

# From the Potting Shed

May 16, 2025

[www.mgofbc.org](http://www.mgofbc.org)



## Ted Szczawinski: May 20 speaker

### **He's been a tree guy since his teens**



*Ted Szczawinski is the speaker for our May 20 meeting. His topic is a brief history of the propagation and cultivation of plants. The meeting is at 1 Bergen County Plaza, fourth floor, Hackensack. Refreshments are at 7 pm with announcements at 7:15 pm. Ted's presentation will follow.*

Ted Szczawinski in the greenhouse at Bergen Community College.

First things first: Szczawinski is pronounced "Shavinski."

Ted Szczawinski, teacher, administrator, and consultant, has answered several questions from the Potting Shed so you can get to know him and his background.

### **How and when did you get interested in trees/arboriculture?**

As a teenager, I started working for a family friend, Leonard Dujets, who was a tree expert and agricultural education teacher at Bergen County Technical Schools. I started splitting firewood, working in the yard/nursery, and learning various horticultural activities, finding the work rewarding and enjoyable.

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## **From the President's Desk**

### ***By Theresa Schneider, Class of 2016***

Calling all educators, artists, and graphic designers.

To enhance the educational component of the volunteer work we do at our sites, I'd like the MG of BC to design an information sheet or poster that MGs would display while working at our volunteer sites. Community members could stop and scan a QR code to take them to a Rutgers fact sheet or the Helpline.



If you're interested in helping with this project, or have ideas you'd like to share, please contact me at [MGofBC.board@gmail.com](mailto:MGofBC.board@gmail.com).



*Pixabay photo*

### **MG picnic Van Saun Park**

**Tuesday,  
June 17  
noon-2:30 pm**

**See page 2 to RSVP**

## MG OF BC NEWS

### ***Annual picnic June 17 at Van Saun***

***By Chris Kozar, Hospitality chair***

Come one, come all! Our picnic for Master Gardeners and interns is Tuesday, June 17. We have a permit to use our customary location at Van Saun Park: Pavilion I (eye) near the lake. There's plenty of parking near the pavilion. The picnic will run from noon-2:30 pm.

The MG of BC will supply sandwiches and drinks. We are hoping that attendees will contribute one of the following based on the first letter of your last names.

- Last name starts with A through I: Appetizer or chips.
- Last name starts with J through P: Salad (green or pasta type).
- Last name starts with Q through Z: Dessert.

We expect another wonderful gathering with the MGs who share so much of their time with the county. RSVP to me at [chriskozar@aol.com](mailto:chriskozar@aol.com). See you there!

## WEBINARS

***All times are Eastern.***

**May 22, noon-1 pm:** AARP Virtual Community Center sponsors Creating a Stunning Pollinator Garden with Native Plants. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. AARP membership is not required.

**May 22, 1-2 pm:** Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation sponsors Insect Restoration and Conservation: Creating Usable Habitats in Human-Dominated Landscapes. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

**May 29, 4:30-5:30 pm:** AARP Virtual Community Center sponsors Longwood Gardens-Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: A Historical Perspective. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register. AARP membership is not required.

## VOLUNTEER SITE NEWS

### **At the Mary S. Topolsky Garden**

#### ***Meet Karen Shaner, new site coordinator***

Karen Shaner has been named site coordinator for the Mary S. Topolsky Garden in Teaneck, replacing Harriet Steiner. Karen, a retired legal secretary, has been volunteering at the garden for two years.

Karen, Class of 2023, said she enrolled in the MG program to "connect with Mother Nature and give back to my community."



**Karen Shaner**

At home, Karen said she prefers container gardening over in-ground planting, but she does grow strawberries, blueberries, and a few herbs in her backyard (her "sanctuary").

As for Topolsky, Karen explained that each week MGs meet with volunteers from the Hackensack River

Greenway Through Teaneck to decide on a work plan for the morning. (The Mary S. Topolsky Garden is part of the Hackensack River Greenway Through Teaneck.) Currently, Karen said, weeding is a priority. Later this spring, volunteers will plant pussy willows.

The Mary S. Topolsky Garden is the only part of the Hackensack River Greenway Through Teaneck with a view of the Hackensack River from River Road. The garden features several sitting areas as it slopes from River Road to the river.

Join volunteers at the Mary S. Topolsky Garden Thursdays from 9-11 am. The address is 640 River Road, Teaneck. Park on Kipp Street. Bring your favorite tools and water, and dress appropriately since ticks are present. A portable toilet is located at the playground two houses away.

For more information, contact Karen by email at [Kls4211@verizon.net](mailto:Kls4211@verizon.net) or call her at 201-385-8599.

## Visit an MG garden or two May 17



Visit the gardens of Janet Schulz (above), 16 Colonial Drive, Wyckoff, and Noel Schulz, 108 Lincoln Place, Waldwick, May 17 from 10 am-4 pm, as part of the Garden Conservancy's Open Days program. ID yourself as an MG and the visit is free.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

### How do you feel about ticks?

Attention Master Gardeners and interns: Are you interested in tick education? Would you attend a free 90-minute Zoom presentation on a weekday evening on the subject of ticks? It's sponsored by the Rutgers Center for Vector Biology and Rutgers Cooperative Extension, part of the "Let's Talk Ticks" program.

This program is considered continuing education, and by attending you'd earn 1½ hours toward your 10-hour annual CE requirement.

If you're interested in attending such a Zoom presentation, send an email to Miriam Taub at [miriamtaub7@gmail.com](mailto:miriamtaub7@gmail.com) with "yes to ticks" in the subject line. **Note:** No date has been set. Whether a free presentation is arranged will depend on the number of "yes" responses.

## Ted Szczawinski, continued from page 1

### How did you start out in the field professionally?

As a teenager, I went into the cooperative education program in my senior year of high school. Upon graduation, I started my career in arboriculture, working full time. I subsequently started college after two years, continually working part time while earning an associate's degree at Bergen Community College and a bachelor's degree at Rutgers University.



Ted Szczawinski

I continue to enjoy learning, eventually earning a master's degree from Seton Hall University. Throughout my career I have been extremely blessed to have incredible mentors and colleagues that helped me grow professionally.

### What prompted you to start your own consulting business?

In 1993, I began working as an arboricultural consultant with another mentor of mine, Ken Gregory at Rutgers University's Office of Continuing Professional Education. In 1996, I joined Len Dujets and Andy Jackson at Bergen County Technical Schools as an agricultural science teacher [and] in 2000-2016 [as] adjunct at Rutgers Newark Biology Department.

[In] 2002, I began as adjunct at Bergen Community College's Horticulture Department with Sue Gruben [former associate professor of horticulture at BCC] and Dr. Steven Fischer [professor of horticulture at BCC]. I continue to enjoy teaching and practicing arboriculture and horticulture, so I created Sterling Consultants LLC in 2002 to continue to stay connected to the industry and share my passion for plants.

Although over the past 43 years, I moved from the classroom into administrative positions at Bergen Tech, eventually retiring from Passaic County Technical Institute as assistant superintendent in 2024, I continued to teach and cultivate green-industry-related relationships. Sterling Consultants is the channel for sharing my passion and providing the highest level of arboricultural and horticulture knowledge and services with like-minded, plant-appreciating individuals.