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Cultivating the field of horticultural therapy in NJ

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The field of horticultural therapy in raising awareness in New Jersey is growing, thanks to overwhelming support from the state senate and assembly by way of four significant steps of policy makers.

First, bipartisan bill SJR 12 (Sens. Kip Bateman and Joseph Vitale) designating the third week of March as Horticultural Therapy Week passed in full Senate vote. Horticultural Therapy week was established by Congress in spring 2006. The New Jersey Senate became the first state legislative body to pass a bill.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Cultivating the field of horticultural therapy in raising awareness in New Jersey is growing.
- Horticultural therapy provides growth opportunities and community connections for New Jersey's horticultural producers.
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"Designating a week each year to raise awareness to Horticultural Therapy will hopefully expand opportunities for more people to take advantage of the many benefits it offers," said Bateman (R-Somerset, Hunterdon, Mercer and Middlesex). "Horticultural Therapy is a time proven practice dating back centuries that's helped countless people from children to seniors to veterans to those with special needs. I encourage my colleagues in the Assembly to quickly advance this measure so we can work to bring this successful therapy to more of those who could benefit from it."



New Jersey Department of Agriculture Secretary Douglas H. Fisher welcomes the American Horticultural Therapy Association to the Delaware Valley Region at the 42nd AHTA annual conference, "Growing Our Future," in Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania, alongside keynote speaker Stephen Kellert, Ph.D., Tweedy Ordway Professor Emeritus of Social Ecology and Senior Research Scholar at the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, AHTA President MaryAnne McMillan (center), Immediate Past President Gabriela Harvey (right) and Horticultural Therapy Practitioner Laura DePrado, Final Touch Landscaping LLC (left). (Photo: COURTESY OF LAURA DEPRADO)

Bateman was recently named 2014 Person of The Year by Gardener News. To view the bill, click http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2014/Bills/SJR/12_11.PDF.

Second, Joint Resolution Bill AJR13 (Assemblywoman Donna Simon) went before the Assembly Human Services Committee with unanimous passing out of Committee, and is awaiting posting by Assembly Speaker Vincent Prieto for full Assembly vote during the 2014-2015 Legislative Session. Backing in support by way of formal letters of endorsement for SJR12 and AJR13 were submitted by the American Horticultural Therapy Association, a 501(c)(3), the Mid-Atlantic Horticultural Therapy Network Inc., NJ Board of Agriculture, NJ Farm Bureau, NJ Nursery and Landscape Association, and American Society of Landscape Architects NJ Chapter. AJR 13 must be passed by the full Assembly before going to the governor for final approval. To view the bill, click http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2014/Bills/AJR/13_S1.PDF.

Third, the Resolutions Committee of the State Board of Agriculture have, for the third year, presented a resolution on Horticultural Therapy for full vote by the over 100 delegate organizations at the NJ Agriculture Convention, February 2015 in Atlantic City. The previous two resolutions have been unanimously adopted by the convention. The Resolutions Committee decides on the areas of agricultural and horticultural importance for the state, and helps set the direction for the Department of Agriculture in the coming year. The resolution is available at <http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/conventions/2014/horticulturetherapy.html>.



New Jersey dignitaries visit the horticultural therapy program at the Adult Day Center of Somerset County. New Jersey Department of Agriculture Secretary Douglas H. Fisher (center); state Sen. Kip Bateman; New Jersey Department of Agriculture Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Alfred Murray (center right); (far left) Nikki Hoffman, activity assistant ADC; Diann Robinson, ADC executive director; Dominick Mondì, executive director of the New Jersey Nursery and Landscape Association; Laura DePrado, HT, Final Touch Plantscaping LLC; Jack Otterbein, NJNLA senior director (far right). The horticultural therapy program was established using a grant from the Grotta Fund for Senior Care of the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater MetroWest NJ.(Photo: COURTESY OF LAURA DEPRADO)

Fourth, the NJ Agriculture Magazine 2015 features (for the first time in the history of Agriculture in the U.S), an article about HT "Therapeutic Gardening." The Horticulture industry in New Jersey is ranked second in the nation representing \$455 million, consisting of nursery and greenhouse products, sod and Christmas trees. In 2012, the value of sales for floriculture crops such as bedding and garden plants brought \$109 million. Horticultural therapy is featured in New Jersey Agriculture 2015 Magazine, Page 39. To view the article, click <http://farmflavor.com/magazine/new-jersey-agriculture-2015>.

New Jersey Department of Agriculture Secretary Douglas Fisher visited horticultural therapy programs in South and Central Jersey, including my program at the Adult Day Center of Somerset County, along with Sen. Bateman, state Department of Agriculture Assistant Secretary Alfred Murray, NJ Nursery and Landscape Association, Dominick Mondì, executive director, and Jack Otterbein, senior director and member of the Somerset County Board of Agriculture.

"Horticultural therapy provides growth opportunities and community connections for New Jersey's horticultural producers," Fisher said. "Growing and working in a garden provides many positives for individuals, from physical activity to learning where our food comes from."

Secretary Fisher spoke at the 42nd annual Conference of the AHTA to nearly 200 horticultural therapists, educators and interns from the U.S. France, Japan and Canada. Activities in New Jersey have resulted in invitation for the AHTA to showcase horticultural therapy at the Capitol Statehouse, March 16 to 20.



New Jersey Sen. Kip Bateman and Assemblywoman Donna Simon at the New Jersey State House in Trenton with Laura DePrado, HT, Final Touch Landscaping LLC, and MaryAnne McMillan, president of the American Horticultural Therapy Association, following the full Senate passing vote for SJR12, designating the third week of March as Horticultural Therapy Week to coincide with the designation passed by Congress in spring 2006. (Photo: COURTESY OF LAURA DEPRADO)

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