Rain Gardens in the Gardens

Rain Garden is one of the new ‘buzz words’ within the gardening world. A rain garden is an attractively designed and planted basin that captures storm water from roof drains or paved surfaces and holds it temporarily, allowing for deep water ground recharge and mitigating damage to streams or rivers. Simply stated, it holds water long enough for it to soak into the ground! If developed properly, they greatly alleviate stream flooding, bank erosion and pollution problems resulting from storm water discharge. A secondary benefit is the removal of water borne pollutants via absorption by the plants. Through a grant from the New Jersey Committee of the Garden Club of America, an in-kind donation from Pinelands Nursery and the generosity of several donors, the rain garden has become a reality in the Gardens. Conceptually designed by Landscape Industry students under the direction of Mr. Richard Bartolone, the Rain Garden features a bog garden and waterfall, along with a seating area and paths. The rainwater is directed from an adjacent shed and highlights how such an environmentally sensitive solution can become an attractive addition to the home landscape. Rutgers Gardens is deeply ingratiated to the New Jersey Committee of the Garden Club of America, the Rumson Garden Club (a member club of the Garden Club of America), Pinelands Nursery and our donors for their support. Please come out and enjoy this very attractive and environmentally sensitive addition to Rutgers Gardens!

Connecting With Nature

Debbie Henry, Children's Program Coordinator

Do you look longingly out of the window, wishing you could be outside, but choose to eat lunch at your desk or clean out that closet that you never seem to get to? When you do get outside, is it just to mow the lawn, cook on the grill or take a brisk walk around the block? If so, and you probably know this already: you are missing out on the wonderful experiences that a closer connection with nature can bring to you. What does a child do if they are pulled away from their TV shows, video games and assorted other electronic gadgetry and left to their own devices out of doors? I think you will find that they will dig in the soil, dissect flowers, inspect unusual plants, climb trees and lie down in the grass to look at the clouds. In short, they will connect with nature.

Rutgers Gardens has a lot to offer our youngest visitors along with their families. From our colorful annual beds to trails through the Rhododendrons and bamboo, from climbing trees and the big chairs to ponds with frogs and fish, from foods growing in the vegetable gardens to wildflowers growing in the fields. Families with children will especially want to visit our Children's Garden where you will find many unusual vegetable plants growing, including purple carrots, white eggplants, popcorn and ‘already pickled’ cucumbers.

We are now in the process of developing new programs to offer individual children, families and children's groups. Group field trips can be scheduled weekdays from April to November. Trips include a tour of several of the most popular spots in the garden as well as a focus on a topic of their choice. Families may choose to sign-up for the Family Garden Club and receive advice and hands on experience with starting your own garden. Families should also attend our public events where we offer family tours and children's activities. Also this year, we are offering a week-long summer camp for children from ages 9 to 13. For children who are interested in exploring our natural world, this program will allow them to take advantage of the facilities and expertise at the Rutgers Gardens for a fun-filled week of learning and connecting with nature.
Directionals

Bruce Crawford, Director

Each year Rutgers Gardens selects a year-long theme around which different programs and plantings are highlighted. For this year it is our often misunderstood garden friends – the pollinators. Entitled ‘Bees-Birds-Butterflies’, the year will focus upon the fascinating association between how pollinators and flowers depend upon each other for life! Even a non-gardener knows about honeybees, but how many people know of our many ‘non-stinging’ native bees? Or, how many know about the fascinating methods that plants interact with animals and insects to insure that pollen is transferred from one flower to another? It is a part of nature that we all take for granted, but through various classes (Native Pollinators on May 21) or special programs during the Open House and Fall Foliage Festival, we hope to bring this fascinating process to life!

Pollinators aside, the year 2011 will continue to see the Gardens improve and develop its programming. The student internship program will begin its focus on plant breeding this summer. Under the guidance of Dr. Tom Molnar, a plant breeder at SEBS, they will tackle the hybridization of Illicium, commonly called Anise. The program will start out slowly, with the interns preparing the field and taking note of flowering time for the different species, as well as developing techniques for germinating and collecting seeds. However, it is one of the few – if not the only – such breeding program in the US that is being conducted by undergraduates and will bring a new dimension to the Internship Program! Another newly started program is the Children’s Program. Under the direction of Ms. Debbie Henry, it completed a very successful second season in 2010. Compliments of a donor and an Eagle Scout, the Community Youth Garden sprouted a cold frame and 4 raised beds in the fall of 2010! This will allow the outdoor portion of the program to begin earlier and to run much later into the year. This year also marks the first time the Gardens will offer a week long children’s camp. Held during the third week of July and the second week of August, it is open to children in 4th through 8th grades, and will focus upon the serious and fun aspects of nature based learning.

The future is also never far from our focus as well! In order to help with our planning efforts, a short survey is available on our web site. It only takes 2 minutes to complete, but will help us to determine how we can better serve you and what features and improvements you feel necessary for the future of the Gardens. Through filling out this survey, you will provide us with some thoughtful insights into how best the future of the Gardens can be shaped.

Looking back, fall of 2010 saw the completion of numerous projects within the Gardens. The Rain Garden is now hooked up to the gutters on the shed and, thanks to the help of a landscape architecture class, was planted in September. The area adjacent to it will be graded and planted this coming summer. September also witnessed the final seeding of the 2 acre Labyrinth. Located in the field on the far side of Helyar Woods, the layout and seeding was the result of an Eagle Scout project. Other Eagle Scout projects completed this fall include a trail map of Helyar Woods that was completed with GPS technology and a new trail in the Asian Hillside Garden. A very busy fall indeed!

With the many exciting new additions and programs, I hope you will visit this spring and enjoy all it has to offer. Don’t forget the Plant Sale on Mother’s Day Weekend! We will have many exciting new selections and additions – including a membership pre-sale. All the proceeds fund the student Internship Program. As always, if you have a question or a comment, please call or write. I truly wish to hear your comments about the Gardens and how to make it a better place for all to enjoy.
A Message From Monica

Monica McLaughlin, Staff Horticulturist

What do Lobelia, Agastache, and Marigolds all have in common? They all attract pollinators to your garden! Pollinators, being our garden theme for this year, had me researching what plants attract which pollinators. According to the U.S. Forest Service, approximately 200,000 types of animals can act as pollinators. The majority of animal pollinators are insects. Over time flowers have evolved features to actually attract insects, and it never ceases to amaze me how humans mimic nature or visa versa! However, that is an article in itself.

Here are a few examples of plants that we will be carrying at Spring Flower Fair and what visitors you'll be inviting to your garden by planting them; Ipomoea alba ‘Moonflower’ attracts moths and bats. The same plant invites both a dinner guest and its meal! Lobularia and Agastache attract bees, one of nature's busiest pollinators. Salvia coccinea ‘Hummingbird Forest Fire’, doesn’t its name say it all? Zinnia and Pentas serve as landing pads for butterflies, while Buddleia is a buffet for the Butterflies.

Late season Sunflowers, Snapdragons, and Cosmos are all ‘for the birds’, while tubular, nectar rich flowers in reds or orange such as Petunia and Fuchsia and Tithonia are for Hummingbirds in particular. Flies while typically thought of more as a pest than as a Beneficial Insect have many useful species and are especially important to fruit production. Plants such as the hardy Paw Paw trees, which we will also be selling at the spring sale are a prime example.

All this and I have not even touched upon the importance of attracting important insects to your garden. Pollinators and Beneficials Insects are an often overlooked aspect to planning your garden, so this year we invite you to celebrate them by planting some of their favorite gourmet treats!

Volunteer Spotlight 2010 Volunteer of the Year

MaryAnne McMillan, Volunteer Coordinator

After some discussion from our staff, who works very closely with the volunteers, we would like to recognize Barry Batorsky as our “Special Volunteer of 2010”. We chose Barry because he is one who takes on the challenges that are presented, whether it be in the bamboo or vegetable garden and in the past year, building structures for our Children's garden program. He is also a very good example of what kind of volunteer leadership we look to in the future. On a recent weekend Barry, who is the Bamboo garden steward, took on the role of leading a group of students and some volunteers in a workday in the bamboo. It turned to be a very productive day.

Recently I asked Barry to write a few words about how and why he became a volunteer: “I started volunteering about ten years ago. I am a semi-retired professor of rhetoric and comparative literature. When I moved to East Brunswick about ten years ago, I passed a small sign on Ryders Lane which announced the entrance to Rutgers Gardens. Having learned to love gardening and cooking from TV, and looking for a new place to grow vegetables, I pulled off the road and drove down to the log cabin to look around. I signed up as a volunteer and, ever since, in the garden, among the uncomplaining vegetables, I have found a refuge from the piece-of-the-pie ambitions of generation me. James Underwood Crockett, Julia Child, and the culture of narcissism alternately pulled and pushed me into the garden. Mother Nature doesn’t whine, but she does dump snow and ice on the bamboo just to see what I am up to. Gardening is better than any workout in any gym.”

2011 Calendar of Events

April 30 - Rutgers Day/Ag Field Day
May 5 - Spring Flower Fair Preview Reception and Sale for Members and invited guest. For information on how to become a member visit- http://rutgersgardens.rutgers.edu/membership.htm.
May 6,7,8 - Spring Flower Fair
July 30 - 46th Annual Open House and Wine Tasting Festival
September 15 - Gardens Gala
October 9 - Fall Festival
December 3 - Hollydays Festival
2011 Garden Series Classes - March through December. For information please visit - rutgersgardens.rutgers.edu/classes.html
Please Help the Gardens Grow!

Rutgers Gardens has continued to grow with support from friends like you. Help us to continue with our plans to add new programs and features to the Gardens in the coming years. Please consider donating by becoming a Gardens member or helping us to reach our goal for the Doc and Ellen Hamilton Internship Endowment Fund. All contributions are tax deductible.

Name_________________________________Address_______________________________________________________

_____ Yes, I would like to donate to the Doc and Ellen Hamilton Internship Enrichment Fund in the amount of $_______. Please make checks payable to the Rutgers University Foundation or fill in your credit card information below.

_____ Yes, I would like to become a member of Rutgers Gardens as:
____ Friend $40.00  ____ Family $65.00  ____ Educator $55.00  ____ Sponsor $150.00  ____ Benefactor $500.00

Credit card number______________________Exp Date______3 Digit security Code____ Signature________________________

Checks should be made payable to Rutgers Gardens. Thank you for your support!

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