



## Master Gardeners of Burlington County Newsletter

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### Welcome

Hello All,

Welcome to summer with the Rutgers Master Gardeners of Burlington County! As the weather heats up, so do our projects. All of them are going strong as you will read in the updates to follow. Also coming up on July 17-20 we have the annual Burlington County Farm Fair! Even if you weren't able to sign up as a volunteer for Farm Fair this year, I hope you'll at least be able to stop by and check it out. It's a great event for the county and for our program. Farm Fair will be bigger than ever this year as several more vendors, especially food vendors, have been added this year. Our tent will be in the same spot by the pond that we were in last year. The fair theme for 2013 is "Cultivate the Red, White and Blue" so we'll be showcasing NJ grown tomatoes, sweet corn and blueberries at the RMGBC tent and providing folks with information on how to grow them all successfully in the home garden. I hope to see you there!

Sincerely,  
Brooke McMinn  
Horticulturist  
Rutgers Master Gardener Coordinator

### The Garden Year

by Sara Coleridge

Hot July brings cooling showers,  
Apricots, and gillyflowers.

August brings the sheaves of corn,  
Then the harvest home is borne.

Warm September brings the fruit;  
Sportsmen then begin to shoot.

### Calendar

#### Education Opportunities:

#### Multiple Rutgers courses in Pest Management and Landscaping

Now open for registration! Visit [www.cpe.rutgers.edu](http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu) or call 732-932-9271 for more information.



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### Rancocas Nature Center Garden Day Open House

Garden Tours

08/04/13, 1:00 PM-4:00 PM

794 Rancocas Road, Westampton, NJ 08060

This event will showcase the Butterfly Garden, the Meadow, the Dragonfly Pond, and the Children's Garden at the new Rancocas Nature Center! Save the date! More details to come!

### RMGANJ 2013 Fall Conference

Conference

10/05/13, 8:30 AM-3:30 PM

Douglas Campus Center, 100 George St., New Brunswick, NJ

Save the date for the biggest and best MG event of the year in NJ! Keep an eye out for more registration and event details as we get closer to the date.

### Upcoming Other Volunteer Opportunities:

#### RMGBC Project Weekly Workdays

##### **Monday**

9:30 AM

Medford Leas Donation Garden

##### **Tuesday**

9:30 AM

Pinelands Preservation Alliance Kitchen & Blended Gardens

##### **Wednesday**

9:30 AM

Rancocas Nature Center Children's & Butterfly Gardens

**and**

BCCAC field work day

##### **Thursday**

9:30 AM

BCCAC IPM work day

### **Burlington County Farm Fair - We still need coverage for all time slots on Saturday, 7/20!**

07/17/13-07/21/13 (actual event ends 07/20/13)

Burlington County Fair Grounds, Columbus



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### Burlington County Master Gardener Newsletter

Submit articles for the October Newsletter by Friday, September 13<sup>th</sup>

### Rutgers Master Gardeners of Burlington County General Meetings:

2 Academy Dr., RCE, Westampton NJ)

Monday, 07/08/13, 10:00 AM-12:00 noon - Meeting on Farm Fair to follow

Tuesday, 10/08/13, 10:00 AM-12:00 noon

Tuesday, 01/14/14, 10:00 AM-12:00 noon

\*Remember - bringing a snack to share will earn you an additional "other" volunteer hour!

## Projects

### Burlington County Community Agricultural Center

By Ramona Barrientos

It's been a bevy of activity at the Burlington County Community Agricultural Center (BCCAC) this spring. MG's meet on Wednesdays, at 9:30 a.m., to work on the demonstration plots, raised beds, a rain garden, and a variety of other projects. And, on Thursdays, at 9:30 a.m., we meet to: monitor insect traps, walk through the various fields of crops to monitor for insect presence/damage in the plants, monitor the plants for biotic diseases in susceptible plants that may have pathogens (fungi, bacteria, viruses, etc.), and to post notices on the bulletin board to inform the gardeners in the Community Garden of our weekly findings. In addition, we prepare the appropriate signage for the areas we maintain; and, we also maintain a weekly blog that we started last summer.

#### Demonstration plots

The demonstration plots are a continuing community project of the Rutgers Master Gardeners of Burlington County, developed to demonstrate, test, teach, learn, and enjoy gardening in its many forms in New Jersey's unique climate and soils.

This year's 10 plots consist of: herbs, pollinators, blueberries, hops, active composting displays, cover crops, Virginia peanuts, quinoa, tomatoes, and peppers (hot and sweet).

Two new demo plot crops this year are quinoa and Virginia peanuts. The quinoa plot is a bit of a quandary for the group. We're told that quinoa and Lamb's Quarter resemble each other in the early stages; so, we either have a great crop of quinoa coming up or lots of weeds! Consideration is being given to replanting half of the plot with another batch of quinoa seed. The initial planting of Virginia peanuts did not germinate, so we purchased a flat of young seedlings which seem to be doing well so far.



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The tomato plot features two hybrids: Ramapo and Supersonic. We limited the variety, because the focus this year is on the various growing methods: staked, caged, trellised, and garden in a bag.

The pepper plot features many varieties of both hot and sweet peppers: in the Scoville Heat Scale, the peppers range from 0 (sweet peppers) to 350,000 (habañero) units.

*Virginia Peanuts*



*Tomatoes*



*Peppers (hot & sweet)*



### Raised beds

MGs maintain five raised beds at the BCCAC. The beds contain flowers (marigolds), vegetables (cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, basil, and cantaloupe). One bed contains a sampling of plants we are growing in the demo plots. Another bed showcases native plants.

### Rain Garden

The rain garden that was planted a few years ago was mulched this spring with triple-shredded hardwood mulch. Our guide for which mulch to use was provided through The Native Plant Society of New Jersey and the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program's *Rain Garden Manual*; it can be found on the NPSNJ website:

[http://www.npsnj.org/PDFs/2011\\_rain\\_gardens/4\\_Installing\\_32-41.pdf](http://www.npsnj.org/PDFs/2011_rain_gardens/4_Installing_32-41.pdf)

### IPM Crop Scouts

This group meets on Thursdays at 9:30 a.m. One of our responsibilities is to monitor the insect traps at the BCCAC. This year we are monitoring traps for 4 specific insects: Black Cutworm (FS283 & FS1013), Corn Ear Worm (FS282), European Corn Borer (FS284), and Fall Armyworm (FS285).

Ag Agent, Bill Bamka, also walks us through the various crop fields where we have an opportunity to learn about crop management and monitor the various growth stages. Discussions are varied and have covered topics such as:



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- Soil pH: a logarithmic scale used to measure acidity of the soil. It ranges from 0 to 14 with 7 being neutral;
- Used a square to evaluate ground cover (crop vs. other plant growth)--*photo at right.*
- Types of thresholds such as economic, damage, and aesthetic. Thresholds are revised by the grower depending on the crop's development stage, as pests or diseases appear, and as commodity prices fluctuate.
- Aside from the constant presence of rabbits, groundhogs and deer, we also identify the insects that invade the crops and make note of the types of damage they leave. Some insects we have identified this year are Cereal Leaf beetle, Cucumber Beetle and Four-lined Plant Bug.



*Photo: Adult Four-Lined Plant Bug – Courtesy Purdue University*

- Weed identification is one of the many enjoyable aspects of our work. Bill Bamka quizzes us as we walk around the property to test our knowledge of the various weeds.
- We are also in the process of developing a herbarium that includes weeds in their various stages of growth; photos are also taken to show what the plants look like prior to cutting. Some of the weeds we have identified include: Lambs Quarters, Sedge, Annual Bluegrass, Velvet Leaf, Mare's Tail, Curly Dock, and Spiny Amaranth.
- We also walk through the community gardens and observe the various methods of crop planting, and how weed maintenance (or lack of) affects neighboring plots.



### IPM Blog

If you aren't familiar with our blog, started last year by Richard Allen (MG '12), check us out at: <http://bcmgipm.blogspot.com/>. We keep you informed and current with our activities at the BCCAC, so...take the opportunity to sign up for blog notifications through the website.

The BCCAC Crop Scouts invite you to join us on Wednesday and Thursday mornings (9:30 a.m. both days)—don't forget your loop (some insects are very tiny!), work gloves, water...etc.

### References:

### Websites:

- <http://bcmgipm.blogspot.com/>.
- [http://www.npsnj.org/pages/nativeplants\\_Rain\\_Gardens.html](http://www.npsnj.org/pages/nativeplants_Rain_Gardens.html)

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### Medford Leas Donation Garden

By Lynn Hecker

After weeks and weeks of rain on Monday mornings, we finally got a good work day in. We have reached 58 pounds of veggies donated to local charities.

Our goal is again 1000 pounds, and to get to it we are going to need some help. We are looking for people to water, squash bugs, harvest, hoe, fertilize, dig, plant, and enjoy good conversation while doing all those tasks. Thanks to Roger's cold frame/greenhouse we should have a bumper crop this year.

Lyn and Jim have the yellow finger award almost locked up. They have gone above and beyond the call of duty when it comes to killing Colorado Potato Bugs. This year's crop of bugs has resulted in their fingers being yellow and the color extending up their forearms. The other gardeners in Medford Leas are grateful to Jim for alerting them to the heavy influx of the beetles. We have planted Cabbage, Pak Choy, Swiss Chard, Corn, Tomatoes (many varieties), Potatoes, Squash (several kinds) Eggplant, Lettuce (several kinds), Spinach, Rhubarb, beans, watermelon, peppers (many varieties), and all kinds of herbs and spices which are planted in the three raised beds. Our hops and pole beans continue to thrive on the Pergola.

We (hopefully with Joyce's research) are looking to set up in Roger's cold frame/greenhouse a fall crop program. This will be a first for us and should boost our production.

Should you have abundance in your home garden we would be glad to coordinate donating it to local charities. We could also use any help you can provide, keep in mind that you don't have to show up only on Monday. You can come any day and gain valuable hours.

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### Pineland Preservation Alliance

By Judith Janas

For the first seven years that the Master Gardeners were at PPA, we focused on creating a kitchen garden in keeping with the age of the property—the house which serves as the PPA office was built in 1752. Last year we began work on another garden on the property which we call the Blended Garden. The purpose of this garden is to demonstrate how native and non-native plants can effectively be used together.

Creating this second garden has been a daunting experience. The space where the Blended Garden was to be located was full of weeds, overgrown shrubs and a few trees that were not doing well. The first job was to clear out the weeds, cutback the over grown shrubs and sometimes move the shrubs.



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We also had to decide what to do about the trees. As we cleaned up the area we discovered that at one time this area had been a garden and had excellent bones upon which we could build. This year we are finishing up the weeding and mulching of the garden and are beginning to plant the native and non-native plants. Looking at the garden now it is hard to believe how it looked just a year ago.

With the Blended Garden close to completion we are once again focusing on the kitchen garden. We are evaluating the plants that are in this garden and deciding which we want to keep. We are also cutting back some of the plants that have become overgrown—oregano anyone? We are also clearing and replacing the paths that divide the garden. We are taking out the mulch on the paths and replacing it with small red stones to match the path in the Blended Garden.



We invite anyone to come and visit these gardens. The Master Gardeners are there every Tuesday morning from 9:30 until around 11:30 AM. We welcome anyone who would like to be a part of this project: all you need to do is show up.

The gardens created by the Master Gardeners provide a wonderful opportunity to sit, relax, and watch the many birds, bees, and butterflies who call this garden home.

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### Rancocas Nature Center

By Candy Myers

We received a grant from The Garden Club of NJ and we have several new projects planned for the gardens at the Nature Center. Toni Price has taken over as Chairperson of the Children's Vegetable Garden. She has reworked the beds and will be adding more raised areas. The garden will be a part of the summer camp curriculum and Nature Toddler programs. An area for children to sit and listen to stories is being created. There is an open house planned for August (See the Calendar above, Page 2, for more information on this event).



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The Butterfly-Hummingbird gardens are at an in-between stage. The Spring flowers are finished and the perennials are full of buds. We're putting in annuals to keep the pollinators happy. Mother Nature has added a rain garden section between our original beds with a mini stream from the driveway. We're enlarging that area with plants for boggy areas such as Cardinal flower, Iris, grasses and other native plants. Together with the RNC Director we are working on plans to extend the rain garden towards the Children's Garden to deal with changes provided by Mother Nature. We're always rearranging plants and trying to keep ahead of the weeds. There is a rain barrel and new plantings installed around the center building.

Because several Master Gardeners, including Toni Price, Lavonne Johnson, and Marilyn Fishman helped create the Friends of the Rancocas Nature and save RNC after New Jersey Audubon decided to close the center, it would be a commendable show of support for this Burlington County treasure for MG members to help maintain our work at the RNC. Thank you to the MG members who helped us with the "great weed war". We always need more hands so come grow with us on Wednesday mornings.

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### Articles

#### Verdolagas (Common Purslane)

By Ramona Barrientos

Growing up in the Salinas Valley of California I was exposed to an abundance of agricultural harvest. And, on many occasions my father would bring home a bag or two of Verdolagas (or, in the English language: Common Purslane, *Portulaca oleracea*) which grew wild. At our dinner table Verdolagas were served as a side dish that my mother prepared with tomatoes, onions, and garlic, along with a variety of herbs and spices.



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The memory of these Verdolagas came to me last year when our IPM group was walking through the community gardens at the BCCAC in Moorestown. I noticed a small plant near the walking path and knew it looked familiar but could not figure out what it was. That afternoon I had the revelation that what I had seen was a Verdolagas.

The Verdolagas have popped up again this year at the BCCAC (picture at right). Research revealed quite a bit of online information from various university extension programs, as well as recipes for using Verdolagas in salads or as a side dish.



A word search on Princeton's word net web defines Verdolagas as a "*weedy trailing mat-forming herb with bright yellow flowers cultivated for its edible mildly acid leaves eaten raw or cooked especially in Indian and Greek and Middle Eastern cuisine; cosmopolitan*"...add to that Latino cuisine!

The Rutgers Cooperative Extension website states: "...It is a severe weed pest in vegetable crops and newly seeded turf. It is an annual and produces numerous seeds. ...The tender young tips are a good addition to a salad." So, it's a weed that's good on salads!

Depending on your cultural and/or life experiences, you may view Purslane as a weed or, an opportunity to try something new in your diet.

Aside from the Purslane that grows wild, there is also a cultivated variety known as Goldberg Golden Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea sativa*); it is larger and grows more upright. The UMass Amherst website states that seeds can be purchased from Johnny's Selected Seeds.

Nutritional value and preparation: Verdolagas are rich in Vitamin A (approximately 40% of a daily requirement, based on a 2,000 calorie diet); and, calories total approximately 20 per cup for one cup of boiled Verdolagas. They are also a good source of Vitamin C. Of course, plain Verdolagas don't provide much flavor on their own (at least not for me); so, adding other veggies to the mix makes for a tastier dish. Now the only question is...do you eat them with corn or flour tortillas? ¡Buen provecho!



Processed Verdolagas for sale at a Latino market in Atlantic City, New Jersey.  
Photo: Frank Mangan



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### References:

#### Books:

Uva/Neal/DiTomaso. 1997. *Weeds of the Northeast*, page 288. Comstock Publishing Associates a Division of Cornell University Press/ Ithaca and London.

#### Websites:

<http://wordnet.princeton.edu/>

<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/weeds/weed.asp?purslane>

<http://extension.umass.edu/vegetable/ethnic-crops/verdolaga-portulaca-oleracea>

<http://web.cals.uidaho.edu/calsblog/2012/06/14/weeds-eat-em-to-beat-em/>

<http://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/search/list> (nutritional value)

#### Recipes:

- Salad: [http://www.simplyrecipes.com/recipes/tomato\\_cucumber\\_purslane\\_salad/](http://www.simplyrecipes.com/recipes/tomato_cucumber_purslane_salad/)
- Salad: [http://allrecipes.com/Recipe/Authentic-Lebanese-Fattoush/Detail.aspx?event8=1&prop24=SR\\_Title&e11=verdolaga&e8=Quick%20Search&event10=1&e7=Recipe](http://allrecipes.com/Recipe/Authentic-Lebanese-Fattoush/Detail.aspx?event8=1&prop24=SR_Title&e11=verdolaga&e8=Quick%20Search&event10=1&e7=Recipe)
- Side dish: <http://web.cals.uidaho.edu/calsblog/2012/06/14/weeds-eat-em-to-beat-em/> (*This recipe comes closest to what I recall my mother preparing.*)

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## Lawns: A View from History

By Marilyn Fishman

Some writers suggest that the love of lawns may be innate: a legacy of humanity's origin in African savannas. However, the desire for lawns may owe more to social and economic history than to an ancestral longing for flat grassland with scattered trees. Setting aside land for a crop which did not generate cash but which did require labor to maintain evolved in Europe as a way to signal wealth and status. Lawns are an expensive status symbol. The Lawn Institute website (<http://www.thelawninstitute.org/faqs/>) states that as of 2004, the annual value of the U.S. turfgrass industry was \$35 billion; more recent estimates push that to over \$40 billion. The American love affair with a chemically sustained monoculture of alien plants is a legacy of the European settlement of North America.

In the 16th century as Europeans were beginning to explore and settle in North America, English landowners were beginning to fence areas which had been in common use for farming and pasture. The enclosed areas were used to graze the landowner's sheep which were a major source of wealth. As Sir Thomas More wrote in *Utopia* (1516) "...your sheep that were wont to be so meek and tame, and so small eaters, now, as I heard say, be become so great devourers and so wild, that they eat up,



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and swallow down the very men themselves. They consume, destroy, and devour whole fields, houses, and cities." Houses of the wealthy came to be surrounded by large areas of grasses, which were well suited to the cool, damp English climate. The greenswards were sheared by sheep or by groups of men with scythes. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century those grassy areas become a key feature in landscape design.

*The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (1971) cites the first use of the word "lawn" (in 1548) merely as an open space, a glade between trees. It was not until 1733 that the word was used to refer to a section of a garden covered with closely mowed grass. This change in definition echoed the changing role of grass as a design element. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century an English landscape style emerged to displace the extravagant formal geometric layouts of the Italian and French gardens. While the Baroque and Rococo Italian and French styles of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries incorporated grassy areas as one among many design elements, the new English landscaped style created vistas of greenswards leading to focal points such as small buildings, real or fake ruins, and artfully arranged groups of trees (the trees could be imports from North America which provided more fall color than the native English trees). The grass areas created by the enclosures of the previous centuries provided the basis for the grand sweeps of parkland created by a new type of artisan – the landscape designer.

The first European settlers of "West Jersey" were not concerned with landscape design. Clearing the native forest for settlement and cultivation was their primary concern. The forest had to be removed as that people could live. The settlers need arable ground to grow food crops and the herbs which were the only source of medicine. The forest would be tenacious. In most of Burlington County, an area left uncultivated will return to forest in a few decades (*Plant Communities of New Jersey*, Rutgers University Press, 1994, documents how a woodland replaced an abandoned field in about 50 years).

By the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> people began to have resources in time and money to include ornamentals in the garden. In many farm and town houses, flower gardens began to appear, planted in the front yard, separated from the road and the fields by a fence, with a path leading to the front door. The flowers included natives as well as those traditional English garden flowers which could be grown with minimum effort by busy housewives. Lawns remained a feature only the wealthiest could afford.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, some American landowners did have the resources to emulate fashionable landscape styles developed for the English upper classes and create extensive lawn areas. See for example the gardens of the Founding Fathers as described by Andrea Wulf in *Founding Gardeners: The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nation* (2011).

The first landscape design book written for American, Andrew Jackson Downing's *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North American* (1841), followed the standard

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English landscape practice of designing for great estates. For those with smaller houses and wallets, Downing recommended only grass and trees), since there was not sufficient space to play out the principles of unity, variety, and harmony. Downing's "Note on the treatment of Lawns" does warn that "Our climate, however, is in the middle states one of too much heat and brilliancy of sun, to allow us to keep out lawns in the best condition without considerable care". The estate owners who were his customers had the resources to pay to maintain their greenswards.

Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed Central Park in New York City, also designed one of the first suburbs: Riverside, build in the grasslands outside of Chicago (1869). The open lawns linking the homes of the community were status symbols which could be maintained by the homeowners using a new gadget – the reel mower. Some writers consider this pattern as democratization of the English manor house set among its ancient greenswards.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the modern suburb, such as those pioneered by the Levitt family, lawns are a standard feature. William Levitt's father, Abraham, was an enthusiastic gardener. The senior Mr. Levitt published gardening tips in a weekly newspaper column, and personally inspected homeowners' lots as they grew in the former potatoes fields of Buck County, PA (<http://www.statemuseumpa.org/levittown/two/l.html>)

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century writers began challenging the dominance of the lawn. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) with it disclosure of the dangers of pesticides, is often cited as the first work in the anti-lawn tradition. In *Second Nature* (1991) Michel Pollan, suggested replacing parts with a garden. In *Noah's Garden* (1993), Sara Stein advocates "ungardening": allowing the lawn to revert to woodland and create wildlife habitats.

Pollan in a 1989 article wrote that "Lawns are nature purged of sex and death. No wonder Americans like them so much." <http://michaelpollan.com/articles-archive/why-mow-the-case-against-lawns/>. However, those who install an alternative lawn may encounter legal issues. Some town laws and housing development covenants do not allow lawn alternatives. As the anti-law movements was gaining ground it the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *John Marshall Law Review* (Volume 26, Summer 1993, Number 4) published an article with suggestions on dealing with "weed inspectors" and local "weed laws" <http://www.epa.gov/greenacres/weedlaws/JMLR.html>

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the anti-lawn movement is growing stronger as people become even more sensitive to the environment and monetary cost of lawns in terms of water usage and pollution from gas fumes and pesticides. The latest trend in lawn alternatives is for "The Edible Front Yard", a productive combination of edibles and ornamentals which might look familiar to a Colonial era family.

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