



Garden Club News

March 2011

PO Box 3253 Teaneck, NJ 07666

www.gardenclubofteaneck.org

Calendar: March 2011

The Garden Club of Teaneck will meet on Thursday, March 10th at 7:30 pm. The meeting will be held at the Rodda Center at 250 Colonial Court. Our speaker that evening will be Captain Bill Sheehan founder and Executive Director of the Hackensack Riverkeeper (see bio below). The topic is "A Virtual Tour of the Hackensack Watershed".

The next Greenhouse Committee meeting will be held at the Greenhouse on Saturday, March 5th, at 10:00 am.

Member News

Message from Debbie Morgan, President

Hi All! I'm baaack!!!

Many thanks to all for the phone calls and cards during my absence. I am happy to report that we have been approached and solicited from a pretty organized "grassroots" organization for guidance and support in the establishment of community gardens to be installed initially at three schools in town, 2 public (including Hawthorne school), and 1 private. I am especially happy to announce that our own Jane Furman has volunteered to represent us in this endeavor. Jane will be attending a seminar next week with other Master Gardeners on Community Gardens. It's truly gratifying that we are considered a resource in the community on all things "green" and that our message continues to spread! To that end, we are planning a Kickoff brunch for the annual plant sale on Saturday, April 16. With the holidays coming later this year, this is an opportunity to invite the Teaneck Town Council and town management to see the greenhouse in a lovely state and enjoy some refreshments. All Garden Club members are invited. More

information next month. Until then, yours in gardening, Debbi.

Message from Christina Mackensen, Greenhouse Horticultural Director:

Spring is on its way!!!

The snow is melting slowly and signs of spring are emerging. Snow drops are trying to peek through the frozen ground and iris stems are also emerging. In the greenhouse, we have been busy transplanting geraniums, tuberous begonias, pansies, gazanias, and dianthus. The greenhouse is filling up nicely; the plants are growing steadily and will be



ready in time for the sale. All members

volunteered freely to make this first session of transplanting a huge success. Thanks to the excellent leadership of all the group leaders in rallying together the members.



However, the main transplanting activities for all the annuals will be during the week of March 20, 2011, when the majority of plugs will be picked up from the grower.

It is important that every member contributes time and effort to the transplanting making this activity and team effort a success.



The late winter and early spring months are also a good time to prune deciduous shrubs such as forsythia, cherry or witch hazel. This

activity can be two-fold – as you trim the shrubs into shape, the cut-off branches can be brought into the home to be forced into bloom, hastening the arrival of spring, even if it's still chilly outside. This pruning should be done when outside temperatures are above freezing, when the branches are not so stiff, and the transition to the warmer temperature in the home will be smoother. The branches should be placed in a container filled with lukewarm water, and floral preservatives, and placed away from direct sunlight and heat sources. Once a week the water should be changed and filled again with a preservative to keep bacteria at bay. Step back and watch the buds grow into blooms and leaves, and rejoice in the wonders of nature.

Have a happy month of March. Until next time, Christina

Message from Len Schwartz, Greenhouse Director:

Not having much knowledge about how a greenhouse works or about the overall operations of what we do, I want to thank Christina, Sara and Fred for putting in the time, effort and skill in making things work again this year despite my meddling.

The following items have been addressed since becoming the director in December:

- A realistic budget was created by the executive board under the guidance of Sara. It was approved by the greenhouse committee at the February meeting.
- I have been at two meetings with our Town Manager, Bill Broughton. He was very reassuring that we can expect continued support from the town. Thank you Town of Teaneck.
- Mr. Broughton would also like to beautify the town, specifically the municipal green around the monument. He has asked for help in landscape design (from Mary Topolsky) and from us at the

greenhouse in supplying flowers. We should make this a priority.

- We will be making improvements to the greenhouse by completing the wall that separates the front meeting room from the greenhouse proper.
- We will be re-orientating the fans to produce a more circular pattern of airflow.

I am optimistic that the plant sale this year will go well. Finally, I would like to thank everyone for doing his/her part in helping to make our greenhouse as good as it can be.

Len

A Possibility: A Seed Exchange

By Pat Libutti

What is a seed exchange? It is just what it sounds like: we exchange (or swap) seeds, and extend the experience to others in the community to build good will.

How it works: First, people who come will have something to offer: a half pack of seeds. They can then take a half pack in return. Most of us have an excess of seeds, unless we are planting a lettuce and tomato field.

What's involved? It's simple. You exchange your seeds---new packaged ones, older ones from a year ago, or some you harvested from your own garden. Just be clear on what is on a label so people know what they are exchanging. You can bring bulbs or tubers too.

Who else does this? Just about everybody. Heirloom seeds are swapped by mail, email, or physical locations, Can we do this? You tell me. This exchange involves little to no cash (except for envelopes and "found" shoeboxes). Enough of us have to be interested in providing seeds as well as working at a long table in the Greenhouse. I'm thinking of March 26, morning, 10-1, in the Greenhouse, involving only us or Teaneck gardeners as well. Let me know if you are

interested (libutti@gmail.com or call 201-836-6165.). This could be fun!

March GCT Speaker

At the Garden Club of Teaneck meeting on Thursday, March 10, 2011 Captain Bill Sheehan will be our guest speaker.

Captain Bill Sheehan, the Hackensack Riverkeeper, is a lifelong resident of the Hackensack River area, having lived most of his life in Union City and Secaucus, New Jersey. He is a dedicated, active conservationist who founded Hackensack Riverkeeper in 1997 and serves as the organization's Executive Director. Captain Bill, as he is known to most people, holds a Master of Inland Waterways license from the US Coast Guard.

Captain Bill serves on the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program Citizens Advisory Committee, a bi-state agency that oversees federal management efforts in the region. He is a founding (and current) member of the Bergen County Trust Fund Public Advisory Committee and is the current Chair of the Meadowlands Conservation Trust; the latter being the agency charged with acquiring, holding and managing conservation properties in the New Jersey Meadowlands and throughout the Hackensack River watershed.

When he is not conducting Eco-Cruises aboard the vessel Edward Abbey, chairing meetings, or otherwise advocating for the Hackensack River watershed, Captain Bill enjoys rock n' roll music, movies and fishing for Striped bass in his favorite river.

Ask Sara

Our "Ask Sara" question this month is "How do I grow plants from seed?"

From an article by Adrianna Vargo come these 10 tips for growing plants from seed.

1. Keep a plant propagation journal

Record when seeds are sown, the germination date and success rate, and when seedlings are ready for transplanting each year. Also record where you purchased your seeds.

2. Store seed properly to maintain viability

Seeds are a fragile commodity, and if not treated properly, their viability will sharply decline. Label them with name, source, and year. Store them in small closable bags.

3. Use wide, flat containers to avoid overcrowding

Use plastic pots or containers when starting seeds, as they retain moisture more consistently. Make sure the containers offer good drainage.

4. Tamp seeds down to make direct contact with the soil

Spread soilless seed starting mix evenly over the top of the seeds to the depth of two times the seed diameter. Very small seeds and those that require light to germinate should lie directly on the surface. Whether covered with planting medium or not, gently tamp down the surface so each seed is in contact with the moist soil.

5. Prevent disease by providing air flow and drainage

The fungal infection often referred to as damping-off is usually caused by excessive moisture and poor air circulation.

6. Cover trays with plastic wrap to keep the moisture level constant

Seeds are very sensitive to the extremes of watering either under or over. Putting plastic wrap over the surface helps to keep the moisture level constant. The pot must still be checked daily for moisture and germination. If you find that you need to rehydrate your seed container, place the entire pot in a tray of warm water and allow the planting medium to absorb the moisture from the bottom. If just the surface has dried, lift the plastic covering and spray the surface with water from a spray bottle. As soon as the seeds germinate, remove the plastic wrap.

7. Keep seeds warm to encourage germination

Most seeds require temperatures of 65° to 75°F to germinate. A heating pad designed for plant use can be placed directly under the seed containers. This will warm the planting mix and encourage germination. When using any additional heat source, be sure to check for moisture often.

8. Turn seedlings daily to keep stems strong

Most seeds will not germinate without sunlight and will perform best with 12 to 16 hours each day. Indoors, place seed containers in a sunny, south-facing window and give the container a quarter turn each day to encourage the seedlings to grow straight and true.

9. Feed them well

After the true leaves develop it is time for a little fertilizer. Proper nutrition at a consistent rate will keep your seedlings growing strong.

10. Acclimate seedlings to the environment

Before seedlings can be planted outdoors, they need to be acclimated to direct sunlight and fluctuating temperatures. This process is called hardening off. It is best to do this over several days by placing the plants in direct sunlight during the morning only, then increasing their time outside by a few hours each day.

Around the Green

From Jane Furman comes this list of garden shows and classes in our area:

MARCH 3 – COMMUNITY GARDENS SYMPOSIUM ~ Freylinghusen Arboretum, Morristown

MARCH 6th – 13th - PHILADELPHIA FLOWER SHOW ~ Philadelphia Convention Center, Hours: Sun 8-6, Sat. 8-9:30, Mon thru Fri. 10-9:30

MARCH 17th – 20th – SPRINGFEST FLOWER AND GARDEN SHOW ~ Sussex

County Fairgrounds, Hours: Thu, Fri, Sun
10-5, Sat10-7

MARCH 19th – HOME GARDENERS
SCHOOL ~ Rutgers, New Brunswick
<http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu/courses/current/ah0201ca.html>

MARCH 28th – **APRIL 11th** – MACY'S
FLOWER SHOW ~ Herald Square, NYC

Mary S. Topolsky, garden club member and professional garden designer will teach a course in vegetable gardening called "**Keen Greens**" on **April 4th at the Eugene Field School at 7:30 pm.** The class will provide you with the information you need to confidently see your crop through from seedling to the harvest table. She will talk about soil preparation, types of fertilizers, integrated pest management (IPM), signs of disease, herb gardening, container gardening and how to extend the growing season. The emphasis will be on organic growing methods.

Mary will also be teaching "**Zoomin' Bloomins**" on **April 25th and May 2nd from 7:30-9:00 pm.** It will cover flower gardening and include such topics as soil conditioning, fertilizers, what are annuals and what are perennials, starting seeds, buying plants, what blooms best in sun and in shade, color combinations, how to plant and the conditions necessary for success.

For fees and to register for these classes, contact the Teaneck Community Education center at (201) 833-5514.

Proposed Government Cuts to Cooperative Extension Services

From Garden Club Program Vice President, Cynthia McKay, comes this note about the proposed Federal Government cuts to programs like Rutgers Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners.

Hi All,

Please share the attached letter and information with your membership. As you all know, the federal government is seeking ways to reduce the budget. One proposed item would slash Cooperative Extension Services throughout the county. The attached form letter being sent to our representatives in congress is written with Master Gardeners in mind. We are asking garden club members to consider the role that Rutgers Cooperative Extension plays in the Bergen County and write letters to your representative in favor of keeping the program that provides volunteers who:

- Beautify our county parks. Saving the county thousands of dollars each year.
- Provide horticultural therapy for patients at Bergen Regional
- Disseminate scientifically based information to residents of the county
- Keep garden clubs abreast of new gardening information

The attached letter would need to be revised to meet the needs of your garden clubs.

Thanks, Lucy Malka.

Attached is a sample letter you can use to send to your representative. Please make sure you send this right away before the measure is brought to a vote in Congress

(Fill in your return address)

The Honorable Steven Rothman
United States House of Representatives
2303 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515-3009

Subject: Restoration of funding that supports Extension Education in New Jersey and the U.S.

Dear Representative Rothman:

I'm writing to express/voice my concern about a proposed budget reduction that will adversely impact the New Jersey Cooperative Extension Service including the Master Gardener Program and the rest of the national Cooperative Extension System.

The reduction is written in H.R. 1, the Full Year Continuing Resolution. It is a \$29.82 million cut from Smith-Lever 3(b)-(c) base formula funds for the Cooperative Extension System's current fiscal year.

This system has grown from long-time joint funding via federal, state, and county appropriations, with federal dollars serving as seed money. Today, these base funds for Extension Education in NJ are matched by the state and counties by more than 5:1.

As a Master Gardener providing hundreds of volunteer hours to Bergen County in relation to the County Cooperative Extension Office, I can attest to the vital role of Extension programs in improving our environment and my family's life, as well as the state's economy and natural resources. In 2009, Bergen County Master Gardeners provided over 150,000 hours of volunteer time equal to a value of over \$3.8 million dollars improving and maintaining Bergen County parks and gardens and improving the lives of the residents of Bergen County.

As you weigh the budget decisions ahead, we ask you to uphold the federal appropriation that reaps such a return from and for its partners.

As a Master Gardener, I can assure you that Extension programs play a vital role in improving life in Bergen County for my family and my community, as well as the state's economy and quality of life through the thousands of hours annually of volunteer efforts of Master Gardeners.

Respectfully, we urge your support to restore the full \$297.5 million level funding that had been budgeted for the Cooperative Extension System. Any loss of these funds so far into the fiscal year would set back your state and local funding partners beyond their ability to sustain Extension Education for the people they serve.

Yours Truly,