

# Bloomin' Times

March 2025



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The Pine Barrens

Photo by Barb Spellmeyer

# CLUB NEWS

The Rake & Hoe Garden Club, Inc.  
of Westfield Presents

A National Garden Club  
Standard Flower Show

GET  
INSPIRED!

Let your creativity  
bloom



Saturday, April 26, 2025  
1 PM – 6 PM

Free Admission and Open to the Public

Shady Rest Golf and Country Club  
820 Jerusalem Rd  
Scotch Plains, NJ

A member of District 5 of the Garden Club of New Jersey  
(GCNJ) Central Atlantic Region  
National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC)  
[www.rakeandhoegc.org](http://www.rakeandhoegc.org)

## Rake and Hoe Garden Club General Meeting, February 12, 2025

Thanks to everyone who prepared the delicious lunch, and for the lovely flower arrangements made by Elena Hreczny and Betty Clark.



## WELCOME NEW MEMBER

**Jim Dukelow**

[jdukelow@comcast.net](mailto:jdukelow@comcast.net)



## AWARDS

Nominations for this year's R&H awards are due at or before the April general meeting. The forms were recently emailed to members by club President, Sharon Shiraga. Send nominations to Beth Siano or Irene Greenstein. Awards will be presented at the annual luncheon in May.

## 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

Maryfran Annese

Joe Da Rold

Carlos Menezes, Sr.

Lee Perry

Betty Round

Barb Spellmeyer

Nina Sylvester

Karen Troiano

## Member Birthdays MARCH

1 Joanne Womelsdorf

2 Eileen Morris

12 Betty Clark

12 Irene Greenstein

18 Nina Sylvester

22 Carmen Skoletsky

23 Mabel Woloj

# CLUB NEWS

*“The Rake and Hoe Garden Club held a workshop February 13 at the Mountainside Public Library. Nine members crafted a set of botanical coasters. Everyone was able to choose from a wide variety of dried plant material including pressed flowers and leaves. Flowers were glued between two glass tiles and fastened with copper tape. The coasters are not only beautiful but functional too.” NS*



## Pysanky Workshop

Instructor: Tracy Criscitiello

L-R: Betty Round, Cheryl Katz, Jane Christiani, and Diane Genco. 1/28/25



## Mobile Meals. 2.11.25

R&H Members Prepared 50 floral designs.



1st Row:

Jeanie Pelikan, Betty Clark, Margot Partridge, Martha Savage, Kay Cross Joan Barna

2d Row:

Gayle Lechner, Karen Troiano, Kris Luka

3d Row:

Mary Lou Nolas, Richard Pelikan, Sharon Shiraga, Elena Hrecny, Donna Sevchuk, Eileen Morris, Maryfran Annese, Betty Round

# CLUB NEWS

## North Jersey Orchid Society Show

*On January 17, 2025, The Rake and Hoe Horticulture Committee sponsored a trip to Rutgers University Cook College for the North Jersey Orchid Society Show. Photos by Carlos Menezes.*



# FLOWER SHOW — “Get Inspired!”

## FLOWER SHOW—HORTICULTURE

### Hort Tips for Our Spring Flower Show, “Get Inspired!”

Horticulture is a big part of every flower show, and will be important to the success of our own Flower Show this April. We encourage every member to submit *at least* one entry to the Horticulture Division of our Show. Even better, many entries are encouraged, with each being unique, e.g. a different cultivar, color, size, etc. This is a wonderful opportunity to participate and win ribbons, either with flowering bulbs, perennials, or interesting foliage from your garden, or branches from flowering shrubs and trees, or potted indoor plants (in your possession for at least 90 days), both flowering or foliage. More detailed information can be found in the draft FS schedule posted on the R&H webpage. Still have questions? Ask the Horticulture Consultants to the show (Inge, Irene, Adah), one of our current and past accredited FS judges (Nina, Margot, Kay, Diana), or any other seasoned member of the Club.



The stage has been set. Now, for some pointers to make your FS horticulture experience fun and a success! Preparation is key. Although specimens must be fresh and at their peak for the show, steps can be taken now to increase your chances of having a spectacular and winning entry. *Inge Bossert*

### Forcing Blooms of Flowering Branches and Perennials

As the saying goes, ‘timing is everything’, and that applies to our upcoming Flower Show as well. Horticulture specimens



must be at their peak of perfection. Sometimes Mother Nature doesn’t cooperate, so typical bloom times might be off, especially with the weather extremes of the past year, e.g. a dry and hot summer, followed by early winter weather. Early bloomers such as forsythia and pussywillow may or may not be past, but there are many other, later-flowering plants that may be coaxed into bloom by a process called ‘forcing’.

Several weeks before our flower show, (late March/early April), stroll around your garden and look for prominent buds on well-formed branches. This is also a good time for winter pruning. In addition to the usual cherry and fruit blossoms, magnolia, witch hazel, serviceberry, viburnum, azalea, dogwood and rhododendron are promising candidates for forcing shrubs and trees; peonies and other perennials are also good for forcing.

Over a span of days, cut branches and stems at a staggered interval to insure a bloom at the right time. Be sure to cut stems a little longer than needed. Place stems in lukewarm water and at room temperature out of direct sun or drying heat vents. With a little luck, you’ll have some blooms at their peak for entry in our Flower Show! Below are some websites with more detailed information on forcing blooms. Google the topic and you will find even more information and suggestions. *Good Luck!* *Inge*

[https://phsonline.org/for\\_gardeners/gardeners\\_blog/forcing\\_branches\\_indoors](https://phsonline.org/for_gardeners/gardeners_blog/forcing_branches_indoors)

[https://yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu/how\\_to/how\\_force\\_branches\\_spring\\_flowering\\_trees\\_and\\_shrubs](https://yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu/how_to/how_force_branches_spring_flowering_trees_and_shrubs)



# FLOWER SHOW — “Get Inspired!”

## *A Note of Thanks*

*“I would like to thank everyone who helped in this endeavor! It was a long and arduous process but it is a nice schedule. Thank you to Sharon as chair of the whole show, who helped develop the layout and planning along with Carolyn. To the division chairs, Nina for design, Inge and her folks, Irene and Adah, for developing the horticulture section, for Margot reviewing the photography section and Nancy for Artistic Crafts. For Alice and Joan B. for their development of the youth section. And a big thanks to the current Rake and Hoe judges, Kay, Nina and Margot, who reviewed the content and, down to the details, all the little errors here and there! I believe in team magic and this indeed, was a great team effort! Thank you all!”*

*Diana K.*

## *Flower Show Committee Chairs*

Judges Lunch	Chair- Jeanette Pelikan
Photography	Chair- Margot Partridge
Properties	Chair- Carolyn Seracka
Staging	Chair- Carolyn Seracka
Tea	Chairs- Tracy Criscitiello Lee Perry
Clerks	Chair-Beth Siano
Docents	Chair-Richard Pelikan
Horticulture	Chairs- Irene Greenstein, Adah Levin, Barbara Spellmeyer
Judges Breakfast	Chair- Beth Hanscom

## *Photography*

Rake and Hoe’s Flower Show, “Get Inspired” is just about 2 months away. At our Flower Show, Photography will be found under the Botanical Arts Division. The title of our Section is “Capturing Nature and Wildlife”.

**Under Section B, there are 4 classes.**

### **Class 4. “Four Elements of Nature - Earth, Wind, Fire, and Water”**

This class will be a photograph of any element of nature. Plant material must be part of the composition.

### **Class 5. “Four Seasons of Nature- Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall”**

This class will be a photograph of any element of nature. Plant material must be found in your composition.

### **Class 6. “Majestic Wildlife”**

A photograph of any wildlife which exudes elegance or majesty. Plant material must be a part of the composition.

### **Class 7. “Awe-Inspiring “**

This class will be a photograph of any other object of nature which inspires greatness including water, sky, architecture, or other subjects suggested by NGC in the Handbook, page 95.

Sign ups have begun. Members may only enter one picture. Pictures are to be printed at an 8x10” size and matted within an 11x14” white frame. Mats may be purchased from Margot.

***Please sign up at the meetings or email Margot.***

***Questions? Contact Margot***

# NOTABLE FLOWER SHOWS

**CHELSEA.** The famous Royal Horticultural Society's "Great Spring Show" debuted in 1862 in Kensington. The famous Chelsea Flower Show, which supplanted it, did not exist until 1913. While it is no longer Britain's largest flower show, having been overtaken by Hampton Court, it is still the most prestigious. *Trivia:* The Chelsea rules forbid the use of colored sculptures, so garden gnomes (dearly beloved by the British) have been forbidden throughout its history. However, one frequent exhibitor is known to have smuggled a gnome into each of her exhibits.

**PHILADELPHIA.** Surprisingly, American flower shows have longer histories. The Philadelphia Flower Show was started in 1829 by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. It is the nation's largest and longest-running horticultural event. The show features displays by the world's premier floral and landscape designers. The Philadelphia Flower Show has been honored as the best event in the world by the International Festivals & Events Association, competing with events such as the Kentucky Derby Festival, Tournament of Roses Parade, and other international celebrations. An intriguing prelude to the show is the Bloom Philly Festival, wherein local shops prepare one month ahead by presenting floral displays in order to win free tickets to the show.

**BOSTON.** Boston Horticultural Society was established in 1829, launching weekly exhibits of locally grown fruit and showcasing the newest horticultural techniques and breeds. With its first big display in 1836, it featured two beautiful orange trees and "some large, growing pineapples." Flowers soon came to occupy the center of the exhibition stage and that same year the Phlox drummondii first appeared, along with "a bewildering display of dahlias". Most dazzling, though, was the appearance of the Oncidium flexuosum, with 97 fully expanded blossoms. Apparently, this was the first time that an orchid was publicly shown in America. The Society was renamed the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and presented its annual New England Spring Flower Show from 1871 through 2008. Financial insolvency caused the cancellation of the show in 2009, but it resumed the next year under its current name as the Boston Flower & Garden Show. MHS describes itself as the oldest formally organized horticultural institution in America, despite sharing an inception date with the Philadelphia Flower Show.



**CHICAGO.** The tradition of the Chicago Flower & Garden Show can be traced back to 1847 when it was created as an exhibition of prized fruits and flowers. The American Flower Show Series, a national horticultural program, began in July 1973 with its first flower show at the Chicago Botanic Garden and has flourished ever since. The Regenstein Center at the Botanic Garden quickly became the home for flower shows, and the Midwest Bonsai Society and Illinois Orchid Society, among many other groups, make it home for their annual shows.

*jdr*



# GARDEN POTPOURRI



"Looks like  
the weeds need to be pulled."

## “Don’t Scrap Your Scraps”

**Oranges.** Put an orange peel in your brown-sugar container. The oils in the peel will soften hard, lumpy sugar in just a few hours.

*Rub the inside of banana peels on houseplants to give them a shine.*

**Apples.** Ferment leftover apple peels and cores with sugar water to create homemade apple-cider vinegar.

**Citrus.** Citrus peels boiled in vinegar make a natural cleaning agent that freshens and sanitizes surfaces.

**Lemons.** Rub a lemon rind over faucets to eliminate mineral deposits and polish the chrome. Rinse and dry with a soft cloth. jdr



## WORDS TO KNOW

### “Scarify”

Some seeds will not germinate even under ideal conditions. They have a tough or waxy exterior that must be softened or broken down. This process of **seed scarification** breaks the seed surface, creating a weak spot in the outer shell. This leads to increased water and oxygen absorption and better germination rates.

There are various methods available to the home gardener. Water softening is the easiest method for scarifying seeds. Pour boiling water over them, and allow them to soak for up to 24 hours. But, “hard seeds,” like nasturtium, sweet peas, lima beans, and chickpeas, have a water-impermeable outer shell.

Abrasion is also a common method. You can use sandpaper or a nail file on a corner or edge. Aim for the end opposite the “eye” of the seed, which is where the root will emerge.

Many videos can be viewed online before getting started.

## GARDEN LIMERICK

Merlin’s app waves its magic wand  
Finding birds from near and beyond  
Birders mimic each song  
In a rough sing-along  
But perplexed, the birds never respond.

jdr



# JERSEY GEMS by Richard Pelikan

... eleventh in a series, featuring overlooked places in the area to visit.

## Lakes And Parks

*New Jersey is a geological masterpiece of mountains, shoreline and forestry. Sometimes overlooked are the wonderful lakes we have around us, in and around Union County. The lakes and parks in our area are not to be missed for their natural beauty and their peaceful and serene surroundings for visitors, garden and historical enthusiasts alike. Some were formed as the glaciers retreated (as was the Great Swamp), while many others were man-made to accommodate the needs of our ancestors. Here are some local lakes worth a visit for photography, recreation and historical significance.*

### Lake Surprise - Berkeley Heights

Whether you enter from Glenside Avenue on the west, or from the Watchung Reservation on the east, you go down long winding roads. When you reach the bottom, SURPRISE! A lake emerges from the forest! That is how it got its current name. It originally was formed in 1845 by damming the Blue Brook for a mill in Feltsville. In past decades it was used for bathing and included a cabin for changing facilities.



### Echo Lake - Westfield

The lake was created by residents long ago by damming a waterway, this time the Nomahegan Brook, again for a mill. In the early 1800s a grandson of one of the original area pioneers, Henry Baker, stood in the lake valley and heard the piercing call of a Yellow Hammer bird echoing throughout the hills before building his mill. Hence the name: "Echo Lake." Lovely landscape and green areas for strolling, recreation and photography in all seasons. The areas of swamp are ideal for bird watching. The park has often been used for movie shoots.

### Nomahegan Lake - Cranford

Highlight of the lake is a 2.3 mile measured and marked walking loop around the lake, through the forest, over the Rahway River and along Kenilworth Blvd. The trail has several changes of scenery, and one can often observe wildlife in the forested area. The trail is easy and takes about an hour to leisurely complete. It is a very photographic park in any season. The area around the lake was once a campground of the Lenape Native Americans. Nomahegan Lake, as well as Echo Lake, is popular with fishermen.



# JERSEY GEMS by Richard Pelikan

... eleventh in a series, featuring overlooked places in the area to visit.

## Lakes And Parks Part 2

*The lakes and parks in our area are not to be missed for their natural beauty and their peaceful and serene surroundings for visitors, garden and historical enthusiasts alike.*

### Warinanco Lake - Roselle

The lake and park were designed by the Olmstead brothers, whose father, Frederick, was the landscape designer of NYC's Central Park. The original name was Elizabeth Park, but was later change to "Warinanco" after a name of a legendary Lenape Native American Chief. In the spring the park features beautiful displays of cherry blossoms, tulips, azaleas, magnolias, etc., in gardens and walks among the ball fields and picnic areas. The cherry blossom trees date back to 1931. It is also known for its many tall and majestic trees that survive to this day. There is a sports area which includes the "Warinanco Ice Rink," a boathouse and a café.



### Watchung Lake and Best Lake - Watchung

Two lakes are separated by the Watchung Circle. The Watchung Lake was used for bathing 20+ years ago. The name "Watchung" is taken from the Lenni Lenape Native American word meaning high hills." The lake has several fountains and has an attractive area of water lilies at one end. The "Water and Wine" restaurant offers lakeside dining. Adjacent to the restaurant is "God's Acre," an almost forgotten small cemetery with gravestones from before the Civil War.



### Seeley's Pond and Falls - Scotch Plains

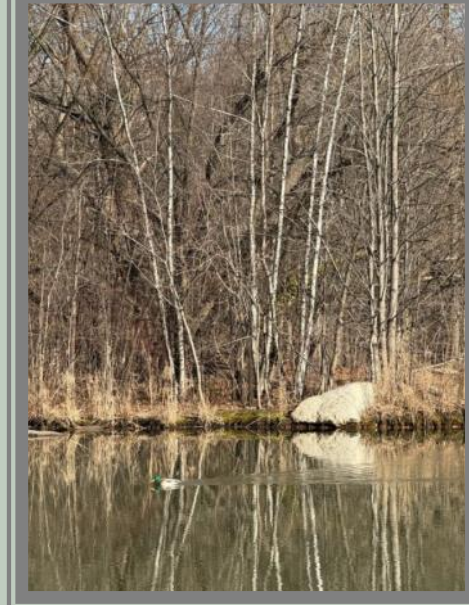
Further downstream, the Blue Brook was also dammed to provide for "Seeley's Mill" and Pond. In the late 1800s, Edmund Seeley, a Scotch Plains businessman, relied upon the dam and falls to power his paper company located nearby. The dam creates a scenic waterfall especially in wetter weather. It is best viewed from Diamond Hill Road.



# CLUB PHOTOGRAPHERS



Mabel Woloj



Lee Perry



Surprise Lake

Photograph by Nina Sylvester



Biven's Arm, Gainesville Fl

Photograph by Lee Perry

# ENVIRONMENT

## GETTING DOWN AND DIRTY WITH OYSTERS

by *Karen Troiano*

*Would you believe two hundred years ago there were so many oysters in the Hudson River it was difficult for ships to pass through?*

Actually, during the 1700's oysters were so abundant that their shells were ground into a mortar to help in the city's building boom. Trinity Church is one of the buildings built with oyster shells.

In the early 1800's, New York City and oysters were synonymous. New Yorkers ate them constantly until the mid 1850's when sewers were connected to the harbor. By early 1900s the harbor was nearly lifeless where once thrived oysters, whales, dolphins, seals, herrings, and striped bass.

In 1927 the last commercial oyster bed was closed. Thankfully, the 1972 Clean Water Act prohibited the dumping of waste and sewage into the harbor. Eventually, by 2000 the quality of water improved for oysters to survive and in 2010 whales began to return to the bay.



In 2014 the Billion Oyster Project of New York City began gathering oyster shells, spreading large amounts to create a healthy environment for oysters to spawn and grow in the nooks and crannies of these man made reefs. The goal is to “introduce a billion eastern oysters into the New York Harbor by 2035.” Shells are gathered from participating restaurants then brought to planned curing sights where they are exposed to air, wind, rain and insects for more than one year before they are clean enough to be dumped into the New York Harbor. 100 million shells have been ‘seeded’ into bays, basins and bases of bridges around the City helping to prevent storm damage and erosion along shorelines. More than 20,000 New York City high school students have volunteered to be part of this endeavor, gaining knowledge and learning from this maritime project.

Getting knee deep into the mud, volunteers along the eastern coastline from Connecticut, New York City, Chesapeake Bay and SouthPort, North Carolina are helping to repair, rebuild and restore oyster beds damaged by overharvesting and pollution.

With the restoration of the oyster population to the bays comes the important benefit of cleaner waters. **Just one adult oyster can filter as much as fifty gallons of dirty water a day...** removing algae, nitrogen, sediment, food-waste, sewer sludge and excess nutrients, turning murky soups into clear waters. Something to be grateful for, the next time you enjoy slurping that succulent little, morsel!



### GRAND CENTRAL STATION OYSTER BAR

The oldest restaurant in Grand Central has one of the largest and freshest seafood menus in the City. You will find 25 types of fish and up to 30 varieties of oysters.



### OYSTER TRIVIA

Once the recycled shells are cleaned and cured, they are placed in huge water tanks containing millions of microscopic oyster larvae, which then attach to the shells. On average, each recycled shell can become home to dozens of those baby oysters, called spat.



## SKY-WATCH

### *Rare Events in March*

*This month the universe will dazzle us with a rare lunar event and two rare planetary events within days of each other.*

#### Blood Moon / Lunar Eclipse

A total lunar eclipse, known as a Blood Moon, will occur on **March 14**. NASA describes the phenomenon as occurring when sunlight bends and scatters through Earth's atmosphere, casting warm hues onto the lunar surface. The moon will appear coppery red.



The lunar eclipse will start at 1:09 am EDT, lasting 3 ½ hrs. The Blood Moon phase will begin at 2:26am EDT, lasting 1 hour.

A Blood Moon occurs on average only about 2-3 times per decade in any given location. This is your only opportunity to experience the event this year, because a Blood Moon in September will not be visible from the Americas.

Adding to this month's celestial excitement, a partial solar eclipse will occur at sunrise on **March 29** in North America.

jdr

#### Planetary Apparitions

Venus is often referred to as the Morning Star, or maybe you have heard it called the Evening star. Both are correct. On **March 18-21**, Venus will be visible in both the morning and evening skies on the same days. This rare event will not occur again until 2033.



Keep watching! Two days later, on **March 23**, Saturn's rings will disappear from view. The event, known as a *Ring Plane Crossing* happens when Earth passes through the plane of Saturn's rings, making them appear

edge-on. This happens every 13 to 16 years.

Unfortunately, Saturn will be very close to the Sun in the March sky, so it will be difficult to catch this from small telescopes. A near-repeat will occur in November, but the next full occurrence will be on October 15, 2038.

jdr

## BRIGHTWOOD PARK NEWS

My last walk with Chuan-Chu Chou was in October when the leaves were changing color magically overnight. He has taught me to walk through the woods slowly to spot the smallest treasures to photograph. Chuan-Chu pointed out the hollow in a tree where a horned owl recently lived. With a little imagination and humor, he noticed a tree trunk that resembles a man's foot and a stump near a downed tree that looks like a teacher overlooking her students, which were mushrooms growing in an obedient line. We discovered a large, white, perfectly rounded mushroom the size of a soccer ball. Looking it up on the plant app "Picture This" we discovered this Agaricus or True Mushroom was extremely poisonous even to the touch, so we let it be. Traveling for a month to see family he loves dearly, Chuan-Chu seemed a little sad to leave his daily morning walks behind during this beautiful season. Brightwood Park seduces you to return often, promising to reveal something new with each visit.

This spring, come meet new friends who are happy to share their love of this charming woods in Westfield. Upcoming events for 2025 will include the 3rd Annual Brightwood Park Day in May, Plein Air Painting in Spring, and the 4th Annual Jack-O-Lantern walk in October. *KT*