BYLAWS OF THE RUTGERS MASTER GARDENERS OF MERCER COUNTY ASSOCIATION

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this volunteer association is Rutgers Master Gardener of Mercer County Association (the Association or RMGofMC).

ARTICLE II. MISSION/VISION/GOALS

Section 1. Mission Statement: To excite, inspire, and encourage the residents of Mercer County to participate in the rewarding experience of responsible gardening and pest management.

Section 2. Vision Statement: To be the leading source in Mercer County for home gardening information.

Section 3. Goals of the Association are as follows:

A. To expand the public's knowledge of responsible gardening and pest management through horticultural and environmental programs and through community service activities.
B. To help Mercer County residents obtain up-to-date recommendations from Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) and other approved resources.
C. To assist RCE and Mercer County in their horticultural and environmental outreach to the public.
D. To provide continuing education and training to the RMGofMC members that ensure their competence and sustain their interest and enthusiasm in promoting the goals of this Association.
E. To participate in the Rutgers Master Gardener Association of New Jersey (RMGANJ).
F. To encourage individual participation in regional, national, and international Master Gardener events.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Membership is open to all without regard to race, religion, color, age, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

Section 2. Membership shall be comprised of individuals who have successfully completed the Rutgers Master Gardener training program. In addition, members of the Association shall abide by these bylaws, the current Policies and Procedures of the Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Program (2010), and the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County Master Gardener Program Policies and Procedures Addendum (2019). Collectively these are referred to as RMGofMC Policies. Active members are defined below:

A. Rutgers Master Gardener Intern:
   (1) Has been admitted into and is currently attending the Rutgers Master Gardener Training Course but may not have completed the course work, passed the final examination, or completed the initial 60-hour volunteer requirement.
   (2) May attend all RMGofMC meetings, enjoys all rights and privileges, but cannot vote or hold office.

B. Rutgers Certified Master Gardener
   (1) Has become certified by completing all the requirements specified in the RMGofMC Policies.
   (2) Has, after initial certification, re-certified each calendar year in accordance with requirements in the RMGofMC Policies.

(3) May attend all RMGofMC meetings, enjoys all rights and privileges, has the right to vote and hold office.

C. Rutgers Certified Master Gardener—*Aurum Insigne*

(1) A certified Rutgers Master Gardener who has achieved 1000 hours of volunteer service and maintains active status. Failure to maintain this status will result in a transfer to inactive status unless a leave of absence has been granted by the RMGofMC Coordinator.

(2) May attend all RMGofMC meetings, enjoys all rights and privileges has the right to vote and hold office.

Section 3. The following categories of members are voting members of the Association:

(1) Rutgers Certified Master Gardener and

(2) Rutgers Certified Master Gardener—*Aurum Insigne*

Section 4. Other members include the following:

A. Rutgers Master Gardener—*Aurum Insigne Emeritus*

(1) Has been designated Emeritus with the recommendation of the Executive Board and the discretion of the RMGofMC Coordinator.

(2) Is not required to re-certify each calendar year.

(3) May attend all RMGofMC meetings but cannot vote or hold office.

(4) May not present themselves as a Rutgers Certified Master Gardeners.

B. Honorary Master Gardener

(1) May be bestowed at the discretion of the RMGofMC Coordinator and recommendation of the Executive Board.

(2) Includes all privileges except the right to vote or to hold office.

(3) May not present themselves as a Rutgers Certified Master Gardeners.

Section 5. Rutgers Master Gardener Inactive:

(1) Has been certified but has not re-certified and/or has not remained sufficiently current. If an inactive member cannot re-certify and/or regain currency within two years, an interview with the RMGofMC Coordinator shall be required to determine the necessity of re-education prior to performing RMGofMC functions.

(2) May not present themselves as a Rutgers Certified Master Gardener.

ARTICLE IV. ELECTED OFFICERS AND THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Section 1. The elected officers are president, one or more vice president(s), one or more secretary(ies), and treasurer, all of whom must be active members for at least one year.

Section 2. All officers are elected for a one-year term at the December general meeting and shall take office as of January 1.

Section 3. The elected officers, the committee chairs, the representatives to the RMGANJ, and the immediate past president shall make up the Executive Board and are responsible for the direction of Rutgers Master Gardener activities in concert with the goals of the Association.

A. The RMGofMC Coordinator, the Mercer County RCE Agricultural Agent, or their appointed representatives shall be considered ex-officio members of the Association and advisors to the Executive Board.
B. Meetings of the Executive Board are open to all active members of the Association. Non-board members have the right to speak only when recognized by the chair and may not vote.

ARTICLE V. DUTIES OF OFFICERS

Section 1. President

A. Conducts all Executive Board and general meetings and pursues the mission, vision, and goals of the Association.
B. Has the deciding vote at the executive and general meetings in the event of a tie.
C. Has the power to call a special meeting of the membership, committees, or the Executive Board in accordance with these bylaws.
D. Works with the officers to define their duties and set them forth in detailed job descriptions for each office.
E. Constitutes committees and has authority to appoint and remove committee chairs and RMGANJ representatives as needed and shall be an ex-officio member of all committees except the Nominating Committee.
F. Confers regularly and shares administrative responsibilities with the rest of the Executive Board.
G. Presides over the implementation of the long-range plan (LRP), including establishing the annual message and the annual operating objectives in conjunction with the officers and Executive Board.
H. Has authorization to sign checks, when necessary.
I. Confers regularly with the RMGofMC Coordinator and/or the Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) Agricultural Agent.

Section 2. Other Officers

A. The vice president(s) shall assist the president in the performance of the president's duties. If there is more than one vice president, the first vice president shall perform the duties of the president in the event of an absence of the president. The first vice president shall become president in the event of a vacancy in the office of president. The vice presidents shall perform the duties set forth in the job descriptions for the offices.
B. The secretary(ies) records the minutes of Executive Board and General Meetings, making them available to the membership in a timely manner, and shall undertake other correspondence as necessary or requested by the president. Each secretary shall perform the duties set forth in the job description for the office.
C. The Treasurer:
    (1) Recommends procedures for submittal and reimbursement of expenditures, which, upon approval of the Executive Board, become part of the addenda.
    (2) Keeps an account of all receipts and disbursements and submits a monthly report to the Executive Board and membership.
    (3) Provides all necessary financial data to the Executive Board in advance of budget preparation.
    (4) In concert with the President and RMGofMC Coordinator, proposes a budget for presentation to and approval by the membership at or before the June General Meeting.

(5) Arranges for reimbursing members for budgeted and/or approved expenses according to the addenda guidelines.
(6) Provides a financial statement for each fiscal year to the Executive Board.
(7) Presents the books on a yearly basis for review by a person or persons appointed by the president.
(8) Presents the books regularly and/or upon request to the RMGofMC Coordinator.
(9) Is authorized to sign checks, when necessary.

Section 3. No officer, chair, or member is authorized to act as an independent agent to set policy or represent the RMGofMC without Executive Board approval.

Section 4. Detailed descriptions of the duties of the officers are set forth in their job descriptions which are part of the addenda to the bylaws.

Section 5. Any officer may be removed from office by an affirmative vote of three-fourths (3/4) of the membership present at a general meeting at which a quorum is present in accordance with these bylaws. Prior to bringing the issue to the membership, a discussion must first be conducted by the RMGofMC Coordinator and/or any appointee(s) with the concerned parties present as requested. If a membership vote is necessary, notification of the issue to be discussed, the meeting place, day, and time must be provided to the membership not less five nor more than twenty business days prior to the meeting.

ARTICLES VI. MEETINGS AND QUORUMS

Section 1. Meetings

A. The Executive Board shall meet prior to the General Meeting no less than eight times per year.
B. One General Meeting shall be held in each of at least nine months of every calendar year.
C. The RMGofMC Coordinator and/or RCE Agricultural Agent should be present at the majority of membership-wide general meetings and policy meetings, such as regular Advisory Board or Steering Committee meetings. These meetings should be scheduled in consultation with the RMGofMC Coordinator and/or RCE Agricultural Agent to ensure their ability to attend.
D. Minutes of all Executive Board and General Meetings shall be made available to the membership, the RMGofMC Coordinator and the RCE Agriculture Agent in a timely manner.
E. Special meetings:
    (1) The President, a majority of the Executive Board, or any twenty-five active members petitioning the President and the Executive Board, may call a special general meeting.

    Notification of the day, time and meeting place, as well as the business to be discussed, shall be provided to the membership in writing not less than five nor more than twenty business days prior to the meeting. Discussion shall be limited to the issues for which the meeting was called. "In writing" to be defined as all or any two of the following: by posting in the RMGofMC office; by group e-mail, by USPS, or in the RMGofMC newsletter.

    (2) The president or two or more Executive Board members may call a special Executive Board meeting. At least seventy-two hours' notice shall be given and discussion shall be limited to the issue for which the special meeting was called.

Section 2. Quorums and Votes

A. A quorum is necessary to conduct business at any Executive Board or General Meeting.

B. A quorum of the Executive Board shall be a majority of its committees and must include at least two officers.

C. A quorum of the membership at a General Meeting shall be twenty per-cent of the total active membership and must include at least two officers.

D. A majority vote of those present at a meeting is needed to approve a motion unless otherwise specified in these bylaws.

E. Votes on motions shall be taken by a voice vote or a show of hands. Any eligible voting member of the body may request a vote by paper ballot and the request shall be honored without discussion.

ARTICLE VII. ELECTIONS

Section 1. Nominations

A. A Nominating Committee is the one committee the president cannot be a member of nor select. The Nominating Committee shall be appointed by the remaining officers in consultation with and the approval of the RMGofMC Coordinator and with the approval of the Executive Board. It shall consist of a chair and four active members chosen from as many different class years as possible. The committee's composition shall be voted upon by the Executive Board between the months of June and August and announced *no later than* the September General Meeting.

B. The Nominating Committee shall announce a proposed slate of officers for the following year no later than the October General Meeting.

C. Nominations may be made from the floor at the November General Meeting. Prior to such a nomination, the Nominating Committee and current officers must be informed of the impending nomination at least one week prior to the November General Meeting at which the nomination is to be made. Any person nominated from the floor must agree to be nominated, must be an active member for at least one year and must have been approved for nomination by the RMGofMC Coordinator. In addition, notification of the proposed slate and any nominations from the floor shall be provided in writing to the membership prior to the December General Meeting

D. At the December meeting the Nominating Committee shall make a formal presentation of its recommendations and announce any nominations that had been made from the floor at the November meeting.

Section 2. Elections

The proposed slate of officers, including any nominations made from the floor at the November meeting, shall be voted upon at the December General Meeting by show of hands or by voice vote. If there are two or more candidates for an office, a written ballot must be taken for that office. A simple majority is needed to elect. Prior to the January meeting, the results shall be provided in writing to the active membership. The elected officers shall take office as of January 1.

Section 3. Vacancies

A. Resignation of any officer must be made in writing to the president, who shall present said resignation to the Executive Board. Resignation by the president must be submitted in writing directly to the Executive Board.

B. If a vacancy should occur in the presidency, it shall be filled for the remainder of the term by the vice president, or by the first vice president if there is more than one.

C. Should a vacancy occur among the other officers, it shall be filled within sixty days through appointment by the president with concurrence of the Executive Board and approval by the membership at a general meeting.

Section 4. Transition

A. Immediately following the election, newly-elected officers may begin their work, including consideration of committee chairs and preparation for the January meeting.
B. At the end of their terms of office, each elected and appointed officer or chair shall assist in effecting an orderly transfer of the administrative function of the office, including but not limited to discussion with their successors of the job description, procedures, customs, and status of programs.

ARTICLE VIII. COMMITTEES

Section 1. Committees are established by the president with approval by the Executive Board.

Section 2. Committees are listed in the addenda to the bylaws.

Section 3. Each committee shall have one vote on the Executive Board.

Section 4. Committee chairs and co-chairs

A. Are appointed by the president.
B. Are members of the Executive Board.
C. Shall encourage and invite Rutgers Master Gardeners of Mercer County to serve on committees.
D. Are responsible for reviewing the past work/history of the committee, the work of the committee including informing the Executive Board and membership of its activities, keeping records of committee activities, and presenting reports to the membership from time to time.
E. Submit reports to Executive Board when requested.
F. Are responsible for submitting an annual report prior to January 15th.
G. Are responsible for submitting a proposed committee budget to the treasurer and for managing the committee budget throughout the year.
H. Prior to budget approval, committee chairs are authorized, after consultation with the president and treasurer, to make interim budget expenditures not to exceed one-sixth (1/6th) of the previous year's budget.

Section 5. Rutgers Master Gardeners of Mercer County are urged to serve on at least one committee.

ARTICLE IX. REPRESENTATIVES TO THE RUTGERS MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY

Section 1. Two active members shall be appointed by the president to represent the RMGofMC Association in a voting capacity.

Section 2. The representatives shall report at meetings of the Executive Board and the membership on state Master Gardener training, activities of interest, and issues of concern.

Section 3. Two alternate representatives may also be appointed by the president. They may attend the meetings, but in a non-voting capacity, unless they are substituting for voting delegates.

ARTICLE X. BYLAWS AMENDMENT PROCEDURE

Section 1. Proposals for bylaws amendments shall be submitted in writing to the Executive Board for review.

Section 2. Notification of any proposed amendment shall be provided in writing to the membership fifteen business days prior to the general meeting at which it shall be considered.

Section 3. Passage of proposed amendments shall be by an affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3rds) of the voting membership at the general meeting providing a quorum is present.

ARTICLE XI. DISSOLUTION OF THE ASSOCIATION

In the event that the Association ceases to function and dissolves itself, all assets, after obligations and expenses of the Association have been satisfied, shall be transferred to the Rutgers Master Gardener of Mercer County Program, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County, or to the RMGANJ.

ARTICLE XII. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

The rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall govern the Association in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special rules of order the Association may adopt.

ARTICLE XIII. LIABILITY

Liability protection for advice given while in service to RCE is provided to Rutgers Master Gardeners by Rutgers University and RCE as long as the volunteer uses approved recommendations when dealing with the public. In New Jersey, volunteers are also protected by the Charitable Immunities Act unless they commit egregious or willful acts of negligence.

ARTICLE XIV. ADDENDA TO THE BYLAWS

The addenda to the bylaws shall include, but not be limited to the following:

A. RMG Policies, as established and modified by the Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Program
B. Program Requirements as established and modified by the RMGofMC Coordinator and/or RCE Agricultural Agent.
C. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are established and modified by initiative of the officers and usually tasked to a committee appointed by the president. The committee presents the proposed SOP to the officers, who may consult with the RMGofMC Coordinator. The final proposed SOP is approved by the Executive Board by simple majority.
D. The Long-Range Plan (LRP) is established and modified by the initiative of the president in consultation with the officers. It shall be reviewed annually for pertinence.
E. Various supporting organization documents are maintained, including those stating expenditure and reimbursement procedures, the current list of officers, committees and chairs, a list of the current approved volunteer activities, Nominating Committee procedures and the current RCE Rutgers Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement. The various supporting organizational documents are assembled by the officers and committee chairs making up the Executive Board and are kept current on an annual basis.

Any changes to bylaws, RMGofMC Policies and SOPs shall be documented in the RMGofMC general meeting minutes. These changes shall be promptly made to official copies of this document.

The bylaws and the addenda to the bylaws are stored and available in the members only section of the RMGofMC website and on the computer of the RMGofMC Coordinator.