

# **Bloomin' Times**

**June 2024**



**“Endangered Ash”**

**Regina Kelley**

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*By Lesley Parness*

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# CLUB NEWS

## SUMMER URNS AT MINDOWASKIN PARK WITH MARTHA AND BARB



### Member Birthdays in June

2 Betty Round                      4 Mary Lou Nolas  
6 Sharon Shiraga                  29 Mary Shea

### Contributors to This Issue

Lesley Parness, Regina Kelley, Mabel Woloj,  
Karen Troiano, Betty Clark, Barb Spellmeyer,  
Pelikans

### Rake & Hoe Garden Club

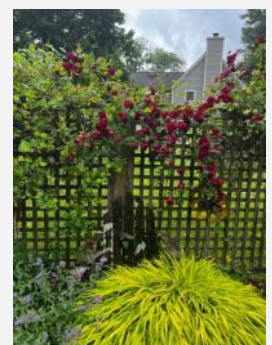
**Sharon Shiraga, President**  
BLOOMIN' TIMES NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Regina Kelley, "Profiles"  
Jeanie Pelikan, Photography  
Richard Pelikan, "Jersey Gems," Photography  
Mabel Woloj, "Native Plants"  
Karen Troiano, "Brightwood Park" et al.  
**Joe Da Rold, Editor, Photography**  
"Native Plants," "Garden Limericks"

## SECRET GARDEN TOUR

The tour was held on Wednesday, June 5. After touring the gardens, participants met for lunch at Tracy Criscitiello's garden. Lunch included sandwiches, salads, and desserts.

1. Inge Bossert garden. Fanwood.
2. Kathi Olsen garden (friend of Kris Luka). Westfield.
3. Brightwood Park (FOBP). Prospect Street, Westfield.
4. Barry & Lee Corcoran garden (friends of Regina Kelley). Westfield.
5. Tracy Criscitiello garden. Mountainside.



# IN MEMORIAM

## Barbara Mullin

### Memorial Luncheon for Barbara Mullin



The memorial luncheon was held on May 6, 2024, and hosted by Barbara's daughter, Nancy Fertakos. Alice Cowell was instrumental in having R&H members create table centerpieces (see photos below), and Kay Cross created a display of photos from Barbara's life and floral creations. Joe Da Rold gave a presentation highlighting Barbara's early life and careers, based on conversations they had had for a GCNJ project. The roses were donated by Cristoffers. All the other flowers came from Barbara's, Clare Minick's and other members' gardens.

### 2023 Perennial Bloom Award



GCNJ President Beverly Kazickas presents the award earned by Barbara Mullin to Barbara's daughter Nancy Fertakos and her husband Mark.

# IN MEMORIAM

## Barbara Mullin

### Barbara's Journey

*My journey with Barbara started in 2022, when I learned about the Perennial Bloom Award, a lifetime achievement award that had Barbara's name all over it. She and I spent months exchanging e-mails and phone calls, putting the application together. Barbara spent hours and hours digging through boxes in her attic, and she loved it! This is a condensed version of the application narrative. I had the honor of reading it at the Memorial service. jdr*

Barbara was born to the purple – of lilacs, irises, and lavender. When she was seven, her father began work as a grower in the New York Floral Trade. What he taught her about peonies remained an essential part of her gardening playbook. She created her first floral arrangement at the age of eight and continued to make floral designs for her family for 80 years.

After a forty-year career in banking, Barbara took early retirement and became active in a Senior Education group. She was asked to step in temporarily to teach a class on **“Gardening Tried and True in Central New Jersey.”** She said, *“I didn't know all about nature, but I did know about growing things. During a 10-week session, I must have given away 50 arrangements and all sorts of plants to accompany my lectures.”* She taught the class for 21 years.

In 1998, Barbara and her sister went to the Rake and Hoe House Tour and were awestruck. Within months she had become a member of the garden club.. She took on many roles within Rake & Hoe. She served as the Club Historian for over 15 years, a job that entailed compiling annual photo albums of the club's floral events. She loved her photography.

Barbara began participating in the state Flower Shows, and became known as the "Energizer Bunny" for her enthusiasm and her willingness to do whatever was needed. One year she even hauled wagons of mulch to help plant 1000 violets.

In 2009 she took on her most ambitious assignment: chairing the State Flower Show; it was a huge challenge and a great success. She later became President of GCNJ and made a lasting impact. When the GCNJ Treasurer became ill and died during Barbara's presidency, Barbara drew on her considerable banking skills and temporarily handled both jobs, while training the person who had been elected Assistant Treasurer. Barbara also worked side by side with Jeannie Geremia for two years, to achieve her vision for New Jersey to adopt a State Butterfly.

Board Member Diana Kazazis has described Barbara as *“an exemplary GCNJ President. When she stepped down, she was the most appreciated President by the board in many years. She showed caring and commitment to whatever it was she dedicated herself to.”* Barbara saw a spark in people and brought dozens of younger gardeners into the State-and-local flower shows.

Barbara was a woman of great generosity of spirit. For over 25 years she prepared floral arrangements twice a week for her church. We think of gardening as her passion, but sharing was her passion. She shared her knowledge of plants with audiences of gardeners and recruits.

She was always sharing plants fresh from her garden. By giving away cuttings, rootings, bulbs and starter plants, her lectures were always popular learning experiences. When Rake & Hoe or neighboring garden clubs found themselves suddenly without a speaker, it was Barbara who would step in as speaker, equipped with her ever-ready bag of mechanics and giveaway flowers and plants.

Barbara was an inspiration to all of us. She will be remembered fondly. I want to thank Barbara for trusting me with her stories, and Nancy for inviting me to share them with you. I would like to close with this sentiment: *“I never thought that a heart that big would ever stop beating.”*

Joe Da Rold

# ANNUAL R&H LUNCHEON

## TABLE CENTERPIECE COMMITTEE



Members of the Ad Hoc committee created unique table centerpieces for this year's Luncheon. Each member was able to take one home.

L-R: Karen Troiano, Beth Siano, Sharon Shiraga, Carmen Soletsky, Betty Clark, Joane Androconis, Mabel Woloj, Donna Sevchuk, Kay Cross.

## PRESIDENTIAL CITATIONS

Inge Bossert - For creating our Yearbook and also taking on Horticulture this year.

Tracy Criscitiello- For many years of chairing Artistic Crafts-one of our most popular committees.

Joe DaRold - Despite many health problems, chairing Archives and creating the newsletter every month.

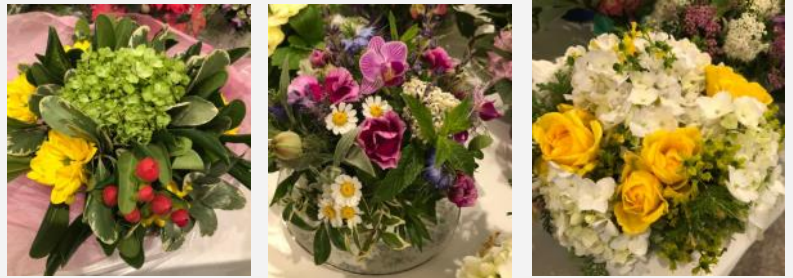
Regina Kelley - As a new member, being willing to chair Flower Design and doing a great job.

Barbara Murphy - Learning to work on our website and keeping it up-to-date every month.

Margot Partridge - For doing two jobs- Recording Secretary and Chair of Photography.

Betty Round - For many years of doing an excellent job as Publicity Chair.

## MINI-ARRANGEMENTS



Each member brought a mini-arrangement to the luncheon, to be donated to The Center for Hope Hospice. Here are three of the outstanding floral pieces created by R&H members.

## SPECIAL AWARDS

### The Sprout Award

Presented to members who have been in the club less than 5 years and have excelled in leadership and participation.

**Awarded to Mary Fran Annese  
and Carolyn Seracka.**

### The Agnes Eggimann Award

Presented to a member who has shown outstanding leadership and skill in chairing the holiday tree events at Jardine Academy and who has done an outstanding job as corresponding secretary.

**Awarded to Mary Lou Nolas.**

### The Leadership Award 2023-24

Presented to a member who, for many years, has supported us and taught us with care and concern.

**Awarded to Kay Cross.**

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These competitive awards were presented throughout the year:

The Judy Kampe Award: Mabel Woloj

The Nancy Wallace Award: Nina Sylvester

The Kay Cross Award: Sharon Shiraga

# GARDEN POTPOURRI

## My Secret Garden

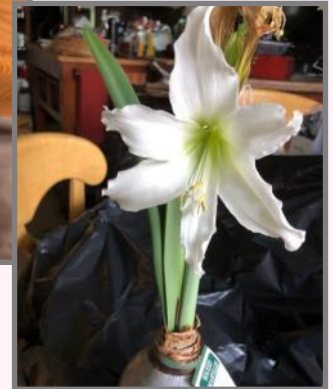
By Karen Troiano

After all the gardens I've seen around the world during my many years, I think I like my secret garden the best. It calls to me now in the early spring as I go out to clean away the fallen leaves and check on what has survived the frosty winter. I spot the reddish tips of peonies peeking through the earth.

Spring in my garden begins with the sword-like leaves of purple iris pushing up their buds. Their backdrop is the cascading blooms of wisteria's heady lavender flowers where the robin will come again this year to build her nest. The lovely fragrance of viburnum lures me to imagine what color perennials to plant this spring.

My secret garden is a small garden, yet to me it holds many treasures behind the white picket fence. Encircled by aging bricks are rosemary, sage, basil and thyme. The Kousa dogwood tree, holding the painted bird house where a wren will nest and share her song, gives shade to the blue bell-like clematis and flowering mountain laurel. I catch a quick glimpse and hear the buzz of a hummingbird as she sips the sweet nectar from a feeder. At night the deer will come and insist on nibbling my hostas.

Each evening I will sit here on my porch overlooking this garden as the sun sets, waiting for you to join me. KT



Joe's  
Amaryllis

An amaryllis that re-blooms in mid-April  
is proof that our hearts  
can leap at any time of year. jdr

## CONSOLATION

*"How fair is a garden amid the trials  
and passions of existence."*

Hugh Johnson

## LIMERICK

Mother said she would take me to task  
For what, I ventured to ask  
You're endangering me  
And our whole family  
By not wearing your Covid mask. jdr

# NATIVE PLANTS

*A native plant is a species that occurs naturally in a given location, either because it evolved there or dispersed to that location without benefit of human activity.*

## R&H Field Trip to Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve 4/29/24

### OBSERVATION

*"I was walking in the woods behind the lake at Echo Lake Park when I saw this beauty flaring in the middle of the green, a Flame Azalea. This native to eastern U.S. has a wide distribution, from southern NY, Pennsylvania and Ohio, through the Appalachian mountains to Georgia. This plant was almost 8 feet tall with wide open foliage. Impossible to miss, the vivid orange color reflected light like a fire in the forest." Mabel.*



Photos by Sharon Shiraga, Mabel Woloj, and Karen Troiano

# JUNIORS

## Mother's Day Arrangements



Junior Members Emily, Grace, and Emma, proudly display the floral arrangements they made for Mother's Day. Standing in front of mentors Betty Clark, Alice Cowell, Carmen Skoltetsky, and Mabel Woloj.



## At Jardine Academy





# RARE BIRDS

## Lewis' Woodpecker

Lewis' Woodpecker is a fabulous bird that breaks all the "woodpecker rules." Most North American Woodpeckers have some combination of white, black, and red feathers. But the



Lewis' Woodpecker sports a palette of dark green, gray, and pink. Most woodpeckers probe for their food by pecking into tree bark, but the Lewis' Woodpecker snaps insects out of the air like a flycatcher.

Lewis' Woodpeckers nest mainly in holes and crevices created by other woodpeckers or created naturally in dead and decaying trees. They nest in cottonwood, ponderosa pine, paper birch, white pine, and other trees that are starting to decay. On occasion they nest in live trees.

They frequently breed in open burned forests with a high density of standing dead trees. They also breed in woodlands near streams, oak woodlands, and orchards. During the nonbreeding season, they move about in nomadic fashion stopping off in cottonwoods near streams, orchards, and oak woodlands with plentiful resources.

With a crow-like flight style there is no question this is one unusual woodpecker.



## Flaco, His Story

submitted by Mabel Woloj

A year ago, I was in Central Park with my grandniece and grandnephew. It was the day Flaco the owl escaped from the Central Park Zoo. The park was galvanized. He had spent his life in an enclosure the size of a bathroom. Now he was free to fly. I've been following him since.



Something I think that has really resonated with people about Flaco is how he was able to completely transform himself. Flaco is now going on 14. He is well into adulthood for the lifespan of an owl. Born in captivity, he did not know how to fly, and did not know how to survive in the wild when he was first released. Yet, he was able to figure all that out and create a totally new life for himself in New York City. The zoo's personnel tried to capture him for months, but he escaped every single time.

Flaco spent a year defying expectations, an owl born in captivity who quickly learned to hunt and fend for himself in the wilds of New York City. That ended on Friday (2-24-24) when he flew into a building near Central Park. "Flaco's tragic and untimely death highlights the issue of bird strikes and their devastating effects on wild bird populations," the zoo said in a statement. "It is estimated that nearly one quarter of a million birds die annually in New York City as a result of colliding with buildings."

Flaco the owl is gone, but his life had all the elements of a classic hero's story, not soon forgotten.

# Lesley's Latest...

Lesley Parness, a former member of the Rake & Hoe Club, writes for *The National Gardener Magazine*, a publication of National Garden Clubs, Inc. She graciously allows R&H to reprint her articles. This one appeared in their Spring 2024 issue.

## Kindred Spirits: Connecting to our Early American Garden Heritage

America's 250th similarities and differences between 18th and 21st century Americans. So, what do modern day gardeners share with their gardening ancestors? A lot!

Let's start with our mutual love of tools. For example, the watering can. The first metal watering cans appeared in the late 17th century. English Lord Timothy George wrote the term "watering can" in his garden diary in 1692 and the former "watering pot" was re-branded.

The tin Haws watering can, the iconic form still in use, was patented in the 1880s. Its design moved the handle from the top to the rear of the can, making it easier to use. This was a vast improvement over the clay or ceramic thumb pot (yes, your thumb kept the water from spilling out) which had dominated the scene since Roman times.

You cannot garden without a shovel, and the Ames Shovel Company of West Bridgewater, Massachusetts, traces its origins to 1774. Captain John Ames made iron shovels known for their excellent quality. Successive generations of the Ames family built the company through the years, supplying the standard issue shovel to U.S. Army troops from the Civil War to the Korean War. Ames shovels dug railroad track, prospected for gold, and built America's gardens.



The bell-shaped glass cloche has been a favored gardener's tool for centuries. Colonial gardeners extended the gardening season for their "sallet" greens. Early American gardeners enjoyed an increased availability of these tiny glass greenhouses for individual plants, because

around 1780 New Jersey's burgeoning glass industry, located near Glassboro, supplied them. Today, garden catalogs tempt us with the classic charm of their many cloche.

Garden pests have frustrated gardeners for every one of the past 250 years. 21st century gardeners have an arsenal of chemicals to combat them.

What were some Early American solutions and best practices for insect damage?

- Fresh onion skins were placed around hills of cucumbers to control squash bugs.
- Cabbage leaves were laid between plants to capture slugs and snails, then collected and burnt early the next day.
- Toxic mayapple roots were dried and used as insecticide for crops. Seeds were soaked in this root powder to eliminate pests before planting.
- A dousing of lime water killed aphids.

We use black plastic nowadays to heat the ground to promote early crops. They spread charcoal dust from their fires on the soil around early crops to absorb the sun's heat.

- We use polypropylene floating row covers to protect crops from frost. Gardeners of yore used oiled paper set over rounded wooden hoops to accomplish much the same task.
- We plug our heat mats into outlets to warm flats of germinating seeds. 18th century gardeners sped germination by shoveling manure under the soil into brick lined hot beds.
- We purchase acres of metal trellis and cages on which to grow things up. Gardeners "in the day" used branch prunings and cut saplings to create towers and teepees for vining plants long before "vertical gardening" was even a term.
- For seed starting, we have our indoor grow racks and outdoor winter sowing in plastic jugs. Colonists dug up sod in the fall, stored the clods in their cellars over winter, then planted their seed in the inverted sod clumps in early spring. This worked especially well for crops that didn't like to be transplanted – the entire hunk of sod was just buried in the garden.
- We love our commercial raised beds. Early Americans used raised beds too. They were constructed with tree cuttings and placed in close proximity to the home for easy access.

We have the internet with its myriad sources. They purchased “exoticks” from John Bartram, America’s first and self-taught botanist in Southwest Philadelphia, and the Prince Linnaeus Nursery in Flushing, NY. Check out the enormous selection of plants, especially fruit trees available to the early American gardener of means.

**You can read about the Linnaeus Nursery in Queens here:**

<https://www.Biodiversity library.org/item/149912#page/4/mode/1up>.

**For a list of plants from Bartram’s Garden in 1792, go here:**

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-10-02-0109>

They were observant, as their very lives depended on the success of their crops. Plant phenology, watching the weather and other environmental cues to aid in scheduling planting, was practiced everywhere. For example, Virginia gardeners knew that they got their best carrots when seed was planted when the daffodils bloomed.

Yet, at the same time, Early Americans did not see. They did not recognize, when observing

the practices of the Indigenous peoples, how the honing of the wild landscape for food abundance could be achieved while retaining native species diversity and function. Only now, 250 years later, do we have a word for this - permaculture. First nation peoples created and maintained food forests, Europeans chopped them down, preferring to plough the soil.

Then and now, gardeners have their heroes and visionaries. We have Dr. Doug Tallamy with his dream of a homegrown national park and “Nature’s Best Hope.” They had Founding Father and 4<sup>th</sup> President, James Madison, who has been called “the forgotten father of American environmentalism.” He first alerted Americans of the perils to the soil by clearing forests and over-farming land and urged fellow Virginia farmers to protect the old-growth forests.

We are kindred spirits with our gardening forebears. Thankfully, we have retained much of our American garden history. Living history museums and the Smithsonian Institute are good places to learn about our shared gardening heritage. Go here: <https://gardens.si.edu/collections/archives/timeline-of-american-garden-history/>



In remembering our ancestors’ failures and triumphs – we find they still have much to teach us. LP.

## Using Bottles for Homemade Cloches

Use scissors or a knife to remove the bottom of your old milk jugs or bottles, and use them in the garden to protect vulnerable seedlings from harsh weather and frost. Leave the top as is, but remove the cap to give the plant the air it needs.

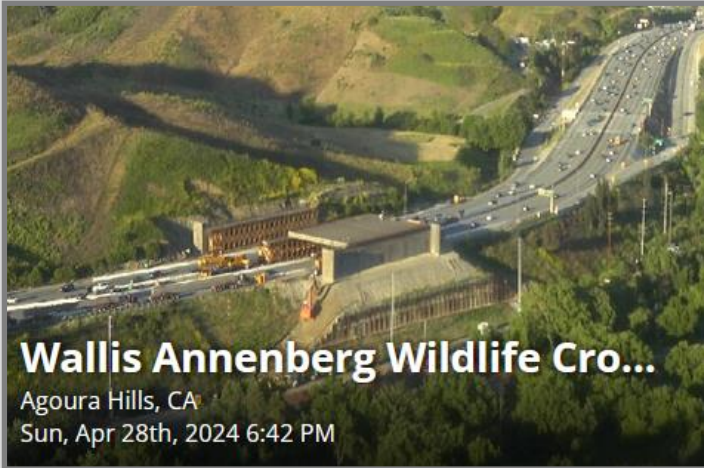


[This article has been edited for space considerations.]

## Using Chicken Wire to Create a Cloche to keep away hungry critters.

To start, you will need chicken wire, tin snips, gloves, and a bowl that will dictate the size and shape of your garden cloche. Next, you should invite someone over who is a skilled crafter. If you are that person, so much the better. If you are not, go to Google and search for GARDEN CLOCHE.





## Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Cro...

Agoura Hills, CA  
Sun, Apr 28th, 2024 6:42 PM

## ANIMAL CROSSINGS

*BT recently printed a story about an unusual animal crossing via a tunnel, and included a reference to a nearby land crossing over Highway 78 in Union County. This story spotlights a crossing under construction, over one of Los Angeles' busiest highways.*

When highways are built through the natural habitats of wildlife, [animals](#) often end up suffering. This ambitious project in California aims to help address this problem. Crews are building the "[largest wildlife crossing](#)" in a safe and sustainable passage for wildlife that will reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and wildlife mortality, allow for the safe movement of animals and the exchange of

genetic material for wildlife survival. When the project is finished in 2025, the man-made crossing should provide safe passage for mountain lions, bobcats, deer, lizards, coyotes, and snakes as they move between the Santa Monica Mountains and the Simi Hills of the Santa Susana mountain range.

Crews broke ground on Earth Day two years ago. In April of 2024, the project achieved a major milestone, as the first horizontal section was lowered into place above the freeway. In the coming months, crews will install more than 80 of these concrete girders, each weighing between 126 and 140 tons.



Artist's concept of the completed project.

## ARE CICADAS COMING?

In a rare occurrence, a trillion cicadas from two different broods were expected to begin appearing in the Midwest and Southeast regions of the United States at the end of April. It's the first time since 1803 that Brood XIX, or the Great Southern Brood, and Brood XIII, or the Northern Illinois Brood, would appear together in an event known as a dual emergence. Thomas Jefferson was president the last time that the Northern Illinois Brood's 17-year cycle aligned with the Great Southern Brood's 13-year period. After this spring, it will be another 221 years before the groups, which are geographically adjacent, appear together again. A roughly 16-state area will be center stage for these periodical cicadas. Rest easy, Gardeners, the Great Southern Brood is well south of us.



### Short Hills Home Garden Club Flower Show

At the Short Hills show, the theme was "*Holidays in Flower.*" With her arrangement entitled "*Thanksgiving,*" Rake & Hoe Garden Club member Nina Sylvester walked away with top honors. Her vibrant floral design won a blue ribbon and then went on to win **Best of Show.** *Well done, Nina!*



### Old American Adage

"When clouds appear like rocks and towers, the earth's refreshed by frequent showers."