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## Third week of March is Horticultural Therapy Week

Written by  
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*On March 26, the N.J. General Assembly passed Joint Resolution, AJR13, designating the third week of March as Horticultural Therapy Week.*

Since Jan. 1, 2014, more than 6,300 bills and resolutions have been introduced by the state Senate and Assembly.

If you weed out duplicates, the list of bills for the 2014-2015 Legislative Session total approximately 4,300. Only a few hundred per session ever become law.

### STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- There are 25 registered horticultural therapists in New Jersey.
- Horticultural Therapy Week coincides with the first day of spring.

On March 26, the General Assembly passed Joint Resolution, AJR13, designating the third week of March as “Horticultural Therapy Week.” The state Senate, through bipartisan SJR-12, led by state Sen. Kip Bateman, and the Assembly, through AJR-13, led by Assemblywoman Donna Simon, are the first legislative bodies in the nation to designate the week every year to raise awareness about the importance of horticultural therapy in improving the quality of life for all participants. Horticultural Therapy Week was established by Congress in the spring of 2006 to coincide with the first day of spring.

“As Chair of the Assembly Human Services Committee, I have seen firsthand the need for innovative treatments. Horticulture therapy can be used for a wide range of physical, mental, and developmental issues while giving individuals an opportunity to interact with their communities. Gardening and plant-based therapies are good for treatment, our environment, and our society. I look forward to celebrating New Jersey’s Horticulture Therapy Week next March,” said Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri-Huttle, D-37, Bergen County.

“Many people find working with plants to be very enjoyable and relaxing. Using it as part of treatment plan has proven to be beneficial to people of all ages with various needs including brain injuries, cancer, Alzheimer’s, substance abuse, developmental disabilities, OT/PT rehabilitation. Horticultural Therapy is used to improve memory, fine and gross motor skills, cognitive abilities, language, socialization and vocational skills. As the Garden State, New Jersey couldn’t be a more perfect place to launch this joint resolution,” said Simon, R-16, Hunterdon, Somerset, Mercer and Middlesex.



*The spectacular, brilliant colors of “Jersey Grown” tulips, hyacinths, geraniums in bloom in the Horticultural Therapy display in Goldfinch Square during “Horticultural Therapy Week.” The flower fragrances filled the hallways of the State Capitol drawing visitors of New Jersey legislators, leader representatives of many organization throughout the State citizens and statehouse staff who visited the display to learn about Horticultural Therapy and who can benefit.  
(Photo courtesy of Laura DePrado)*

In order to advance the profession, it is important that the public recognize horticultural therapists as professionals with specific education, training and credentials in the use of horticulture for therapy and rehabilitation.

Professional registration informs the public that the horticultural therapist has met the required education and experience to practice horticultural therapy. Horticultural therapy is the process of connecting people and plants through vocational, social and therapeutic programs under the direction of a horticultural therapist who is trained and skilled at creating

customized activities and/or garden spaces that accommodate a wide range of abilities (with goals, objectives and recorded outcomes).

Horticultural therapy designs and programs can offer cognitive, social, physical benefits with year-round applications indoors and outdoors. Currently, there are 25 registered horticultural therapists in New Jersey facilitating valuable programs using evidenced-based research for children through seniors, in schools, adult day care, mental health, veterans homes, assisted living, nursing homes, rehabilitation, family shelters, developmentally disabled day programs, group homes, day and residential housing for adults with autism, community and county parks, gardens and arboreta.

“As horticultural therapy continues to play a larger and more important role in the community, it is altogether fitting and perfectly appropriate that we recognize its emergence and therapeutic benefit by designating the third week in March as “Horticultural Therapy Week,” said Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli, R-16, Hunterdon, Somerset, Mercer and Middlesex.

“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-16, 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.”

“On behalf of the American Horticultural Therapy Association, thank you to our New Jersey legislators, the State Board of Agriculture, Farm Bureau, New Jersey Department of Agriculture, NJ Nursery and Landscape Association, American Society of Landscape Architects NJ Chapter and the Program Coordinator of the State Capitol, Dawn Temperino, for giving us the opportunity to display Horticultural Therapy in Goldfinch Square during Horticultural Therapy Week, March 16 to 21,” said MaryAnne McMillan, president of the American Horticultural Therapy Association.

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