



Burlington County Master Gardeners Newsletter

Welcome

Summer is a time of growth and the Master Gardeners of Burlington County are growing a newsletter. The goal of this publication is to communicate what plants are blooming and what pests are buzzing around the County and to highlight the work of our Master Gardener (MG) project teams to both the MG community and the general public. Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who assist the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) Cooperative Extension in its mission to deliver research based horticulture programs and information to the general public.

What's blooming

As you drive around Burlington County you may notice flowers blooming along the side of the roads. The bright orange ones are common daylily (*Hemerocallis fulva*). First introduced in the United States in the late 19th century, daylilies are a popular choice for the perennial garden. There are now over 40,000 registered cultivars but the common daylily is considered to be invasive. The common daylily can escape from the garden to infest natural areas and crowd out native plants. The white roadside flowers are either common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) with flat topped flower heads composed of many small flowers, or wild carrot (*Daucus carota*). Wild carrot is also known as Queen Anne's lace because flower head has lace-like appearance. The blue roadside flowers now in bloom are chicory (*Cichorium intybus*).

What's buzzing

Observed in the area on fruit and vegetable plants: Colorado potato beetles, flea beetles, Japanese beetles, and late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*).

Observed in the area on woody ornamentals: Botryosphaeria canker, anthracnose, rose rosette virus, and scale.

NJAES publishes Plant and Pest Advisory Newsletters for commercial growers. These newsletters contain information which can be useful to homeowners. A new feature is that the NJAES Vegetable Working Group has joined the Cornell University's Network for Environment and Weather Applications (NEWA) to bring disease and insect forecasting to vegetable growers throughout New Jersey. Over 30 weather stations from Sussex to Cape May County now offer forecasting services for 19 specific pests. The website, managed by the New York state Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, can be found at <http://newa.cornell.edu/>. Because the map can be slow to paint, you can save time by using the "Choose a NEWA weather station home page" menu. The list is in alphabetical order by town.



Burlington County Master Gardeners Newsletter

Project Highlights

BCCAC Demonstration Plots

The Master Gardeners have created a number of demonstration plots at the Burlington County Community Agricultural Center (BCCAC <http://www.burlcoagcenter.com/about-the-farm/>). The goal of these plots is to showcase various techniques and plants. Besides the plots described below is a Turf Alternative Plot located in the Southwest corner of the plot area, next to the new Giving Garden. Now in its second year, the Turf Alternatives Plot provides a guide to which ground covers can provide an easy care alternative to grass.

Rain Garden & Pollinator Plots

By Toni Price

The rain garden at Burlington County Community Agricultural Center (BCCAC <http://www.burlcoagcenter.com/about-the-farm/>) was first planted five years ago. Since then many changes have occurred. There were originally two gardens planted, but last year we decided to eliminate one because most of the plants were so overgrown and unmanageable. A few new plants were donated last year by the Xerxes Society for Invertebrate Study, and they have filled in nicely. The garden has withstood heavy rains, winds and drought with almost no care, so current plans are to weed, water when needed, to prune some of the taller plants, and to divide some of the iris this fall. Approximately one thousand people per week pass this garden in season.

What was originally planted as a demonstration plot of native plants has evolved into a pollinator spot in the field. Several of the plants were mislabeled as dwarf varieties and continue to present an obvious lack of symmetry, but the small plot remains to provide home gardeners with some ideas for good plants to attract pollinators. A pollinator plant field row strip was also planted this spring with a seed mix recommended by the Xerxes Society (<http://www.xerxes.org/>) for the Mid-Atlantic States. Given the unusual spring weather, the growth seems adequate. Both areas as well as the rain garden will be included in Toni Price's National Pollinator Week talk on June 23 at BCCAC.

Culinary herbs plot

By Lise Castagner

This plot contains a variety of herbs used in cooking and also in tea. We are demonstrating how easy it is to grow tasty herbs to use in the kitchen. We are growing many varieties of basil with a mix of other common, and not so common, herbs. Herbs also provide us with a very pretty garden.

Squash plot

By Lise Castagner



Burlington County Master Gardeners Newsletter

This plot has become a mixed vegetable patch. We are trying to grow a mix of squashes, eggplants and 2 donated tomato plants. We started this plot a bit late in the season with weeds coming up to our knees. We are using newspaper and mulch to slow down the weeds. To date, the results have been good.

The Giving Garden

By Ray Wargovich

The Giving Garden (GG)--a new Master Gardener donation garden project--began operation in April 2012. The GG recently delivered its first vegetable donation--two medium boxes of red leaf lettuce--to the Farmers Against Hunger at their Mt. Holly collection/distribution point!

The GG is a 12 x 18 ft. plot in the SW corner of BCCAC next to the community gardens and farmers market. It has all day sun exposure. After tilling the plot, soil was weeded and amended with sand and manure (donated by Kathy Misunas) and granular fertilizer. We laid down a circumferential weed block barrier, and built a 2 foot critter fence to surround. Summer crops include bush beans, yellow squash (both from seed) and red bell peppers and three types of tomatoes (from plants courtesy Toni Price). We have two compost units, one a typical plastic tower and a handmade unit made of 3 foot high hardware cloth (team members bring chopped oak leaves for the brown component as there is plenty of green component (weeds!) available on site. Our goal is to add the finished "active" composted organic material as soil amendment to our plot this fall or to build soil quality in an adjacent plot for a possible fall garden.

The Kitchen Garden at Pineland Preservation Alliance

By Judy Janas

Eight years ago, in 2004, a group of Master Gardeners met with The Pinelands Preservation Alliance and offered to create a garden on the newly acquired PPA property in Southampton. Since the property contained an old farmhouse dating from 1752 we decided that the garden should be a kitchen garden. At the time none of us knew exactly what a kitchen garden was but we decided we could research it and make it happen.

The plot of land PPA gave us was a rectangle measuring approximately 20 by 60 feet. It was severely overgrown with weeds, dead shrubs and even a few large rocks that needed to be moved. It was edged with wooden gardening ties some of which were rotting.

The first thing we did was define what exactly was meant by the term "kitchen garden" We found the best answer in a booklet from the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens which said that a kitchen garden can be whatever you want it to be as long as it is near the kitchen. It could be all herbs, herbs and vegetables, herbs and flowers etc. We decided on herbs and flowers with maybe some tomatoes here and there.

Planning what to plant however was way in the future, first we had to prepare the beds. We decided that instead of one rectangular bed we would divide the plot into four equal sections.



Burlington County Master Gardeners Newsletter

We mapped this out roughly and began clearing the property. It was hot, hard, heavy work. We had to dig out dead shrubs that had been there for at least 20 years with roots going deep into the ground. From time to time we had help in the form of young, male PPA volunteers but still it was very slow going. By the end of the first year we had removed most of the dead shrubs but that was only the beginning.

The next year we began removing the weeds that overgrew the plot. Once we removed the weeds we brought compost from the compost pile on the property. Wheelbarrow by wheelbarrow we covered the beds with two to three inches of compost. We even planted a few herbs and flowers which raised our spirits considerably since we felt we were finally on our way to creating our kitchen garden.

The next spring when we came out to PPA for our first workday we realized that we had made a huge mistake. We did not prepare the beds for winter before we stopped worked for the season. Over the winter the beds had filled with water, a multitude of weeds had reappeared and our beds had lost their shape. Undeterred, we spent the fourth year surrounding the beds with bricks to hold them in place planting more herbs and flowers and yes, finally mulching everything to cut way down on the weeds and it worked!

From the fifth year on things have gotten much easier and we have been able to concentrate on ways to improve the garden. That's not to say that we still don't have weeds or the occasional problem—who knew that oregano could completely take over a garden-- but it is nothing like it was. From spring to late Fall something is always blooming in the kitchen garden. At the end of the garden nearest the house we have a shade garden with a path running through it. Walking down the path you come to the sunny part of the garden divided by paths that create the four beds. Butterflies, hummingbirds and bees are frequent visitors to the colorful flowers. We do not use chemicals of any kind on the garden and feel as though it provides a refuge of sorts to all kinds of critters.

This year we are starting another garden near our kitchen garden. It is called a “blended garden” and it will combine flowers that are native to South Jersey with non-natives to demonstrate that it is possible to have a colorful, welcoming garden and still use native plants which often tend to have softer more subtle colors.

The educational goal of both our gardens is to demonstrate to the public the basics of successful gardening without the use of harsh chemicals. There is nothing exotic about our gardens; instead these can be replicated at anyone's home and that, after all, is the point.

Medford Leas Donation Garden

By Mike Hogan

The Master Gardener Donation Garden has been supporting food banks and soup kitchens for ten years since Medford Leas graciously invited the Master Gardeners to cultivate a plot in their “farm.” Over the years it has grown from a small plot to two large plots, three raised beds, and a pergola area as well as a few other small plantings. Farmed as organically as possible by volunteers willing to get their hands dirty, squish bugs, and brave cold, heat, and rain, it has produced up to 1,300 pounds of produce in a season.



Burlington County Master Gardeners Newsletter

Feeding the hungry is not the only benefit of the garden. Many of the volunteers have never grown edibles before. Many have never started plants from seeds. Gardeners are introduced to these phases of horticulture. Seeing and tasting vegetables fresh from the garden is a new experience for some. The problems encountered in a real-life setting are often the problems encountered on the helpline; first hand experience is the best education. Discovering the benefits of a rain barrel has been a joy to all when water wasn't available.

The garden is an evolving entity. While many of the crops are old stand-bys, each year new varieties are tried. Heirloom varieties are popular. Unusual and ethnic crops are also grown; one bitter melon was prolific, but those willing to eat it were few. One year a plot was dedicated to edible flowers. The Three Sisters Garden was tried last year and has been expanded this year. Each year, there are attempts to extend the growing season with early and late crops. While the majority are vegetable crops, there are strawberries, blueberries, Nanking cherries (if the birds can be deterred!) and, the latest trial, hardy kiwi.

The program is a co-operative venture. While there are two persons "in charge," each of the forty plus members of the team is invited to have a say in the garden crops and procedures; no one dictates every aspect of the process. All willingly share their time and expertise and show a desire to learn. Not all can participate weekly because of their schedules and physical needs. However, they do what they can whether it be offering ideas and insights, starting seeds, providing plants, transplanting, mulching, watering, or the ever-needed weeding. Alumni from the group often keep in touch, and some provide materials for the garden as they down-size their supplies.

The Donation Garden satisfies many community needs by providing fresh food for those on limited budgets especially in these economically depressed times, educating Master Gardeners in edible horticulture, offering residents of Medford Leas a place to vicariously enjoy the gardening they can no longer physically do, and giving the volunteers a feeling of collegiality and friendship.