

# Bloomin' Times

February 2025



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*Vancouver Harbour, British Columbia*

Photograph by Nina Sylvester

# MEMBER NEWS

## FLOWER SHOW UPDATES

### ***“Let Your Creativity Bloom”***

The final draft of the schedule is now complete and copies have been made for the flower show committee. This schedule, dated January, 2025, on the title page, replaces all others which you may already have and will be sent on for evaluation to our schedule advisor. *Diana Kazazis*

Since we want everyone to participate, we’ve decided to offer ANOTHER workshop that will focus on the design that you have chosen to enter into the show. On our schedule, this means you can choose to do a design from class 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8. If you do not have a copy of the schedule, let me know and I’ll send it to you. *Regina Kelley*

### ***Reminder:***

You will put your design together at home and bring the completed design to the Mountainside Library at Noon on WEDNESDAY, February 19. Kay, Margot and Nina will judge your designs and give you hints on possible enhancements.

Please follow the directions in the schedule about what is allowed/required in your design. Please don’t forget your 3x5 card with your entry requirements that are listed on the schedule with design materials on one side and your name on the other. Also note any other directions included on the schedule for your class. *Regina Kelley*

### COMMUNITY PROJECTS NURSING HOMES

*“Donna Sevchuk and I delivered 10 poinsettia plants to the Veterans Home in Menlo Park. They are placing them on the tables in their reception and dining area.”*

*Maryfran Annese*  
12/21/24



*Photo by Maryfran Annese*

### **Rake & Hoe Garden Club** **Sharon Shiraga, President**

#### **BLOOMIN’ TIMES NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE**

Regina Kelley, “Profiles”

Jeanie Pelikan, Photography

Richard Pelikan, “Jersey Gems,” Photography

Mabel Woloj, “Native Plants”

Karen Troiano, “Step Into My Garden,” Brightwood Park et al.

**Joe Da Rold, Editor, Photography**  
“Native Plants,” “Garden Limericks”

### **Contributors** **To This Issue**

Nina Sylvester

The Pelikans

Maryfran Annese

Diana Kazazis

Karen Troiao

Barb Spellmeyer

Anna Daurio

Sue Feldman

### **Member Birthdays** **This Month**

2 Jeanie Pelikan

11 Inge Bossert

14 Cathy Becker

16 Pam Kolb

20 Peggy Smith

26 Lee Perry

27 Tracy Criscitillo

28 Kay Cross

# MEMBER NEWS

## Botanical Jewelry Workshop



Workshop Leader: Sharon Shiraga

Attendees: Joann Androconis, Eileen Morris, Mabel Woloj, Jane Christiani, Diane Genco, Barbara Murphy, Carolyn Seracka.



## The Splendor of Amaryllis



Karen Troiano



Anna Daurio

Joe Da Rold



Anna Daurio



The Pelikans

Barb Spellmeyer



# PROFILES

by Regina Kelley

## Tracy Criscitiello

Tracy started life in Ontario, Canada – Tracy had an interesting early life. Her parents were professional ice skaters and met in NYC. Tracy’s mother had moved to the city to go to school and skate. She and two of her three brothers were on tour with Mom and Dad for some of the early years of their lives. After settling in Chicago to teach skating, they moved to the Westfield area so they could start their own skating school. The pinnacle of nine-year-old Tracy’s life was being selected to be in a Broadway show called *Pickwick on Broadway* that included ice skating on stage. Tracy began acting and skating in the out-of-town tryouts and ended up on Broadway.

Far from being scared or wanting to be with her parents, she demonstrated her early fearlessness and loved being on tour and on Broadway. As time passed, Tracy finished school, but was still skating in competition and still performing. Tracy’s skating specialty was Ice Dancing.



Back then “professionals” were unable to participate in the Olympics, and Tracy was classified as a professional.



Tracy met her husband Gary in high school. They have had a long and happy marriage with five children, all of whom live nearby. Tracy’s grandparents were from the Ukraine and passed along the egg-painting tradition to her family. As a result, throughout Tracy’s life she has been engaged in the ancient Ukrainian artistic craft of

Pysanky. The word means “to write.” It is done with real eggs, bee’s wax, and dyes. The finished eggs are masterpieces of design and color. Tracy is a Master of the technique and was asked to contribute three of her eggs to the Pysanky Museum in Kuromiya, Ukraine, as part of a new exhibit showcasing North American Pysanky. She has also become involved in the Pysanky community that has retreats around the U.S. and Canada, where like-minded people meet to exchange ideas, new techniques and attend workshops.

Tracy’s creative talent seems both inherent as well as learned. Since joining R&H in 2002, Tracy has been particularly active in Artistic Crafts as an instructor. She says her father was a talented artist but also that she picks up skills quickly. Another aspect of her talent seems to be that she finds it difficult to not be busy so she takes up new challenges and keeps learning. She says this is how she learned knitting and joined the R&H knitting group.



As a younger woman Tracy did not have any particular desire to garden. But, after her children were old enough to give her some free time, she was invited to a Rake and Hoe fundraiser. They had a florist as a guest speaker/presenter and a Boutique. She said the experience was outrageously wonderful, and this is where her interest in gardening began. She is now an avid and talented gardener and has a beautiful yard and pool area with many horticultural delights. One is a Hosta Garden with a large display of Hosta varieties.

Tracy feels that it’s the people she has met that she has most enjoyed. She says that she has met some of her best friends in Rake and Hoe.

# ANATOMY OF AN ECO-WOMAN

## “FARFALLA”

*Dress-form Designs by Diane Genco, Sharon Shiraga, and Chris Endris*



**Necklace**—Rose of Sharon, Cedar Cone, Raffia, Lebanese Incense



**Shoulder straps**—Dusty Miller



**Bodice**—Southern Magnolia, Dusty Miller



**Belt**—Southern Magnolia, Cedar Cone, Lebanese Incense



**Skirt**—Cryptomeria, Tree Peony Seed Pods, Arborvitae

### Rake and Hoe Contributors

... assisting Diane's Team with garden greenery.

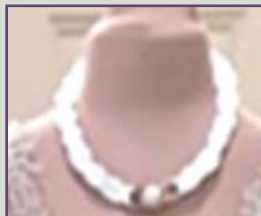
Inge Bossert  
Joe Da Rold  
Richard and Jeanie Pelikan  
Phil Round

Kay Cross  
Carolyn Seracka  
Peony's Envy  
Rutgers Gardens

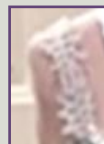
# ANATOMY OF AN ECO-WOMAN

## QUEEN OF THE SOLSTICE'

*Dress-form Designs by Diane Genco, Sharon Shiraga, and Chris Endris*



Necklace—Macadamia Nut, Acorn cap, Azalea leaves



Shoulder Straps—Dusty Miller



Bodice—Lamb's Ears, Dusty Miller



Belt—Tree Peony Seed Pods  
Dusty Miller



Peplum—Cypress



Skirt—Southern Magnolia  
Snowflakes—Red Bud Pods  
Queen Anne's Lace

## Festival of Trees

Frelinghuysen Arboretum Mansion, Morristown NJ

At the annual Festival of Trees, every December, trees are decorated by scouts, families, floral designers and garden clubs. Diane Genco has been invited to participated several times. This is her fourth iteration of Eco-Women.

# GARDEN POTPOURRI

## GARDEN QUOTES

"I rejoice in the opportunity to scratch in the dirt. I like finding seedlings from my plants.

But more importantly, I simply find joy in being in the moment in the dirt of my garden."

*Finlay M.*

\*\*\*

"I went home into my garden and started planting things and getting into nature and going back to the trees that knew me since birth."

*Pamela Anderson*



## WORDS TO KNOW

### "Stratify"

*Stratification* is a process that involves treating seeds to simulate natural conditions that break their dormancy and initiate germination.

Seeds are placed close together in layers in moist sand or peat to preserve them or to help them germinate, exposing seeds to moist, cold, or warm conditions to mimic the natural environment they would experience in the soil over winter.



## GARDEN LIMERICK

The snowstorm came up as we slept overnight  
Bringing changes unseen until first morning light  
Tree branches hung low  
Weighted down by the snow  
A worrisome sight but a photog's delight. jdr



# GARDEN POTPOURRI

## THE WINTER GARDEN...

by Karen Troiano

This morning, the pale yellow sun rose around seven-thirty, revealing a cloudless, cool, blue-grey sky. Branches, black and bare, reach up swaying in the wind. Two red foxes walk gingerly past my kitchen window, leaving their footprints on the evening's fallen snow. The ground is hard and the water is frozen. What is a gardener to do this time of year? LOTS!

- ◇ By pampering your house plants. As this is a slow period for them too, you may notice they need to be fed and watered less. Be sure to dust off the leaves and give them a spritz once in a while for humidity. Remember to check for pests, keep plants away from drafts and give them the light they crave. Before you know it, you will see new unfurling leaves and vibrant blooms.
- ◇ Cozy up with a warm blanket, a cup of hot cocoa and a plethora of gardening catalogs to design a new garden, turning turf grass into a native flower bed filled with pollinators.
- ◇ Create a shopping list to take with you to the garden center.
- ◇ Take a walk outside and enjoy your evergreens.
- ◇ Feed the birds and enjoy their tweets while watching the flutter of color at the feeders. Feeders have a positive impact producing earlier laying dates, larger clutches and higher weight chicks.
- ◇ Before you know it, March will be here bringing warm fifty degree days. That is the time to gently clear out leaf debris and cut back the perennials you left tall in your garden. When clearing out old stems, be on the lookout for bee activity, chrysalises and cocoons when pruning back shrubs; leaving them in place. Carefully move piles of leaves to a corner as butterflies and beneficial insects will need to remain undisturbed for a little while longer.





# NATIVE PLANTS

by Mabel Woloj & Joe Da Rold

## PAWPAWS COME TO NEW JERSEY

by Joe Da Rold

Our nations largest native fruit, the Pawpaw is a subtropical fruit that migrated north from Central America. It is the only member of its family (Annonaceae) that is not confined to the tropics. Pawpaws have a long history in North America. They were a staple in the diets of Native American tribes like the Algonquian, Siouan, and Osage. They ate the fruit fresh, dried, or cooked into soups, stews, breads, and drinks. The Cherokee also used the inner bark of the pawpaw tree to make rope, string, and fishing nets. Pawpaws were grown by Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, who enjoyed them as a dessert. Lewis and Clark ate pawpaws and nuts to survive when their rations ran low. During the Great Depression, pawpaws were called the "poor man's bananas" because they were often eaten as a substitute for other fruits.



Some characterize the flavor as a blend of pineapple, mango, strawberry and banana. Despite its sweetness, the pawpaw can be beneficial for those with diabetes, as it has a low glycemic index, releasing sugars slowly into the bloodstream.

The trees grow best in U.S. Hardiness Zones 7 through 9. Older maps that show where pawpaw crops are grown in America do not include New Jersey. But climate control has changed growing conditions, and pawpaws are now becoming popular with farms in South Jersey. If you want to find a "Pawpaw Patch," keep in mind that the pawpaw season is very short, usually running only the second, third and fourth weeks of September. There are not that many trees in cultivation, so do not expect to harvest a bucket of fruit, you will be lucky to get a half dozen.



If you are interested in growing a pawpaw tree in your garden, they are available from online specialty nurseries as either grafted or seedling trees. Grafted trees produce fruit in two to three years, while seedling trees may take five to eight. They want shade in their first few years and full sun later. Trees can reach up to 30 feet in height when grown in full sun with ample moisture. The trees are unpalatable to deer, although small wildlife will devour the ripe fruit. Pawpaws are the host plant for the zebra swallowtail butterfly (see photo below). Their flowers are pollinated by beetles and flies, so planting them in pairs or multiples can help restore insect habitats. However, the trees must be genetically different from each other to pollinate.



Zebra Swallowtail Butterfly

*More details about growing pawpaws may be found in the article Pawpaw Fruit in the Garden and Kitchen by PennState Extension: (<https://extension.psu.edu/pawpaw-fruit-in-the-garden-and-the-kitchen>).*

PawPaw Farm in South Jersey:  
Robson's Farms  
33 Rahilly Road  
Wrightstown

# CLUB PHOTOGRAPHERS



Photos by the Pelicans



# ENVIRONMENT

## Nature is Good Medicine

A robust body of research shows that being in green spaces—such as parks, woods, forests, mountains, and the like—is beneficial for people’s physical and mental well-being. Less well-known are the perks of hanging out around oceans, lakes, and rivers.

A report called *Green and Blue Spaces and Mental Health* issued by the World Health Organization shows that time in nature—including urban and peri-urban areas—improves moods, mindsets, and mental health. Research shows that exposure to forests, parks, gardens, or the coastlines can even mitigate the psychological impact of climate change, support physical activity, and provide opportunities for social interaction and places “to relax and leave daily stress behind for a while.”

“If you think about our relationship to nature, it reminds us that we are embedded in the natural world, as a species,” says Patricia Hasbach, a psychotherapist and ecopsychologist in Eugene, Oregon. There are many ways nature is beneficial for our psychological and physical health. A recent survey of more than 16,000 people in 18 countries found that people living in greener or coastal areas reported higher overall positive well-being. In addition, those who frequently visited green spaces or blue spaces (along the coast or inland) for recreational purposes felt better and suffered less mental distress.

Source: National Geographic



Photograph by Sue Feldman

## “FOREST BATHING”

[*Shinrin-yoku*]

Research has shown that the Japanese practice of “forest bathing” reduces people’s blood pressure, alleviates depressive symptoms, and improves their mental health. It involves slowly walking in a forest and inhaling the fragrant substances called phytoncides that are released by trees. This simple procedure can be done almost anywhere.

Another study published last year in *Occupational & Environmental Medicine* found that people who visit green spaces five or more times per week have lower use of psychotropic, antihypertensive, and asthma medications than those who spend less time in nature.



*“We’re kind of returning home when we go into blue spaces or green spaces. It fosters a feeling of being part of something bigger than ourselves.”*

Patricia Hasbach, Psychotherapist and Ecopsychologist

## “GARDEN OF TOMORROW”

a poem

*“We breathe air exhaled from trees whose leaves  
are made of starlight...”*

*Our veins echo the patterns of rivers, branches,  
and root systems...*

*We are not a part of Nature. We are Nature.”*

Marysia Miernowska, Author



Read Mabel Woloj's article on Organic Lawn Care, in the December BT, where she hears about the benefits of corn gluten. jdr

## CONTROLLING CRABGRASS



Corn Gluten Meal is making waves as an effective pre-emergent herbicide used to control crabgrass and other lawn weeds. It is a powdery by-product of the corn milling process. Corn gluten meal is about 10 percent nitrogen, which is slowly released over a three-to-four-month period. Corn gluten does not prevent weed seeds from germinating, instead, it inhibits those seeds from forming roots after germination. Originally used as a supplement in hog feed, corn gluten has become a common organic alternative to synthetic chemical herbicides.

How does it work? After application, corn gluten needs to be watered in, either by rainfall or by artificial watering within five days of application. Rainfall of about 1/4 inch, or a comparable artificial watering, is ideal. After this, a dry period of one or two days is required, to prevent weed seedlings from growing roots. When the application is timed correctly, with a short dry period after seed germination, **crabgrass seeds that germinated will form shoots but not roots**, and will die. If conditions are too wet immediately after seed germination, the weed could recover and establish a root.

The first application of corn gluten will not suppress all of the weed seeds, but a single application may help suppress weeds for four to six weeks. Heavy soils, extended rainy weather, and hot spells may require a monthly application, or a second application in late summer. The initial results may be disappointing, but after several applications, corn gluten can reach 80 percent effectiveness at controlling crabgrass.

*"Weeds are flowers, too, once you get to know them."*

A. A. Milne

## ENDANGERED MONARCHS

In December of 2024 the US Fish and Wildlife Service moved to protect the iconic monarch butterfly and proposed listing it as threatened with extinction under the Endangered Species Act. The loss of pollinators like the monarch could have far-reaching consequences for ecosystems and the people who rely on them. Without immediate action, officials warn that the monarch could vanish from the continent for good before the end of the century"



## TRAPPING CARBON DIOXIDE

A typical large tree can suck as much as 40 kilograms of carbon dioxide out of the air over the course of a year. Now scientists say they can do the same job with less than half a pound of a fluffy yellow powder. The powder was designed to trap the greenhouse gas in its microscopic pores, then release it when it's ready to be squirreled away some place where it cannot contribute to global warming. Then they can vacuum them up for safe-keeping, most likely by pumping them deep underground.

