



# Garden Tales

Atlantic County Master Gardener  
Association Newsletter



## Coordinators Comments:

By Mona Bawgus

Hello Master Gardeners:

Recently I attended the Woody Plant Conference at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. Various topics included the diversity of new trees, promising new plants, revitalization of urban areas such as the Highline in New York City, and our changing forests. But the most interesting lecture was on “Dysfunctional Root Systems: Girdling roots and the Browning of our Landscapes” from Gary Johnson, Professor, Urban and Community Forestry, University of Minnesota.

He presented an amazing statistic; many trees in nature live up to 150 years, in rural areas 60 to 70 years, suburban communities 30 to 40 years, and urban environments 7 to 10 years. He went on to explain that this is not due to bugs or diseases. Many times when a tree dies the cause is usually referred to as tree decline. But what exactly is tree decline? For a more detailed explanation see the article on page 5 on Tree Decline.

No matter how long you have been gardening the exciting fact is that you still can learn something new. Try branching out (ha ha) with a new educational experience and then share what you have learned with a fellow gardener.

Happy gardening.

~Mona

## Important Dates

- July 28 MGA Trip to Chanticleer Gardens
- July 29 Margate Farm Market
- July 29 Hope VI at Gardner’s Basin
- July 31 Rutgers Gardens Open House
- August 5-7 Atlantic County 4H Fair
- August 12 Tomato Tasting @ Margate Farm Market
- August 13 MGA Meeting
- August 19 Margate Farm Market



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New Jersey Agricultural  
Experiment Station

## **Dennis Craghan [09]**

Six acres; intense full day sunlight; moderate desiccating winds off the bay; hard rocky construction-compacted soil; landscaping restricted to the use of native southern coastal New Jersey plants; and wildlife that knows no restriction to its diet. That was the challenge! Via a grant agreement from the state of NJ-DEP with the Friends of Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge and participation by a group of volunteers from the Atlantic County Master Gardeners, this challenge was met!

A new Visitor Contact Station, recently constructed near the entrance to the Wild Life Refuge and restored Leeds Eco Trail boardwalk, was in need of a landscaping design and plan which would use native plants, grasses, shrubs and trees beneficial to resident and migratory wildlife by providing habitat and food as well as attracting pollinators, butterflies, and other invertebrates.



Atlantic County Master Gardener volunteers, being an integral part of an on-going native landscaping project that spans eight to ten years, were sought out to be a prime participant in this new project. Beginning last fall and continuing again in the late winter and early spring of 2010, Atlantic County Master Gardeners and Friends of Forsythe volunteers, with input and guidance from refuge personnel, researched and developed a site plan for the first phase of development. This phase was to identify, purchase, and plant trees and shrubs in the spring that would enhance the visual appearance of the new building while establishing a natural looking environment.



Master Gardeners met with the other participants on a weekly basis at the Refuge, and after a winter of planning, were finally able to "get down and dirty" in the spring--planting trees and shrubs and a number of perennials along with a variety of grasses planted by Refuge personnel. The rocky inhospitable soil was amended with eco-soil from Atlantic County and rototilled to make planting possible.



Where needed, fencing was installed to protect the more sensitive trees and shrubs. Weeds--always a concern--took over very quickly, but are being managed as a temporary ground cover to prevent erosion until the next phase of the development is implemented in the fall and succeeding years.

# Atlantic City Aquarium

## Meryl Giamporcaro [10]

Tucked away to the north of all that hustle and bustle of Atlantic City lays an area I had never been to in all my years living in New Jersey, Historic Gardner's Basin. Driving past the Neptune Statue in the middle of New Hampshire Avenue, I felt as if transported to another shore town. This area was quiet and peaceful.

Pulling into the large parking area, I could not believe there was not a parking fee. Where can you go in Atlantic City without paying a parking fee? Getting out of my car, gardening tools in hand, John Collette and George Lonkart greeted me warmly, a few of my classmates were also present and ready to dig in.



John and George, Master Gardener's from 2007 tend this 12-acre oasis out of dedication, as the grounds have only two full time employees. Surrounded by a marina, the gardens and an aquarium, the views are to die for, I was pleasantly surprised!

Touring the grounds you can hear the passion in John and Georges voices, as they talked about the Basin's progress. The seashore can have a very harsh effect on flowers and plants but they make every effort to balance this landscape. Moving trees and shrubs through trial and error as the winter wind blows or the summer sun bakes them. Incorporating seashells as mulch has proven a wise choice in an area frequented by visitors, some careless about where they throw trash or discard flammables.

John's eyes twinkle as he talks about the gardens, the hydrangeas, the symbiotic relationship between some of the plants and his ideas for the future. The amount of work they put in on a daily basis is staggering yet strangely, they seem to enjoy it.



The serenity of the area may have something to do with it, but it takes a certain type of person to give of themselves, day after day, for the good of the community.

Dedication, commitment and volunteering are attributes that one does not run across very often but seems to abound in the Master Gardener Program. I am fortunate to have stumbled on the beauty of Gardner's Basin, and honored to work beside John Collette and George Lonkart and the other volunteer gardeners.

The Master Gardener course taught me how much I did not know about gardening and allowed me to sit in the presence of many wonderful people with similar interests in gardening and wildlife.

Juggling many jobs as a wife and mother, the thought of volunteering never seemed possible or necessary. This program opened my eyes to the fact that what is holding a large part of our communities together are volunteers like John and George and the numerous Master Gardeners that willingly give up their time "tending" to the community's needs wherever they may spring up.



# Demo Garden/Port Republic School



**Demo Garden**  
**Barb D'Augustine [07]**

Cool season crops made way for summer crops such as Dark Green Zucchini, Long Green Improved Slicing Cucumber, Honey Rock Melon, Long Purple Eggplant, Kentucky Wonder beans along with a few others. All of the plants are open-pollinated heirlooms from which seed can be gathered for next year if the plants grow well. Prolific producers were chosen so that Master Gardeners can donate the harvest to a local food bank.

Below is a picture of the 22 pounds of beautiful Yukon Gold potatoes that were harvested from one of the raised beds in the Demo Garden. They look wonderful!!! Great job Master Gardeners!!

You can find a list of the new plantings posted on the Demo Garden section of our website ([www.rutgers-atlantic.org](http://www.rutgers-atlantic.org)) should anyone want more information on them.



Yukon Gold



**Port Republic School Project**  
**Janet Longo [04]**

The Port Republic School Gardening Project is a joint effort sponsored by the Port Republic Drug Alliance, Master Gardeners of Atlantic County, and the administration/teachers of Port Republic Elementary School. The purpose of the project is to instill a love of gardening in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students. Teachers included Lee Ann Parker and Rosemary Crossan. Master gardeners included Glenn Pavlis, Patty Cassidy, Evonne Kaminski, Vicki Butler, and Janet Longo. Students learned about and participated in spring clean up, enrichment of soil, planting shrubs, perennials, and annuals plus mulching. Two paths run through the garden which the children enjoy on a regular basis. In addition, the garden runs the length of the school between the school and the street so that all have a chance to enjoy the garden daily. All student received small herb gardens, seeds, and Gerber daisies to continue their gardening at home.



## Topics to look forward to when working the Help-Line:

- Weather related issues in the vegetable/fruit garden
  - Powdery Mildew
  - Leaf spot
  - Anthracnose
- Disease in Lawns
  - Brown Patch
  - Summer Patch
  - Pythium Blight
  - Dollar spot
- Carpenter Bees
- Carpenter Ants
- Ticks and Their Control/ID
- Rhododendron Borer
- Aphids

## “Green Thumb” Articles

Look to use the following Green Thumb articles as resources for clients while volunteering for the help-line. The articles are located in the “Green Thumbs” binder on the bookshelf in the help-line office:

Peonies  
Repotting Houseplants  
Strawberry Renovation  
Oriental Fruit Moth  
Beekeeping  
Colorado Potato Beetle  
Sweetbay Magnolia  
Chipmunks

## New or Updated Factsheets

FS018	How to Hire a Household Pest control Professional
FS720	Copper: Evaluating Micronutrient Needs of soils and Crops in New Jersey
FS1127	Rain Barrels Part III: Building a Rain Barrel from A Plastic Trash Can
FS113	Peach and Nectarine Pest Control Schedule for New Jersey Home Orchards
FS112	Apple Pest Control Schedule for New Jersey Home Orchards

## Tree Decline – Mona Bawgus, Program Coordinator



So why aren't our trees living out their normal lifespan? Trees begin their decline from some predisposing factor such as long term drought and repeated defoliation, but the number one reason for their eventual death is stem girdling roots. Most of this damage is occurring underground out of sight because of improper planting of the tree's root system. This can be just an inch above the main order root. Secondary roots begin to grow closer to the soil surface and begin to encircle the stem. These stems compress the tissues of the tree and the trees become stressed from decreased flow of nutrients and water. You now have a tree that each year will emerge from dormancy in a weakened state due to energy depletion. Releafing is stressful and then the tree has to deal with the harsh conditions of urban landscapes.

So what can we do? Prevention starts at planting. Remove excess soil over the tree's main order root before planting and then plant the stem completely above ground. As the lecturer summarized “plant trees don't bury them”. Randomly sampled trees showed trees planted too deep ranging from 0 to 13 inches. Also don't assume a balled-and-burlapped trees are planted at the correct depth. Start by removing excess soil until that main root is found. When this is done the chance of having girdling roots is reduced to almost zero. If your tree seems to be slowly declining investigate the root collar. It may not be too late to help.

**By James Murphy, Specialist in Turf Management, Rutgers University**

Unless property owners have an in-ground sprinkler system or a very small yard, it will be very difficult for them to keep up with evapotranspiration now that much, if not all, of the plant available soil water reserves have been depleted from the upper 1/2-foot or more of the soil. So I would recommend to those trying to water with hose and sprinkler - don't expect to keep the grass completely green and drought stress free - you need to tolerate some drought damage. I personally decided to not spend time and money watering my lawn; most of it has or is going dormant. The only grass getting water in my yard is from the overthrow of the sprinkler watering my shrubs - that are wilting! The topsoil in my yard is very shallow and won't even support the growth of shrubs without irrigation in this weather.

The dry hot weather has now shifted to very warm and humid conditions. New Brunswick Cook Campus actually had a brief rain shower this morning with another cell skirting by us to the east the afternoon. Tomorrow's forecast includes more thunderstorms. Thus, the drought stress problems on turf will likely morph into disease stress problems, if they haven't already. Note that disease damage is not a concern on grass that is already dormant from drought - presuming there was not disease attacking the grass while it was going dormant.



The preceding heat and drought stressed has fired up summer patch disease on Kentucky bluegrass turfs; where present the damage has been intense this year. For most home owner situations there isn't much that can be done short term, if summer patch disease is currently expressing. The actions are far too expensive and time consuming with limited results. Recommend over-seeding or re-sodding the late summer (15 August to 21 Sept) with a resistant turfgrass to repair the area (tall fescue, perennial ryegrass, and Midnight type Kentucky bluegrass varieties).

Test the soil for fertility - pH needs to be in the range of 5.7 to 6.1 and nutrients need to optimum. Next spring, the home owner needs to avoid over-watering - over-watering encourages the fungus to colonize/infect the root system during the spring and the turf collapses in the summer heat and drought. The home owner also needs to mow at 2 inches or higher.

Turf that has been irrigated too generously may have or will soon suffer some brown patch disease and possibly Pythium disease pressure. Brown patch is usually superficial and the grass will grow out of damage from brown patch disease. However, property owners need to be encouraged to back off the irrigation if the turf and soil are wet at this time of year - a moist to slightly dry condition in the soil will be the best prevention against disease and will also result in a more conservative use of water.



Pythium on the other hand can destroy the crown of the grass plants, which completely kills the affected plants. Pythium can also "run" with flowing water and "track" on wheels or shoes, so it wise to stay off the afflicted areas until it is dry. Definitely turn off the water if you see this disease!



Until recently, dollar spot disease has been limited. However, the very warm, humid weather over the last two day has ramped up this disease on susceptible grass species. To limit the spread of this disease, don't overwater and keep the turf as dry a feasible. If you have the inclination, dragging a hose across the turf early in morning to knock down the dew and disrupt the fungal mycelia growth works very well at suppressing this Disease - but you need to do this whenever dew is present to be effective. A light nitrogen fertilization can be effective at growing the turf out of dollar spot damage but under the current weather conditions this should be delayed until rain occurs more frequently and the high temperatures consistently moderate (<85 °F).



## **Bob Varrelmann [07] Chairperson**

The 2010 Plant was held on May 22, 2010 at the 4-H Center on Route 50 in Mays Landing. Plants were purchased from two nurseries this year for resale. North Creek Nursery supplied plugs of various sizes for native and butterfly-friendly perennial plants. Several varieties of shrubs were purchased from Cicconi Farms. Master Gardeners also propagated many varieties of vegetables, herbs, house plants, perennials and fig trees. All plants looked very healthy and were well received by the attendees to the sale. Master Gardeners were on hand to provide information about the plants being offered. They also presented four seminars on various gardening topics relevant to concerns gardeners are experiencing now. I want to personally thank those Master Gardeners who volunteered in the months before the Sale and on the sale date. It takes much effort on the part of many volunteers to help make this Sale a success. Thanks again.



# Getting to Know You



**Marie A. Frost**  
**Class of 2009**

**What committees are you involved in?** I was on a committee that spoke to a garden club and participate in 4 H.

**Favorite time of year?** Spring and Fall

**Least favorite plant?** Easter Lillies, I just learned that if my cat ate any part of one, it would cause renal failure and possibly death. No more Easter Lilies for me.

**Favorite plant?** Veronica Speedwell Giles Van Hees [ a sweet, petite, profuse bloomer] and Russian Sage [ it has such a lovely fragrance ]

**If I had a farm I would grow...** I'd have to have some apple and peach trees, strawberry plants and a variety of veggies; peas, corn, pole beans, potatoes and squash.

**What is your most embarrassing gardening moment?** Because of a knee injury, I have a difficult time getting up after kneeling. One day while gardening in my front yard, I tried to stand up, but my knee would not hold my weight. I had to crawl on my hands and knees across the yard, over to the fence and pull myself up. If any neighbors saw me, I hope they didn't think I had been out on an all night binge.

**What most MGs do not know about me is...** Besides gardening I like to paint in oils and water colors. I also have a great interest in creative writing. [when I have the time.]

**My favorite garden tool is...** my shrub rake

**My family thinks my gardening is...** Interesting, they like my garden and sometimes ask for advice.

**My favorite MG class was...** I gained much knowledge from the entire course, but my favorite class was on native plants. I'm now on a mission to learn what is native to our area and slowly transform my own garden into a more regional habitat to support our eco system.



**Gail Fisher**  
**Class of 2010**

**What committees are you involved in?** None, so far - I'm a newbie.

**Favorite time of year?** Fall

**Least favorite plant?:** Rose of Sharon

**Favorite plant?** Rosemary and/or Lavender

**If I had a farm I would grow....**butterfly weed

**What is your most embarrassing gardening moment?** Wearing shorts when I cut down Rue, and getting a severe blistering skin burn on my leg from the sap.

**What most MGs don't know about me is..** I'm a gourd artist, and my husband and I have a year-round garden railroad in our front yard,

**My favorite garden tool is...** my pair of Felco #8 clippers.

**My family thinks my gardening is...** obsessive, but often tasty.

**My favorite MG class was...** Backyard Habitats with Pat Sutton

During the upcoming MGANJ Fall Conference on October 2, 2010 the following Master Gardeners will be recognized for their volunteer efforts throughout this year:

**Individual Award**

Bob Varrelmann

**Group Award – Demo Garden**

Gay Pitz  
Barbara D'Augustine

**Congratulations** to these Master Gardeners and to all of our volunteers for another successful year!!! **Thank You!**



### **2010 Class of Atlantic County Master Gardeners Graduate**

Twenty weeks of learning everything from soil classification & fertility, insect identification, plant propagation, fruits, vegetables and more, all 19 students taking the Master Gardener course graduated on June 4, 2010. Graduation took place at the Atlantic City Aquarium where Master Gardeners have been working on a beautification project with native plants that are salt tolerant. Graduating Master Gardeners were also given a tour of the Aquarium and all that it has to offer.

Graduates include: Pamela Cascioli, Carolanne Cassano, Jesse Connor, Paula Demarest, Kevin Dougherty, Kate Dumas, Gail Fisher, Meryl Giamporcaro, Mike Gustray, Sandra Koguc, Elliott Kraus, Hugh Lamonaca, John Marositz, Trudy McGuire, MaryAnn Previti, William Reed III, Susanne Reto, Lisa Romano and Robert Tewell Jr.

Graduates now become interns and must complete the volunteer requirement within one (1) year. Our graduates were eager to get started and have already gotten themselves involved with our current projects.

Welcome to the family 'Class of 2010.'



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Published by:  
Cooperative Extension of Atlantic  
County  
6260 Old Harding Highway  
Mays Landing, NJ 08330  
(609) 625-0056 ext. 6123  
Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Edited by:



Mona Bawgus  
Program Associate - Agriculture



**Happy Birthday  
Master Gardeners!!**

July 25	John Marositz
July 28	Amy Menzel
July 31	Camille Griffin
August 2	Thornton Hole
August 13	Glenn Pavlis
August 19	Barb D'Augustine
September 2	Gerel Pereborow
September 17	Gloria Perakovich

**Want to contribute to  
*Garden Tales*?**

Send topic ideas, photos, or  
material to Anita at  
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Atlantic County Master Gardener Program  
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