

# Garden Tales

Atlantic County Master Gardener Association Newsletter



## Coordinator's Comments

By Mona Bawgus

Hello Master Gardeners:

I thought I would share with you my latest garden adventure. As spring draws near I just can't wait to get my hands in the soil and plant something. Usually my first crop is Peas. Since I use the rule of thumb of planting on Saint Patrick's Day, I started my seeds indoors in late February. I had remembered reading about a new technique about starting peas in roof gutters so they easily slide out when transplanting. Peas do not like to be transplanted so anything you can do to lessen the stress helps.

So, bless my husband, we bought two ten-foot pieces of gutter and cut them to a manageable size of 3 feet, filled them with soil, and taped the ends. Next, I planted the peas after soaking them overnight, then rolling them in inoculant. Then came the difficult part: Where to put eight three-foot pieces of gutter? I suggested the garage where it would still be cold, as peas prefer cold temperatures. (See photo on page 12.)

I checked them regularly and began to notice something. The soil seemed to be disturbed. I thought maybe it was just the soil settling after a watering. One morning during inspection I saw the peas' thick roots *on top* of the soil! A night time visitor was feasting on my peas. So much for my two worthless, lazy cats! I began to wonder why I liked to garden. It is often not a stress-free hobby, but there is something that keeps drawing us back. Maybe sharing these stories and laughing about them helps. -- Mona

## HOT Happenings

- Mar 25 MG Class: Earthwise Lawn Care
- Mar 25 *Garden Talks*: Annuals & Perennials, AC
- Apr 1 MG Class: Insects
- Apr 2 *Garden Talks*: Tree Pests at Fairways
- Apr 8 MG Class: IPM
- Apr 11 MG Association Mtg, 12:30
- Apr 15 MG Class: Arboriculture
- Apr 19 *Gardener News Seminar*
- Apr 25 Arbor Day
- Apr 25 Northfield School Earth Day
- Apr 26 Bay Fest
- Apr 27 Earth Day, ACUA
- Apr 29 *Garden Talks*: Lawns, Hope VI, AC
- May 16 & 18 MG Plant Sale

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# Community Outreach Projects: Volunteer Opportunities

***Spring has certainly sprung! Our projects are all coming back to life, and there are opportunities for everyone to get involved. For more information or to volunteer, contact the project leaders.***

**Demo Garden: Mona:** Volunteers are sought to “adopt” each of the raised beds. We have the funds for flowers, vegetables, or a combination of your choice. Contact Mona as soon as possible to adopt a bed.

**Estell Manor Park:** MGs are involved in more activities than ever before at the park, working with Helen Biggs on a wide variety of projects. Volunteers are welcome!

- **Backyard Habitat: Kathy Olsen:** We’re eager to get moving on the Backyard Habitat, thanks to renewed interest and support from the park administration. We’ll focus on “natural and native” gardens and exhibitions, and will be able to link our activities with the greenhouse and other Estell Manor projects. ***Please join us on March 25 at 1:30 at the backyard habitat!***
- **Raised beds: Linda Hawn:** Four raised beds at the Nature Center will be used for different garden types, such as a pizza garden, native plants, etc. MGs will assist with the plant selection and garden design, labeling, maintenance, and community talks/tours of the four gardens.
- **Herbicide test beds: Rebecca French–Mesch & Barb Kennedy** will be monitoring and evaluating four typical herbicide types to see how effective they are in perennial and annual plantings. They’ll share what they learn with the MG community.
- **Greenhouse plantings & perennial propagation: Mary McDermott:** We’re working in the mornings (9:30 – 11:30) at the greenhouse planting and transplanting seedlings that we’ll plant at the county facilities. In the afternoons (12:30 – 2:30), we’re harvesting perennials (cuttings, divisions, etc.) and potting, dividing, or replanting them. The propagation activities will continue through the fall, while the greenhouse activity will shift to planting in May.
- **Entrance native garden design: Janet D’Alessandro** is working with Helen on planning, design, and plant selection for two or three beds at the entry area to the Nature center. Because it’s the starting point for the walking paths, the intent is to use it as a community education opportunity on native plants.

**Galloway Library Butterfly Garden: Mona Bawgus:** We’re starting to decide on plants, and as soon as they’re available from the garden center we will be planting at Galloway Library. Watch emails or Association minutes for planting dates.

**Lion’s Club Sensory Garden: Barb D’Augustine and Gay Pitz:** Volunteers are working on the garden design and next steps. It’s an exciting project with a very engaged client. We meet Thursdays following our monthly Association meeting.

**Ocean Life Aquarium: Michelle Brunetti Post and John Collette:** We’re working with the Aquarium on a plan to get other garden clubs involved, with each of us taking a section to landscape, and participating in a small competition.

**Peace Pilgrim Park, Estelle Berkowitz:** ***Volunteers are needed for April 1 through 4, from 1 – 4 pm,*** to assist the school children with plantings. It’s a lot of fun, and the kids really enjoy the activity and our involvement. (By the way, all MGs are invited to the Park’s 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration on July 18 and 19.)

**Port Republic School Children’s Garden: Janet Longo:** We need volunteers to design and help the school kids put in the third section of the garden. This fun and rewarding project is going on its third year.

**Rain Garden: Mona:** Pinelands Nursery has donated a selection of plants for a rain garden. We’d like this garden on the grounds at the MG facility. We’re looking for a project leader and volunteers to design and create the rain garden. Plants will be picked up in late April.



**MG Sandra Templeton assisting Estell Manor's Helen Biggs harvesting perennials**



**'08 Student Mary Jo Perrone in the Estell Manor greenhouse**  
Photos: M. McDermott

# Community Events: Volunteer Opportunities

***In addition to planting projects, here are some great opportunities to engage the community.***

***For more information or to volunteer, contact the project leaders.***

## **Northfield School Earth Day/Green Initiative, *April 25:***

**MGs** will answer plant/insect questions and talk about horticulture. Volunteers include Gloria Perakovich, Ann Cinquina, Bev Albertson, and George Lonkart.

## **Somers Point Bayfest, *April 26:* Michelle Brunetti Post:**

We'll have a table again this year from 10 am to 5 pm, and need volunteers to work the booth for two-hour shifts (setup at 8:00 am) to give out literature, answer gardening questions, and sell native plant plugs. We did this last year and it was fabulous for outreach and sales. It's also great fun and packed with people and interesting things to see and do. Bayfest is a huge block party with food, crafts, community groups' tables, and a party atmosphere. See photos and more info at [www.somerspointbayfest.org](http://www.somerspointbayfest.org).

**Earth Day, *April 27,* Bunny Mason:** Once again we'll be hosting a booth at the ACUA event on Delilah Road in EHT. We'll need volunteers for set up/tear down and to work the tables over three shifts from 7 am to 4:30 pm. We'll be giving away Ramapo tomato seedlings, offering several children's activities, and answering questions about plants and garden insects. We'll also need volunteers to help make posters.

## **Ramapo Tomato Seedlings**

**Amy Menzel** will lead the Ramapo Tomato planting this year. Volunteers who've already signed up should meet ***March 27, 10 am***, at the ACUA greenhouse on Delilah Road (directions at <http://www.acua.com/about/directions2solid.cfm>).

The plants will be grown out at the ACUA greenhouse and we'll eventually distribute them at our community events, such as Earth Day. To volunteer, contact Amy. (And if you want a packet of Ramapo tomato seeds for your own garden, contact Anita ASAP.). Rutgers is hosting the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual "Great Tomato Tasting" August 27, and will feature the Ramapo. See <http://njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu/documents/TomatoTastingPostercharge5.pdf>



## **"Garden Talks" in the Community**

Here are a few current and upcoming community talks led by MGs:

- **Annuals & Perennials:** Kathy Schoonover & Rachel Bogatin, at the Hope VI Atlantic City Housing Authority, ***March 25***
- **Trees:** Oak gall, White Pine Weevil, & Gypsy Moth: **Bob Varrelmann** and **Ann Cinquina**, ***April 2***, Fairways at Mays Landing
- **Lawns:** Presenters needed for the Hope VI Atlantic City Housing Authority, ***April 29***
- In the past month, **Grace Wagner** spoke to the St. Mary's Guild on **Herbs** (March 6), and **Gay Pitz & Mary McDermott** spoke to the Hope VI Garden Club in Atlantic City on **Houseplants** (see photo below).
- The Galloway Community Garden has asked the MGs to give educational presentations to their group this Fall.

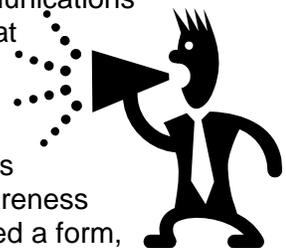


Mary McDermott and Gay Pitz with the Hope VI Garden Club in March. (Photo: K. McColl)

## **Outreach Project Publicity**

Project leaders are asked to complete and return the "MG Communications Support" form distributed at February's meeting.

That will help us determine photo or press release opportunities to increase the public awareness of MG activities. If you need a form, contact Mary McDermott.



# HelpLine Info

- **Helpline Hours:** We **need volunteers** to work the Helpline in April and May. Whether you have met your volunteer hours or not, please fit in at least ONE day a month on the HelpLine.
- **Plant and insect identification forms:** Two forms are available in the HL office to help clients identify really tricky or troubling plants or pests. These forms should be used as a last resort, after we've exhausted all the HelpLine research materials and Extension office people knowledge we can tap. Clients complete the form, provide payment, and send in the sample. The forms are "Plant identification," and "Insects and Tick Identification."
- **Wildlife resource:** There's a big purple binder in the HL office called, "Prevention and Control of Wildlife Damage." Please refer to this information *before* directing a HL client to Animal Control or Animal Rehabilitation/ Rescue. The first step in assisting a HL client is to advise the client on how to prevent or get rid of the problem, based on the binder information. If the animal is injured, the next step is to call an Animal Rehabilitator on the list in the HL office. Calling Animal Control is usually the last step, if needed.
- **Dissecting Microscope:** Insects have never been so clear! The new microscope is in the HL office, waiting for you to take a closer look at our little friends to make a confident identification. We've also got half dozen insect slides that can be used under the scope for identification help. For a quick training session on the scope, let Mona know when you'll be in and she'll walk you through it.



Bunny Mason working the HelpLine in March

Photo: M. McDermott

## HelpLine Questions to Expect

Okay, it's here! The HelpLine season is gearing up. But there's no reason to be nervous – we know what most of our callers will have questions about. Here are some topics to expect calls about, based on March / April HelpLine logs for the past few years. Take a quick browse through your MG class binders or the fact sheets in the file cabinet, and you'll be all set!

- **Lawns:** Soil tests, soil amendments (when to lime, fertilize), when to use crabgrass preventive, how to select grass seeds (for drought, acid soils, shade, etc.), moss, seed vs. sod options, and groundcovers.
- **Pests:** Ticks, termites, scale on houseplants, oak borers, ducks (really!), squirrels, voles, mealy moths. AND gypsy moths (see special profile on pages 10 & 11.).
- **Shrubs & Trees:** Oak galls (the old standby), rhododendron problems, fruit tree spraying and pruning.
- **Ornamentals/Perennials:** When to prune spring flowering shrubs, what to do with daffodil and hyacinth leaves, when to feed spring flowering bulbs.
- **Vegetables & annuals:** when to start tender plants, when and how to move them outdoors, how to prevent damping off.

## "Green Thumb" Articles

Look for these recent articles in the archive binder in the MG office, or in your "MG NewsBits" emails. Green Thumb articles can be printed and shared with HelpLine callers.

- Caladiums, Feb. 22
- Soil Tests, March 14
- Irises, March 21

Photo: M. McDermott



Did you hear?  
It's almost Spring!

# Education Opportunities

## 2008 MG Class Schedule

Classes are on Tuesdays, from nine till noon, at the MG classroom. Certified MGs can earn three continuing education units (CEUs) for attending classes that weren't offered or were missed in previous years. If you decide to attend a class, be sure to let Anita Wagner know the week before.

Mar 25	Earthwise Lawn Care
Apr 1	Insects
Apr 8	Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
Apr 15	Arboriculture
Apr 22	Flowers Garden
Apr 29	Flowers Field Trip
May 6	Helpline/Working with youth
May 13	Vegetables I
May 20	Vegetables II
May 27	Small Fruits I
June 3	Small Fruits II

## Rutgers Garden Series 2008

The 2008 series kicks off with eight new courses in the first half of the year. Courses are in New Brunswick, and range from two hours to four days. For more information, see

<http://rutgersgardens.rutgers.edu/>

- **Seasonal Care of the Garden**, March 29
- **Orchid Breeding For Fun NEW**, March 29
- **World of Orchids and Epiphytes**, March 29
- **Designing a Perennial Garden NEW**: 2-day course led by Bruce Crawford, April 5 & 12
- **Organic Vegetable Gardening NEW**: April 5
- **Garbage Gardening: Growing Plants from Seeds and Kitchen Refuse NEW**: April 12.
- **Pruning for the Homeowner**, April 19
- **Evening in the Gardens**, April 24, 6 – 8 pm

## Gardener News Seminar April 19

A full day of garden topics will be offered Saturday, April 19, at the Somerset Hotel in Warren, NJ. Choose four of sixteen garden-related seminars for \$80. For more info see [www.gardenernews.com](http://www.gardenernews.com)

MG '08 Student **Kathy Whelan** and guest speaker **Pat Sutton** peruse one of the many valuable butterfly reference books during a break in Pat's March 18 talk.



Photo: M. McDermott

## Guest Speakers on the way

**Ann Cinquina**, head of the Speakers Bureau, has lined up guest speakers for the next to MG Association meetings. In April, we'll hear from **Marie Boehly** on Herbs, and in May, **Karl Rosner** will speak about Bonsai. Our March speaker was Mike Brightly, of Lynn's Nursery; see the story on page 6. Each of these guest speakers counts as one hour toward Certified MGs' education credits.



## Continuing Education: What counts?

Once you're a certified MG, you're required to earn ten Continuing Education Units (CEUs) each year (after your first initial year as a certified MG) -- in addition to your 25 volunteer hours -- in order to retain your certification.

What counts as CEUs? Most MG-sponsored education activities, such as a MG class or a speaker at our Association meeting. If you have an outside education program you'd like to earn credits for, complete the "CE Hours Request" form *before you take the class* and send it to Mona. She'll let you know if it will earn CEUs for the MG certification. (Note: MG Interns do not have an educational hours requirement.) Examples include certain (but not all) workshops from the Rutgers Home Gardeners School, many classes at Longwood Gardens, etc.

# The Plant Sale

*Ann Cinquina and Gloria Perakovich*

***This year we're taking a few different approaches to our plant sale. We're simplifying the organizational aspects by not having customers pre-order plants, and we're focusing on native plants to support our educational mission. Volunteers are needed for a wide variety of activities, starting with helping to get the word out. See the notes below for how you can help.***

- **Publicity:** Flyers, postcards, press releases and other publicity efforts will support the plant sale. If you frequent a gym, grocery store, vet, or other public place that allows promotional flyers, please plan to post a flyer there. Flyers and post cards will be available at the next Association Meeting on April 11<sup>th</sup>. We'll be contacting previous customers, county employees, 4H-ers, and HelpLine callers, as well as sending our press releases. Please forward any publicity suggestions and contact info to Mary McDermott, Ann, or Gloria.
- **The Plant List – what's on your wish list?** We've just about finalized the plant list with our vendor, and it includes about 30 different trees, shrubs, grasses, and perennials. As soon as the list is ready, we'll share it with all MGs. We'd like to get a sense of what you might order, so we can then order above that for our non-MG customers. Watch for an email soon. Also, any project leaders who might be ordering from the plant sale (we hope you do!) should let Gloria know your approximate order ASAP, so we can make sure we'll have enough for your needs and the general public.
- **Plant Displays: Can you help?** As part of the sale set up, we'll assemble displays that show what the plants look like when mature, and what other native each plant could be planted in combination with, to help cross-merchandise and increase sales. Your suggestions and help on these displays is needed.
- **HelpLine Panel:** We're asking MGs to commit to a two-hour segment at a HelpLine table with two or three other MGs to field questions from our customers. Questions that can't be answered on the spot can be handled back at the MG office. To participate on the HL panel, contact Mary McDermott.
- **The Logistics:**
  - **Location:** The sale will again be at the 4H facility on Route 50.
  - **Dates:** Thursday, May 15: Plants delivered. Friday, May 16: Plant Sale Day One. (Saturday we'll regroup while 4H is holding their Spring Fling.) Sunday, May 18: Plant Sale Day Two. ***Volunteers will be needed for all four days – Thursday through Sunday.***

## Prepping your pond

Mike Brightly, owner of Lyn's Ponds and Pavers in EHT, spoke to the MG Association members after our March meeting. With his easy-going approach and layman's terms ("circulation, aeration, filtration"), Mike demystified garden pond maintenance. Mike stressed using both plants and fish to establish a balanced pond, and talked us through the concept of biological filters. Some hints for limiting algae: Use lots of plants to take up the nitrites so algae doesn't get them; use barley straw to inhibit algae growth; maintain a 3/10<sup>th</sup> of a percent salt solution for algae control and as an all-around health benefit to fish and salt-tolerant aquatic plants; watch your pH; and avoid chemicals whenever possible. (Certified MG attendees earned one hour of Education credit.)

*Guest speaker Mike Brightly  
and Speakers Bureau chair  
Ann Cinquina*



Photo: M. McDermott

# People Page

## Garden Memories and Morning Glories

By Carla Glass

Growing up in Queens, NY, in a two-bedroom apartment with two sisters and parents would present a garden challenge to anyone. My building was surrounded by sad-looking boxwood shrubs and patches of crabgrass here and there. I believe the shrubs may have even been planted in concrete. Each spring, my elementary school principal would hand out packets of morning glory seeds as a gift to everyone. I waited all year for those seeds because it meant warm weather was on the way! Try as I might, year after year, I planted my seeds in the concrete garden. I watered and waited, but to no avail... They just didn't take to the conditions.

One year in particular, the seed packets changed. I was doubtful as to whether this "new and improved" pack of seeds would do the trick... Low and behold, 1973 was a bumper crop year for morning glories in Queens! This was also the start of my love of planting. Years later, I am still planting morning glories for my girls. This time it is with a much better success rate, since I leave the concrete out of the equation.

## My favorite spring bloomer is...

- The hellebora (the Lenten Rose) because it usually blooms during Lent. It's a unique plant because it keeps its leaves throughout the winter, which then die in the spring producing new leaves along with the blossoms. It can live in shade and mine live in stony soil....how's that for hardy plants! This year I plan to give them a better home. -- *Grace Wagner*
- The Dutch iris – *Bette DelGrosso*
- Forsythia: Their arches of sunshine even on a cold morning brighten my days, and seem to say "Hang in there, it's almost time... get ready...the wait is almost over..." – *Linda Ann Hawn*
- I'd have to say the daffodil, because it's the first flower that makes a really big splash of color, especially if you plant them in groups of 12 or more. And since there are early, medium, and late varieties, you get to have them for more than a month! They look good in the wooded garden, or in flower beds, and they make great cut flowers, too. They may be common, but they are invaluable. – *Michelle Brunetti Post*
- The saucer magnolia (*Magnolia soulangiana*) – *Kathy Schoonover*

## Photographers wanted!

We'll need two photographers on May 5 to take individual digital photos of the class of '08. If you can help from 9 – 12 that day, please contact Mary McDermott. Thanks!

## Congratulations New Certified MGs!

John Collette  
Barb D'Augustine  
George Lonkart  
Kathy Schoonover  
Mary Stecher  
Sandy Templeton

Happy  
Birthday!

Morgana French, March 29  
Virginia (Bunny) Mason, April 1  
Kathy Olsen, April 20  
Nancy Amrhein, April 24  
Ellen Lichtenstein, April 26



Hellebores in Grace Wagner's garden, above, and from Mona's garden to her vase, below.



# Critter Corner

## Plan now for Bees

By Mary McDermott

We've all heard about the big decline in honeybees over the past few years. While we can't cure the whole problem in our own back yards, we can help support and attract both honeybees and the increasingly valued native bees. Here are a few tips:

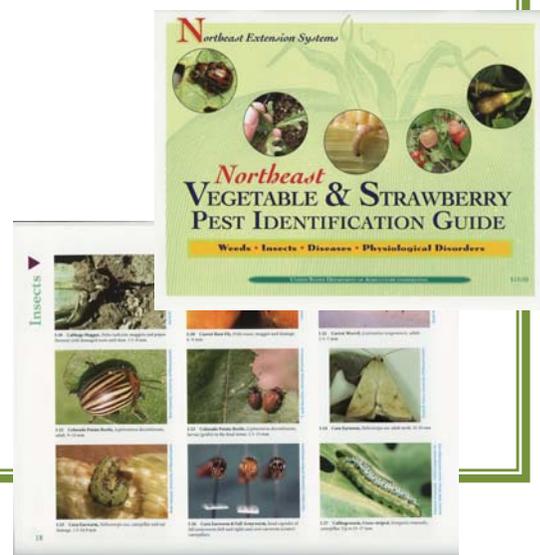
- 1. Limit the use of chemicals, especially pesticides.** If you do use natural or chemical pesticides, carefully target the pest/plants that really need them.
- 2. Plan a bee-friendly garden.** In the October 2007 "Garden Tales," Michelle Brunetti Post discussed the concept of a bee-friendly garden (if you need an email copy, send a note to Mary McDermott). Now that you're getting ready to plant, it's time to start incorporating some of those suggestions into your garden plans. The good news is, one of the most important features of a bee-friendly garden is its variety – of blooms, and timeframe for blooms. Bees prefer large swaths of flowers, where they can find plenty of food in one area, at different heights and bloom times. In fact, our usual goal of having something in bloom from early spring to early fall suits the bees' needs perfectly. While mulching certainly is good for your plants, try to leave some patches of bare soil here and there help native bees who burrow. Ponds and birdfeeders can catch bees in the water's surface tension, so to provide a drinking spot, sink a small saucer into the ground, fill it with sand, and keep the sand wet. This kind of "puddle" helps both bees and butterflies get a drink.
- 3. Think "bee" in your plant selection.** Bees seem to be attracted to blue flowers, such as lavender, liatris, borage, thyme, mint, and most flowers in the aster family. Many bee-attractors, like daisies and coreopsis, draw bees because they have special marks that show in bees' ultraviolet visual range. To see a detailed "Bee Plant List" and for more information, see the University of California's extensive Urban Bee Garden website at <http://nature.berkeley.edu/urbanbeegardens>

## Lacewings and Catnip

By Mary McDermott

A recent report by the USDA said, "... a single chemical (that can be simply derived from the commercially available catnip plant) can be used to attract various kinds of lacewings throughout the northern hemisphere to naturally suppress aphids and other pests. These findings will be of practical utility to gardeners and commercial growers alike who will now be able to naturally induce female lacewings to lay eggs among pest infestations for enhanced biological control." In English, that means lacewings, which are voracious feeders of aphids, spider mites and other soft-bodied insects, can be lured to your garden for a feast. While a specific product is not yet available, you may want to think about adding more plants from the catnip (*nepeta* spp.) family to your garden. (USDA report summary at [http://www.ars.usda.gov/research/publications/publications.htm?SEQ\\_NO\\_115=193461](http://www.ars.usda.gov/research/publications/publications.htm?SEQ_NO_115=193461) ) By the way, Cornell provides this list of lacewings' favorite snacks: aphids, spider mites, thrips, whiteflies, eggs of leafhoppers, moths, and leafminers, small caterpillars, beetle larvae, tobacco budworm.

Check out this great **identification guide for plant pests in the Northeast**. It's available – though going fast! – from Mona for \$5 for MGs, and \$10 for non-MGs.



# Something has taken a "lichen" to my maple!

The Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) has greenish-gray moss-like crusty structures growing on the trunk and branches. The high rainfall and some full sunlight have given these Lichens a good environment to take advantage of the tree to grow. The Lichen is not parasitizing the Maple -- it is only attached to the bark and does not penetrate to the inner bark to rob the tree of nourishment. The presence of the Lichen is more a result of a poorly nourished tree than the cause. A tree in poor health can leak nutrients and promote increased growth of the Lichen.

Lichens resemble mosses but are not true bryophytes. A Lichen is a fungus that contains one or more kinds of algae which makes its food by photosynthesis. There are three major growth forms of Lichens: foliose (leaf-like lobes), fructiose (hair-like or stringy) and crustose (crust-like). The fungus and the algae grow together in a mutually symbiotic and beneficial way. The fungus derives water and minerals from the air and its growth surface. The algae contribute carbohydrates and vitamins. Lichens can 'fix' nitrogen by converting the nitrogen in the air into nitrates aiding their own growth and the environmental nitrogen cycle. Large amounts of minerals or sulfur dioxide, as is found in air pollution, will poison the lichens -- they are extremely sensitive.

After researching these interesting creatures, I can't convert them from spectator-like passengers who are taking advantage of poor conditions for the tree to harmful culprits. While unsightly, they aren't causing decline. I can take comfort in the air quality that sustains them. An herbicide could eradicate them, but there are animals that like Lichens. Deer take a liking to lichen. Squirrels use them, as well as hummingbirds and other birds for their nests. They can be frog snacks and shelter for small invertebrates. Live and let live.

References and more info:

<http://www.acua.com/about/directions2solid.cfm>

[http://herbarium.rutgers.edu/pinelands/Panel11\\_Lichens.pdf](http://herbarium.rutgers.edu/pinelands/Panel11_Lichens.pdf)



Photo: M. Bawgus



## Regional Activities of Interest

### Invasive Plants Lecture, Mar 31

PA Horticultural Society, Philly

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

### NY Botanical Garden annual orchid exhibition, Feb. 23 – April 26. See

<http://www.nybg.org/>

### Trees, Tree Houses, and a lot about Wood, Longwood Gardens, April 15

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

## Thoughts on Spring

By Barb D'Augustine

"I love spring anywhere, but if I could choose I would always greet it in a garden." -- Gardening author Ruth Stout ( 1884 - 1980)

"Advice on dandelions: If you can't beat them, eat them." -- Retired USDA botanist James Duke

"All through the long winter, I dream of my garden. On the first day of spring, I dig my fingers deep into the soft earth. I can feel its energy, and my spirits soar." -- Legendary actor Helen Hayes

"Successful gardening is doing what has to be done when it has to be done the way it ought to be done whether you want to do it or not." -- "America's Master Gardener" Jerry Baker who began his career as an undercover cop posing as a gardener.

# HelpLine Extra: The Gypsy Moth

by Kathy Schoonover

**The gypsy moth will surely be the focus of many calls to our Help Line this spring, given last season's infestation and the NJ Department of Agriculture's announcement this January that gypsy moth populations in New Jersey are expected to rise even higher this year. Arming ourselves with information about this pest will allow us to handle calls quickly and efficiently. This month's article focuses on the history and biology of the gypsy moth; next month's will focus on the gypsy moth's ecological impact and methods of controlling/managing gypsy moth populations.**

## History

*Lymantria dispar*, the gypsy moth, has lived for thousands of years in temperate areas of Europe and Asia. It was introduced to North America in 1868 by French artist and amateur entomologist E. Leopold Trouvelot during his attempt to cross the disease-resistant European gypsy moth with North American silk-producing moths that were being killed by various diseases. Some gypsy moth larvae escaped Trouvelot's Boston backyard and became the first North American "settlers." Trouvelot, aware of the looming ecological threat, tried without success to warn local entomologists. After the incident, he lost interest in entomology and turned to astronomy.

By 1889, the Massachusetts State Board of Agriculture had begun a campaign to eradicate the pest, which failed; fifty years later, the gypsy moth had spread into most of the New England states. Today, the gypsy moth is spreading at the rate of 21 km/yr along a front that sweeps from Wisconsin to North Carolina, though it is found in states beyond this range.

## Biology

An understanding of the gypsy moth's life cycle is crucial to the success of human attempts to control its spread.

Like annual flowers, the gypsy moth completes its life cycle in one year. Each summer in late July and early August, adult female gypsy moths lay eggs in masses that are buff-colored and studded with hairs from their abdomens. The oval egg masses, about an inch long and a half-inch wide, are usually hidden in the dark, protected areas of trees or in the spaces behind and under lawn furniture, shutters, window sills, the wheel wells of vehicles, etc. Once the eggs are laid, both the male and female adult gypsy moths die.

Eggs typically hatch in this area by late April to early May (see photos at right). After larvae emerge from the egg mass, they produce a thin line of silk, which the wind can pick up and use to blow larvae to new locations, a phenomenon called "ballooning." The newly hatched larvae are black or brown and ¼ inch long, and soon develop long hair-like setae. Larvae increase in size by going through a series of molts; the periods between molts are called instars. Male larvae have five instars before entering the pupal stage; females have six. The later instar larvae have five pairs of raised blue spots and six pairs of red along their backs, with the red closest to their heads. The caterpillars are about two inches long.

It is feeding by the larval (caterpillar) stage of the gypsy moth that is responsible for the defoliation of trees. While the caterpillars prefer the leaves of oaks, they are known to feed on hundreds of different species during periods of high populations. A single caterpillar can consume 11 square feet of vegetation during its lifetime. Given that each egg mass produces upwards of five hundred caterpillars, complete defoliation of trees can occur rather quickly.

*(Continued on next page)*



# Gypsy Moth

*continued*

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The feeding period of the caterpillars lasts from 7-10 weeks (in New Jersey, roughly the months of May and June) and follows a pattern that is dependent on both the instar stage and population size. Young instars feed during early morning and late afternoon; at midday they rest on the underside of the leaf along the mid-rib. Older instars too large to seek shade in this way feed at night and migrate down the tree trunk to seek cool shade during the day. When populations are high, however, older instars feed continuously. Once a tree is defoliated, they crawl to a new host.

Larvae reach maturity approximately 8 weeks after egg hatch and crawl into the crevice of a tree and enter the pupal stage (in New Jersey, around the beginning of July). Pupae are dark brown, tear-shaped, and 1-2 inches long. Approximately two weeks later, the adult gypsy moth emerges.

Adults are rather large moths: the female has a wingspan of approximately two inches, and the male, 1½ inches. Only the males are capable of flight, which is why females lay their eggs a short distance from their pupa cases. Males are dark brown, and females are white with wavy dark bands across their forewings. The plumose antennae of the males are pheromone receptors. The female lays eggs within a day or two of mating, and both sexes then die, having lived on average only a week.



Gypsy moth population size is cyclical. A cycle comprises years of steady population growth that peaks and then dramatically crashes the following season. Many agents are responsible for the crashes: starvation, fungal and viral infections, parasites, and predators. These drops are followed by periods of low gypsy moth populations for five years or more. The latest peaks in gypsy moth populations in New Jersey have occurred during 1972, 1981, and 1990. We are currently experiencing another upward cycle that has not yet peaked.

The selective pressures that have kept gypsy moth populations in check in Europe for thousands of years are different than those operating in North America; the introduction of the species here has had an effect analogous to that of an invasive plant. While cyclical selective pressures do eventually reduce gypsy moth populations here, it is often after much damage has occurred.

Some natural predators of the gypsy moth are small mammals such as deer mice and shrews; invertebrates such as ants and ground beetles; parasites; viruses; and fungi.

That adult females of the European gypsy moth are incapable of flight affects its rate of spread. Naturally, there is concern that the Asian variety has been found in the United States, since its females are capable of flight.

In addition to the sources listed, see the Rutgers University Fact Sheet 004 at <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=FS004>. There are also four or five additional fact sheets / information packets in the HelpLine file folder. These also provide information on the 2008 and 2007 spraying programs in our area.

**Sources:**

[www.fs.fed.us/ne/morgantown/4557/gmoth](http://www.fs.fed.us/ne/morgantown/4557/gmoth) (source of photos)  
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# Perspectives

## Tool Time: Soil Thermometers

By Mary McDermott

When should you mulch in the fall? When is the ground warm enough for peppers? Tomatoes? Zinnias? Cannas? And just when, exactly, are we supposed to know when crabgrass is about to germinate? One way to test the accuracy of your instincts is with a soil thermometer. These relatively inexpensive tools (\$10 and up) can help ensure your indoor seedling trays are at the right temperature for ideal germination, and can help you avoid shocking your plants by introducing them into soil that's too cold for them. And you can be sure you're applying your winter mulch so that you're keeping the soil cool, not keeping it warm. (By the way, crabgrass germinates when the soil is temperature is between 55 and 60 F, so plan ahead!) The only downside: Forgetting the thermometer in the ground and stepping on it!

If you don't have a soil thermometer on hand and need a quick decision, in a pinch you can try MG '08 student **Anna May Maslinki's** approach: She was starting her tomatoes indoors, moving them from window to window to find the best spot. Finally, she decided to stop guessing. She pulled out her cooking thermometer, thrust it in the soil, and got a reading of 73 degrees. She was off and running!



## Avoiding Empty Nest Syndrome

From the March *Gardener News* comes this advice on helping birds this spring: Offer house supplies such as raffia, cotton yarn, shredded newspaper, pet fur, pine needles, etc. Place them in a pile on the ground, stuffed in tree crevices, or suspended in net bags. Birds will pick and choose the items they want to feather their own nests.

## Poetry Corner

by Kathy Schoonover

Vita Sackville-West (1892-1962) was an English poet, novelist, and gardener. She created the gardens at Sissinghurst Castle in Kent, England, which is now owned by the National Trust. The following poem of hers reflects a concern we'll all soon be faced with.

*Frost*

Therefore, lest this inclement friend should maim  
Your valued plants, plunge pots within a frame  
Sunk deep in sand or ashes to the rim,  
Warm nursery when nights and days are grim;  
But in the long brown borders where the frost  
May hold its mischievous and midnight play  
And all your winnings of the months be lost  
In one short gamble when the dice are tossed  
Finally and forever in a few hours,  
--The chance your skill, the stake your flowers,--  
Throw bracken, never sodden, light and tough  
In almost weightless armfuls down, to rest  
Buoyant on tender and frost-fearing plants;  
Or set the wattled hurdle in a square  
Protective, where the north-east wind is gruff,  
As sensitive natures seek for comfort lest  
Th'assault of like be more than they can bear,  
And find an end, not in timidity  
But death's decisive certainty.

## Want to contribute to *Garden Tales*?

*Garden Tales* is produced by Mary McDermott, following each Association meeting.

Send topic ideas, photos, or stories to Mary at [mmcddmnc@comcast.net](mailto:mmcddmnc@comcast.net)

# Plant Profile: Pokeweed

by Virginia Mason

Pokeweed, also called pokeberry, poke, or inkberry is a member of the pokeweed (Phytolaccaceae) family. It is a tall, herbaceous perennial with a thick fleshy taproot – a stout branching plant with racemes of white or pink flowers and dark purple berries. Pokeweed is native to North America, growing from Maine to Florida and west to Texas and reproduces only by seed. **All parts of the plant are poisonous if ingested**, causing vomiting, stomach irritation, mouth and throat burning and bloody diarrhea. Even though there are at least three different poisons in Pokeweed ('phytolaccatoxin, triterpene saponins, an alkaloid, phytolaccin, and histamines'), Indians often used it in concoctions for various medical purposes as well as for staining garments, feathers, and arrow shafts.



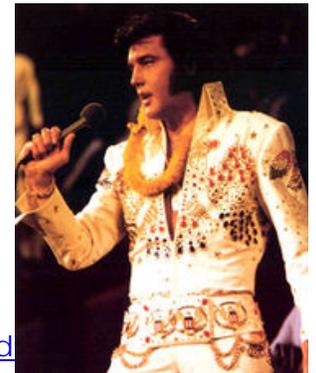
During the nineteenth century, pokeweed was used to treat syphilis, cancer, tumors, skin problems, neuralgia, rheumatism, and as an emetic. The juice of the berries has been used to make dyes, ink, food coloring, and as a coloring agent for wine. It is not currently used medicinally.



Birds, especially robins, bluebirds, mourning doves, catbirds and mockingbirds, seem to be immune to the poison. They will eat the ripe berries in the fall and scatter the seeds. Other animals will not eat the bitter tasting plant unless there is no other grazing food available. Usually growing in rich pasture land, open woodland areas, recent clearings or along fencerows, small infestations can be pulled up by the roots and burned. Children can be attracted by the crimson berries. Good pasture management can prevent parts getting into animal feed and hay.

Despite the poisonous nature of this plant, the young shoots and leaves have been eaten as a spring vegetable in the southern U.S. It is cooked in several changes of water before consumption. The term 'Poke Salad' is mistaken. Salad refers to greens eaten raw. It's actually 'Poke Sallet'- an old English word. Sallet refers to greens eaten after cooking.

In 1969, while Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, a song was being played on the radio called "Poke Salad Annie" or "Polk Salad Annie" written and performed by Tony Joe White. The term for the food in the song is "poke salad" traditionally and describes the picking and eating of the greens. Elvis Presley picked up the song for his live performances in the 70's.



References; <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/poison/Phytoam.htm>  
<http://www.vet.purdue.edu/depts/addl/toxic/plant40.htm>  
<http://www8.georgetown.edu/departments/physiology/cam/urbanherbs/pokeweed>  
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[http://emilydecampherbarium.rutgers.edu/images/Pokeweed\\_jpg.jpg](http://emilydecampherbarium.rutgers.edu/images/Pokeweed_jpg.jpg)

## Gardening as a positive life experience

- If I'm ever reborn, I want to be a gardener— there's too much to do for one lifetime! - Karl Foerster
- The most noteworthy thing about gardeners is that they are always optimistic, always enterprising, and never satisfied. They always look forward to doing something better than they have ever done before. - Vita Sackville-West, 1892 – 1962
- Gardening is an exercise in optimism. Sometimes, it is a triumph of hope over experience. - Marina Schinz
- I don't care what Elvis says... I hate pokeweed! – Mona Bawgus

## Atlantic County Master Gardener Newsletter

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Edited by:



Mona Bawgus  
Program Associate - Agriculture

## Early Spring reminders

- Get those cool-weather transplants out and start the warm-weather crops and flowers indoors.
- Deadhead daffodils and grape hyacinths; leave the leaves to ripen.
- Weed perennial gardens.
- Gently clear mulch from perennial crowns.
- In April, plant glads, daylilies, delphiniums.
- Plant bare root plants before they leaf out.
- Be on the lookout for early eastern tent caterpillars and destroy nests.
- Examine trees and shrubs for winter injury. Prune dead and weakened wood.
- When the soil reaches about 40 degrees, fertilize woody plants and shrubs.
- Tune up power equipment.
- Rake and re-seed bare lawn patches.
- Apply pre-emergent crabgrass killer when forsythia are in full bloom.
- Where needed, shear back tired ground covers with scissors, shears, or a sharp mower on a high setting.
- Where monarda is growing out of bounds, pull small shoots or divide and replant.
- Cut back hardy hibiscus stems, but mark area to recognize late emerging new growth.
- Gently rake out dead leaves from lambs' ears and trim / replant straying growth.



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Atlantic County Master Gardener Program  
Newsletter

# Online Extra: Spectacular Spring Flower Show At Keukenhof Gardens, NL

*Story and photos by Janet D'Alessandro*

A visit to this year's Philadelphia Flower Show lifts us all from the winter doldrums. For me, it also brought back memories of the amazing array of blooms at the Keukenhof Gardens in Lisse, Holland. Here, each year, 70 acres of mammoth trees, water features, and sculptures are the backdrop for over **7 million** colorful flowers bulbs planted by hand. These include daffodils, crocus, muscari, hyacinths, and some 4.5 million tulips in 100 different varieties. It is the largest (and most photographed) bulb flower park in the world.

Now in its 59<sup>th</sup> year, much of this present-day garden was once an estate. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Countess of Holland, Jacoba van Beieren, grew herbs and vegetables for her kitchen. From this, Keukenhof, which means Kitchen Garden, got its name.

In 1840 part of the original estate was designated to be a park, designed by landscape architects Zocher & Son who also designed the Vondelpark in Amsterdam. The majestic trees and the pond date back to that time and design.

The "garden" began its current-day splendor in 1949, when the Association of Tulip Flower Growers of Holland showcased their flowers here to sell and exchange bulbs. That still happens today; you can make a garden purchase in April and receive a fall shipment. But more likely you'll just want to visit this beautiful garden which hosts over 700,000 visitors from around the world each spring (between March 20 –May 18 in 2008). Best time to attend is late in April when all the bulbs are in bloom and the flowering trees and bushes are at their peak. It's also a good time to catch the Flower Parade on April 26. This has the pageantry of the Rose Parade and the uniqueness of the Mummers. For the entire day, 20 large floats (made entirely with flowers and plant material) and more than 30 decorated luxury cars interspersed with marching bands and banter travel along a preplanned route. The parade leaves Noordwijk in the morning and arrives in Haarlem by dusk.

Outside the Garden, there are also rows and rows of commercial tulips growing roadside (think of our mums in November). And, as flowers and gardening are part of the culture, the Dutch favor small plots of land with shed-like "cottages" that are weekend retreats for the city folk.

Need more reasons to see Keukenhof and go to Holland? You are very close to Amsterdam, public transportation is easy and affordable, and everyone in Holland speaks English.

Sadly, the public is invited to see the Keukenhof Garden only as long as the display's in bloom, so you have to go in the spring. However, last summer I recall a P. Allen Smith segment reporting that Keukenhof grows experimental new varieties of perennials in the off season, so maybe one day we may see a summer perennial show as well.

For more information go to: <http://www.holland.com> and <http://www.keukenhof.nl>



# On-Line Extra: Espalier

by Virginia Mason

An espalier is any plant (usually woody or fruit) that can be trained to grow in a flat plane. It would be supported by a wall, fence, wire with supports, or a trellis. The term can also be used for the training technique itself. The word may derive from the French *aspau*, meaning to prop, and the Italian *spalliera*, referring to a support for the shoulder or back. Today, it's pronounced "es-PAL-yer." Originated as a Roman technique and refined by Europeans (who used the term to describe the trellis or frame that the plant was trained on) through the decades, this method of growing can provide beauty, function and practicality.

Espaliers can be used in many ways in garden design: a living sculpture against a blank wall; to produce food or visual pleasure in minimal space; as an attractive divider or screen; as a landscape accent for entrances; or a focal point in a cultivated area. They can be trained into informal or formal patterns. Informal allows the espalier to grow in its natural shape. Formal espaliers require many hours of pruning, tying and shaping and follow the design of its support framework. Some formal patterns include cordon, u-shaped (candelabra), palmette, fan-shaped, fence, basket weave, tiered and chevron(v-shaped).

- Espaliers can form a living wall or attractive arch and can be trained to a table form.
- A cordon, the simplest form for an espalier, is a single stem that can be vertical, horizontal, oblique, tiered or even braided.
- The u-shaped are formed as single, double, or triple -- but is a difficult process requiring a lot of maintenance pruning to form the candelabra effect.
- Most popular espalier design is the palmette verrier, which is a tiered cordon trained upward into a candelabra shape.
- A good choice for a screen would be a fence pattern, such as the Belgium fence, which is a complex lattice formed by horizontal cordons and 45-degree branching to form a broad V.

There are several ways to begin to start an espalier. You can find pruned plants about 3 to 4 feet tall in a container with a trellis in a nursery. If you're planting against a wall, plant 8 to 10 inches away to allow for root growth, air circulation and easy pest control access. You'll need items for anchoring (bolts, plugs, screws, roof clips, etc.) and support (wiring, trellis, posts, fence, etc.). An unpruned plant will need to go further from a wall to allow for the pruning to be done while dormant or in the appropriate season if a flowering plant. Pruning will stimulate growth and limbs can be bent and trained to the supports in the summer when they are most flexible.

Patience is required to grow an espalier. They are high maintenance (pruning every few months until established, frequent fertilization, and pest and disease control) and cannot be trained in one year. However, once set and settled, only a few hours each season are needed. Some trees (like dwarf fruit trees for the home landscape), shrubs and vines suggested for espaliers include: Apple/Crabapple (*Malus* sp.), Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*), Star Magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*), Camellia (*Camellia japonica*), Pyracantha (*Pyracantha* sp.), Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster* sp.), Fig (*Ficus carica*), Winter Jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflora*), Viburnum (*Viburnum* sp.) and American Wisteria (*Wisteria frutescens*) to name a few.

If I have sparked your interest in this truly creative growing endeavor, check these references;

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/quickref/general/espalier.html>

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-619.html>

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1427.html>

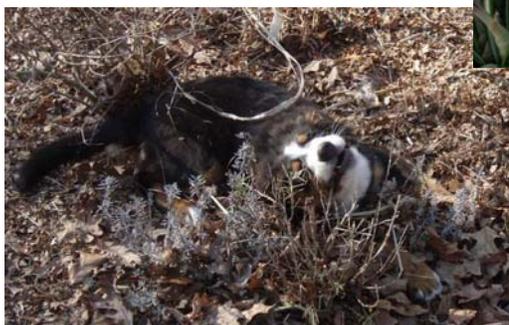
<http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/gt/espalier/espalier.html>

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG273>



# Online Extra: Early Spring

By Mary McDermott



Cutting back the rosemary

