



### GREEN TIMES

April 2009

Volume 8 Issue 7

**Master Gardener Meeting**  
**Tuesday, April 28, 2009 at 7pm**  
Totowa Business Center  
930 Riverview Drive, Suite 250  
Totowa, NJ

**Meet us for dinner at 5pm**  
Miranda's Café  
Route 23 North, Wayne NJ  
Allow 15 minutes to get to the meeting

### "Landscape Below the Ground—A look at trees from the soil down" with Neil Hendrickson, Ph.D.

Neil Hendrickson, Ph.D., is the Northeast Technical Representative for Bartlett Tree Research Lab. He has worked at Bartlett's for 11 years and has been an arborist for more than 20 years. Hendrickson is a Cook College graduate. He earned his Ph.D. in forest ecology. Hendrickson is a regular guest on the "Ralph Snodsmith" radio program. He resides in Somerset County with his wife. He has two grown daughters -- one is a social worker, the other is a landscape architect.



#### UPCOMING EVENTS/VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

**April:** ~ Macy's Flower Show, Herald Square (Broadway, between 34-36 Streets) New York, April 5th—April 19th.

For more information call 212-494-4495 or visit [www.macys.com](http://www.macys.com)

~ Morris Canal Restoration Campaign—Friday, April 24th 3:00 pm—6:00 pm and  
Saturday, April 25th 9:00 am—12:00 pm. Call 973-470-5956

~ Ag Field Day, NJ Folk Festival, and Rutgers Day—April 25th, all day. Cook/Douglass, Busch and College Avenue  
campuses, New Brunswick, NJ

**May:** ~ NJBG plant sale—Saturday May 2nd & Sunday, May 3rd from 10 am—4 pm

~ Leonard J. Buck Garden bus trip—Thursday, May 7th (cost \$7)

~ Master Gardener Plant Sale—Saturday, May 16th

~ Responsible Gardening with Dr. Doug Tallamy & garden tour of NJBG with Rich Flynn—Wednesday, May 20th (cost \$20)

~ Drumthwacket & Morven Museum and Garden bus trip—Wednesday, May 27th (cost \$12)

**June:** ~ Helpline Training at Morris Community College—June 5th

~ Lilac Saturdays at NJBG—June 13th and June 20th (rain date June 27th) 9 am—after lunch

## ELAINE'S CORNER



### To do in April

- ◆ Get a soil test done every 3-5 years
- ◆ Sharpen and balance the mower blades. Change the oil and spark plug.
- ◆ Apply pre-emergence crabgrass control to turf (during and a little after forsythia bloom)
- ◆ Reseed small damaged turf areas with quality lawn seed
- ◆ Plant roses
- ◆ Plant new strawberries
- ◆ Plant perennials and cold-tolerant annuals
- ◆ Plant cool-season vegetables
- ◆ Plant trees and shrubs
- ◆ Start warm-season vegetables and herbs indoors
- ◆ Divide late-blooming perennials -  
POT SOME FOR THE PLANT SALE 5/16
- ◆ Set out peony supports
- ◆ Shape up plants that are winter damaged
- ◆ Begin fruit spray schedule
- ◆ Check stored summer bulbs
- ◆ Well-rotted compost makes a great mulch and supplies a bit of nutrition
- ◆ Tick control for gardeners and pets!

### Computer Gardening Information

You can request catalogs, read tips, shop, and sign up for garden newsletters at [mailordergardening.com](http://mailordergardening.com). Enjoy!

### MG programs

Please know that the Rutgers Master Gardener road trips and educational programs (Responsible Gardening, Helpline training) are for Master Gardeners. They are not open to the public.

### Plant pot collection

Please bring your empty garden pots to the next MGAPC meeting in Totowa. Now is the time of year to divide late blooming perennials (or mid-season ones, if allowed to recuperate in the pot). The MGAPC plant sale is May 16th, after Mother's Day, at the RCE office.



*"Snow drops bloom in the snow, but when the daffodils open you know spring is here."*

Anne Raver

Elaine Barbour  
County Agricultural Assistant

### THE "JOYS OF BIRDING" BIRDING FOR BEGINNERS 2009

The Bergen County Audubon Society presents a course in the Joys of Bird Watching. The course will be held five Sunday afternoons in April (19th and 26th) and May (3rd, 17th and 31st) at local Nature Centers around Bergen County.

The course is free to Bergen County Audubon members or \$20 to non-members which includes a one year membership.

Participants must be at least 12 years old. 12-15 year olds must be accompanied by an adult

For more information, contact Don Torino  
Phone #: 201-636-4022 E-mail: [greaauk4@aol.com](mailto:greaauk4@aol.com)



— Edith Wallace

## BOOKWORMS

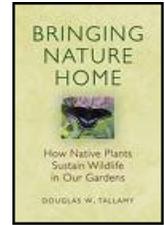
*Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens* by Douglas Tallamy makes the strongest case for native plants I have ever seen. Our native caterpillars and other herbivorous insects cannot eat introduced plants. If there are fewer insects there will be fewer birds. Even seed eating birds feed their young insects: good protein.

Americans' love affair with weed-free lawns and undamaged plants as well as our enthusiasm for impenetrable (paved) surfaces has vastly reduced the food supply of our native insects.

What can we do? Tallamy says that each of us must replace some of our grass with native trees, shrubs and forbs, therefore making an individual contribution to wildlife. Reading this book will make you think differently about your choice of plants. Tallamy writes, "Some people claim that alien species actually increase the diversity of the region they have invaded and therefore are ecologically desirable. I could not disagree more."

Take advantage of the opportunity to hear Douglas Tallamy speak at NJBG on May 20th. He gives an interesting talk from a "different" point of view.

— Edith Wallace



## EARTH DAY AT THE E.A.R.T.H. CENTER

Earth Day has long been a time to think globally and act locally. That's why on Wed. April 22, Middlesex County's office of Rutgers Cooperative Extension invites you to celebrate Earth Day at the EARTH Center in Davidson's Mill Pond Park, 42 Riva Ave., South Brunswick, from 4 to 7 pm. Families are encouraged to pack a picnic dinner and blanket to enjoy an evening in the park. The event is intended to familiarize residents with the EARTH Center's theme of environmental stewardship and encourage them to take action in their own backyards.

During the celebration, there will be tours of the EARTH Center's compost display area, and rain garden, (which filters and recharges ground water). Attendees can ask the county's Master Gardeners gardening questions at the Garden Helpline Q & A table. Representatives from 4-H Clubs will be on hand with activities for the kids. A limited amount of free tree seedlings will be available and local environmental groups will be in attendance. Musical entertainment will be provided. This is a weather dependent event; please call 732-398-5262 before 4 pm, if there is a threat of rain.

If you are not familiar with your county's extension office, it is part of a nationwide network that brings the research of the state land-grant universities to local communities. The Middlesex County Extension office is comprised of three departments; Agriculture & Natural Resource Management, 4-H Youth Development and the Family & Community Health Sciences Department.

Even if you can't visit the EARTH Center for Earth Day, you can still get information on extension programming at the Middlesex County extension website, just visit [www.co.middlesex.nj.us/extensionservices](http://www.co.middlesex.nj.us/extensionservices). For more information call 732-398-5262.

— Elaine Barbour

## MGAPC DIRECTORY UPDATES

Please update your directory! We had some late comers!

Joan Scott-Miller  
400 Union Valley Road  
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Phone#: 973-409-4504  
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## LAURELWOOD ARBORETUM RHODODENDRON FESTIVAL and PLANT SALE

- ◆ Quality shrubs, perennials, annuals, hanging baskets
- ◆ Workshops by Rhododendron hybridizer Dr. Al Fitzburgh
- ◆ Tree Tours
- ◆ Green Elephant Table– *Gently* used garden related items and unusual painted rocks
- ◆ Laurelwood Arboretum T shirts (Adopt – A – Tree Program)

Saturday May 9th 10 am – 3 pm

Rain date Sunday May 10th

725 Pines Lake Drive West, Wayne, NJ

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

To volunteer at this event call 973-838-1908

## PLANT OF THE MONTH: PUSSY WILLOWS—A SHRUB OR A TREE?

I know that spring has sprung when I go for a walk in the woods and see the first catkins on the pussy willow *tree*. As our tree expert, Edith Wallace, stated “A tree usually grows to more than 20 feet and has a single stem while a mature shrub is less than 20 feet and multi-stemmed.” In its natural setting these deciduous shrubs can reach a height of twenty feet, thus we call them trees. If pruned properly in our gardens they take on the appearance of a shrub.



Technically, *Salix discolor* is a dioecious shrub. There are male pussy willows and female pussy willows. The buds (catkins), on the male pussy willow look different from the female ones. The male catkins are showier, and it is the branches of the male that we seek for their “pussy willows.” The catkins on the males yield many tiny staminate flowers later in spring. The female catkins will bear the pistillate flower.

Since these shrubs are wetland plants, they thrive along banks of rivers and streams and are useful for controlling soil erosion. They would be ideal for any area in your landscape that suffers from poor drainage. If you are lucky enough not to have such an area, then you will have to provide your shrub with plenty of water. If you prune your shrubs properly, they will form privacy screens or borders in your landscape. They do best in full sun but will tolerate shade.

The American goldfinch, our state bird, likes to nest in this shrub. Ruffed grouse, beaver, muskrat, red squirrel and snowshoe hare all include willow in their diet. But be careful, deer also like to eat the branches of the pussy willow. So if you are in an area that has a deer population you will have to protect them with some type of fencing.

If you cut the branches off and bring them indoors they will add a wonderful addition to your décor and announce that spring is here. If you place them in a container of water they will root for you or you can simply propagate the branch clippings by placing them in soil. If placed in a waterless vase – absolutely beautiful.

So go out and get some branches from the pussy willow and Happy Spring!

— Barbara Sanford

## MEMORIAL TREE PLANTING

There will be a memorial tree planting to honor Passaic County Master Gardener Elaine Martino at Laurelwood Arboretum. It will take place on Arbor Day, which is on Friday April 24, 2009 at 1 pm. We will meet at the Pavilion.

— Bonnie Joachim

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES IN LAURELWOOD ARBORETUM

Laurelwood Arboretum welcomes your enthusiasm, creativity and skills

- ◆ HORTICULTURAL—no prior skills needed – work in “most needed” areas
- ◆ SECOND SATURDAYS OF EACH MONTH April – October 9-12— Meet at Pavilion
- ◆ EVERY WED. 1 pm – Work/learn with the Horticultural Manager— Meet at Pavilion
- ◆ CIVIC, FAMILY, SCHOOL or CORPORATE GROUP PROJECTS—Create a project or fill a need
- ◆ COMMUNICATIONS—Computer and web skills needed
- ◆ PLANT IDENTIFICATION—Learn about the wealth of trees, shrubs and flowers in the Arboretum
- ◆ TOURS—Be trained to give general and specific tours of the Arboretum
- ◆ VOLUNTEERS—Help train and supervise volunteers



To volunteer and for more information contact Bonnie Joachim – Volunteer Coordinator at 973-838-1908 or email her at [bonniej142@netscape.net](mailto:bonniej142@netscape.net)

## 2009 RUTGERS GARDEN SERIES CLASSES

Spring has finally arrived! Visit the Rutgers Gardens and learn while you are there. They are continuing to register for their Spring and Summer classes which include:

- ◆ Vegetable Gardening Made Easy
  - ◆ Spring Centerpieces
  - ◆ Pruning Techniques
  - ◆ Container Gardening
  - ◆ The Art of Beer

For more information on classes, please visit  
<http://www.rutgersgardens.rutgers.edu/classes.html>  
 or call the office at 732-932-8451.  
 — Elaine Barbour

## HORTICULTURAL THERAPY THANKS

Barbara Sanford would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our Master Gardeners who participated at Van Dyks Assisted Living. We had a great attendance with about 32 participants and 10 master gardeners. Spring was in the air and so we made fresh flower arrangements with pussy willows and spring flowers. The seniors were appreciative to us for bringing a little bit of spring into their rooms. A big “Thank You” to Dick Watts, Birgit Hellen, Jean Marie Burkhardt, Barbara Cook, Rentate Gudat, Chung Hei No, Anita Murski, and Rhea Link.

Patricia Engrissei would also like to give a heartfelt thanks to the Master Gardeners who planted purple petunias with the seniors at the Oak Ridge Rehab in Wayne. Thank you to Enid Medina, Sonny Brennan, Helene Christie, Margaret Kerstner, and Mary Riley. And a special thanks goes to Anita Murski, who participated in both the morning and afternoon Horticultural Therapy sessions!

— Barbara Sanford and Patricia Engrissei

## WHAT ARE WE DOING AND WHY?

Do you wear high heels? Or a necktie? Did your mother wear a hat and white gloves? Is your lawn a green carpet? Why? STYLE! TRADITION!

Prior to the Civil War almost no American had a front lawn. If you could afford servants with scythes, or sheep, there might be an area of cropped grasses. The lawn as we know it came with invention and then perfection of the lawn mower, interest by the USDA and many state agricultural experimental stations in selecting grasses that would thrive in local environments and with close cropping. Simultaneously golf became popular and golf courses require grasses that have many of the characteristics of lawn grasses. Popular magazines carried articles promoting the desirability of a weed-free green front lawn claiming it made a statement that you were a good neighbor and it increased the value of your home. An article in the October 2008 issue of *Money* makes these same points. With the growth of suburbia, towns passed ordinances requiring well-kept front lawns. Seed and fertilizer companies have been successful in convincing Americans that the ideal lawn is obtained by purchasing and using their products. In most recent years, especially in the affluent suburbs, homeowners have installed automatic sprinkler systems and hired landscape companies to care for their point of pride: a well-manicured lawn. The prime purpose of this lawn is for the aesthetic enjoyment of the owner and the neighbors. The lawn is not for picnics, ball games, tag, badminton or even croquet.

A large lawn often surrounds modern industrial parks and office complexes. Why? These green swathes have no purpose other than to be admired. Douglas Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home*, gave a talk showing a small bird (black-throated green warbler) that wintered in South America, flew across the Caribbean, and finally made its way to New Jersey where it landed in an industrial park with an extensive lawn and Bradford pear trees looking for food. In vain!

In the name of fashion what are we doing to our wildlife?

What can each of us do to help care for wildlife? If you tend a home with a lawn and garden, reduce the amount of lawn. Increase the garden space. Plant native plants. They will provide food for our native insects that are, in turn, food for birds. A garden of native plants is less work than a traditional garden, the only work being removing alien plants. Once established it does not even require artificial watering. Ask yourself, do I require so many square feet of lawn or can I share some of it with the birds? And keep your cats inside.

Books to read that may change your thinking:

Jenkins, *The lawn: a history of an American obsession*

Tallamy, *Bringing Nature Home: how native plants sustain wildlife in our gardens* (see BookWorms article on p. 3)

Roth, *Bird-by-Bird Gardening*

—Edith Wallace

Contributors: Elaine Barbour, Ray Edel, Patricia Engrissei, Bonnie Joachim, Jo-Ann Pituch, Barbara Sanford, Edith Wallace

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### Master Gardener Association of Passaic County Officers

Edith Wallace & Barbara Sanford, Co-Presidents  
Raymond Edel, 1st Vice-President  
Jo-Ann Pituch, Mary Ann Sytsma, 2nd Vice-Presidents

Joan Kaynak, Treasurer  
Patricia Engrissei, Recording Secretary  
Janet Rekesius, Corresponding Secretary

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