



Garden



Atlantic County Master Gardener Program Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 10



Current Projects Update

- **Pleasantville School/South Main Street:** The group has already planted herbs, garlic, and flower bulbs with students (see photo on page 9). The next student planting session is November 1, from 3 to 4 p.m., in conjunction with a lesson on soils. **Estell Manor Park:** Flower and vegetable gardens are in great shape, and weeding was done on the herb garden. The group met recently to finish weeding and get the beds winter ready.
- **A.C. Aquarium:** As the first step, Bunny and Mona are developing design and plant choice proposals based on ornamental grass plantings around the aquarium sign. Our next steps are dependent on the Aquarium staff to finish some maintenance work and soil grading. If they can do that in the next month, we'll plant this fall. Otherwise, we'll plant in the spring.
- **Forsythe Refuge:** The group is still meeting on Thursday mornings from 9 - 12 (you can join any hours within that time). The garden looks great, thanks to all the volunteer support. We will order native plants from Pineland Nursery for fall planting. Volunteers welcome!
- **Peace Pilgrim Park, Egg Harbor City: *New!*** This new project involves students from the **Fanny D. Rittenberg Middle School** in garden planning and planting. Contact Kim Hesse for info.
- **Community beautification: *New!*** On Grace Wagner's suggestion, we are talking with the ACUA's Adopt a Road project to "adopt" a planting area in a high-profile area (such as Mill Road or Fire Road) to contribute to community beautification and continue to raise the MG organization profile.
- **Demo Garden:** Work continues to winterize the raised vegetable beds, and to plan the Spring flower bed/garden design.

Hot Happenings

- Nov 17 MG Association Meeting, 12:30 to 2:30. Mays Landing Classroom; bring a bag lunch.
- Feb 15 – 18 NJ Flower & Garden Show, Edison
- Jan 5 Rutgers' Spring courses begin (see p.5)



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HelpLine News and Info

Invasive Species References

If you couldn't make it to the October MG Association meeting, you missed a great presentation by **Steve Atzert**, the director of the Forsythe National Wildlife refuge. In addition to a lively hands-on presentation (did you get a whiff of that "tree of heaven"?), Steve provided some helpful web-based references for more information on invasive plants and native alternatives. Here are several of Steve's suggestions:

Reference Title	Web link
An overview of indigenous plant species in NJ	http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/natural/heritage/InvasiveReport.pdf
Plant invaders of the mid-Atlantic natural areas	http://www.invasive.org/eastern/midatlantic
Native alternatives to invasive plants	Available through the Brooklyn Botanic Garden bookstore at http://shop.bbg.org/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=BGG&Product_Code=BBG-PLA-179&Category_Code=BBG-PLA
Native plant society of New Jersey	http://www.npsnj.org
Alternatives for invasive ornamental plant species	http://www.caes.state.ct.us/SpecialFeatures/NativeAlternatives.pdf
The Nature Conservatory global invasive species initiative	http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu

Fall HelpLine dates available

To help keep our HelpLine hours covered, consider volunteering singly: as the call volume decreases, we won't need two people per shift. And while on duty during slow times, discover (or re-discover) all the resources in the HelpLine office and library. For example, read/review some of the text books in the library, read the HelpLine manual, assist with filing, check with Mona on additional activities, etc. Last year, for example, volunteers practiced plant propagation and other activities.

Green Thumb articles

Read these to prepare for callers' questions, and feel free to send copies to clients. You'll find these in the "Green Thumb" binder in the HelpLine office.

- Fall blooming perennials, September 29
- Rain Gardens, October 6
- Backyard composting, October 13
- Harvesting home gourds, October 20
- Tree choices for front yards, October 27



No one has ALL the answers!

Don't hesitate to tell clients that you'll research their questions and call them back. Don't feel you have to rush to a conclusion while on the phone. Practice asking lots of questions and use the diagnostic tools outlined in the HelpLine manual.

Timesheet Updates

Association Meetings count as one hour for "Community Education." Certified MGs may count Steve Atzert's Oct. 13 presentation as a half hour of "Education." (MG Interns do not have a Continuing Education Unit requirement.)

Recent calls and expected calls

The HelpLine calls have been slowing down, which is typical for the season. However, calls continue to come in from clients concerned about planting and transplanting trees, perennials and shrubs; about critters coming indoors as the weather cools (millipedes, spiders, bats, and possums); about suddenly visible oak galls; and about bringing in tender plants – there are quite a few questions about fig trees. These topics track to what we heard last year, so research the fact sheets in the file cabinets to prepare.

Committee News & Updates

Community Outreach Committee, report by Kathy Olsen and Nancy Jansen

- See page 1, “**Current Projects Update.**”
- **Noyes Museum** in Oceanville is seeking help in weeding gardens.
- Next meeting November 17 at 11:30, at the MG offices just before the Association meeting

Hospitality Committee: report by Bev Albertson

- The committee will send **get well/condolence cards** to members. If you know of a situation where such a card would be appropriate, contact Bev Albertson.
- **Birthday celebrations**: Each month’s newsletter will list Association members’ birthdays (sans years!).
- **Refreshments** at Association meetings: The group is investigating options for drinks and desserts for our meetings.

For a brief explanation of each committee’s responsibilities, see page 3 of the August “Garden Tales.”

HelpLine Committee, report by Mona

- See HelpLine News & Info, page 2

Communications Committee, report by Mary McDermott

- **Newsletter**: The office printer is not working quite right, so the September and October issues have been printed in black and white. The newsletter is still produced in color, which you can see on the HelpLine computer. The November and December issues will be a single combined issue. Send story ideas, photos, etc. to Mary McDermott.
- **Photos for Members’ directory**: If you haven’t provided a “head and shoulders” photo of yourself for the updated Members’ directory, bring a photo to the November association meeting, or email it to Michelle Brunetti-Post. Mary and/or Michelle will bring a camera to the November meeting as well.

Nominating and Election Committees, report by Kathy Olsen

- The nominees for 2007 officers are: Michelle, President. Debra, vice president. Mary, secretary. Daina, Treasurer. There were several other nominees. However, those nominees chose not to stand for election. No other nominations came from the floor at the October meeting. Elections will be finalized at the December meeting.

Finance & Fund Raising Committee, report by Grace Wagner

- The committee will meet November 17 at noon at the MG office, and report updates at the Association meeting.

Speakers Board: A possible speaker for future Association meetings is Barbara Fiedler (Galloway), on composting.

Estell Manor Park invites you!

The Estell Manor Park staff is hosting an appreciation luncheon for volunteers and guests on Sunday, November 5, at 1:00. Look forward to music, awards, prizes and more. RSVP with Karen Zindell at 645-5960 before October 31.

Information & Resources

Publications of Interest

- The NJ Nursery & Landscape Association has published their new “**Trees & Shrubs: Plants for Outdoor Living.**” This full-color catalog provides plant characteristics, care, and recommendations for a wide range of plants selected to grow well in our area. The NJNLA notes that many of the plants listed are native plants. A copy is in the HelpLine “To Read” folder.
- **Gardener News:** This monthly NJ-specific newspaper is available at the HelpLine office. October stories include “Mulch volcanoes are killing our trees,” composting leaves, preparing your landscape for winter, and more. Copies are at the HelpLine office.

School gardening goes nationwide

The September 9 “The Press of Atlantic City,” ran a nearly full-page article entitled, “School gardens help students learn about better diet, growing, process” (a copy is in the HelpLine office). The author profiled a middle-school in Sacramento, California, and observed, “[gardening is] good for the soul, the palate, and the community.” Here in Atlantic County, we have several school gardening programs and partnerships underway.



New Tree Workshop Formed

Mona is leading a tree study group – the first workshop of its kind for our chapter. Activities include learning detailed tree characteristics, researching native species and hybrids, and sharing information as a HelpLine resource. Five specimens will be discussed each month. While the workshop is already filled, keep an eye out for future workshops. Mona will provide updates at association meetings.

USFS Weeds of the Week

In coordination with Steve Atzert’s talk on invasive plants, a weekly resource on invasive plants and weeds comes from the US Forest Service. See http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive_plants/weeds/index.shtm for more fact sheets and detailed information:

- **British Yellowhead:** (a.k.a. British elecampane, inula, meadow fleabane, yellow starwort). At up to 30 inches tall, this member of the Aster family is an aggressive weed often introduced into local landscapes intermingled with nursery hosta or daylily plants. It will be listed as noxious, as it can be toxic to some animals.
- **Whitetop** (a.k.a. hoary cress, whiteweed, peppergrass, heart-podded hoarycress, hoary cardaria). This two-foot tall member of the mustard family is found in full sun, and can spread rapidly. A single plant can spread to a 12-foot diameter in one year.
- **Japanese Yew** (*Taxus cuspidat Sieb. & Zucc.*) This member of the yew family reaches 25 feet, and resembles the native Canada Yew. It is reported invasive in NJ, as it frequently escapes landscape plantings. NOTE: For some animals, including dogs, eating plant parts can be toxic.
- **Ground Ivy** (a.k.a. cat’s-foot, creeping Charlie, creeping Jenny, field balm, haymaids, etc.) This perennial herb in the mint family forms thick tangled mats with 12-18” flowering branches. It’s reported as invasive in NJ and is toxic to many animals, particularly horses when eaten in large quantities.
- **Common Barberry** (*Berberis vulgaris L.* (a.k.a. European barberry, jaundiceberry, pepperidge bush, sowberry, etc.). This eight to ten-foot shrub is reported invasive in NJ. Birds spread the seeds, and the barberry can limit the growth of native plants, reducing wildlife habitat and forage.

Visit new “NJ Farms” Website

Just in time for pumpkin and apple picking, New Jersey’s new agri-tourism website has been launched. Visit *New Jersey Farms* is available at: <http://www.visitnjfarms.org/>

Events & Education

2007 MG Course

The 2007 Atlantic County course begins in January and includes two classes we haven't had before: Basic Botany, and Tropicals (led by Triple Oaks Nursery). Triple Oaks has also offered MGs a free tour of their facilities, which may be a field trip in May '07. Current MG interns and certified MGs can sit in on the two new 2007 classes, as well as any classes they may have missed due to absences, etc.

Mona is investigating changes to the Landscape Design class, as well investigating offering one or more Landscape Design classes specifically for Association Members



Spring Friday courses at Rutgers

"Basics of Plant Materials," "Basics of Landscape Design," and "Residential Landscape Renovations" will be offered on Fridays starting January 5, at Rutgers' campus in New Brunswick. These detailed, for-credit courses last up to ten weeks. Rutgers also offers a two-day "Introduction to Plant Identification" class (a prerequisite for the Plant Materials Class). Mona has taken several of these courses and highly recommends them. For more information, see www.cookce.rutgers.edu/programs/landscape.html Rutgers recently published their "Professional Landscape Programs" course catalog (see it in the HelpLine office). Register early for a significant discount.

FYI....The International MG Conference will be held May 2 – 5 in Little Rock, Arkansas. For more information about the event and renowned speakers, see <http://mg2007.uaex.edu/news/default.htm>

Annual Master Gardener Conference

By Kathy Olson

Nine of our members participated in the October 7 conference at Cook College in New Brunswick, and we found it interesting and engaging. Some highlights:

- **Bruce Crawford** (Director of display Gardens/Landscape Architecture, Rutgers University) presented Design Thoughts for Residential Gardens. He discussed 'good garden design' using color, space, textures, and light/dark. He discussed the value of 'outside rooms' and emphasized passageways using vertical lines: trees, poles, posts, and columns. He promoted using arbors, paths, and small patches of lawn and walkways. He liked the simple line of the house front with a pathway that leads where you would like your guests to enter. We have a handout.
- **Nancy Kalacz**, (President on MGANJ and Nursing Faculty at Orange County Community College) presented Murder in the Garden. Her very humorous approach to toxic plants in the garden was very entertaining. She supplied the pharmacology of the plants and the history of their use. We have a handout for this as well.
- An **Award of Excellence** was presented to AC MGs for our HelpLine Manual. The state coordinator has the manual and may use elements for the state-wide course materials. Congratulations to all who supported the manual, including Phil Cross, who chaired the committee, and Mary McDermott, editor.
- **Preservation in the Pinelands:** The mission of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance is to protect and preserve the resources of the Pine Barrens, to promote public awareness and acquire land to preserve the ecosystem. www.pinelandsalliance.org
- **Themed Herb Gardens:** How to set up an herb garden with different themes. We have a handout for this presentation.
- **Maximizing Media Access and Development to Promote Master Gardeners Objectives:** Mona attended this workshop on how to advertise who we are and what we do.

Outstanding work!

At the October Association meeting, the group recognized

- **Kathy Olsen** for her outstanding bulb presentation Oct. 12 at the Linwood Library; Bette and Janet were significant contributors.
- **Mary McDermott** for her production of the monthly association newsletter, *Garden Tales*.

NJ Flower Show in February

Mark your calendars now for the big show in February. We'll have the opportunity to volunteer at the show for 2 to 3 hour blocks – and volunteers get in free. Held from February 15 to 18 at the NJ Convention and Expo Center in Edison, The Flower Show will feature full-scale display gardens, seminars, how-to demos, exhibits and a flower show. We'll also have details at our next meeting on entry-fee discounts available (for Thursday and Friday only). Watch for an email or meeting minutes for details on volunteering. See <http://www.macevents.com/show.cfm?eventID=121>



Stories from the HelpLine

By Grace Wagner

Recently, a Ventnor client called to say he had a Banyan tree – a direct descendant of the original Thomas Edison Banyan tree. The client's tree is now five feet tall, and he didn't know where to place it. He called us to see if we wanted the tree for inside our building (it's not hardy in our zone). We suggested Longwood Gardens or the Morris Arboretum. He wasn't familiar with the Morris Arboretum, but when I told him it was connected to the University of Pennsylvania, he perked right up. It turns out our client is a Wharton School alumnus and was a professor in business at the University of Pennsylvania. Our client was so pleased with our suggestion that he plans to stop by the offices with a photo of the tree and himself.

Edison planted the first Banyan tree in the U.S. It was a gift from Harvey Firestone, after Firestone visited India in 1925. The original four-foot tall tree is now some 400 feet across at the Edison and Ford Winter Estates in Fort Meyers, FL. *Ficus Urostigma* is also known as the Strangler fig.

A new way to look at seeds

The October "Discover Magazine" discussed "How flowering plants beat out the competition on ancient earth." Noting that "Botany is fundamentally about sex, and flowering plants have thrived because they are better at it," the feature offers an eye-popping selection of seed photos from a new book, "Seeds," by botanist Wolfgang Stuppy of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Key, England. The seeds were photographed under an electron scanning microscope. The article is in the HelpLine "to read" file.

Seed and Plant swaps

Thanks once again to all members who brought seeds and plants to swap at the October Association meeting! If you'd like to share plants, seeds, and/or cuttings, feel free to bring them to any Association meeting.

Happy Birthday!

October birthdays to celebrate:

- 10/08 Debby Sandler
- 10/23 Michelle B.Post
- 10/28 Carol Strahlendorf
- 10/28 Nancy Jansen



Want to contribute to Garden Tales?

Garden Tales is written and produced by Mary McDermott, following each Association meeting. Send topic ideas, photos, or material to Mary at mmcddmcm@comcast.net

Visiting Fox's Cranberries

By Rita Wenig

MG Intern Ann Fox and her husband Bill run Fox's Cranberries in Weekstown, and the past month has been their busy season. Anne Craig and I recently visited the bogs (and we hear Vin Thoms stopped by, too). In a word, the experience was fascinating! Bill Fox took valuable time from harvesting to explain the cycle of cranberry farming. It was fascinating to watch the harvesting procedure; they not only harvest the crop but with the machine they use, they also prune the bushes to ensure robust bushes for next year. Bill also explained that there are two ways to harvest the cranberries, flooding and picking. The Foxes don't flood their bog. Instead, they use irrigation at this time of year to prevent freezing, as cranberries are not a viable crop if they have been frozen.

After the cranberries are picked, they are put in bags and taken to an area where they are put through a sorting machine. The leaves and stems are discarded and the berries are packed for shipment to the customer. Bill also explained the price of cranberries has gone down in recent years, making it less profitable than in the days of his father and uncle. I left amazed at the beauty of the land and the bogs and also in awe of the hard work involved in getting a crop to market. We extend a big "Thank you!" to Ann and Bill for giving us the opportunity to get a glimpse of a working farm, and we recommend a visit to the bog! (See photos on page 7.)

The final issue of Rutgers' "What's in Season" focused on cranberries – "The Gem of the Pines." See <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu/pdfs/Whats-in-Season-10-23.pdf>

Mum's the word

While chrysanthemums are considered hardy, a tough winter could kill or damage them. Prepare now to bring back your autumn beauties next fall. Once the blooms fade, remove damaged buds, leaves and stems. Once the ground is frozen (usually after two or three episodes of below 20-degree temperatures), give them a good blanket of mulch to keep the soil from heaving. (And in the spring, remember to pot up some early cuttings to extend your mum collection.) For more info, see the Purdue University *Chrysanthemum* fact sheet at http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/pubs/HO_077.pdf

Angel Trumpets in the Fall

By Debi Baker

I've had my Angel Trumpet (*Brugmansia*) for seven or eight years now, and each year it puts on a good show. In fact, this summer it had over 100 blooms at once, and the perfume permeated the whole patio. If you've got an Angel coming indoors for the winter, here's what has worked for me. Angels like the hot days and cool nights. Once it starts staying in the 40's at night, bring your plant in and let it die back on its own. Give it a nice shaping so it's not too leggy next year. If you want to practice propagation, put some cuttings in water and they'll root pretty easily. During the winter, I water my Angel just enough so it doesn't dry out. When it tries to grow, I keep pinching back a little to keep it bushy. In the spring, I put it in our three-season room again to acclimate. Good luck with your Angels! See photo on page 7.



Leaves are *not* green

Most tree leaves are actually orange and yellow – even in summer. It's just that the pigment chlorophyll (which makes leaves green) is a much stronger pigment than the yellow (xanthophyll) and orange (carotene) pigments. But, come fall, leaves produce less chlorophyll and the other colors can show through. Another pigment (anthocyanin), which produces reds and purples, isn't present all year long in most green leaves. It only shows up as the nights get cooler. For more information, see the SUNY site at <http://www.esf.edu/pubprog/brochure/leaves/leaves.htm>



Shred rather than bag fall leaves

Shredded leaves can be used as mulch around garden and landscape plants. Chopping or shredding leaves will help prevent them from matting down and keeping air from reaching the roots. One concern is that shredded leaves decompose too quickly to be useful as an ornamental or functional summer-season mulch. But when the leaves decompose over the winter, the soil benefits tremendously.

One option is to rake the leaves into a shredder, and spread the bounty as needed. To provide winter protection, apply a 3-6 inch layer of shredded leaves over the top of tender perennials after several hard freezes. The goal of winter mulch is to keep plants dormant through the winter, so apply the mulch after the ground is cold and plants are fully dormant.

Another option (if the leaves aren't too deep already) is to run your lawn mower over them until the pieces are small enough to leave them right there on the lawn. Dry leaves are much easier to mow than moist ones. If possible, remove the bagger so all of the leaves are deposited right back onto the lawn as they shred.

For more info, see the "Much ado about leaves" fact sheet at

<http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/leaves.html>



Plan now for live Christmas tree

If you're thinking of a live tree for Christmas, plan now for its final destination. While the ground is workable, choose a sunny, well-draining spot and dig a hole. The hole should be twice the diameter, and as deep as your tree's expected root ball (since you don't have the tree yet, you'll have to guess a bit). Cover the hole with plywood or fill it with straw so no one falls in, and store your dug-up soil in the garage or under black plastic to keep it warm enough to work with on planting day. For more tips on indoor care and making the transition outdoors, see <http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/HO-211.pdf> or <http://www.coopext.colostate.edu/4dmg/Trees/livetree.htm>

Boozy Bulbs

Under the category of "You can't make this stuff up:" Paperwhite narcissi are easy to force, but they usually get leggy and flop over just as they begin to bloom.

So Cornell University tested growing paperwhites in a five percent solution of alcohol. Researchers found that the boozy plants were half the height of plans grown in plain water, and they managed to stand straight up.

Watch the alcohol concentration, but gin, vodka, whiskey, rum, tequila are all equally effective and of similar strength (40% alcohol). Generally, mix about one part booze to nine parts water. Don't use wine or beer, though – "they kill the bulbs."



Starting -- and Restarting -- Your Amaryllis Now

Stately Amaryllis blooms are great holiday gifts and colorful home decorations. Get started in November for December and January blooms. Purchase new bulbs now, or use your own. If you over-summered your Amaryllis outdoors and let them go dormant since September, they should be about ready to wake back up. When planting, choose a pot (with good drainage) that's just an inch or two wider than the bulb itself. With the top 25 to 30% of the bulb showing above the soil, water well, and place in a warm, bright place. You'll see flowers in five or six weeks. There are many .ext and .edu fact sheets on Amaryllis; here's just one:

<http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/amaryllis.html>



Grape Harvest

Volunteers picked grapes in September and October at the Rutgers Agricultural & Research Station in Salem County. Volunteers included Gloria Perakovich, Ann Cinquina, Gerel Pereborow, Anne Craig, Glenn Pavlis, Bob Kruk, Claire Quigley, Vin Thomas, Mona Bawgus, and Janet D'Allesandro. (See photo on page 9.)

Photos



Carol Strahlendorf (in yellow) assisting students at the Fanny D. Rittenberg Middle School



Debi Baker's long-lived Brugmansia



Ann Fox's cranberry bog, visited by several MGs during harvest season.



Grape harvesting at the Rutgers Agricultural & Research Station in Salem County. Pictured is Gary Pavlis, County Agricultural Agent specializing in small fruits.



Mona, Bev Albertson, and Gloria Perakovich at the NJ Annual MG Conference, accepting the Award of Excellence on behalf of the HelpLine Manual committee.



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Mona Bawgus
Program Associate - Agriculture



Home Garden: What to do now

- **Young trees** will need to be protected against winter sunscald. Stock up on burlap and set a date in the next month to bundle their trunks.
- Seal up paper **seed packages** or envelopes, make sure they're labeled, and organize them in a large, airtight container. Make a note of any seeds that will need a period of cold treatment.
- Trim **spent annuals** back below the soil line. **Perennials** such as purple coneflower, bee balm and tickweed should be left as is. Their dried seed heads will provide winter interest for you, and winter food for sparrows and finches.
- **Equipment maintenance:** Drain the gas from your mower, chainsaw, grass trimmer, and tiller for safe storage. Check seedling heat mats for cracks. Sanitize and oil heads of shovels, rakes, and hoes. Clean up and store plastic and clay pots, trellises, and garden stakes. Drain, coil and store regular and soaker hoses before the first hard freeze.
- **Chemical maintenance:** Check liquid fertilizers, insecticides, rooting hormones and other open chemicals for any signs of leakage or spoiling. Bag up any chemicals you no longer want and take them to the appropriate Atlantic County Hazardous Waste disposal facility.



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