

**Community Board 17
Parks & Beautification Committee Meeting
Tuesday, March 7, 2023**

Present:

Berlotte Antoine
Adele Bennett
Jackie Williams
Jorge Tait
Brie DaCosta
Jadeeva Smith
Sabrina Samedi
Ricky DaCosta
Linda Turner
Rodrick Daley
Ann Hudson

Guest:

James Morris,
NYC Parks Dept.
Eduardo Torres,
NYC Dept. of Health
Karley Chamblee,
NYC Parks Dept.
Patrick Fuller

The **Parks & Beautification Committee Virtual** meeting was held on **Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at 7:30pm.**

Ms. Berlotte Antoine called the meeting to order 7:33pm and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Mr. Eduardo Torres said he from the NYC Poison Control Center and he will discuss plant poisoning prevention. Webinar certificates will be sent to everyone in attendance tonight.

Today, he will discuss the NYC Poison Control Center, indoor and outdoor plants, mushrooms, gardening and different resources available to the community.

The Poison Control Center is a free telephone helpline that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. They provide treatment, advice and information about unintentional and intentional poisoning. There are 55 control centers throughout the US. Every year, about 2 Million cases reported to all the control centers. Of those 2 Million cases, approximately 50% involve children under the age of 6. Of those 2 Million cases, about 75% get managed in the home,

and a majority of them did not have to go to the emergency room. One of their goals is to reduce the unnecessary emergency room visits, wasting time and money. They can also get infections they did not have when they went into the emergency room. It is important to know how to act, when to call 9-1-1 and when to call the Poison Center, and he will discuss that at the end of the presentation.

They provide services to the 5 boroughs in NYC, Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester County. They want to create the awareness of the poison center, because a lot of times, people do not know that they exist and people think the poison center is for kids only, and that is not true, because unintentional poisoning can happen to anyone, regardless of age, income or education level. They provide translational services in 150 languages. All calls are free and confidential and those answering the phones are registered pharmacists and nurses, who are certified poison specialists, and are certified by the American Association of Poison Control Centers. In 2020, there were about 85,000 calls received.

They can reach the **Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 or 212-764-7667**. If they call the 212 number and their area code is not from NYC, they will be routed to the Poison Control Center that is associated with their area codes.

Poisonings can happen to anyone, not just children. Just under half of all the calls to poison control centers are about children, teens and adults, and the older adults are usually more serious. Some common exposures for young children, tweens and teens, adults and older adults are pain medicines, household cleaners, foreign bodies like batteries, toys, cosmetics, if not used properly. Other common poison exposures include household products, plants, mushrooms, pesticides, bites and stings and carbon monoxide. Almost anything can be poisonous, if it is used in the wrong way, in the wrong amount, or by the wrong person. If they suspect a poisoning, don't take a chance, call them at 1-800-222-1222 or 212-764-7667.

Plant poisoning, every year, over 100,000 exposure of plants are reported to the Poison Control Centers throughout the US. Most common problems arise from contact with sap oil that causes allergic skin reactions.

Children and pets find plants appealing, they may eat leaves, flowers or seeds, and the berries on some plants. Even non-toxic plants may cause a reaction in some people and that is why it is a good idea to know what they have at home. If they go hiking on a trail and are not sure of a plant, don't touch it.

Plant based products in local stores, botanicals and markets are not regulated by the FDA, may be harmful if taken in the wrong amounts, or may interact or affect the way their medicines act in their bodies. It is important that they talk to their Doctor before taking any vitamins or supplements, so they are not wasting their money or putting their lives at risk.

With children and pets, always know which plants are toxic and always choose non-poisonous plants and label them by name, in case something happens, and they need to know the name of the plants. Do not chew on jewelry made from beads or seeds, because they may have been treated chemically with paint that may be toxic, and can also cause a choking hazard. Keep plants, household cleaners and medicines up high and out of reach. If they have any questions, they can call the Poison Center.

Common indoor plants that are non-toxic are **Lucky Bamboo**, and some species can be toxic, make sure you purchase Lucky Bamboo. Other non-toxic plants are **Ferns, Wandering Jew and Jades**.

Poinsettias- exposure is not usually dangerous, ingesting a very large amount may be toxic and most common reactions are skin irritation, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Some toxic house plants are the **Dieffenbachia**, a popular ornamental plant, found in hotel lobbies, shopping malls and restaurants. The leaves contain needle-like crystals, and when broken or bitten into can cause irritation, burning and inflammation. When gardening, it is a good idea to wear gloves to minimize the exposure. The same thing can happen with Philodendrons.

Dracaena- called the mother-in-law's tongue or snake plant, all parts of this plant are poisonous, and the symptoms include vomiting, nausea and burning of the mouth and throat.

Caladium- elephant's ear or angel's wings, all parts are poisonous, and the symptoms include painful burning and swelling of the mouth, lips and throat, difficulty breathing, speaking and swallowing and possible blocked airways.

Pothos- mildly harmful in small quantities and the symptoms include burning mouth, swelling of the lips, tongue and throat, skin irritation, vomiting and diarrhea. Handle with care and keep them high up and out of reach, especially if

they have pets and small children walking around. Common Pothos plants are non-toxic.

Chili Peppers- capsicum annuum, used as a spice or ingredient in personal protection sprays. If peppers or seeds are ingested, they can cause irritation of the lips and mouth. If chili pepper juice gets in your eyes, it can cause acute inflammation, burning pain and tears. Use different utensils, cutting boards and knives, when cutting chili peppers, and also wear gloves.

Roses- their thorns are sharp, can injure or puncture skin. If a puncture occurs, promptly clean the area with soap and water. Wear gloves and long sleeves to minimize contact or risk getting a cut on their skin.

Dandelions- flowers often attract bees which may lead to stings. Call the Poison Control Center for bee sting recommendations. If they get stung by a bee, take jewelry off immediately, because if they have an allergic reaction, the hand may swell up and the ring can cut off circulation.

Some non-toxic plants are the **Impatiens and African Daisy**.

Tulips- are generally non-toxic and if the bulb/plant is handled excessively, skin irritation or a rash may occur.

Daffodils- are moderately toxic and may cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea with large ingestions. Symptoms occur in humans and pets.

The Poison Control Center is for people of all ages. No one will ask for payment or health insurance, and the only they need to tell them is they got stung by a bee and they will tell them how to respond to that situation. Their goal is to help them avoid that unnecessary visit to the Emergency Room, and possibly exposing themselves to infections that did not have going in. Share this information with their family, friends and co-workers.

Common toxic outdoor plants can cause nausea, vomiting and drowsiness.

Lilly of the Valley- all parts are toxic, even in small amounts. Additional symptoms may be a slow heart rate, low blood pressure and cardiac rhythm disturbances. Call the Poison Control Center immediately after an exposure happens.

Rhododendron- all parts are toxic, even in small amounts. Additional symptoms include burning, tingling and numbness of the mouth, slow heart rate, low blood pressure, coma and seizures. Call the Poison Control Center immediately after an exposure happens.

Fox Glove- all parts are toxic, even in small amount. Additional symptoms are slow heart rate, low blood pressure and cardiac rhythm disturbances. Call the Poison control Center immediately after an exposure happens.

Oleander- deadliest ornamental plant, and even ingesting the honey made from the nectar can produce symptoms like arrhythmia and tremors. Call the Poison Control Center immediately after an exposure happens.

Yew- can be found in NYC and surrounding areas. All parts are toxic, except the red fleshy berries surrounding the seed. It is toxic fresh or dry, and additional symptoms are abdominal pain, dilated pupils, seizures, cardiac rhythm disturbances and even death. Call the Poison Control Center immediately after an exposure happens.

Pokeweed- grows in open fields, along roadsides around NY, and the green berries are highly poisonous. The purple-black berries are visually appealing and additional symptoms may cause headache, abdominal pain, sore throat and oral irritation, foamy diarrhea, agitation, cough, blurred vision and irregular heartbeat. Call the Poison Control Center after an exposure happens.

Holly- the bright red berries are toxic and attractive to children, the sharp leaves can puncture the skin, and additional symptoms are diarrhea and abdominal pain. If it touches the skin, it can cause an infection, and with other underlying health conditions, it can cause more consequences. Call the Poison Control Center right away if an exposure happens.

Poison Hemlock- grows along streams and ditches, all parts are poisonous. Additional symptoms are confusion, rapid heart rate, muscle paralysis and decreased breathing.

Morning Glory- grows along the ground, and the seeds are poisonous. Additional symptoms are hallucinations, dilated pupils and erratic behavior.

Bittersweet Nightshade- all parts are toxic, the berries are commonly ingested. Additional symptoms are diarrhea, headache, increased salivation and muscle cramping.

Poison Ivy- leaves in groups of 3, “Leaflets of 3, let it be”, all parts can cause an irritating rash on the skin, and if they have other health conditions, it can aggravate it and make it worst.

URUSHOIL is an oily mixture of organic compounds with allergenic properties found in plants like **Poison Oak, Chinese Poison Ivy, and Poison Sumac**. The symptoms are redness, swelling, itching and blisters. If Poison Ivy is burned, and they inhale the smoke, it can cause the same symptoms in their lungs and respiratory systems, and they will end up in the hospital.

With **Poison Ivy, Poison Oak and Poison Sumac**, it is recommended that they wash their skin well with mild soap and room temperature water. Do not include in a compost bin. Call the Poison Control Center right away after an exposure happens.

Toxic mushrooms may be mistaken for edible mushrooms and if they don’t know, don’t touch it, because it can be painful and cause death.

The **Death Cap** is the most poisonous and is involved in a majority of human fatal cases worldwide. The liver is the main target organ, in addition to the kidneys. The symptoms include gastrointestinal disorders, jaundice, seizure and coma. Do not let your children or pets go near them.

Funeral Bell or Deathly Galerinas- contains the same toxins as the Death Cap mushrooms. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, liver and kidney failure. Even if they cook a poisonous mushroom, it will not get rid of the poison.

Death Angel- contains the same toxins as the Death Cap mushroom. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, liver and kidney failure. Never pick or eat mushrooms from outdoors, grown in the wild, parks or other places. Cooking does not make poisonous mushrooms safe. Non-poisonous mushrooms can cause reactions to people who are sensitive to them. The symptoms from eating poisonous mushrooms can be delayed for many hours.

For gardening, fertilizer safety, any questions they may have, call the Poison Control Center for proper use, if exposure happens. Fertilizers balance the soil, nutrients, minerals and most used at home are minimally toxic.

Insecticides, pesticides and herbicides are used on garden plants and vegetables to control pests and plant diseases. If they can kill the pests, it can kill you. Call the Poison Control Center for instructions and clarification.

Always wear protective gear such as goggles, gloves, long sleeves, pants and boots when using pesticides, and wear a mask to not inhale the fumes. Keep insecticides, pesticides and fertilizers up high and out of reach, read instructions and wash produce and herbs really well. They should test the soil to make sure it is not contaminated. If an exposure happens, call the Poison Control Center right away.

When the World is in bloom, know what poisons may loom. Swimming pool chemicals can be dangerous if mixed together. Keep chemicals in the original bottles, up and away from children and pets. Do not ever mix bleach and ammonia because the fumes are very toxic. Teach children to avoid touching or eating wild mushrooms, berries or plants they find outdoors. Also teach children not to touch anything indoors without asking. When using insect repellent, keep it away from your hands and mouth. Remember to wash off bug spray, once indoors. Read and follow instructions when using lawn and garden chemicals. Before they spray, pick up children's and pets' toys and wear protective gear.

When to call 9-1-1 and when to call the Poison Control Center. Call 9-1-1 immediately if the person is unconscious, having convulsions, trouble breathing or any sign of a true emergency. After calling 9-1-1, call the Poison Control Center for instructions while they wait for the ambulance, they will be on the line waiting for the First Responders, because not all of them are not trained on how to respond to poisoning situations. The first place they get calls from are the home, second from the hospital emergency rooms. Do not do home remedies.

Call the NYC Poison Control Center if the person is awake and alert. If there is any suspicion a poisoning has happened, even if there are no symptoms present. Ask questions about products or medications, safe use, dosing, side effects and interactions, even proper disposal of medications. Do not share prescription medications, because what works for you, may not work for someone else.

Resources are free educational materials that can be downloaded in PDF form in English, Haitian Creole, Chinese, Spanish, Russian and Korean.

They have Community Education Training for Poison Prevention in the Home, and it covers a lot of different situations, like medicines, carbon monoxide, household products, (INAUDIBLE) poisoning.

They can request free virtual presentations in English, Spanish, Chinese Mandarin and Cantonese. Brochures are available from the Poison Control Center for Plant Poisoning, Poison Ivy and Soil and Gardening.

They can also follow them on social media at @nychealth.

Ms. Brie DaCosta said she has the Fox Gloves in her garden, is it unsafe to have them in the garden?

Mr. Torres said they are okay in the garden, just be careful when coming in contact with them. Make sure children and pets do not come in contact with them.

Ms. Antoine thanked Mr. Torres for his presentation and will follow up with him regarding the certificates.

Chairperson's Report

Ms. Antoine said the survey is for people to submit information for what needs to be done in the parks, and she received a lot of input from that. She will keep them updated on what is next, because there is something that is coming, but she does not have all the information right now. At the next meeting, she will let them know what is being done. The District Manager is compiling issues in the Community Board for a possible walk through or someone from the (INAUDIBLE)

She met with some people who wanted to do some events with the committee. They will do some events during the summer and she welcomes their participation for the events.

She will forward the information about what they can and cannot plant.

She asked if they reviewed the minutes for January and February 2023? She asked for a motion to approve the minutes?

Ms. Jackie Williams made a motion to approve the minutes for January 3, 2023.

Ms. Linda Turner seconded the motion.

Ms. Antoine asked for a motion to approve the February 2023 minutes?

Ms. DaCosta said she did not see her concerns about the park being granted to the school in the minutes. Renovations were discussed and Tilden Park is being a priority. When reading through it, she does not see a lot of the commentary, if the committee is okay with it, that's fine.

Mr. Rodrick Daley said instead of tabling the minutes, he asked Ms. DaCosta if when viewing the comments, if there were something specific that she wants in the minutes or for the committee to correct, to amend the minutes to reflect that comment? He asked if she could put those comments on the record to be added to the minutes, opposed to tabling them, just in case they do or do not have quorum next month?

Ms. DaCosta said she would have to go back and look at his comments again, but she just wanted to make sure she was also on the record as supporting his statement regarding the park because she felt like they said not two different things but they were slightly different. What Jorge said was more so about there not being enough parks in the area, and not wanting to up the park to be given to the school, where her concern was that they had been talking about wanting to renovate Tilden Park and to get funds to improve the park, and her concern is that giving the school money to renovate or whatever it was she was asking for would then take away the opportunity for them to do anything for this park they had been discussing for a while. That is kind of what she wanted to explicitly say.

Ms. Antoine asked for a motion to approve the February minutes with the corrections?

Ms. DaCosta made a motion to approve the minutes for February 7, 2023 with the amendments discussed.

Ms. Adele Bennett seconded the motion.

Ms. Antoine said she put out a flyer and received a lot of input from different people in the community and she is putting together a spreadsheet and divided them by parks. In the coming days, they will hear more about the next steps.

She and Ms. Chamblee from the NYC Partnership for Parks have been talking about what they can do in Tilden Park. Tonight, she will give a short presentation on what they are doing and can work together for the renovation of Tilden Park.

Ms. Karley Chamblee said she works for NYC Partnerships for Parks. Mr. Jim Morris is here, and he works in Capital Projects for the Parks Dept. and is the Director in Brooklyn.

She will go over the conversations she and Ms. Antoine had regarding Tilden Playground, as well as the green space on Church and Ralph Avenues.

Partnerships for Parks is a joint program with the Parks Dept. and the City Parks Foundation. They support groups and organizations that volunteer in their local parks and work towards beautifying and protecting the green spaces, as well as advocating for them and turning them into community assets. They provide different types of resources for these groups. They can be physical resources like tools and supplies for volunteer projects, provide insight on the different things they are doing, as far as sharing community connections, serving as a Parks Liaison with some of the Parks Managers and Supervisors, and they also work with Community Boards, so they can help provide different kinds of Neighborhood Forestry, navigating through some volunteer opportunities, as well as distinguishing what some of the things Parks Managers have been working on in their park spaces, and what are some items that would need to be brought to the local Councilmember that cannot be tackled through volunteer programming.

They are making plans for the 2023 year. Three of the main projects for It's My Park are clean ups, could be removing weeds, trash and litter, they have planting projects, those are more horticultural, and painting as well.

They have multiple Outreach Coordinators throughout the City, and they cover various districts in Brooklyn, and she is the contact for District 17. They have had groups that have operated in other parks in East Flatbush, and other neighborhoods in the district, including Nostrand and Paerdegat Playgrounds and any ideas they may have, she can talk to them about that.

They are thinking of doing a Spring Project at Tilden Park. Tree pits are something that Partnerships for Parks can assist with, and they have plants and shrubs they can plant. With the painting projects, they can provide the paint, paint brushes,

the paper to put on the ground. These are projects they are planning for 2023 in District 17.

The green street on Church and Ralph Avenues, is more of a commitment of making sure it is sustained throughout the year, especially with the watering. The Horticultural Team will make a site visit and look at different considerations like watering needs and shade and what types of plants would thrive in these areas, the soil condition.

She wants to get more involved in CB 17 and the other districts she works in, and she will be a resource for them. With Tilden Playground and the green streets and she gave an update on the progress and timeline. They are waiting for a site visit with the Horticultural Team and she will approve some of the projects they have in mind. Plants can be (INAUDIBLE) through the Parks Dept. from the Citywide nursery. They can form a group called Community Partners. They have a volunteer program as well.

Ms. Antoine thanked Ms. Chamblee for her presentation. A lot of the members are already volunteers and they want to be a part of the team working on beautifying Tilden Playground.

Ms. Bennett asked can they pick up plants from the Citywide nursery?

Ms. Chamblee said yes, the Parks Dept. does have a Citywide nursery in the Bronx for their established partnership groups who are requesting plants. There is an availability list that comes out each month.

On the City Parks Foundation side, they do have plants and planting opportunities for the community partners. The website will show them the resources they have to offer.

Ms. Bennett asked do they have seeds?

Ms. Chamblee said there is a nursery on Staten Island for that.

Mr. Ricky DaCosta asked what she mentioned, is that really just for park upkeep, and does not include fixing any indentations in the cement or cracks on the basketball courts?

Ms. Chamblee said that is correct. The community partners have funds and if they have certain concerns or suggestions like cracks in the concrete or things that would be a little more tedious than just a beautification project or a clean-up and that is something that is relayed to the Park Managers, as well as the Capital Projects team and then they would be relaying the information and whether that is something Parks is currently tackling, would give a timeline to resolve that issue or if that is something that needs to be advocated for through the Councilmember's office. That is something they had done at Tilden Playground as well (INAUDIBLE) some other items they identified. At Partnerships, they will inform the Capital team and the Borough Commissioner, and they will make a decision as to whether or not that is something that needs to be handled by Councilmember's funding.

Mr. Jim Morris said he is from the Parks Dept. and is the Director of the Capital Projects for Brooklyn parks. They can email him with any questions they may have about the Capital process on a lower or higher level.

There is a line between what would be a safety concern and the Managers would fix them in house, in their shop and they have (INAUDIBLE) , Electricians and they go around and fix the parks if there are safety issues. If it is more of an issue with aging and needs an update, that would be veering into something more Capital based, and they can talk in length on that.

Mr. DaCosta said however they can move forward with that, he would rather do it sooner than later and be proactive. They have been discussing this for the past year, and obviously some more intense and rigorous intervention with the park they wanted to do and that is going to require funding, millions of dollars. They need to start taking steps to tackle this before it requires too much funding.

Mr. Morris said it is a marathon, not a sprint with these kinds of things. Them getting involved and paying attention to the park. It may seem like sometimes they are not doing as much as they would like, in front of and behind the scenes and seeing people in the park, that helps. The Parks Dept. does not have a Capital budget, but they can advise about how much things would cost.

Ms. Antoine thanked Mr. Morris and she will follow up on Tilden Playground.

They are planning a Parks & Beautification Family Day in July. She will email them to see if they can come up with a date.

They will do a Breast Cancer walk in the park on October 21, 2023.

On June 18th, they would like to have a Father & Daughter/Father & Son event at Railroad Playground, located on Ditmas Avenue between East 91st & 92nd Streets. They will collaborate with Mr. Patrick Fuller regarding this event.

Mr. Patrick Fuller said he is the co-founder of Ditmas Park Classics. They do basketball clinics for kids from 8–18 years old and tournaments in the Railroad Playground, on Ditmas Avenue, between East 91st & 92nd Streets.

This year, he would like to do a Father's Day Get Together, doing things in the park with Fathers, Sons and Daughters, handball, basketball and softball. With the help of the Community Board, for getting the park maintained and beautified and getting this around to the community so they can have a Community Day. Since the pandemic is over, people want to get out and bring life to the community.

Ms. Antoine said if they want to be a part of this, give her their name. She needs at least 2 to 3 people to work with Mr. Fuller on this event.

Mr. Tait said the pandemic is not over, so be careful out there. In the last month, he tested positive 3 times.

Ms. Bennett asked if there will be a charge for this, is there going to be loud music, will there be some type of protocol? Absolutely, no alcohol, no loud music, there needs to be a time limit and no smoking. Does he need a permit for that?

Mr. Fuller said since it is a park, till sundown, yes, he would like to have music, smoking is not allowed in the park period, and getting the permit is not a problem.

Ms. Antoine said she will follow up with the members to see how they can contribute to the event. They will work with Mr. Fuller and assist with the permit to make this event happen.

Mr. Daley said he would like to acknowledge Chair Berlotte for her work that she has done with the Parks & Beautification Committee. Since taking over after COVID-19, she has done a fantabulous job in terms of getting things done, getting the Parks & Beautification Committee up and running, and a lot of the events that she has done and the committee for everything that they have done to increase and move the committee forward with what they are doing in the community.

He is one of the founders of the Ditmas Park Classics and they have done a tremendous amount of things in the park for young men and they have also started to work with young women in terms of sports and bringing (INAUDIBLE) on the work of what they do. Since there are no lights in the park, they do things within the confines of the hours.

She asked if there were any other questions or issues to discuss? Having heard none, she asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:15pm?

Ms. Linda Turner made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Ms. Ann Hudson seconded the motion.