

# RUTGERS MASTER GARDENERS OF MERCER COUNTY

## 2022 Trent House Annual Report

TRENT HOUSE COMMITTEE (part of CHILDREN'S BUREAU)

COMMITTEE CHAIRS: Debbi Kanter and Andre Butts

MEMBERS: Susan Colket, Michelle Delahanty, Denise Hansson, Beverly Phillips, Louise Senior, Dan Valentine, Theodora Wang. Louise Senior and Julie Rauch were co-chairs for about 8 months and participated in administrative details. Louise still occasionally participates in workdays in the garden and remains active in project development. Andre Butts stepped in as co-chair in September when they resigned.

DESCRIPTION: Work with the Trent House Board (specifically Sam Stephens, Interim Executive Director) to continue to expand and maintain the interpretation of the gardens to educate the public, and when feasible, offer children's programs. Pre-Covid we led summer camps for children ages 3rd – 5th grade and their counselors in a variety of MG-led hands-on gardening projects. Now we are working in cooperation with the 4H and other local day camps. Produce grown is donated to a local food pantry, Arm in Arm.

Our committee goals continue to reflect the mission and goals of the RMGofMC.

Committee work began before the end of January as Andre Butts initiated a dialog with Trent House Horticulturist Charlie Thomforde on the plan for the garden this year. Seeds were ordered. Throughout the year committee members continued researching and discussing appropriate fruits and vegetables to add to the garden further aiding the reinterpretation, recognizing the original inhabitants, the Lenape, and William Trent's enslaved and indentured servants (our African Diaspora and Market garden) and the types of crops they had grown or foraged.

This year the following vegetables were added to the garden: Puhwem corn, Mandan Bride corn, Hannah Freeman bean, Hopi Dye Sunflower, Mammoth Gret Stripe Sunflower, Callaloo Amaranth, Belle Upland Isle Cress, Fish Pepper. Three Paw Paw saplings were donated and planted in the Lenape garden as well.

In mid-March under Charlie's expert tutelage seven of us pruned each of the apple trees in the heirloom apple orchard. After that day cleanup began in earnest. Spring came quickly. By the end of March the magnolia and cherry trees were blooming.



Dan Valentine organized our New Zealand compost bin. With our regular contributions of “greens” and a natural source of “browns” on the property in short order it began producing quantities of compost which we could spread on the now weeded and cleared beds. Planting began in April, and continued into September, as crops came and went. The summer was hot, and dry for extended periods. This year we found we had more problems than usual with invasive insects (harlequin bugs) and critters such as squirrels and groundhogs, and



aphids on the fava beans. There were plants and seeds that simply failed to thrive. Okra, for instance, had to be planted three times! There were others that never germinated or produced vegetables either. For instance, the sweet potatoes grew lushly, but yielded few potatoes. Despite that, we were able to produce and donate 118 lbs of turnips, potatoes, cheese pumpkins, and kale to Arm in



Arm food pantry in Trenton. We had small successes with a few other vegetables (beans, garlic, potato) and saved some seeds for planting this year, but not enough of any others to be able to donate.





As a reward to ourselves, we ended most workdays with a mini-meeting to discuss what we did and plan to do, and “tasting” relating to the garden. Led by Theodora, we sampled raw baby



vegetables and herbs, such as pattypan squash, potatoes, nasturtium and pea leaves, citron melon, or fruits and vegetables she brought from the Asian market (fresh water chestnuts and dragonfruit among them). Denise brought cookies and jellies she made often using herbs and plants from the garden (Apothecary rose, Apothecary rose-raspberry, apricot - rosemary, blueberry spice, and cherry-lavender, among others) and her 4H award-winning lavender violet cake.

Continuing our successful partnership with the 4H we presented educational garden tours during two day camps on June 28 and July 5. Groups of 15 kids of mixed ages up to age 14



came in the morning and stayed into the afternoon. We separated into smaller groups and toured them through each quadrant and to the compost area, teaching them about 18th century gardening and encouraging them to touch, smell and taste various vegetables and herbs. There were turnips to harvest, and corn to plant or grind with a wooden bowl and a real cannon ball. They turned over compost. As much as we could it was “hands on” with the kids. Working with the SNAP Ed counselors the children learned about nutrition. They became more familiar, and even somewhat comfortable, with the great variety of pollinators in the garden as well as the somewhat intimidating Cicada killer wasp. One highlight: the Trent House Garden suffered from the dreaded spotted Lanternflies. We spotted one group of kids near the



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We also gave garden tours at a day camp on August 23 with the “Little Diamond Chefs” organization. Located in Trenton they work with kids between 5 and 10 years old. Sam Stephens produced the camp day event where MGs gave garden tours as we had for the 4H.



We toured the 25 kids, all wearing aprons and chef's toques and 12 adults who accompanied them through the garden, touching, smelling and tasting their way through. One of the additional positives occurring during the garden tour is the MG presenter interacting with the counselors. MGs answering counselor's gardening questions and giving suggestions as to how to make the natural world more inviting to young people can be an encouragement to them



to continue to give the children these types of experiences year-round, and in fact incorporate them into their everyday life.

In March Debbi Kanter wrote a brief article announcing our plans for the gardening season for the MG newsletter, with the assistance of Louise Senior and Julie Rauch. In September Andre Butts wrote a description of our summer camps for the newsletter.

On May 25 Debbi Kanter and Louise Senior participated in the national Cooperative Extension Tour of Trenton, which brought 40 professionals from Cooperative Extensions from approximately 20 states to a conference at the Rutgers Camden campus. They showed a slide show about the Trent House and the day camps and answered questions regarding the program. On December 6 Louise and Debbi made a similar presentation in a session on "Working with Youth" conducted by Chad Ripberger, County Extension Dept Head, for the then current MG intern class.

Our goals for next year (2023) are to again prune the apple trees in March and plan the garden and even more historically based additions, especially to the Lenape and African Diaspora quadrants. We will also plan the gardens with more food donations in mind and continue to assist the Trent House in their mission to educate the public about the history of the land on which the Trent House stands. We will continue to meet on a weekly basis to plant and maintain the garden and when harvesting contribute as much as possible to Arm and Arm. We hope to again partner to produce educational garden tours for the 4H and another one or two local organizations who will bring children in for a day of garden fun and education. We are working on expanding our program with a variety of age-appropriate activities to be better able to accommodate various weather conditions and varying ages and numbers of kids we serve on camp day. We will continue to contribute articles about what we are doing and learning to the MG newsletter.

*Thank you to our many photographers for their contributions included here, especially Theodora Wang, Debbi Kanter, Denise Hannson, Andre Butts, and one shot from Louise Senior.*



## Additional work and growth at the Trent House through the Seasons



Everyone hoeing weeds



The Pea Stakes are in



Helping Peas grow up the trellises



Bev Planting Cabbages



Careful weeding



More scuffle hoeing





Garlic, and other early Spring treats



Moving perennial herbs



We love the compost!



More composting



Planting hills of corn



Apothecary Rose in Bloom





August Sunflowers in Lenape Garden



Denise and Susan cleaning Peas



Paw Paws planted in the Lenape Garden



Mulching Leaves



November Turnip Harvest!



November pumpkins and Kale!



The Brick dedicated to us in courtyard!