



BROOKDALE PARK CONSERVANCY

Next
Month's
Meeting
APRIL 28TH

March, 2009

THE BROOKDALE PARK ROSE GARDEN

This spring George Burns and Double Delight will slip into bed with Sophia Renaissance and Mister Lincoln on the lush northern peak of Brookdale Park. A lovers' rendezvous? Absolutely—if you're talking about rose lovers.

To help celebrate the 50th anniversary of Brookdale Park's extraordinary rose garden, the Essex County Master Gardeners (ECMG) will be adding an orgy of color and fragrance, new bushes bursting with pink, white and peach-colored blossoms. Mr. Burns, Ms. Renaissance and other fanciful buds—Sentimental, Carefree Sunshine, Golden Wings—will be tagged and named for the parade of admirers who are expected to show for the June 20 half-century celebration. Refreshments and live music will be provided by Essex County.

Each year a dedicated group of five master gardeners—Bob Kroeckel, Suzy Butler, Lisa Caplan, Susan Jankolovits and Don Moore, assisted by rose aficionado Winston Velez—put in about 20 hours a week to prep the beds for the new season. "We've worked in the snow and in the hottest days of summer," says Ms. Jankolovits. "We mow the paths, weedwack, pitch fork mountains of mulch and fight off mugwort, bindweed, thistle, chickweed and dandelion. And we always pray that the sledders haven't destroyed too many bushes during the winter."

Tending Brookdale Park's rose garden is a tradition that extends back to June 11, 1959, when the North Jersey Rose Society donated 750 bushes to the Essex County Parks Department, which paid a small staff to keep the beds in order. However, budget cutbacks forced the County to discontinue its paid staff and the Rose Society eventually withdrew its support.

The garden languished until the newly-formed ECMG, under the leadership of the late Jonathan Forsell, took over the care and restoration as a community project in 1997. The ECMG worked with the Essex County Parks Department and a neighboring block association to replant and maintain many of the existing beds. By 2002, however, work on the garden stalled once more after the death of Jonathan Forsell.

The following year, Robert Kroeckel, an ECMG member since 1998 and president from 2000 to 2003, and a handful of volunteers began to revitalize the garden. It took more than two years to significantly clean up and rebuild the grounds and restore the soil.

By June of 2007 the rose garden volunteers had finished planting 350 bushes in the 555-square-foot garden. There are now more than two dozen beds and at least 80 types of roses growing as high as four feet. In honor of the garden's 50th anniversary, the county is installing a rose arbor at the top of the bed so as you enter Mister Lincoln and Chrysler Imperial, deep red fragrant hybrid teas, will be the first of the roses to greet you.

The Master Gardeners do not spray fungicides and only use herbicides for the crabgrass. They make every attempt to purchase hardy and disease-resistant bushes and to keep a balance between the hybrid teas, floribundas and shrub roses so that there is always something of interest in the garden.



To sponsor a rose bed or to make a donation, email Master Gardener Susan Jankolovits at sjankolovits@hotmail.com. The Essex County Master Gardeners Helpline is 973-228-2210

Half a Century Celebration at the Brookdale Park Rose Garden

Come join The Essex County Master Gardeners and Essex County Parks and Recreation Department on Saturday June 20th from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M. to celebrate the rose garden's 50 years of existence. The garden is on the right side as you enter the park via Grove St.. The parks department will provide refreshments and music.

