



GREEN TIMES

March 2010

Volume 10 Issue 3

Master Gardener Meeting
Tuesday, March 23, 2010 at 7 pm
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

“THE ABC’s of ROCK GARDENS” with MICHAEL WILSON

This slide presentation will explain three subjects for the successful culture of alpine plants in New Jersey. **A**lpine Ecology gives an understanding of the native habitat, while **B**uilding and Maintaining explains growing alpine plants at low elevations. The **C**ompendium of Plants gives a list of plants that perform well in the Garden State.

Wilson began his career in horticulture in 1986 at New Jersey Botanical Garden/Skylands. In 1989, he became the horticultural utility foreman for the Frelinghuysen Arboretum in Morris Township and has recently retired from the Morris County Park Commission. He has degrees in both horticulture and environmental studies.

Wilson is also an adjunct professor at Ramapo College for the Environmental Studies Department. He serves on the Sustainable Building and Grounds Committee at Ramapo College as an advisor for vegetative assessment and mitigation projects.

Wilson has been a member of the North American Rock Garden Society since 1992. He is active in the Watnong Chapter in New Jersey and served as co-chair for four years. He was responsible for the rock gardens at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum and also grows alpine plants at home.



SAVE THE DATES

- ◆ Morris Canal Park “Clean and Grow” Restoration Campaign: April 30th 3 p.m. — 6 p.m. and May 1st 9 a.m.— 12 p.m.
- ◆ NJBG Lilac Saturdays are coming so save the dates: June 12th and 19th (rain date June 26), September 18th and 25th (rain date October 9th)
- ◆ MGAPC Plant Sale: May 15th 10 a.m. — 2 p.m. This is our only fundraiser so please contribute plants and participate in any way you can.



ELAINE'S CORNER



To do in March

- ◆ Clean the lawn and garden of debris
- ◆ Don't guess - soil test! Fee is now \$20
- ◆ Frost seed the lawn (It is not as successful as fall seeding, but worth a try on bare soil. Buy fresh seed)
- ◆ Apply dormant oil to plants with woolly adelgid and scale
- ◆ Control ticks on pets (yes, they're back)
- ◆ Start vegetables and perennials from seed. Sow seeds outdoors of hardy annuals (poppies, larkspur, sweet alyssum, sweet pea, cleome, candytuft, etc.)
- ◆ Plant peas and onions late in the month (if soil is workable)
- ◆ Look for gypsy moth egg cases on trees and scrap off (they look like wads of brown paper the size of your thumb)
- ◆ Finish pruning fruit trees, grapes, roses, clematis
- ◆ Gradually remove mulch from perennials; gently press heaved plants back into the ground
- ◆ Cut down/saw ornamental grasses and other perennials with last year's tops still on
- ◆ Begin water-soluble fertilization on houseplants

'Ramapo' and 'Moreton' tomato seed packets available soon; transplants at the May 15 plant sale

Packets of 'Ramapo' and 'Moreton' tomato seeds will be available from MGAPC and can be picked up at our office. The packets have 25-30 seeds and cost \$4.00 each. I'm grateful to our Passaic County growers: Skip Bartlett, George Cluff, and Todd Kuehm who will be producing transplants for the plant sale on May 15.

Road trip

Details of the May 20 class trip will be available in the next newsletter. I will have about 10-15 bus seats open. Location and cost to be determined. Continuing education credits will be awarded. I have another bus available June 23. Garden plans are still in the works. Details in the near future.

Free Open House at Bamboo Brook

Consider going to the annual Open House on Saturday, June 12, noon to 4pm at Bamboo Brook. Tours usually cost \$8 per person. Call 973-326-7600 to register.

Volunteer opportunity at West Milford's Greenfest, May 22

A great place to promote the Rutgers Master Gardener program is at Greenfest. I will have a table for RCE. Hope the MGs will join me. This could be a good site to sell t-shirts and plants left from the plant sale the week before! Thanks for your kind help.

MG Class training snow dates

Enough with the snow already! Here is the new, new schedule of Class of 2010 training classes (changes and additions to original schedule are listed below):

Thursday, March 11	Vegetable Growing, Dr. Tom Orton (not Houseplants)
Thursday, April 22	Small Fruit, Pete Nitzsche (not Houseplants)
Tuesday, April 27	Organic gardening, Jan Zientek, and Composting, Elaine Barbour
Wednesday, April 28	Flower Growing, Barbara Bromley—Road Trip! Seats on the bus still available. Call our office for details and to hold a place with the class.

*Now 'tis spring, and the weeds are shallow rooted;
suffer them now and they'll o'ergrow the garden.*

- William Shakespeare, King Henry VI, 1592

Elaine Barbour

County Agricultural Assistant



PLANT OF THE MONTH: CREEPING FIG

There are approximately 800 species in the *Ficus* (fig) genus. There are trees, shrubs and climbers. They may be enormous as the banyan tree (*F. benghalensis*) that may grow to 100' tall. Banyans are the largest trees in the world in terms of spread, covering many acres. Aerial roots from low spreading branches may form secondary trunks.



The fig most commonly used as a houseplant is the weeping fig (*F. benjamina*). The name weeping is given as the strongly ascending branches weep at the tips. In their native habitat (south Asia, north Australia, south-west Pacific) they grow wider than tall (to 100'). They are often sold with several plants in a pot, braided. There are variegated forms. They often drop leaves when moved.

F. carica, the common edible fig, forms a tree usually to 15' tall. This is the plant with leaves that many people recognize as fig leaves from human statuary. In New Jersey these trees need special care in the winter; they are easier to grow in the south, producing delicious fruit.

F. pumila, the creeping or climbing fig, is grown as a houseplant in our area in hanging baskets or pots, trailing 2'. It may be seen covering the inside of conservatory walls in northern gardens. In the south it may grow to 50' on masonry walls. It is native to China and Japan. On March 6th we went on a garden tour in Key West and saw *F. pumila* covering the walls of two gardens. Not only are the vines longer but the leaves are larger when grown outside.

— Edith Wallace

LET'S TRY AGAIN

Since our February meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather, at our March meeting we will be collecting cans of soup which will be distributed to the needy.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◆ March 21st ~ Home Gardeners' School, SEBS campus, New Brunswick. Discounts available. Contact ocpe@njaes.rutgers.edu or call 732-932-9271
- ◆ Rutgers 2010 Garden Series Classes begins in March. For more information visit <http://rutgersgardens.rutgers.edu/classes.html>
- ◆ May 6th—8th ~ Bee-ginner's Beekeeping. Contact the Office of Continuing and Professional Education for details and costs at www.ocpe.rutgers.edu or 732-932-9271
- ◆ June 18th and 19th ~ Beyond the Basics: Practical Hive Management Tools for Beekeepers. Contact the Office of Continuing and Professional Education for details and costs at www.ocpe.rutgers.edu or 732-932-9271

DIG IN!

This month we begin a new column that anyone can contribute to. If you have a recipe that features ingredients that can be grown in your garden, please email it to regimper@optonline.net.

LAVENDER COOKIES

Yield: 2 1/2 dozen

Ingredients

- ◆ 5/8 cup butter
- ◆ 1/2 cup white sugar
- ◆ 2 teaspoon vanilla
- ◆ 1 egg
- ◆ 1 tablespoon lavender flowers
- ◆ 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- ◆ 1/2 cup colored sugar for decoration (optional)
- ◆ Additional lavender flowers for decoration (optional)



Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease cookie sheets.
2. Cream together the butter and sugar. Beat the egg, and blend into the butter and sugar. Add the vanilla. Mix in the lavender flowers and the flour. Drop batter by teaspoonfuls onto cookie sheets.
3. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, or until golden. Remove cookies to cooling racks, and sprinkle with decorative sugar and additional lavender flowers if desired.

The original recipe came from allrecipes.com. I added the vanilla to it.

— Kathy DiBiano

DO YOU AGREE?

The quote below is taken from the new edition (2010) of *Dirr's Manual of Woody Landscape Plants* regarding *Euonymus alata* (burning bush).

"Birds have seeded the plant in shady woods in some northern gardens...Is now banned in New Hampshire, along with Norway maple and Japanese barberry. The species and cultivars are great garden plants and breeders need to work toward sterile forms. Realistically, millions have been planted in home and commercial landscapes and as long as birds eat and fly, the plants will be disseminated. Banning the plant hurts the nursery industry and does not solve the problem. The measure is more 'feel good' than meaningful....Be forewarned, the invasive plant police will soon be in your garden!"

Have you driven along Morris Avenue from Skylands in the fall and seen the pink of burning bush dominating the undergrowth? Have you been to Jockey Hollow where the dominant plant in the under story is barberry? Bradford pear was considered sterile when it was introduced. Wrong again. It is becoming a nuisance in parts of northern New Jersey as well as farther south. The native plant movement is about 30 years old. The NJ chapter of the Native Plant Society was founded in 1983. The publication of Tallamy's *Bringing Nature Home* has strengthened the positions of native plant activists. Should we join the "native plant police?" Should we work to get an "official" NJ list of invasive plants whose sale is banned? Is it sufficient that we purchase no plants considered invasive? Should we remove all of the listed plants from our properties? Should we organize weed buster crews that spend days removing invasive plants from public lands? Or should we remain our usual complacent selves?

— Edith Wallace

PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOR MASTER GARDENERS

The Project Management class at the Middlesex County RCE Facility in North Brunswick, NJ was very informative for 40 Master Gardeners. The speakers were Patricia Evans and Sheila McRae who are professional project planners.

Some of the highlights of their presentation were:

- ◆ There will be 70% more success using project management tools. (Microsoft Project or Excel)
- ◆ Use Bar or Gantt charts for scheduling.
- ◆ You will need to create a Scope of Project and should beware of “scope creep”.
- ◆ The planning process can be as much as 50% of the total project time.
- ◆ May need 20% contingency in budget.
- ◆ Limit the size of the project team to no more than eight people.
- ◆ A project manager can spend as much as 70% of his/her time on communication.
- ◆ Communication can be in various forms—written, drawings, verbal.
- ◆ Provide limited details to upper management.
- ◆ Volunteers should be included in the planning stage.
- ◆ Inquire as to the skills of team members.
- ◆ Establish a task list.
- ◆ Consensus could lead to mediocrity.
- ◆ Verification is needed throughout each phase of the project.
- ◆ Be aware of pitfalls.
- ◆ Change requests should be approved.

If anyone would like a copy of the 12 page handout let me know.



Howard Aschoff, Patricia Evans and Sheila McRae flank Howard's plan for the Friendship Garden.

— Howard Aschoff

BEE BUSINESS

Question: Have you heard about the problem of honeybees?

Me: I just read an article in *Science* (1/8/10) Called “Clarity on Honey Bee Collapse?”

Q: Then you know the reason for the problem.

Me: No.

Q: No? But you said...

Me: Officially, as of now, no one knows.



According to the authors the most probable cause of colony collapse disorder is pests and pathogens. Colonies become infected with mites and the mites carry viruses. However this is not the complete explanation. It may be the interactions among pests and pathogens, poor weather that makes foraging ineffective, pesticides, and stress caused by long-distance transport of hives to sites where the bees are to do their jobs—crop pollination. Much of our agriculture is dependent on honeybees so the concern is that bee colony collapse could cause failure of crops like almonds, blueberries or the squash group. “Every third bite we consume in our diet is dependent on a honeybee to pollinate that food,” said Zac Browning, vice president of the American Beekeeping Federation.

We do have native ground dwelling bees that are capable of pollinating most of our crops according to Rutgers’ pollination ecologist Dr. R. Winfree, so we should take care of them by leaving their nests alone. Ground dwelling bees are solitary and not aggressive. They will not attack people, as do yellow jackets when someone steps in a nest. Be kind to them. We need them.

— Edith Wallace

2010 MEETING DATES

Board Meeting Dates

(3rd Wednesday - 6:30 p.m.)

March 17, April 21, May 19, June 16, Sept. 15, Oct. 20 and Nov. 17

General Meeting Dates

(4th Tuesday - 7 p.m.)

March 23, April 27, May 25, June 22, Sept. 28, Oct. 26 and Nov. 23

Contributors: Howard Aschoff, Elaine Barbour, Kathy DiBiano, Ray Edel, and Edith Wallace

Editor: Regina Imperato



Master Gardener Association of Passaic County Officers

Ray Edel, President
Janet Rekesius & Mary Ann Sytsma, co-1st Vice-Presidents
Howard Aschoff, 2nd Vice-President

Joan Kaynak, Treasurer
Patricia Engrissei, Recording Secretary
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