



## Freeholders Recognize Horticultural Therapy Week

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Evan Wadle, representing NJ Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th) presented a Congressional Citation to Laura DePrado for an article she wrote published in the Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture. Credits: Courtesy Somerset County Freeholders

SOMERVILLE, NJ - The Somerset County Freeholders recognized New Jersey Horticultural Therapy Week at its March 13th meeting, presenting a proclamation to Branchburg resident and horticultural therapist Laura DePrado.

A proclamation in recognition of a story she wrote that was published in the Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture was also presented by Eric Wadle, a representative of New Jersey Rep. Leonard Lance, R-7th.

New Jersey Horticultural Therapy Week, March 18-24 celebrates increasing public awareness of the importance of horticultural therapy in improving the quality of life for all, and to increase opportunities for each individual to experience the endless benefits of the people-plant Connection.

National Horticultural Therapy Week was established by Congress for the year 2006 to coincide with spring and the Vernal Equinox. New Jersey is the first and only state to designate a week each year through a bipartisan Resolution co-sponsored by state Sen. Christopher "Kip" Bateman, R-16, and Sen. Joseph Vitale, D-19, which was spearheaded by DePrado.

Horticultural Therapy is the time proven practice of utilizing the therapeutic benefits of working in a peaceful garden environment and using horticulture as modality to improve quality of life. It is practiced through social, vocational and therapeutic programs and successfully empowers individual to achieve their maximum independence in settings such as rehabilitative, hospitals, senior centers, residential, and schools.

Horticultural Therapy helps individuals recovering from illness, or injury, the elderly, socially disadvantaged, and individuals with disabilities. Horticultural Therapy is unique in that it uses seasonally-related plant material to connect people in purposeful and meaningful activities with goals and objectives for individuals and client groups. It is the "process" in the connection that offers the benefits. Horticultural Therapy is a vehicle to meet wide ranging goals. The evidence-base of Horticultural Therapy designs and programs can offer cognitive, social and physical benefits with year-round application indoors and outdoors.

Horticultural Therapy gained prominence in the United States in rehabilitating wounded veterans of World War II through the assistance of volunteers and trained professionals and continues today in Veterans hospitals across the country, and brings dignity and enhanced skills by helping individuals such as those recovering from illness or injury, the elderly, socially disadvantaged individuals and individuals with disabilities.

The American Horticultural Therapy Association, a nonprofit 501 (c)(3), provides opportunities for registered horticultural therapists to share research, and best practices. Awareness of the growing profession of horticultural therapy is being realized through increasing educational opportunities, beginning with the first MS degree in horticultural therapy, awarded by Michigan State University in 1955, and continuing across the country, and through horticultural therapy certificate programs. Horticultural therapy was practiced by Dr. Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence.