

BPC PARKS NEWS

THE BATTERY PARK CITY PARKS CONSERVANCY OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER

UPCOMING EVENTS

All programs are free unless noted.

For more information and to register, call 212.267.9700 or visit www.bpcparks.org.

GARDEN TOURS

Select Thursdays

For dates and times, call or visit website.

STORIES FOR ALL AGES

July 17 **Joe Cross**

Aug 14 **Eleni Constantelos**

11am, Rector Park

SWEDISH MIDSUMMER FESTIVAL

June 25, 5 – 8pm, Wagner Park

folk dancing, wreath making, maypole parade, children's games, Swedish food

6:30 – 8pm: Family Dance with

Ole Olsson's Oldtime Orkestra

GO FISH

June 26, Wagner Park

10am – 2pm: Fishing & Art,

12:30 – 1:30pm: **Robbi Kumalo**

WALKING TOUR

Carter Craft: *Waterfront Preservation*

June 27, 2pm, Wagner Park

TEEN MARINE ADVENTURE

for grades 6, 7 and 8

15 sessions, July 6 to 29

10am – 2pm, Rockefeller Park

\$400. Pre-registration required.

RIVERS & BLUES

July 8 **Black Coffee**

July 15 **Shemekia Copeland Blues Band**

July 22 **Big Ed and The Sidepockets**

July 29 **Hugh Pool Band**

7 – 8:30pm, Wagner Park

SUNSET JAM ON THE HUDSON

Fridays in July & Aug starting July 9

6:30 – 8:30pm, Wagner Park.

With **Pamela Patrick,**

Mary Knysch and Maguette Camara

Bring your drum or borrow one

from BPCPC.

WEST AFRICAN & GREEK

FAMILY DANCES

July 24 **Mane Kadang** and **Kotchegna**

Aug 14 **Greek American Folklore Society**

6:30 – 8pm, Esplanade Plaza

No partner/experience necessary. All ages.

HARMONY ON THE HUDSON

Oct 3, noon – 6:30pm, Wagner Park

(See page 4)



North Cove

Photo: Ted Wallace

SEA FEVER AT NORTH COVE

A tall ship, the wheel's kick, the wind's song and the white sail's shaking. John Masfield yearned for these in his poem *Sea Fever* whose famous first line reads: "I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky." One satisfies such longings at North Cove watching the comings and goings of the marina's sailing and motor vessels – small, large, private and commercial – and dreaming of distant lands and "the vagrant gypsy life."

In March 2003, barely a month before it was to reopen for the season, Battery Park City Authority (BPCA) assigned temporary management of North Cove Marina to the Conservancy. BPCPC's assistant director Vince McGowan supervises the marina and its dock masters. Ted Wallace, Hugh Lassen and Michael Rosa oversee daily operations.

Previously, the marina was privately operated, primarily as a commercial yacht and transportation hub. Assuming management, BPCPC found the docks as well as the potable water and electrical systems in disarray. Supervised by foreman Gary Satriano, BPCPC's carpenters, plumbers, electricians and masons immediately began extensive infrastructure repairs. Ben Plaza and Jose Velasquez replaced broken decking, damaged bumpers and rusted hinges. While contractors were hired to replace all the electrical outlets, BPCPC's Robert Maggi and Eric White ran power lines to the white lighthouse-shaped structures on the docks. After stopping a dozen major leaks, Renny Colon and Jose Rosado ran water lines to the lighthouses, restoring boater access to water and electricity.

Today, the marina accommodates approximately 50 boats including the 22-boat fleet of the Manhattan Sailing School and the charter boats *Calypso*, *Ventura* and *Shearwater*. The mix of vessels – which anchor from one night to six months – includes sailboats and yachts up to 160 feet.

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COPYING MOTHER NATURE

Shunning chemical fertilizers and toxic pesticides and herbicides, BPCPC landscapes its lawns and gardens in a sustainable way. BPCPC's Landscape Management Program considers the entire growing environment of a plant. Acting on the principle that nature is sustainable and takes care of itself, BPCPC offers a nontraditional, if not unique, way of considering and adapting natural processes. BPCPC's Landscape Management Program entails seven components and all need to be implemented for the program to work. Two of the components – **Soil Management** and **Composting** – are the bedrock of BPCPC's horticultural practices.

T Fleisher, BPCPC's director of horticulture, recreates what nature does on its own. "In a forest environment valuable natural resources such as leaves and twigs decompose, releasing bacterial and fungal organisms which absorb and retain nutrients and moisture. Protozoans, beneficial predators in the soil, feed on these organisms and secrete surplus nitrogen back into the root zone in plant-available form. In artificial environments like lawns and ornamental gardens, fallen leaves, spent flowers and prunings are removed to keep them tidy and attractive, thus creating the basic need to restore lost organic matter."

BPCPC accomplishes this by transforming plant waste into compost and compost tea (compost rendered in liquid form with the addition of biological amendments) and applying them to lawns and plants. The compost provides a growth medium for bacteria, fungi and mycorrhizae (which enable plants to metabolize certain nutrients).

There are many growing environments in BPC's parks – woodland, coastal, turf, shrub



Robert Hansen applies compost tea to BPC ballfields.



Dana Anders and Karen Chaffee transplanting *Brunnera macrophylla* (Siberian bugloss) on the Esplanade.

and flower borders. BPCPC develops various soil mixes to meet the needs of each environment. It also adjusts the ingredients in its compost to achieve a balanced biology for each soil type. Leaves and wood chips yield fungal-dominant (woody) compost, good for trees and shrubs. Annuals and perennials yield bacterially-dominant (green) compost, good for lawns and flower borders.

Crucial for healthy soil, the nitrogen found in compost is naturally produced through nutrient cycling. Acting like a time-release capsule, it is slowly released back into the soil at a rate the soil can accommodate. In addition to nutrient retention and availability, a balanced soil biology helps suppress plant disease, retain water, aid aeration, and offset the effects of pollutants.

Fleisher stresses the need to apply nitrogen responsibly, "It's easy to over apply inorganic, high-nitrogen fertilizer. The problem is that the soil cannot absorb it all." In such cases, surplus nitrogen filters down into the ground water and pollutes the water table. Moreover, the high salt content of inorganic fertilizers kills the beneficial organisms in the soil. BPCPC's methods cultivate, not destroy, predatory protozoans along with bacteria and fungi. BPCPC measures the predator/bacterial ratio in its soils to determine how much nitrogen is naturally present, not absent, and whether additional nitrogen is needed.

The five remaining components of BPCPC's Landscape Management Program work in tandem with soil management and composting. Horticulturists consider available sunlight, watering needs, and wind and salt conditions in determining **Plant & Site Selection**. Annuals and perennials must not only be compatible with their environment; they must also share similar sun and water requirements.

For successful **Pest & Disease Control**, BPCPC considers the offending organism's life cycle and habitat in its diagnosis and analysis of pests and disease. BPCPC releases beneficial insects (e.g., ladybugs, pirate bugs, lacewings, nematodes, and trichogramma or microscopic wasps) and, when all else fails, sparingly applies horticultural oils and soaps.

Irrigation Management minimizes water evaporation by using in-ground drip systems wherever possible. Compost aids moisture retention in the root zone, playing an important role in water conservation.

Common sense dictates BPCPC's **Planting Practices** and **Pruning Techniques**. Horticulturists plant at the proper depth (planting too deep can lead to premature plant death) and remove all synthetic materials from root balls, lest roots become stunted. They prune in a way that encourages natural growth patterns and maintains correct plant structure.

Grounded in basic horticultural theory, BPCPC's Landscape Management Program embellishes what happens naturally, its success dependent on healthy balanced soil. As Fleisher says, "Bacteria. Fungi. Protozoans. They are all part of the great drama unfolding beneath the surface of the soil."

WANTED!

Horticultural Volunteers
to help weed, water, mulch,
plant and prune.
Wednesdays from 8am – noon
Call 212.267.9700, ext.364

Why not receive BPC PARKS
NEWS by e-mail? If your e-mail can
accommodate a PDF file, drop us a line
at info@bpcparks.org. Write "newsletter
e-mail list" in the subject line.

SITTING PRETTY

Were Goldilocks to step out of the pages of *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, she would have a fine time testing out the benches in BPC's parks. Of the 950 benches sited in the parks, she would certainly find several types "just right." She might sit on a World's Fair bench in serene Rector Park or, shaded by the Linden allée, take in the water views from a Londino bench on the Esplanade. She might try a pine bench on South Cove's tucked away quay or a teak bench in the "hot" and "cool" gardens of Wagner Park.

The responsibility of keeping BPCPC's huge bench inventory in good repair falls to carpenter Maurice Smalls and his able assistants William Smyer and Jesus Pitta. As Maurice says, "There's always something to do whether it's repainting or replacing broken slats, repairing chipped and cracked concrete bases, or pressure washing moss from the bases."

Nearly two-thirds of BPC's benches are the comfortable New York World's Fair bench, developed in 1934 by Robert Moses and Kenneth Lynch, a Connecticut blacksmith, and used extensively at the 1939 Fair. Overlooking the Hudson River from Battery Place to Chambers Street, they are easily recognized by their circular iron bases and armrests. The majority of World's Fair benches are painted "Central Park green." The slats of those at the Belvedere, however, are cut from Ipe, a South American hardwood.

Identified by their sturdy cement bases, Londino benches make up almost a quarter of BPCPC's bench inventory. With backs and without, they are found in upper South Cove, fronting the woodland gardens on the Esplanade, and in Rockefeller Park.

The plain pine benches in lower South Cove suit their seaside setting. Two 6" x 8" x 8' lengths of pressure treated lumber sit on round pine bases. The bench crew planes and sands splintered wood, replacing lengths when needed. This summer the original benches installed in 1988 are being retired, and the bench crew is building the new units using arsenic-free pressure treated pine in accordance with BPCPC's green practices.

Maurice, William and Jesus perform some tasks such as slat repairs, painting, and

power washing concrete bases on site. Also on site, BPCPC masons John Wright and Willem Paillant use molds they have developed to repair chipped and cracked concrete bases. Every World's Fair bench is brought to the crew's base of operations, a large airy tent on Battery Place, on a regular schedule for general maintenance. Slat are separated from their frames and cracks are filled in. Replacement slats are cut from lengths of Douglas fir. After planing and sanding, three coats of paint are applied – a primer, top and finishing coats.



above: William Smyer (left) and Jesus Pitta restoring a World's Fair bench. below: Maurice Smalls bolts in a bench.

Before joining BPCPC's maintenance team 12 years ago Maurice served in the military as a communications specialist and, later, as the superintendent of a 15-story commercial building in midtown Manhattan. William, a commercial painter for over 20 years, came to BPCPC seven years ago, joining the bench crew in 1999, his "best job so far." Previously, he worked for NYC Parks & Recreation. Originally from Bogotá, Colombia, Jesus worked in general construction before coming to BPCPC five years ago. He enjoys his work. Not only is he near the water but "I like to do the best I can and I can do that here."

The thousands of people who daily day-dream, picnic, read or chat on BPC's benches benefit – as would Goldilocks – from that thought.

OH, RATS!

Faced with a recent "bloom" or increase in the local rat population, BPCPC has attacked the problem the same way it deals with other pests – through the use of non-toxic techniques.

Rats, like other creatures, have three limiting factors to survive: food, water and shelter. Reduce just one factor and rat populations can be controlled. At BPC, bordered by the Hudson River, water cannot be eliminated, and rats just relocate when their burrows are destroyed. Food, however, can be controlled. Without sufficient food, rats have smaller litters and within six months infestations can be significantly reduced.

BPCPC is working with Dr. Stephen Frantz to reduce BPC's rat population. Director of The Vector Biology and Comprehensive Management Program at the Wadsworth Center in Albany (the research arm of the NYS Department of Health), Dr. Frantz says, "Non-toxic pest control is simple. One must, however, pay close attention to the details."

At Dr. Frantz's suggestion, BPCPC replaced NYC's traditional, easily accessible wire-mesh garbage cans with steel-domed, rat-proof containers. BPCPC maintenance crews collect the waste several times a day, storing it in steel-lined rooms until it is placed outdoors for pickup. Proper storage of garbage and its timely placement at curbside is critical. Acknowledging the lack of manpower and steel-lined garbage rooms at street level, BPCPC's executive director Tessa Huxley urges residential buildings not to put garbage on the street the night before pickup, but rather to wait until 5 am. Otherwise, she says, "rats enjoy an all-night buffet." BPCPC is working with BPC building managers and superintendents, educating them on the issues.

Rats affect BPC's infrastructure. As they normally live within 100 feet of their food source they have taken up residence under the 14 miles of cobblestone bands that separate BPC's sidewalks and streets. In areas where garbage is set outdoors at night, rats continually undermine the stones. According to Bruno Pomponio, BPCPC's director of maintenance, "Our stonemasons repair certain stretches of cobblestone every two weeks."

Rat populations in cities are inevitable but, working together, BPCPC and BPC's residential and commercial community can reduce them.

SEA FEVER... cont. from page 1

Boaters quickly recognized the physical improvements; they also appreciated regular garbage removal by BPCPC's maintenance staff. Michael Fortenbaugh, director of the Manhattan Sailing School reflects on the changes, "With BPCPC at the helm, the marina is user-friendly, hardly the case in former years. Boaters feel welcomed and taken care of. The reputation of the marina has swung 180 degrees."



From left, Hugh Lassen, Michael Rosa and Ted Wallace.

The positive change in atmosphere is due to Ted, Hugh and Mike, the marina's, dock masters who strive to meet the boaters' needs and keep the docks in top condition. Ted implemented a bubble system to eliminate winter dock damage; the bubbles prevent ice from forming around and breaking up the docks. Hugh, recognizing that the waves produced by the ferries and large ships plying the Hudson damaged the docks' timbers, substituted flexible hinges at the docks' stress release points.

Sailing since boyhood, both Ted and Hugh worked at the Manhattan Sailing Club. Ted also worked as a dock master for the NYC Community Sailing Association and Chelsea Sailing School. Last summer, Hugh and his father and uncle crossed the Atlantic in a 37-foot sailboat. Mike, who joined BPCPC's maintenance department in 2002, is learning the rules and lore of the sea through U.S.C.G courses.

This season, BPCPC in cooperation with BPCA introduced programming at North Cove. "We are always looking for ways to further the public's knowledge and appreciation of the Hudson River," says Abby Ehrlich, director of parks programming. On May 16, Steve Veeffkind, fishing manager of the Orvis New York Store, conducted two fly casting clinics for an enthusiastic audience. On June 6, Bruce Odland gave a walking tour of his and Sam Auinger's interactive sound installation *Blue Moon* (at World Financial Plaza through August 20). In July, teens will take part in the month-long Teen Marine Adventure, learning about the Hudson's history, ecology, and inhabitants through scientific exploits and boat trips (info: 212.267.9700, ext. 366). As in years past, North Cove is the end point for several Hudson River swims: the first leg of the New York to Philadelphia Triathlon (May 30) and Race for the River and Cove to Cove Swim (July 17, info: www.nycswim.org).

Thanks to BPCPC, sailors and landlubbers alike are happily heeding John Masefield's tribute to the running tide: "a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied."

UNDER WRAPS

Opening in Fall 2004, the redesigned Monsignor Kowsky Plaza, located above the Police Memorial, will offer a tot lot, dog run, sitting area, flower beds and a trellis. The sculpture *Ulysses* by Ugo Attardi now stands sentry at the northwestern corner of Rockefeller Park.

The area surrounding the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Memorial to the Holocaust is getting a facelift – redesigned lawns and paved surfaces with new plantings, planters, and seating. The first phase of the project opens in Fall 2004. Completion is set for June 2005.

The Third Annual Family Music Festival at BPC HARMONY ON THE HUDSON

Sunday, October 3, 2004
Noon – 6:30pm
Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Park

Music

Tom Chapin & Friends
Dar Williams
Women of the Calabash
The Double Dutch Divas

Irish Family Dance
Cherish the Ladies

Family Activities • Games
Art Projects • Food • Fun!

BPCPC PRESIDENT/CEO: Robert M. Serpico
BPCPC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Tessa Huxley
WRITING/PHOTOGRAPHY: Jane Weissman
DESIGN: Marites Algonos / Ezidinma Okeke

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Battery Park City Parks Conservancy
2 South End Avenue
New York, NY 10280
212.267.9700
www.bpcpc.org

