

**2019 June-July, Bi-Monthly Board Report, Education & Outreach, Becky Laboy, E&O Specialist**  
**July 18, 2019**

In support of OCSCD's APO, which includes in its vision "to be recognized as a conservation leader", and includes in its mission "to protect, restore and sustain fully functioning soil resources...", "further natural resource stewardship through educational programs..." and "develop and nurture effective relationships... to sustain functioning ecosystem services...", the Education Department has championed 2 main initiatives to effectuate OCSCD's vision and mission:

- **Jersey-Friendly Yards Initiative:**

- **Subcontract with Barnegat Bay Partnership:** OCSCD will subcontract with BBP to support the Jersey-Friendly Yards initiative, which began July 1<sup>st</sup>. OCSCD will be subcontracting for a total of **\$13,500**, per year, for 3 years. Tasks will include:
  - Develop, coordinate and present programs and workshops designed to educate and engage property owners in using the resources and tools on the JFY website, total of 12 per year.
  - Research and develop new content for the Plant Database, Success Stories, and other sections of the JFY website: monthly addition of new content.
  - Develop and post appropriate messages on JFY social media sites, including the JFY Facebook page and Twitter account, at least 1 per week.
  - Research and identify grant opportunities for funding JFY projects and assist with preparation and submission of grant proposals: 1-2 per year.
  - Develop, promote and grow a program to increase watershed stewardship by coordinating and engaging volunteers in meaningful projects that align with BBP and OCSCD strategic plans and the CCMP.
  - Assist with developing, organizing and delivering a "train-the-trainer" program for recruitment and training of volunteers to present programs about the JFY website and its resources and tools: 2-3 training programs delivered per year.
  - Assist BBP with developing stewardship opportunities for BBP volunteers, and grow informal educational and volunteer activities targeting specific audiences: monthly volunteer opportunity/activity provided.
- **SHIP Gardens:** In partnership with Jakes Branch County Park, OCSCD is continuing to manage and maintain these **Jersey-Friendly Demonstration Gardens** as tools for teaching and learning. The SHIP Gardens are established along the "Plant Discovery Trail" at Jakes Branch. The Bluebird Nest Boxes are incorporated into this trail as an interrelated nature feature that showcases the ecosystem services provided by the birds, and the need to eliminate overuse of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, in an effort to create healthy soil for plants and wildlife.
  - Jersey-Friendly Gardener, Lisa Mazzuca, has taken the role of Volunteer Garden Manager.
  - The Butterfly Garden has been relocated along the Plant Discovery Trail
  - June 1, National Trails Day, volunteers assisted with SHIP Gardens.
  - New plants were received from Pinelands Nursery and through BBP funding.



June, 2019: Volunteers assisted with plant installation, weeding, mulching and maintenance of the SHIP gardens.



June, 2019: Ray LeChien, Watershed Ambassador, monitors the Eastern Bluebird nest boxes along the Plant Discovery Trail.



- **Urban and Community Agriculture Initiative:**

- The **Community Garden Network of Ocean County (CGN)**, a partnership between OCSCD, Rutgers Agricultural Experiment Station, Rutgers Master Gardeners of Ocean County, Fulfill, Soil to Soul, Southern Ocean Hunger Foundation, Wrangle Brook Community Garden and Community Garden of Beach Haven, continues efforts to increase community food security, improve access to healthy food, and provide education and resources about urban agriculture practices, through monthly meetings, education and outreach, and project implementation.
  - Education programs offered by the CGN:
    - July 16: Gleaning, Growing a Donation Garden, Connecting with Food Pantries
    - August: Garden Party Fundraiser
    - September: Cooking from the Garden
    - Date TBD: Combating Climate Change in the Community Garden, Regenerative Agriculture, Carbon Farming
    - Date TBD: Cover Crops
- The **Riverwood Park Community Garden** in Toms River, the CGN's first project, was installed in May and is managed by the Toms River Green Team and gardened by the community. Ten local residents/families/groups are growing and harvesting their own food.



May, 2019: CGN team and Toms River Green Team proud of their hard work installing the new garden beds at the Riverwood Park Community Garden.



June, 2019: The gardens at Riverwood Park are producing fresh food! Community organizations, including 21+ and Girls Scout Troop 321, as well as individual community members are gardening the plots.

**Following is a list of programs and events implemented and anticipated by the Education Department that support the Jersey-Friendly Yards Initiative and the Urban and Community Agriculture initiatives, as well as the overall mission of OCSCD.**

**Outreach Programs, Conferences and Events: (APO Item #5, Activity 9)**

- **June 1: National Trails Day** – volunteer gardening and weeding at Jakes Branch. (10 people attended)
- **June 14: Sustainable Jersey Summit.** Attended by approx. 500 people. Becky and Karen Walzer (BBP) exhibited “JFY”. Attended info sessions regarding Sustainable Jersey.
- **June 19: State Committee Meeting and Urban Gardens Tour.** Becky attended the State Committee Mtg at the Newark Greater Conservancy, led by Carrie Lindig, NRCS, and participated in a tour of 3 urban gardens in the local area, showcasing urban farming practices and the many supports still needed for successful urban farming and gardening.
- **July 16:** Gleaning, Growing a Donation Garden, Connecting with Food Pantries
- **August 11:** Jersey-Friendly Yards program at BTMUA.
- **August 14:** Jersey-Friendly Yards program at Berkeley Branch of the Ocean County Library
- **September 7 and 8:** WILD EXPO
- **October 5:** Fall Forestry Festival
- **October 19: 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual JFY Conference.** Theme: “Putting Your Jersey-Friendly Yard into Practice”.

### **Special Events/Projects: (APO Item #5, Activity 2, 3, 6, 10, 14)**

- **Poster Contest:** Theme: “Life in the Soil: Dig Deeper”. We received 24 entries with representatives from all four grade groups. The Board selected the Grand Champion Winner: **Summer Sprague**, who received a check for \$50 from OCSCD. The four winning posters were submitted for entry into the State competition, none won.
- **23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Environmental Educators Roundtable:** will be held on **April 22** at the Lighthouse Center for Natural Resource Education. OCSCD will be emphasizing “STEAM”-based presentations.
- **Envirothon:** Next year’s theme is: **Water Resources Management: Local Control and Local Solutions**. Becky will again co-coordinate the Wildlife Station with Holly Reynolds, Freehold Soil Conservation District

### **Grant Writing: (APO Item #4, Activity 2)**

- Continues to search for grant opportunities that support the District’s mission and 2 main initiatives, as outlined above: *Jersey-Friendly Yards* and *Urban and Community Agriculture*.

### **Website, Media and Promotions: (APO Item #5, Activity 1 and 11)**

- Maintains and enhances the Education components of the OCSCD website,
- Utilizes social media (**Constant Contact** and **Facebook**) to disseminate information about OCSCD programs
- Maintains database and mailing list of contacts for E&O initiatives

### **Professional Development: (APO Item #3, Activity 3)**

- June 7: “Using Green Infrastructure to Promote Climate Resiliency”, Rutgers University.
- August 7-9: Teach on the Estuary (TOTE), offered by JCNERR; a research and field-based training program; opportunities include: explore coastal habitats and conduct field investigations, interact with local scientists and experienced coastal educators, integrate local and national monitoring data into the classroom, learn hands-on field activities highlighting various [estuary education resources](#).

### **Internships/Volunteers: (APO Item #5, Activity 8)**

- Lisa Mazzuca, one of OCSCD’s “Jersey-Friendly Gardeners”, is offering her volunteer services to assist with managing and maintaining the SHIP gardens.
- Irene Tysh, Master Naturalist, will be assisting with OCSCD’s exhibits at future events, including Wild Expo, Forestry Festival and Jersey-Friendly Yards Conference.