's the people, the projects, or just a fresh perspective," added Maria Bushman, who is MG of BC corresponding secretary and co-chair of the Program Committee with Lisa. "This event is the perfect chance to explore what's out there and find a site that sparks your interest. Who knows? Your next favorite spot to 'dig in' and make a difference might be just a Zoom call away!"

Click [here](#) to join the meeting before it starts (7:15 pm). Please remember to keep your microphones muted. Since this meeting is for MGs and interns only, this link isn't posted on the home page of our website.

[See page 7 for information about our April 30 meeting.](#)

(Survey, continued from page 1)

networking. Additional interest in sustainability, native plants, horticultural therapy, and community education presents opportunities for expanded programming.

Next steps

The MG of BC will prioritize expanding specialized educational programs and enhancing community involvement by:

- Providing volunteers with more educational materials and resources; and
- Equipping volunteers with new ways to educate and engage the public at community sites.

APRIL 30 MEETING

Cannabis: From Stigma to Science

Clare Kennedy, an adjunct professor at Bergen Community College, will speak on the subject of Cannabis: Stigma to Science at our April 30 meeting in the greenhouse on the BCC campus. The meeting will start at 6 pm.



Clare Kennedy

Due to the limited size of the venue, the meeting is for MGs and interns only; it's not open to the public. Half of the attendees will hear Clare's presentation while the other half can shop at the college's annual plant sale (see story at right). Then the groups will switch places.

Clare Kennedy explained that there are two cannabis-related studies programs at BCC. The Continuing Education Department offers a [cannabis studies program](#) with three specialties. "Those three continuing education programs are entirely online and do not include any greenhouse training using actual plants," she wrote in an email. "Those have more of a business framework and prepare students to be on the business end of the industry."

Meanwhile, the cannabis program offered through the BCC Horticulture and Biology Department, the degree-granting part of the college, "is entirely focused on the plant husbandry aspects and more science-related," she wrote. "All five of the courses that are part of the certificate [Certificate of Achievement in Medicinal and Industrial Cannabis] have lab-based hands-on activities." Click [here](#) for a brochure describing that program.

Clare Kennedy answers some questions for the Potting Shed.

How many people have completed the cannabis certificate training program since its start?

This cannabis certificate is in its infancy being launched during the pandemic years. Thus far we have had seven students who have completed the certificate. Currently, there are another seven students in the program who are enrolled in the

Physiological Aspects of Cannabinoids in Humans course.

Can you make any generalizations about the cannabis-studies students?

Students selecting this certificate are mostly younger (19-30 years old), and most are already on the campus earning an associate's degree, some in horticulture, and some earning AAS [associate of applied science] degrees in other fields. All of the courses required for the certificate in cannabis studies can be fully applied to an AAS degree in horticulture here at BCC.

How is the program going?

Although the program is new, we have looked at the required courses and made slight changes to prerequisites. We want to ensure that students have the prerequisite knowledge for studying this plant, but that the certificate is obtainable with only five courses. This certificate requires 18 credits.

BCC plant sale – special preview for MGs

Get ready to immerse yourself in the vibrant world of plants at the special preview April 30 at 6 pm. We'll have first pick of a gorgeous array of plants before they're available to the public.

Explore a selection that includes eye-catching coleus, radiant pansies, vibrant begonias, unique succulents, lush spider plants, striking celosia, colorful snapdragons, charming dianthus, and beautiful hanging baskets. The plants were cultivated and arranged by BCC students.

Prices range from \$4 to \$20 (cash or check only), and every purchase supports vital college scholarships. The sale continues for the general public May 1-3.

"There's nothing better than discovering new plants to love while supporting a great cause!," said Lisa Yoler, MG of BC vice president and co-chair of the Program Committee.

Parking at Bergen Community College: A BCC map was attached to the Potting Shed email. Park in the upper rim of Lot C and then follow signs and balloons to the greenhouse.