



Garden Tales

A Newsletter from Rutgers Master Gardeners
of Atlantic County

March 2014
Volume 11, Issue 1



Coordinators Comments:

By Mona Bawgus

Hello Master Gardeners!

Does anyone else have the gardening bug?? With the past few days feeling more and more like spring, along with all the seeds in the local stores, spring cannot be far away. Have you started your lettuce and greens seeds? Are you going to plant your peas on St. Patrick's Day? It seems like last year things were already done by now. Maybe I should check my gardening journal.

This year, if you don't already use a gardening journal, plan on starting one. "A gardening journal can help you plan from year to year by leaving a written record of exactly what, when and where seeds and plants were grown," explained Barb Fick, home horticulturist with the Oregon State University Extension Service. If something didn't work put that in also so it won't happen again. It doesn't have to be fancy, just paper and a place to organize them.

Keeping a journal will give you a sense of accomplishment and will prove invaluable as a personal journey through.

See Mary's article on page 4 for further details on journaling.

RUTGERS

New Jersey Agricultural
Experiment Station



Important Dates

Mar	11	MG Class - Propagation Class
	11	Hope Community Garden Talk – by MG Sue Scarlett on Seed Starting)
	14	MGA Meeting with Speaker to follow
	17	MG Class - Native Plants/Invasives
	21	Eagle Theatre Project Meeting 10 AM – RCE office
	25	MG Class – Landscape Design
April	27	MG Ann Cinquina at Hammonton Canoe Club - 11AM
	28	MG Roundtable Meeting 10 AM
	1	MG Class - Arboriculture
	8	MG Class – Earthwise Lawncare
	11	MGA Meeting
	15	MG Class – Helpline/ Working w/Youth
	18	Office Closed – Good Friday
	22	MG Class – Waldor Orchids Tour
	22	MG Sue Scarlett at Little Gardens Club – Vegetables Talk
	24	EARTHDAY at FAA Tech Center
	25	MG Roundtable Meeting 10 AM
	27	EARTHDAY at ACUA
	29	MG Class – Vegetables I

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Community Outreach - 2014 Plans for Projects

Eagle Theatre Project – Sandy Templeton, chairperson

There will be a Rutgers Master Gardener directed planting of the native plant demo garden at this location in late May. The master gardeners will also help train community volunteers to maintain the garden. Volunteers are currently working with the theatre manager and artistic director to develop a plant list and plan for hardscape. MG's are also looking at the possibility of having an "on-site helpline" for the community in conjunction with a film and "opening reception" co-hosted by the theatre and Hammonton's Green Committee.

Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge Native Garden – Bev Alberston, Evonne Kaminski – co-chairs

Master Gardeners will be updating plant markers and selecting additional plants at this site. Mg's will also be creating a powerpoint presentation on native plants with references to the Forsythe Gardens to be shown at the refuge and to groups in the area.

County Office Extension Project – Doug Groff, chairperson

Plans for this project this year include building a raised bed of flowers and native plants under the county office sign. Master Gardeners will continue to expand plantings of native species in front of the building and add plant labels to new and established plants. Pruning, weeding and watering will continue to take place to help bring attention by the public entering the building to the beauty of using native plants in the landscape.

Plant Sale – Lynn Kell, Sue Scarlett – co-chairs

Based on the success of last year's sale, increased quantities of perennials, herbs and succulents will be ordered for this event to be held on May 17th. The public will be able to interact with Master Gardeners, learn about the program and have their gardening questions answered by our helpline staff which will include Mona.

Linwood Arboretum – Mary-Lou Monihan, chairperson

The development of a docent program is in the works for this year. Ongoing projects include arboretum transplants and development of new sites as they occur; ex. a scree garden and weed beds near the berms and drought resistant plants in the annex. Lectures for this year will include: Curator, Allen Lacy, "A walk in the winter garden"; George Buttress, "Dwarf Conifers"; and coming soon Andrew Bunting of Scott Arboretum and Jason Austin on NJ natives/bay plants.

Master Gardeners will be called upon by Curator, Allen Lacy and George Butrus in order to contribute our expertise as needed and experience educational lectures. As we develop our outreach lectures we plan to share presentations with Linwood Arboretum volunteers and the Friends of the Linwood Arboretum group.

Bird & Butterfly Garden at Galloway Library – Jesse Connor, chairperson

Plant identification markers, seasonal maintenance, planting and care will be ongoing. We will need to redo the path with wood chips, the sides need be mulched, and the liriopie will have to be removed as it is taking over. We will focus on signage for this project; one to indicate that this is a Rutgers Master Gardener project and another to illustrate the butterfly lifecycle, host plants, etc. Education opportunities will take place at the plant sale in May with one or two brief walking tours. This year would also be a good year to coordinate the garden with a library children's program.

The helpline office has opened for the season and seems to be running smoothly. When time permits, mgs are working on going through the current files and ensuring that the factsheets available pertain to our gardening zone. One factsheet per question is sufficient for mailing.



Master gardeners are currently available from 9 a.m. until noon. In April, mg's will be available from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. (Remember that the schedule fills up fast, so if have hours to fulfill on the helpline, you might want to make a visit to the office).

Typical Topics at This Time

Vegetables:

- Starting from seed
- Germination test
- Best varieties for this area
- mulches

Frost Dates

- Average Date – April 15
- Last Date – May 15

Lawns

- pH tests at office \$2 (need 1 cup of soil)
- Soils kits \$20 pick up at RCE front office
- NJ Fertilizer law for consumers

<http://www.wrwc.org/NJFertilizerLaw2011.pdf>

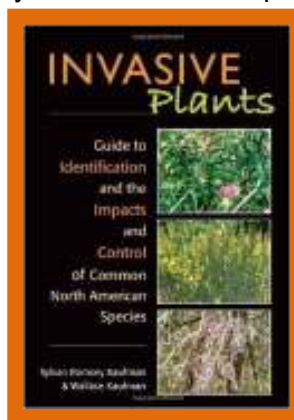
Houseplants

- Pests

Green Thumb Articles

- ❖ Wood Ash
- ❖ Beekeeping
- ❖ Scale
- ❖ Rosemary
- ❖ Houseplants: Vacation
- ❖ Rhododendron Leaf Curling
- ❖ Ticks and Lyme Disease

Look for these newly purchased books available for your use on the helpline:

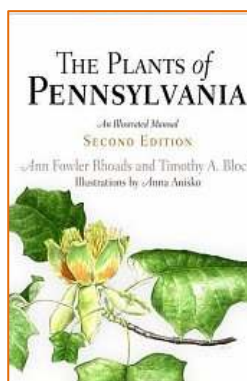


Invasive Plants: Guide to Identification and Impacts and Control of Common North American Species

Second Edition, Revised and Updated

Sylvan Ramsey Kaufman & Wallace Kaufman.

This book includes wonderful photos, the name and family of the plant in question, it's identifying characteristics, habitat and range, what it does to the ecosystem, how it came to North America, management, and resources to find more information on the plant in question.



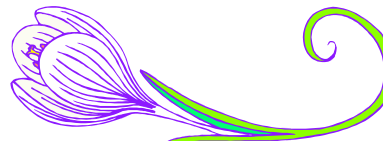
The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual

Ann Fowler Rhoads and Timothy A. Block

Families and genera are listed in a sequence determined by current studies of plant molecular genetics, thus providing new insights for the study of botany. In addition, species have been added to the book as a result of new discoveries. The botanical illustrations of Anna Anisko continue to complement the descriptions and add an element of beauty to the volume.

Roundtable Meetings

Friday, March 28 – 10 am
Friday, April 25 – 10 am



Time to start your Garden Journal – Mary McDermott - Class of 2005

If you don't already have one, now's the perfect time to start a Garden Journal, before things get too busy. There are lots of methods to consider, from online tools and phone apps to the basic three ring binder. Choose the approach you're most comfortable with – keeping in mind that it may have to withstand muddy fingers and garden shed conditions from time to time. My approach is the three ring binder, because I can add, subtract and re-organize things any time I want. Here are some tips if you decide to go this route:

1. Divide the binder by month, using blank monthly calendar pages as the dividers. (There are free online templates you can print, or cut up an extra calendar).
2. In addition, have separate tabs for:
 - a. Copies of receipts or orders when you buy plants, seeds, and bulbs
 - b. Deer Resistant Plants list, Salt tolerant Plants List, Native plants list
 - c. Garden layout plans – dreams, actual plans, planting diagrams, etc.
 - d. Clear plastic envelopes for odds and ends.
3. On the calendar pages, write notes to yourself:
 - a. What you *want* to do and when (“Cut back buddleia”)
 - b. What you *actually* did and when (“Divided Iris”)
 - c. The dates you started or transplanted seedlings
 - d. When you ordered bulbs or seeds
 - e. When you first noticed Japanese Beetles, squash bugs, or other pests.
 - f. Reminders for regular deer repellent actions.
 - g. Early and late frosts and unusual weather conditions.
 - h. Reminders for pruning and fertilizing dates
 - i. Reminders for winterizing gardens, irrigation systems, and ponds
 - j. Whatever you feel like – reactions to positive or not-so-great plants, how long it takes for certain bulbs to sprout, what winter hardy plants did or didn't make it, “notes to self” for next year (“rip out xyz!!”), care sheets for certain plants, photos of plants or gardens, etc.
 - k. I also cut interesting things out of magazines and tuck them behind the month that they relate to, so I have them each year.



Keep your binder somewhere handy, so you can note things each day, and noodle about what's ahead. Then each year, print new calendar pages. Put them in the binder right in front of the previous year's page. A simple flip lets you see the important activities of the year before, and you can transfer info to the current year. I've been using this approach for several years, and while it's basic, it works well for me. I don't have to “reinvent the wheel” when spring kicks in, and I discover notes to myself that I'd completely forgotten about. Give it a try – and don't be surprised when you have to get a bigger binder next year.

Upcoming Speakers for MGA meetings

March 14 - Green Team Brigantine (dune restoration)

May 9 - Rutgers Climate Division
(science behind climate and environmental change)

Additional Education Opportunities

38th Annual Home Gardeners School

March 22, 2014

<http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu/courses/current/ah0201ca.html>

Bee-ginner's Beekeeping

April 10 – 12, 2014 - **SOLD OUT**

May 22 – 24, 2014

www.cpe.rutgers.edu/bees

Upcoming MG Classes

11-Mar	Plant Propagation
17-Mar	Native Plants/Invasives**
25-Mar	Landscape Design
1-Apr	Arboriculture
8-Apr	Earthwise Lawn Care
15-Apr	Helpline/Working with Youth
22-Apr	Waldor Orchids Field Trip
29-Apr	Vegetables I
6-May	Vegetables II
13-May	Small Fruit I
20-May	Small Fruit II

*March 17 is a Monday and class begins at 10 AM



Jeanne Holbrook

Linda Mantello

Don McBride

Kathy McCormick

Bob Sergeant

Dee Zaniewski

Buzz around the Feeders

Sue Scarlett – Class of 2009

In February when the weather was unusually warm (approx. 65 degrees); I was outside cleaning up my garden beds, and loving it. My dog Buddy was with me, and took much interest in and around my bird feeders.

I had just filled them with 8 lbs. of seed, which I do every week all though the winter. With closer inspection I was very surprised to see a swarm of Honey Bees eating the bird seed. See attached photos. They were there the entire day, not leaving until dusk. The birds did not know what to make of this. They kept trying to land and eat with no success, the woodpeckers included. The black birds which come in flocks and take over my feeders swarmed the trees over & over again, but would not attempt to eat. I've never see this in the 14 years I've been here & feeding the birds. After all day coming & going to my feeders the Bees left the feeders only half full. That means they took, ate, and dropped 4 lbs of Bird Seed. Has anyone ever seen this before? Wonder what that honey would taste like????



Here is an extension article on honey bees at birdfeeders:

http://anr.ext.wvu.edu/bees/faqs/bees_birdfeeder

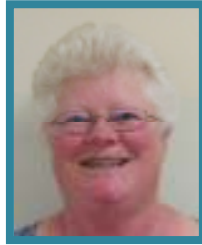
The above mentioned factsheet states:

When no flowers are available to provide pollen, the foraging bees will turn to other sources they may encounter.

Everyone has a story!

In an attempt to help everyone get to know their fellow MG's we have brought this section back to our newsletter.

Jeanne Holbrook, 2013
Egg Harbor Twp.
Atlantic City Aquarium, plant sale, helpline



- ❖ My Favorite....
 - Time of year is Spring and Fall because I hate the heat of summer but enjoy gardening and growing things! I am not a fan of the sun because I am fair and burn easily.
 - Garden tool: My hand trowel or maybe my pruners hmmm, they are both in my pockets, bucket or carryall at all times.
 - MG Activity: Gardening, propagating, learning, teaching, etc.
 - Garden drink/garden recipe: Iced tea – any way and any style as long as it is sugar free and caffeine free.
- ❖ My least favorite plants are poison ivy and brambles.
- ❖ My family thinks my gardening is out of control - I started a nursery business and have no time to weed my own flower beds!
- ❖ If I didn't join the MG program I would still be gardening.
- ❖ If I had my own farm, I would grow more bushes!
- ❖ Most Mg's don't know that I love to fish.



Happy Birthday Master Gardeners!!

March

- 1 John Collette
- 13 Anita Wagner
- 16 Bev Albertson
- 20 Mary Breckley
- 30 Paula Demarest

April

- 2 Mary-Lou Monihan
- 30 Carol Dupras



Doug Groff, 2011
Linwood
Treasurer – MGA, Forsythe Refuge Project, County Extension Office Project, Helpline

- ❖ My Favorite....
 - Time of year is Spring because the plants and flowers start to bloom.
 - Garden tool: Bypass pruning shears and battery powered weed whacker – I like a well-manicured landscape.
 - MG Activity: Working at the Forsythe Refuge project
 - MG Class: Small Fruits Tour and the Native Plants and Invasives class.
 - Garden drink/garden recipe: An ice cold light premium lager during the hot days of summer. After gardening is complete a nice bold glass of red wine.
- ❖ My least favorite plant is the invasive phragmite reed plant.
- ❖ My family thinks my gardening is awesome!
- ❖ If I didn't join the MG program I would be "Wasting life away in Margaritaville."
- ❖ If I had my own farm, I would grow grapes.
- ❖ Most MGs don't know that my wife and I love to "jitterbug" and dance to the music of the big band era.



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Master Gardener Newsletter**

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Birdhouse Management – Gail Fisher, Class of 2010

As spring cleanup begins, now is also the correct time to set up birdhouses (nest boxes). We choose the proper size and site location according to the species we wish to attract. We provide structurally secure boxes to help ensure a successful brood. Just as each plant needs specific conditions and protection to thrive, so do the winged guests we invite to our gardens.

Part of our spring readiness also includes a recognition/removal plan for invasive species of all sorts. There's little sympathy for the deer, moles, voles, mice and others when they devour our investments of time and money right before our very eyes.

The Pest

However, many of us are not as familiar with a cleverly disguised, invasive and dangerous threat to our native birds: the House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus*. Also called the English Sparrow, it was imported from England in the 1850s and erroneously thought to control insects. HOSPs quickly multiplied and became destructive to crops and orchards as well as to native birds. Oh, but they're so CUTE, some think. Ah... but nobody knows what goes on behind closed nest boxes!

The following paragraph is an excerpt from the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) Factsheet on House Sparrow Control.

House Sparrows are extremely aggressive. They will harass, attack, and kill adult native birds when competing for nest sites, and destroy their eggs and young. They also overwhelm birdfeeders, driving native birds away.

This is the bluebird nest box sited at the edge of my veggie garden last spring. A pair began to build a nest. See those blue feathers? A House Sparrow trapped the male inside the box, killed it, tore it apart, and then built its own nest right on top of the dead bluebird.



Pest Control

There are two levels of pest control for House Sparrows. The first is PASSIVE control (taking preventative measures to discourage sparrows). This includes:

Plugging the Entrance Hole - keeps the sparrows from entering (and everyone else, too) and encourages them to move elsewhere.

Eliminating Feeding Areas - This is one of the most important factors for discouraging these pests. House Sparrows are attracted to yards where mixed seed is put out in feeders and on the ground. A good way to discourage House Sparrows from moving into your property is not to put out seed mixes. Putting feeders with (straight) black oil sunflower seeds, thistle feeders with nyger seed, and suet feeders will meet the needs of our native bird population with less chance of attracting aggressive non-native birds like house sparrows (and starlings).

Note: It's important to correctly identify the birds. House Sparrows are more attracted to mixed seed but many native sparrows, like the White Throated Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow and Song Sparrow enjoy black oil sunflower seeds. One good identification guide is the Sibley Field Guide.

Sparrow Spookers - shiny ribbons, such as strips of mylar, attached on the nestbox.

(continued on next page)

The second level is ACTIVE control (removing nests, eggs and trapping adults), and includes:

Regular Monitoring - check the nest boxes 1-2 times/week, remove House Sparrow nests and eggs. This will prevent young from fledging from this box, but the male may still defend it and will drive off any other birds interested in nesting there.

In-Box Trapping- there are a variety of traps available to install inside the nest box. Note: Before you order, check your nest boxes to see how they open for clean-out. Does the front/side/back/bottom/ top drop down/ swing up/ swing out? Is there enough space to slip the trap down over the screws when the trap door is centered on the entry hole?

Bait Trapping - these traps are located outside the box and are designed to trap multiple birds. Learn about proper trap set-up and maintenance. These traps catch the birds. Then they must be euthanized. (Relocation is not a viable option - it just relocates the problem) How this is done must be your decision. Be aware, however, that there are Federal, State and local rules that govern humane euthanization. I cannot and should not suggest a particular approach. Also, if this is an approach you are willing to explore, first be VERY sure you have properly identified the bird as a House Sparrow

Please take time to read the full article at the link below. While the target audience is bluebird trail monitors, this information applies equally to anyone interested in responsible care of their home nest boxes.

<http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/PDF/FAQ/NABS%20factsheet%20-%20HOSP%20Control%20-%2024May12%20DRAFT.pdf>

Disclaimer

Yes, it does take more effort to responsibly maintain the nest boxes. But, as I've been told, "It is better to have no nest boxes at all than to allow invasive species to nest in them." No, it's not a pleasant chore, but I've had to learn to focus on the goal...improving the native habitat. It's for the birds!



←Eastern Bluebird eggs and day old chick

Purple Martin eggs and day old chick →

Photos by Gail Fisher



One final note: European Starlings are also a destructive, invasive species which threaten native birds. They were not discussed here due to space constraints.

More information on aggression of House Sparrows (and starlings)

<http://www.purplemartin.org/forumarchives/archive/Supercompet.htm>

Nest box choices: the right fit for the right bird.

<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=FS034>

<http://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/FNR/FNR-246-W.pdf>

More information on controls

<http://www3.ag.purdue.edu/entm/wildlifehotline/pages/sparrows.aspx>