

Announcing the Newest Column in the AHTA Magazine: "Plowing Fields!"

By Marion G. Myhre, MEd, TVI, HTR

The AHTA Magazine Work Team invites you to participate by sharing your thoughts, comments, questions, updates on events, or latest news. We are all plowing fields in many ways. Whether you are a therapist, teacher, researcher, architect, student, or intern, you have valuable news to share with the entire membership. After all, you are the seeds! Please help us to plant some new topics to grow and inspire one another. Let's open the field of dialogue and share information, past and present, so we can grow the future of HT! You can forward these articles to [Ranita Keener](#), [Laura DePrado](#), [Marion Myhre](#), or anyone on the Work Team!

Looking to Viable Seeds of the Past to Grow Harvest of Future through "NHTW"

Photo and article by Laura DePrado, HTR



National Horticultural Therapy Week (NHTW), has been a "ritual" of AHTA to promote and celebrate horticultural therapy third week of March since 2006. This March 2016 marked 10 years of recognizing HT in this way. Lana Dreyfus in 2004 planted a seed. At the time Lana was an AHTA board member and President of the Chesapeake Chapter who campaigned for NHTW. Through communications sent out by the AHTA, every member of AHTA was encouraged to take a moment and contact their elected representative and senators to ask for their support

of this resolution. Congressman David Price, 4th District of North Carolina, agreed to sponsor a Congressional Resolution Number 92 submitted to Congress March 2005 supporting the recognition of NHTW during 2006.

I took the seed (Congressional Resolution Number 92) planted by Lana and showed it to New Jersey Senator Christopher "Kip" Bateman, R-District 16, my legislative district in 2012. He shared it with the NJ Office of Senate and Legislative Affairs to research the field to see if there was fertile ground to redraft. The ground was indeed fertile, and Senate Resolutions SJR12 and AJR13 were immediately supported by Senator Bateman and Assemblywoman Donna Simon, R-16, and introduced during the 2014-2015 Legislative Session. Meanwhile, the New Jersey Board of Agriculture, which sets policy for all things agriculture via the New Jersey Department of Agriculture had invited me to write a resolution for HT week in December 2013 for consideration for vote at the 2013 Agricultural Convention in Atlantic City. The Convention annually assembles delegates from over 100 agricultural organizations (represented by an appointed delegate), including Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, NJ Farm Bureau, Vegetable Growers Association, and the New Jersey Nursery and Landscape Association (NJNLA). The NJNLA is comprised of 400 plus member companies encompassing all

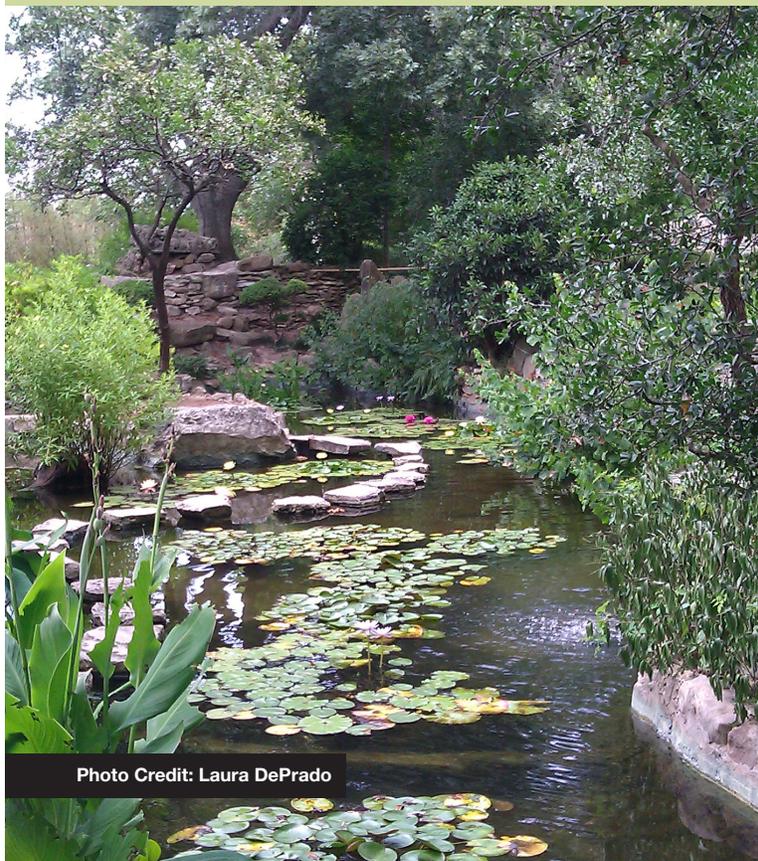


Photo Credit: Laura DePrado

facets of the nursery, greenhouse, landscape and retail garden center industry in New Jersey.

From the political side of things, the State Board through the HT Week Resolution, written by me in 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016, along with Senate and Assembly Joint Companion bills, created “weight,” merit, significance, to the subject of HT Week. Additionally, many fields had to be rototilled: formal letters of support had to be written to legislative representatives and key leaders. The purpose of the letters was to request both Senate and Assembly Health, Human Services, and Senior Citizens Committee chairs to approve and “Post” SJR12 and AJR13 for Committee vote. I called and invited the Committee Chairs to visit programs in their own legislative backyards, including my own, sent articles, over many months. MaryAnne and I had to testify before each Committee with Senator Bateman and Assemblywoman Simon. We had to garner bipartisan support with the each of the Committee Chairs, and do everything to get Senate President Sweeney, and Assembly Speaker Prieto to post for Full Senate and Full Assembly vote. It was critical to get these chairs, who are Democratic, to Co-Sponsor SJR12 and AJR13 in order to have any hope in getting Senators and Assembly folks on both side of the isle throughout the State to support. As the two bills for NHTW progressed through the legislative fields in Trenton and around New Jersey, I received an invitation for the AHTA to present a display about horticultural therapy in March 2015. It was so successful we were asked back March 2016.

On May 11, 2015, Governor Christie signed into law SJR12/AJR13 “Horticultural Therapy Week” beginning in 2016 and every year thereafter. New Jersey is the first state in the nation to do this. On March 14th we attended a ceremonial on the Senate Floor inaugurating NJHTW. The Assembly sent a proclamation to me in the mail and the U.S. House of Representatives sent a Congressional Proclamation initiated by Congressman Leonard Lance, who attended a special ceremony orchestrated by me in

August 2015 in celebration of 300 horticultural therapy sessions achieved with a senior whose life has been saved as a direct result of HT. Lance flew the flag over the U.S. Capitol August 3rd, 2015 in honor of one of this senior client, and citations were presented by Full Senate and Full Assembly and Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders. In preparation for the Senate Ceremonial, MaryAnne and I garnered the support of AHTA President Leigh Anne Starling on behalf of the AHTA, to prepare a formal NJ Statement upon the passing of SJR12/AJR13.

New Jersey Executive Director of the USDA Farm Service Agency Paul Hlubik said, “As a farmer and as the spouse of a horticulturalist, I recognize firsthand the healing power of working with one’s hands in the soil and with plant life. As a public advocate for every segment of New Jersey agriculture through my work with growers and my colleagues in D.C. I commend such awareness and unyielding support of the horticulture industry here in the Garden State.”

Time for the Harvest. We are growing the field one viable seed at a time.

Further Reading:

Produce News, March 21,2016

<http://theproducenews.com/news-dep-menu/test-featured/18332-new-jersey-designates-horticultural-therapy-week>

Produce News, April 4th Floral Edition

http://www.theproducenews.com/digital_editions/pn040416issue/files/76.html

