

Let's Plant NJ! - Fri Apr 30, 7 pm on zoom - Speakers' Bios

Co-Moderator Frida Ruiz is a graduating senior at Union County Vo-Tech High School in Scotch Plains, and will attend Princeton University this fall. Frida co-founded The Green Cause to engage Cranford area students and teachers in sustainable practices. She's presented for the Columbia University Earth Institute, Sustainable Princeton, and the Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education.

1. Amanda Nesheiwat, Deputy Director of Sustainability and Community Outreach, Hudson County Improvement Authority
is Adjunct Professor at Ramapo College and recipient of the 2014 United Nations ATOP (Association for Trauma Outreach and Prevention) Peace Award. She received the North Jersey Young Environmental Innovator Award and was "Woman of the Year" in Hudson County in 2018. Amanda attended Ramapo College and Bergen Community College, and holds an MS in Sustainability Management from Stevens Institute of Technology.

2. Lee M. Clark, Environmental Justice Policy Manager for New Jersey League of Conservation Voters resides in Phillipsburg, and received his BA in Political Science and MS in Business Communication from Rider University. Lee was Field Director for the "Green in '17" campaign for clean energy, water, open space, and environmental justice. Lee has worked on several presidential and state campaigns, and became the first African American Councilman in Phillipsburg's 158-year history. Lee enjoys hiking New Jersey's beautiful trails, and camping, fishing, and kayaking with family and friends.

3. Dr. Joy Barnes-Johnson, Chemistry/Material Science & Racial Literacy teacher, Princeton High School Dr. Joy Barnes-Johnson teaches Chemistry, Material Science, and Racial Literacy at Princeton High School. Her research interests are in equitable science teaching and evaluation, and STEM curriculum development. Dr. Johnson received a B.S. in Chemistry at Johnson C. Smith University, a Master of Ed. at Montclair State University, and a PhD in Urban Education and Leadership from Temple University. She loves enabling students of all learning modes to thrive.

4. Tobias Fox: Founder and Managing Director, Newark Science and Sustainability

Tobias Fox is an urban farming organizer in Newark, and coordinator of an annual Sustainable Living Empowerment conference. He conducts various community events, presentations, and workshops on sustainable living

practices and has assisted numerous urban farmers and gardeners with the cultivation of their agricultural space. Fox has earned awards including selection for 100 People of Newark as part of Newark's 350th Celebration, the 2016 Community Service Award presented by the Northeast Earth Coalition, and the 2014 Newark NAACP Environmental Justice Honoree.

5. Crystal Wessel: New Jersey Tree Foundation, Program Coordinator, North Jersey

Crystal coordinates the NJTF's Renaissance Trees Program in North Jersey. A native of Galloway, she graduated from Stockton University in Environmental Science and received a Masters in Sustainability at Montclair State University. Crystal is living her childhood dream of being Captain Planet (of the Planeteers.) She believes green infrastructure and tree-planting addresses many problems at once - flooding and pollution, the need for cooling and shade in urban hot spots, beauty and a gathering place for neighbors. When not planting trees you can find her cooking, dancing, or playing with her cat, Nova.

6. Gary Oppenheimer, Founder/Exec. Director, AmpleHarvest.org

Gary Oppenheimer is founder and executive director of AmpleHarvest.org, an award winning nationwide nonprofit that enables America's 62 million home gardeners to easily donate their surplus fruits and vegetables to one of 9,000 local food pantries across all 50 states. He is also a CNN Hero, World Food Prize nominee, a Master Gardener, Rutgers Environmental Steward, former community garden director, a dancer and long distance cyclist. After graduating from college in psychology, he became one of the early geeks in the personal computing arena. Gary now lives in Newfoundland, New Jersey, after having lived on a boat on the Hudson River in Manhattan since 1978.

Co-moderator Susan Haig is founder and creative advisor of CivicStory.org, a South Orange Green Team member, and conductor of the South Orange Symphony Orchestra. She is dedicated to advancing solutions-based news that empowers citizens and values each person's contribution to healthy, thriving communities. Exploring relationships among sustainability, health, and civic learning, and creating complex stories in vernacular forms are current pursuits, as well as learning the 1, 2, 3's of native plants.