



# Garden Club News

## April 2015

PO Box 3253 Teaneck, NJ 07666

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

The next meeting of the Garden Club of Teaneck will be held on April 9<sup>th</sup> at the Richard Rodda Center. The meeting will start at 7:30 pm. Our speaker that night will be Paul Sadowski, an amateur mycologist. Paul will speak to the club on the importance of mushrooms in our gardens.

The next meeting of the Greenhouse Committee of the Garden Club will be on Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am at the Greenhouse.

### Member News

#### Message from Pat Fromm, President

Great events are coming our way!

We're on countdown to our own annual plant sale, May 2-10th and many of us are biting at the bit to get our hands in the earth! The calendar is filling up with plant sales, lectures, and seed exchanges and the mail boxes are over flowing with seed catalogs! Please see listings in this newsletter for some special events happening in nearby towns.

The Garden Club mailbox is also overflowing with all sorts of requests for help with community projects.

- A section of the Hackensack River Greenway through Teaneck will be named in honor of Mary Topolsky, a Teaneck resident and member of Garden Club of Teaneck who dedicated much of her time to beautifying the greenway. It was Mary who designed and created a plan that includes a sitting area with a butterfly garden near the roadway, and a calm meandering trail to a sitting area at the riverside that will accommodate visitors with mobility problems. Historic New Bridge Landing Park Commission has invited us to participate with other community

organizations in the rehabilitation of Brett Park. I think they need some invasives removed and general annual cleanup, a good weekend workout!

- The "Let's Move Advisory Board" here in Teaneck (Let's Move initiative. <http://www.letsmove.gov/>) is addressing our youth and promoting healthy eating. They are working with the schools and their gardens and hoping that the Teaneck Garden Club would care to get involved in this initiative.

- Closer to home – in our own garden, Joe Papa will direct a dig of perennials from Robyn & Denise's new lots on April 4th, following the committee meeting and again on Sunday 5th 10:30 – noon with Coffee, Bagels and lox as an incentive (free lunch). The perennials were donated by Jane Furman for us to pot up and sell at the plant sale. Additionally, we'll have a clean-up of the yard area between the fence and the road.

- Doug Raska has designed a beautiful new landscape for the front of our greenhouse. Doug will be announcing dates for volunteers to begin digging out and potting up the existing plants and then follow up with planting of the new trees, shrubs, and perennials! It will be a new look that we can all be proud of!

If you want to get involved in any of these activities, please let me know or contact Joe Papa or Doug Raska directly. (Who knows, volunteers may get first dibs at the perennials). Oh yes, and Happy Spring! Pat

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### **Message from Len Schwartz Director of the Greenhouse**

We are more than 60% through repotting and the greenhouse is starting to fill up again with plants. In a few more weeks our emphasis will shift entirely to watering, growing and maintenance of our stock. Each of our five groups has responsibility for the plants in its area, which we are trying to make as compact as possible. Each group needs to learn its plants, their requirements, meet them, and document what was done. This will require individual group members to be vigilant and in attendance at times other than the normal once a week group meeting time. Do Not Let Your Group's Plants Fail, they are yours and they are depending on you!

The plant sale starts in thirty five days on May 2 and ends May 10. As in all of our past plant sales, greenhouse members will be signing up for two of the eight weekend sessions as well as selling during group time during the week. Signup sheets will be available at our April 4 meeting, at which we will also set prices. We will need both front meeting room checkers and greenhouse floor sellers and helpers.

Our Hawthorne school program will start three weeks from now. We need to help Olga and the teaching staff in any way they require. The kitchen and bathroom remodel will be put off until after the sale. Len

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### **Message from Joe Papa Horticultural Director**

As you know we have experienced much cooler temperatures and some long term predictions are that this trend will continue

through June. If you have not done a soil test now is the time, these kits can be purchased on line through Rutgers Extension Services and Connecticut has this service as well. They cost about \$20.

Consider amending your soil with compost, this is an integral part to develop the proper tilth; it offsets compaction, provides water retention and is a food source for all the **Mycorrhiza Fungae**, nitrifying bacteria and other organisms that comprise the soil food web. These food web player's interactions enable the exchange of resources for vibrant plant development. It is imperative to maintain this interaction so if you must till do not exceed 6 inches. I amend my beds with straw and leaves. This protects the soil throughout the winter and enhances the webs activity, limits evaporation, and in its decomposition feeds the web. Your soil test will indicate values that can be amended. I use only organic amendments supplemented by Fish emulsion for heavy feeders during the peak demand months.

April is my favorite month; great time to be outdoors moderate temperatures, gentle breezes, soft rains, as life is being restored, flowering trees and out of slumbered perennials abound. I love the fragrance of the soil as I thread my hands through its texture. This is our renewal our connection to the cycles, embrace it. Let the renewal begin. Joe

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### **Paul Sadowski to Speak at the April Meeting by Pat Fromm**

Paul Sadowski is an amateur mycologist, long active in the New York Mycological Society and the Northeast Mycological Federation. In 2010, Paul was the recipient of North American Mycological Association's Harry and Elsie Knighton Service Award. The meeting is on April 9th, 7:30 PM, at the Richard Rodda Center,

Second floor, 250 Capital Court, Teaneck, NJ; free refreshments.

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## Woe Be the Wily Woodchuck!

### By Patty Libutti

#### From the UrbanHerban's Notebook:

Henry David Thoreau, Transcendentalist and author of *Walden*, was angry, very angry, at woodchucks on his land. One ate 1/4 an acre of his bean crop.

"As I came home through the woods with my string of fish, trailing my pole, it being now quite dark, I caught a glimpse of a woodchuck stealing across my path, and felt a strange thrill of savage delight, and was strongly tempted to seize and devour him raw; not that I was hungry then, except for that wildness which he represented." --- Thoreau, *Walden*.

The woodchuck is just as much of a deserved target in the 21st century as in the 19th. This column serves as is a quick review of the methods most often used to curb the woodchuck's enthusiasm for our gardens.

**Herbs or other plants with noxious odors?** My theory here is if the woodchuck got so far as to get into my garden with rosemary, santolina, thyme, wormwood, etc. in it, it would hold its nose and eat. The herbs would not deter it unless it was interplanted, twined around, with the vegetables. There is anecdotal evidence on the use of marigolds, gopher plant (*Euphorbia lathyris*) or crown imperial fritillary (*F. imperialis*) around the garden. I will use aromatic herbs and line the paths with marigolds, which, by sheer luck, have repelled woodchucks. Squirrels and rabbits, however, act as if I hung a sign: "I have built it, you can come." Unfortunately, the evidence points towards the big guns (no pun intended) as the ways to deal with

woodchucks. **Shooting?** There is a \$99 fine for shooting the woodchuck out of season, but there is very little time that it is out of season! The woodchuck hunting season is in the latest NJ Small Game Hunting regulations from [NJ Fish and Wildlife site](#). **Live Traps?** The woodchuck's habits are inflicted on new people. It's also illegal to release a wild animal in NJ. Woodchucks do not appear to be scared by **motion devices**, nor much by a **scarecrow**. **Sprays and hot sauces** appear to affect them little and the home gardener much. The amount of time for reapplication and concern about the chemicals on produce was key here. Using **bobcat or fox urine** is moderately effective. Finally, the use of an **electrified fence** was seen as effective on many gardening sites as is a fence dug very deep under the ground. The fence needs to be bent outwards-and hung in a wobbly way so the critter cannot parade on top of the fence in front of you, taunting you with vegetables. Patty Libutti

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## Earth Day 2015 - By Pat Fromm

### April 19, 2015

Paramus Earth Day event on Sunday, April 19, from 12 noon - 4pm at Paramus Public Library band shell, E. 116 Century Road.

### April 19, 2015

Ridgewood: EARTH DAY 2015 FAIR  
"Let's Grow Ridgewood Green & Yellow!!"

### April 19, 2015

"Party for the Planet" at Van Suan Park, Paramus, 10 am - 4 pm. At 10am - noon Bergen County Zoo at Van Saun Park, Paramus. Visit exhibitors throughout the zoo or attend a special program in the Education Center to discover ways to connect to your local environment this Earth Day. Learn about eco-friendly products, programs, and services available in our area. Exhibitors will be in the zoo from 10 am until 4 pm. Everyone loves a good party and

there's no better place to celebrate than with the fabulous animals that make our beautiful planet the awe-inspiring place that it is. Admission to the zoo and all activities are free.

### **April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

Old Tappan @ Stone Point Park  
<http://www.nv-earth-fair.org/> The  
 Environmental Commissions have joined  
 forces to have an Earth Fair for Earth Day,  
 Old Tappan NJ at Stone Point Park on Sat.  
 4/25 from 11am to 4pm.

Overpeck Earth Fest 11 am 5 pm Overpeck  
 Park 45 Fort Lee Rd  
[www.EarthFestOverpeck.com](http://www.EarthFestOverpeck.com)

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## **Plant of the Month - Helleborus Orientalis by Robyn Lowenthal**

As soon as the “glaciers” receded from my back yard, I took the short walk to the rear, shaded by a large Magnolia grandiflora and my neighbor’s Norway maple. There I saw some ragged evergreen foliage. As I gently cleared away the leaf litter, I saw them – the newly emerging flowers of the *Helleborus orientalis*. For me, they are as much a part of the coming of spring as the melting of the snow.

Also known as Lenten Rose, because they bloom around Lent (but are not any relative of the rose), this plant thrives in the shade. A member of the Ranunculaceae family, this species originated in the Balkans. The wide, leathery, glossy dark green leaves are divided into serrated segments and arise directly from the roots – there are no stems. They are evergreen in warmer climates, but here in New Jersey they may become scorched and tattered in extremely cold weather, particularly if not insulated by snow cover. The flowers, which are 5-petaled, cup-shaped, rose-like and usually appear in clusters of one to four, grow directly from the ground on thick stems

rising above the foliage; they are 3”- 4” wide, vary in color from white to green to purple and are often spotted. The flowers last for eight to ten weeks. They are downward-facing and, when cut, look beautiful floating face-up in a bowl of water. To view the flowers more easily, it is a good idea to remove any winter-tattered foliage; new leaves will grow rapidly. The *Helleborus* will grow to about 1.5 feet in height and tend to form large clumps. They last for years and reseed vigorously; new plants can be made from division or from the ever present seedlings.

Because the leaves, stems and roots are poisonous, *Hellebores* are not attractive to deer or woodchucks. They have no pest or disease problems. They enjoy growing in partial to full shade, in well-drained soil with plenty of organic matter. Once they are established, they ask little of the gardener.

Breeders have produced many hybrids, including flower shapes that are doubles, semi-doubles, picotee edged, upward facing, and anemone. New colors range from almost black, deep purples and plums, through rich red and pink to yellow, white and green.



In addition to the *Helleborus orientalis*, there are two other hellebores that can be grown in Northern climates. The

*Helleborus foetidus*, aka Stinking hellebore, has green flowers held high above the green foliage, almost like a bouquet, blooms a little earlier than the Lenten rose, and is truly a little odd looking. The *Helleborus Niger*, the Christmas rose, has white flowers that provide a sharp contrast to the dark

green foliage; it blooms in January and February and is more difficult to establish than the others.

The *Helleborus orientalis* is a very easy plant to grow. It loves the shade, is evergreen, reseeds and forms clumps, is disease and pest resistant, is not a treat for wildlife, and rewards us with beautiful flowers early in the season when we need them the most.

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### School Program – By Olga Newey

The Hawthorne School Program's schedule has been finalized and is posted in the greenhouse meeting room and on the Hawthorne bench. Cynthia will not be able to lead the 3rd grade classes in propagation, but Mark Penchinar has offered to step in for her. I'm still recuperating from a knee operation, but as soon as I'm able, I'll meet with the teachers to finalize plans. Meanwhile, teachers have been corresponding with questions and ideas. It's exciting. We wish Cynthia a speedy recovery. We miss her. Thank you, Mark, for stepping in. Work Groups; please don't forget to label your plants. I hope to move

them as needed, to the middle benches, a week before the classes start, Monday, April 14th. Olga

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### Master Gardeners Visit The Greenhouse - By Anna Kurz

On Saturday, March 14, 2015, despite rain, seven members of the Master Gardeners visited the Garden Club of Teaneck at its greenhouse. The seven GCT hosts gave mini-presentations to explain to MG members workings of the greenhouse and its attenuating garden plots. An informal gourmet lunch followed. (See photo below).

**From left, front row:** Pat Libutti, Patricia Fromm, GCT president.

**second row,** Dennis Gretchen, Caryl Gottlieb, Josie Ko, Robyn Lowenthal (with pot holding GCT member-grown milkweed destined to attract monarch butterflies);

**Third row,** Joe Papa (white shirt) Mark Penchinar (blue shirt), Len Schwartz (beard), Tammy;

**Back Rows,** Carolyn Gretchen, Karen Pinnell, Kathy Skidmore, Catie Farahat.

