

# The Conch Call



Fourth QUARTER 2014

ST. GEORGE VILLAGE BOTANICAL GARDEN~CONSERVATION, EDUCATION & PRESERVATION

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Garden Supporters,

The human history of the property now known as Estate St. George is a remarkable story of resilience.

From the early Amerindians who made the voyage up the island chain from South America, to the early European colonists, to the enslaved Africans whose forced labor built the structures that remain 200 years later, to the modern-day community that is dedicated to helping support our mission – throughout this almost 2,000 year human history, we know the people who lived and worked the land faced the challenges of hurricanes and storms, droughts and floods, and periodic shortages of resources.

As we face these same obstacles today, we have to remind ourselves why it is important that we remain dedicated to this mission of conservation, education, and preservation, and to celebrate our successes as we also acknowledge the challenges.

Among some of our recent successes in the face of the many challenges:

**Conservation** – On October 9, 2014, after almost 18 years of patient and diligent collaborative efforts with Federal and local agencies, the endemic St. Croix Century Plant (*Agave eggersiana*) was finally listed as endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and now receives the protection of the Endangered Species Act. SGVBG will hopefully be able to continue the effort to conserve this unique species by playing a role in the development of a recovery plan.

**Education** – SGVBG continues to offer educational opportunities for students and nature enthusiasts ranging in age from pre-school to adults through activities like *Story Hour*, *Second Saturday*, *Grow and Learn*, school workshops and field trips. SGVBG participates in the Virgin Islands Network of Environmental Educators (VINE) to help educate the community how every element of our natural surroundings - from hilltop to the sea – interacts and is vital to preserving and conserving the unique biological community that is our island home.

**Preservation** – The culture and traditions of the US Virgin Islands can only be preserved if the natural materials that shaped the heritage of local food, music, medicine, and arts and crafts are also conserved. The unique combination

## ONE GREAT WEEKEND TWO GREAT EVENTS

### Friday December 5th



Come join us **Rockin Around the Christmas Tree** Friday, December 5 at 6pm. We have put the FUN back into our annual FUNd-raiser. The evening will include a full meal, live and silent auctions, fabulous fifties fun, specialty adult beverages and dancing.

The live auction offers several exciting trips and beautiful trees. JetBlue has donated two round trip tickets to any of their destinations, and CapeAir has donated round trip air fare for two to each of the following destinations: Vieques, Anguilla, Nevis and St. Thomas. Accommodations will be paired with each trip. Attendees will have the opportunity to bid on 10 designer decorated trees, many of which will then be donated to an organization such as Queen Louise Home, or Herbert Grigg Home doubling the philanthropic impact of the purchase.

The silent auction will include a wide variety items and services in all price ranges donated by local businesses and individuals.

All items are 100% donated to the St. George Village Botanical Garden. The generous donors and the attendees who bid on items are to thank for the on-going operation of the Garden. It is only with the assistance of our community that we have been able to offer this resource for over 42 years.

The evening begins at 6:00 p.m. attire is Caribbean Elegant or Fabulous Fifties. Tickets are \$125 per person. Call 692-2874 to make reservations.

### Sunday, December 7th

This year's Christmas Spoken Here will be held from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on **Sunday, December 7**. Children aged 12 and under will be allowed to come in free; adults pay just \$5.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

CONTINUED FROM PG 1

of plants found here and brought here were a significant influence on these and many other traditions. The rich ethno-botanical heritage of the Virgin Islands is not just history, it is still a living heritage, but only as long the plants, and knowledge of how those plants were used, is preserved.

Our community and supporters are a vital part of the ongoing human history of Estate St. George. I would like to thank all our supporters for being an essential part of the effort of continuing to tell the story of the people and plants of St. George, St. Croix, and the Virgin Islands.

Moving forward, there are many opportunities to continue and expand this support. This newsletter highlights some of the upcoming events like the Holiday Gala, Christmas Spoken Here, Lunch at the Garden, and more. Please plan to attend or volunteer and bring friends and/or family to experience the beauty and history of the St. George Village Botanical Garden.

Check our website ([www.sgvbg.org](http://www.sgvbg.org)) and look for us and "like" the St. George Village Botanical Garden on Facebook to see how much we do with the help of our valuable supporters!

Happy Holidays!

David M. Hamada

## One GREAT Weekend

Sunday, December 7th—continued from pg1



Santa will be on hand from noon until 4 p.m. in the Pavilion at the Bodine Visitors' Center to hear the little ones' wishes and he will also pose for photos. The kids can also take part in fun activities.

Live music will be presented in the Great Hall. Come and enjoy the Good Hope Country Day Chorus, Central High Musicians, UVI Voices of Inspiration and the Southgate Baptist and Calvary Baptist Joint Choir who will be entertaining throughout the afternoon. Dozens of vendors will be on hand, selling everything from local food and drinks to artwork, jewelry, T-shirts, books, clothing, pottery and much more. The Garden's bar, staffed by our wonderful volunteers, will have special drinks for sale. A tree completely decorated with Jan Mitchell's ornaments will be on display. At the end after-noon, the lucky holder of the winning raffle ticket will take home all the ornaments.

Both The Nursery and The Museum Store, stocked with fabulous new merchandise will be open all day.

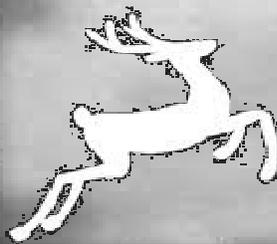
This year's White Reindeer Sale – with items at bargain prices – will be held under the Pergola at the Visitors' Center and promises to be bigger and better than ever. Generous supporters have donated items to be sold to raise funds for the Garden's programs.

# WANTED!

## LOOKING FOR

*Donations for our White Reindeer sale*

The holidays are coming up and it is a great time to clear out your stuff. Your unwanted items can find a new home and at the same time become treasure for the Garden.



Reliable  
Rentals  
...and more

Bring your slightly used live Christmas Tree to

St. George Village Botanical Garden

Monday December 29 through

Tuesday, January 6th

between 9am-3pm

Thanks to Reliable Rental

your tree can become mulch for the Garden!

## EDUCATION—BUBBLES, SPICE, AND EVERYTHING NICE

BY SASIA CORKE

Break out the guavaberry and trim the inkberry bush, let's celebrate the community and culture that comes alive during these months on island! The breezes are picking up, and you might second guess getting into the water, but come feel the warmth this winter at the St. George Village Botanical Garden. With fun and educational activities for children, adults, families, locals, and visitors, make the Botanical Garden part of your festive fun this season.

If you're looking for something to do with your youngest children, bring them out to our monthly StoryHour readings. We have had StoryHour under the Kapok tree for over three years, and as we enter into 2015, our hope is to keep offering this wonderful literary opportunity to locals and visitors alike. There is only one StoryHour reading in December, on the 17th, and we are fortunate enough to have a very excited and passionate volunteer share her time and her voice that morning. Donna Prock-Ledger is a former middle school teacher of 13 year, and has been a member of the National Guard for nearly 15 years. She moved to St. Croix in 2011 and works for the US Armed Forces here on island. She loves reading to children, and the Garden is very happy to have her read for our youngest garden enthusiasts. If you are unable to make it in December, our other upcoming dates are January 21st and 31st, and February 11th to catch an opportunity to hear a story, do a little art, and spend time in the Garden.

The St. George Village Botanical Garden is a great place to find your next gift purchase, or even more personal, find inspiration to create a gift. Sometimes, a handmade touch can make even the simplest present special. Every year the Botanical Garden kicks off the Crucian holiday festivities with Christmas Spoken Here on December 7th. There will be food vendors, arts and craft vendors, music, sales, and even Santa Claus to help spread cheer throughout the island! A great place to find locally made jewelry, bags, clothing, and other handcrafted artisan goods; this day-long festival will be fun for the entire family.

At our monthly Second Saturday workshop, participants will be creating their own holiday-themed soaps, which can be gifted for use or decoration. Washing up with soaps and detergents seems so commonplace now that we can keep decorative soaps around the home that (at least in my household) you would never touch. Soap as we know it today is descended from Arabian soaps first crafted by Muslim chemists in the Middle Ages; but soap-like material had been used as far back as 2800 BC in Ancient Babylon. There are many ways to make soap, and in the past, the process could be quite dangerous. Usually to create soap, water and lye--a very caustic chemical--were added to fatty acids, usually obtained from lard or animal fat, in a chemical process called 'saponification'. This creates 'cold process' soap. Nowadays though, many cold process soaps obtain their fatty acids from vegetable oils such as olive oil, coconut oil, or hemp oil. Cold process saponifi-

cation makes soaps that are hard and long-lasting, and depending on the oil that is used, the soaps can exhibit very unique qualities from the amount of lather they create, to how moisturizing or mild the soap is. Another way to make soap is using the hot process, where all the ingredients are added simultaneously to one pot and cooked until the soap goes through the various forms of saponification.

However, when some people make their own soap they use neither method. Instead, they take a glycerin soap and melt it down. The melted soap is poured into molds to give it a shape, and left to harden. As the glycerin soap hardens, flowers, leaves, shells, stones, scents, etc. can be added and layered into the soap to give it unique and interesting appeal. This process is called the 'melt-and-pour' method. This will be the method participants at December's "Botanical Bubbles" will be using to create their own soaps.

Not to be forgotten, Grow and Learn workshops for adults happen every fourth Saturday of the month, features exciting topics that have ranged from Hurricane Preparedness, Coconut Oil making, and Alcohol Infusions. On December 27th, participants will be learning about the Vanilla bean. Vanilla is anything but plain, and this plant—a climbing orchid that originated in the Mexican tropics—is the second most expensive spice in the world behind saffron and has been used to flavor food and drinks for Pre-Columbian Mesoamericans for thousands of years. This orchid produces the only edible bean in the entirety of this diverse group of flowering plants. Used to flavor and aromatize things from baked goods to perfumes, vanilla is as interesting as it tastes. Participants will learn about how vanilla is grown and cultivated, and the different cultivars grown throughout the world. Ultimately, each participant will create their own vanilla extract to use in their kitchen (or give as gifts!). So get out here and spend a day at the garden!! Members enjoy a reduced fee for these Second Saturday and Grow & Learn programs. Call the office at 692-2874 or email us at [sgvbg.edu@gmail.com](mailto:sgvbg.edu@gmail.com) to reserve your space for these upcoming workshops!

If you are interested in a private workshop in the Garden for adults, students, or children, the Education program still offers private workshop on various topics. Whether you want to learn more about soil, observe pollinators in action, or make your own soap, a private workshop or seminar is a great way to learn about the natural world around us. There are also tours available for school group or organizations. Call or email if you would like more information or have any questions, ideas, or comments. Hope to see you here soon.



## A Gift for The Garden

Please consider discussing a planned gift with your attorney. A planned gift will continue growing and bearing fruit into the future. Thanks to Donovan Hamm, Esq. and our new Foundation Board, the new entity **SGVBG Foundation, Inc.** is being finalized.

Use of estate planning principles of planned giving is a technique that helps you maximize the benefits of present and future charitable giving that gives you a personal tax-favored benefit. It is done through advantageous tax treatment under Territorial, State and Federal law.

With careful planning, it is possible to reduce income taxes, as well as capital gain and transfer taxes—including: gift, estate, inheritance and generation-skipping taxes. You can enjoy these tax savings while turning appreciated assets into an income for yourself and others. Planned giving is a tool that helps you benefit the on-going programs of St. George Village Botanical Garden and enhance your financial plans and security.

A charitable remainder annuity trust or unitrust is a trust that has a current beneficiary that is not a charity and then, after either a stated period of years (not exceeding 20) or the lifetime(s) of one or more individual beneficiaries, the remainder of the trust assets goes to a charity, in this case the foundation. During lifetime, there is a current charitable deduction for the present value of the remainder interest that goes to the charity. A charitable lead trust is a trust that gives the income from the trust to a charity with the remainder going to a non-charitable beneficiary. Both can be used very effectively in certain situations.

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## Thank You!

Time and weather has taken a toll on our beautiful Visitors' Center. We started to experience some significant leaks in the deteriorating roof and gutters. Members of the SGVBG Board of Governors led a fundraising effort to make the necessary repairs.

THANK YOU! To everyone who responded to the e-mail and [www.gofundme.com](http://www.gofundme.com) campaign. The Visitors' Center roof was repaired and recoated with generous assistance from Clearwater Roof & Cistern just ahead of some heavy rains storms.

Soon we will start the repair of the gutters with the help of our dedicated volunteers and our friends at RoofTops.



**The St. Croix Century Plant**  
(*Agave eggersiana*)

The Caribbean as a region is considered a biological “hot-spot.” With thousands of islands, cays, and off-shore rocks scattered between the tip of Florida and South America, each with their own combination of eco-systems influenced by elevation, size and water-currents, there is a staggering diversity of plant and animal life. The unique combination of influences on each island has resulted in many examples of endemic plants and animals – organisms that are only found in a particular region, island or locality.

St. Croix claims two endemic plant species that can only be found here and nowhere else in the world naturally - The St. Croix Touch-Me-Not (*Malpighia infestissima*) and the St. Croix Century Plant (*Agave eggersiana*). Both are threatened by loss of habitat from increased land development and the introduction of destructive insects and diseases.

Since 1996 the St. George Village Botanical Garden has worked with the VI Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to have the St. Croix Century Plant listed as endangered and protected by the Endangered Species Act. Finally, on October 9, 2014 this goal was achieved. SGVBG looks forward to working with other local and Federal agencies in developing a recovery plan to ensure the long-term protection of this plant that is unique to St. Croix.

The St. Croix Century Plant was described and named by American botanist, William Trelease in 1913. The species was named in honor of Baron Henrik Franz Alexander von Eggers, a Danish soldier and botanist who served in the Danish West Indies between 1867 and 1885.

The development of a recovery plan will have to take into account the recent detection of the Agave Snout Weevil (*Scyphophorus acupunctatus*), which has a history of decimating Agave species and varieties (such as the one grown to produce tequila in Mexico). This pest was introduced into St. Thomas and St. John in the late 1980’s and quickly destroyed approximately 80% of the population of the Agave species found there (*Agave missionum*). Thank You!

*Dear Santa,*

*Some people say you are not real, but we all know that magical things can happen during this time of year and we have been very, very good. Did you know that we welcome all naughty AND nice children and adults to the Garden? We are very careful with all gifts we receive and make the most of each donation. Please help us fulfill our wish list for St. George Village Botanical Garden*

- Repair of Great Hall Doors and cane-bolts (\$12,000)
- Replacement of exterior light fixtures in Great Hall (\$7,800)
- Replacement pump for waterfall in factory ruins
- New computer for Man Office (\$1,000))
- Digital projector (\$700)
- Repair of chain-link fence along east and south borders of the Garden (\$4,500)
- 2 Energy Star rated refrigerators for Great Hall Kitchen, (\$700 each)
- 6 Round tables for Visitors’ Center events (\$700)
- Push Lawn Mower (\$300)
- Nylon Flags (\$300), all-weather one each-American, Virgin Islands, Danish (\$50 each replaced every 6 months)
- Energy Star clothes washer
- Gift Certificates in any amount from local hardware stores
- Three 25’ internal halyard flagpoles for Visitors’ Center

*Sincerely,*

*Larry, Carolyn, Sandi, Nathan, Vicki, Bob, Phyllis, Richard, Scot, Robert, Nina, David, Holly, Ken, Saskia,, Denise, Catherine, Velta, Sandra, Linda, Paul, Norman , Jacinta and Nancy,*



**St. George Village  
Botanical Garden**

127 Estate St. George, Frederiksted, VI 00840

**Hours**

**Open Every day except Christmas; 9 am—5 pm**

1/2 Price Admission for St. Croix Residents every Sunday; STX Children (Under 12) Free on Sunday

**HERBARIUM HOURS:**

By appointment. Call 340-692-2874

**LIBRARY HOURS:**

By appointment. Call 340-692-2874

**NURSERY HOURS:**

Tuesday & Friday; 9 am-11am

**MUSEUM HOURS:**

Monday through Friday; 9 am – 5 pm, and on weekend days when a cruise ship is in port.

**MUSEUM STORE HOURS:**

Monday through Saturday; 10 am – 4 pm, and during special events.

Tel (340) 692-2874 Fax (340) 692-6154

[infoatthegarden@gmail.com](mailto:infoatthegarden@gmail.com)

[www.sgvbg.org](http://www.sgvbg.org)

**Upcoming Garden Events**

**DECEMBER**

3	Luncheon	11:30am
5	Holiday Gala	6pm
7	Christmas Spoken Here	11am-5pm
13	Second Saturday	9am-noon
16	Luncheon	11:30am
17	StoryHour	10:00am
25	Christmas Day	CLOSED
27	Grow & Learn	10am-noon

**JANUARY**

7	Luncheon	11:30am
10	Second Saturday	9am-noon
21	StoryHour	10:00am
21	Luncheon	11:30am
24	Grow & Learn	10am-noon
31	StoryHour	

**FEBRUARY**

4	Luncheon	11:30am
11	Story Hour	11:30am
14	2nd Saturday	9am-noon
18	Luncheon	11:30am
22	Annual Meeting & Vol.Party	noon