

# The Conch Call



FOURTH QUARTER 2010 \* EDITOR: NINA YORK

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

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Garden Friends,

Another stormy season has passed and St. George Village Botanical Garden has come through in good shape. Our first **Fall Heritage Festival** on October 10 was well attended and well received--you will read more about it in this issue--and its success points toward its becoming a popular annual event.

Following in December, before we know it, SGVBG presents the **Bangles and Baubles Holiday Gala**, a well-liked and attended holiday gathering where Christmas trees and a jolly evening get us all in the spirit of the season on Friday evening, December 3. And on Sunday, December 5, a day for the entire family, **Christmas Spoken Here** takes place on the Garden grounds with holiday choirs, a White Reindeer Flea Market, Santa's workshops, holiday nursery sale, fun kid's activities, and one hundred plus vendors for your early holiday shopping convenience. The following Saturday, December 11, the Garden's annual **Sip-n-Shop** at the Bodine Visitor Center's Museum Store offers a chance to browse, sip a glass of something wonderful, taste some exquisite homemade treats and to discover all of your holiday shopping needs. Don't miss these three great Garden offerings.

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## BAUBLES, BANGLES AND BEADS IS OUR CHRISTMAS GALA THEME



Once again, Bruce Wilson's inimitable style as auctioneer will elicit top bids on beautifully decorated trees and other fabulous auction items at the 2010 Gala.

**Baubles, Bangles and Beads**, the Garden's 2010 Gala, promises to be another winner. Join the fun Friday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6 pm. Early bird tickets (prior to November 19<sup>th</sup>) have been flying out the door at the reduced price of \$75. Don't delay, last year's Gala sold out.

**Amanda Friedman & Kim Jones** are co-chairing this year's event, bringing a double dose of special energy and enthusiasm. The silent and live auctions promise an amazing array of items for your selection. The live auction will again feature our traditional fully decorated trees and wreaths, and this year we are adding a Hannukah bush. Both live and silent auctions will include trips, furniture, restaurant gift certificates, jewelry, art and a few surprises.

To start the gala on a sparkling note, guests will be greeted with a specially designed cocktail created for the Baubles, Bangles and Beads evening by Jesse Card, master mixologist, from Salud.

**Our auction offers a wide selection of items for your shopping satisfaction**

**...with plenty of items for holiday giving...**

**...don't forget to gift yourself...**

**...plan to peruse and pick from a plethora of...**

**... perfectly precious potential purchases!!**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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*Closing in on year end---the end of the first decade of the millennium!---your Board of Governors and Garden staff have been, and are working hard to establish good habits of governance that will carry us through in years to come. Our financial prospects are turning slowly but steadily toward the positive zone.*

*Our efforts to match a very generous gift to the Garden for its education mission have been completed. **We welcome Jennifer Travis** who joined the Garden team in September as part-time Education Coordinator. Jennifer will be instrumental in planning the Garden's permanent education program. As part of our education efforts we are expanding this newsletter with a special education section.*

*Your memberships and contributions are crucial to keep us heading in the right direction. We thank you for your valuable and continued support. Our volunteers are of critical importance to the Garden and we are ever grateful to them.*

*Come and enjoy your botanical garden. Share in the goodwill of the holidays with us and enjoy the peace and beauty of this very special place.*

Monette Booth

President, Board of Governors

## CHRISTMAS SPOKEN HERE



**Christmas Spoken Here** is scheduled for Sunday, December 5, 11am-5pm. Come listen to choirs singing amongst the beautifully Hanukkah bush and Christmas trees. Have lunch and visit the 100 local vendors. The children can enjoy arts and crafts and then visit with Santa and his elves. There will be bargains galore at the White Reindeer tables, as well as at the Museum Store and nursery.



## LIBRARY CORNER

The most exciting thing currently happening in the Library at the Garden is development of an online catalog at **LibraryThing.com**. Each book title in the Library must be entered into the online catalog individually, a tedious, but exciting, task undertaken by Tina Roberge, Kitsy Wood and Virginia Stevens. Each title is found in the Library of Congress collection, and the catalog record is imported into the **LibraryThing** catalog of the St. George Village Botanical Garden. To date, Tina, Kitsy and Virginia have invested some 85 hours in the task. Happily, the catalog lists almost 400 book titles held by the Library. These are searchable by author, title, subject or key word. For instance, a search on the word "orchid" returns 35 titles in our Library having to do with orchids. Books are available for check out to all Garden members. The Library is open on Monday and Friday afternoons from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., or by appointment by calling 340.718.4729.



How do members access this wonderful online Library tool? From your internet browser, go to the site at [www.librarything.com](http://www.librarything.com). On the home page you will be asked for a logon and password for catalog access. **The logon for our catalog is BotanicalGardens and the password is SGVBG.** So log on and find out what's in your Library!

The Library has, in addition to books, a collection of newsletters, periodicals and occasional papers from botanical gardens across the country and around the Caribbean. So come on in and check it out!!

## SIP 'N SHOP AT THE MUSEUM SHOP

**Sip 'n Shop** is scheduled for Saturday, December 11th, 10am-4pm. Make plans to visit the Museum Store for that special gift. Indulge in a glass of wine and hors d'oeuvres while you shop in our beautiful store. In addition, the Museum Store is planning a special trunk show of exquisite Juliana jewelry. Don't forget -- there is never an admission charge to visit the store!

## How Does Your Garden Grow? Education and Tips from Garden Staff

*Welcome to our first regular education section...coordinated by the Garden's Horticultural Director, David Hamada and Education Coordinator, Jennifer Travis*

### THE TRUTH ABOUT POINSETTIAS

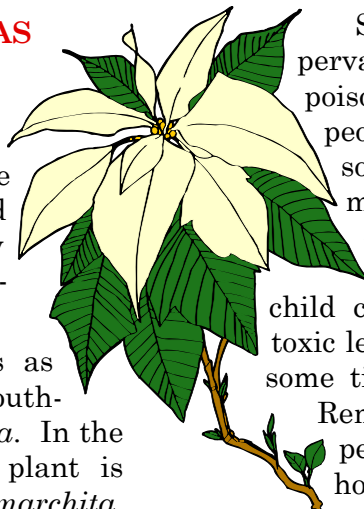
Jennifer A. Travis

With beautiful red or white bracts and tiny, inconspicuous flowers, the poinsettia is a popular holiday potted plant. But how much do you really know about this common holiday decoration?

The poinsettia, known to botanists as *Euphorbia pulcherrima*, is native to southern Mexico where it is called *nochebuena*. In the Aztec language, Nahuatl, the bushy plant is known as *cuitlaxochitl* or as *flor que se marchita*, or the flower that wilts, because a cutting will wilt almost instantly. In ancient times, the Aztecs used the milky sap of the poinsettia to treat fevers and burns, and they made a purple dye from the beautiful red bracts (a modified leaf structure often mistaken for a flower). After the Spanish conquest in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Franciscan priests decorated nativities with the plant.

An old Mexican folktale surrounds the poinsettia and links it to the Christmas season. Pepita, a poor, young girl was distraught because she had no present to lay before baby Jesus at Christmas Eve services. To ease her embarrassment, her cousin, Pedro told Pepita, "Even the smallest gift, if given with love, will make the baby Jesus happy." Pepita was reluctant but gathered a handful of roadside weeds. As she walked into the church and laid these at the altar, she thought of her cousin's kind words and regained some hope. Suddenly, the weeds transformed into a beautiful bouquet of poinsettia and all who witnessed were certain they had seen a miracle.

But how did this Central American beauty make it to American buffet tables? In 1828, the United States Minister to Mexico, Joel Roberts Poinsett, came across the *nochebuena* while working near present day Cuernavaca. He immediately sent samples to his home in South Carolina where they were propagated and sent nationwide.



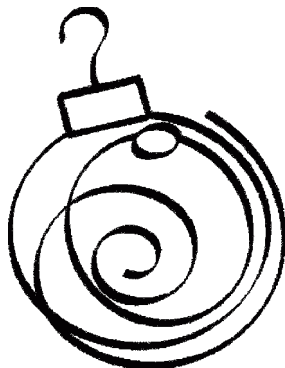
Since the 1920s, there has been a pervasive rumor that the poinsettia is poisonous. This is not true! Although people with latex allergies may endure some irritation due to the milky sap, most people suffer no ill effects from contact with poinsettias. The POISINDEX reports that a 50 lb. child can eat 500 leaves and not reach toxic levels. In fact, the poinsettia earned some time on NASA's Foliage Plants for Removing Indoor Air Pollutants list; perhaps you'll want to keep those holiday decorations around!

Should you want to keep your poinsettia alive after the holidays, follow these directions for keeping it healthy:

- Allow soil to dry between watering.
- Poinsettias like bright but filtered light—you can plant them directly in the ground. Keep them near a tree.
- After the holidays, cut the colored bracts and blooms back; the plant will send out new shoots in the spring. Prune regularly for a bushier plant. Use a water soluble fertilizer once monthly
- Beginning next October, allow the plant uninterrupted darkness for 14 hours each night. The poinsettia only produces the colored bracts when nights are longer than days. Do not interrupt the nighttime darkness until after the plant has bloomed—absolute darkness is key. If your poinsettia receives any nighttime light—porch lights or street lights, use a box to cover the plant for 14 hours each night.
- To keep your poinsettia from growing tall and scraggly, pinch back excessive growth. This will create a bushier, denser plant. However, do not prune after July as this may retard the growth of colored bracts near the holiday time.



## SMALL POTATOES: JUST FOR KIDS



### MAKING POTPOURRI

Marilyn Chakroff

Have you ever heard the term *potpourri*? Potpourri (pronounced *poe pour REE*) is a mixture of flowers, spices, and other fragrant items that is used to release pleasing fragrances into a room. The word *potpourri* is

French and it means “rotten pot.” Originally, the French made potpourri by forming alternating layers of salt and fresh or semi-dried petals and whole flowers in a crock to create a strong and long-lasting scent.

The main ingredient in French potpourri was rose petals. However, any scented flower can be used in potpourri, such as carnations, hibiscus, lavender, ylang ylang, bay rum, plumeria (frangipani), and sunflowers. Some herbs that can be used in potpourri are thyme, rosemary, sage, and chamomile. Spices used in potpourri include cinnamon, cloves, allspice, mace, anise, and fennel. Here’s what you need to make your own potpourri for a Christmas gift that will last for months!

#### WHAT YOU NEED:

- small glass jar or bowl
- large plastic bowl
- mortar and pestle
- kitchen grater
- kitchen knife
- measuring cups and spoons
- fixatives – ground corn cob or cellulose (from a craft store)
- spices – cinnamon sticks, whole cloves, whole nutmeg, allspice
- herbs – rosemary, thyme, sage, fennel, caraway seeds, marjoram, mint, bayberry
- plant parts – rose petals, rosebuds, lavender, marigolds, hibiscus blossoms, bay rum leaves, oranges, lemons, limes (any flower/peel that is scented)
- small piece of floral foam or sphagnum moss

#### WHAT TO DO:

- Choose an assortment of fresh plant materials such as flower petals and lemon peels that you

wish to use in your potpourri.

- Collect dried materials. If needed, grate or chop up these ingredients to release their scents.
- Place all ingredients into a large plastic bowl and mix them with your hands.
- Add a fixative to the mixture in the plastic bowl. Use a ratio of two tablespoons of fixative to 4 cups of materials. Gently mix the fixative with the materials in the bowl.
- Place a layer of floral foam or sphagnum moss into the bottom of the small glass jar.
- Fill the glass jar with the potpourri. Leave it on a table and enjoy!

#### TIPS FOR MAKING POTPOURRI:

- Flower petals should be lightly crushed, just enough to release the scent.
- Orange and lemon peels and cinnamon sticks should be broken up into smaller pieces or finely chopped before being added to the mix.
- Grind up fresh spices using a mortar and pestle before adding them to the mix.
- Adding a fixative such as ground up corn cobs (sold as litter for small pets) or cellulose (sold in craft stores) will help the potpourri last longer.
- To make a nice gift, put the lid on a small glass jar of potpourri and cover the lid with a piece of colorful cloth, tied with a ribbon.
- Potpourri can also be used in sachets to add fragrance to dresser drawers. Use organza material to create little bags, fill with potpourri, close with a drawstring, and place in drawers.
- To make a stronger scent, you can add a few drops of essential oil to the mixture. Essential oils such as rose oil and pine are sold at craft stores.
- There are lots of possible recipes to use to make potpourri; it is best to experiment to find a good mix. To help you get started, here are a few ideas:

**Recipe 1:** bay rum leaves, hibiscus flowers, cinnamon, cloves, fixative

**Recipe 2:** bayberry leaves, balsam needles, tiny pine cones, rose hips, fixative

**Recipe 3:** lavender, rose petals, lemon verbena, rosemary, cloves, fixative

**Recipe 4:** rosemary, lemon verbena, peppermint, lemon peel, fixative



## FALL HERITAGE FESTIVAL DECLARED A SUCCESS

The first annual *Fall Heritage Festival* has been declared a success with over 300 people attending. The history, people and plants of St. George were the focus of this new event. Junie Bomba Allick opened the event with the blowing of the Tutu. Richard Waugh gave demonstrations in the blacksmith shop. Veronica Gordon shared her skills on several topics: calabash crafts, Carita (Sanseveriera) weaving and herbs. Michelle Moore shared her grandmother Frances Christiansen's biographical memories. Gary Bourdon answered questions about the history of the property in the St. George Village Museum. Traditional food was prepared by the students at Good to Chew, and local juices and desserts were offered. Petrine Allan organized traditional children's games.

George Tyson's research of the history of St. George Village resulted in rich biographical information for several enslaved individuals who lived, worked and, in some cases, died on this property. Per Ankh Troupe members used this biographical information to dramatize the lives of seven individuals. They concluded with a Bamboula dance. There were few dry eyes during the performance.

Those who attended Fall Heritage Festival vowed to come next year along with any of their friends who missed the opportunity to experience this emotional and educational experience.

## NURSERY NOOK

Christmas time allows us living in the tropics to enjoy the splendor of seasonal floral beauty right in our gardens. The Garden nursery volunteers are available to help you choose poinsettias and other colorful plants to decorate your home for the holidays. And remember, plants are always welcome and thoughtful gifts. We hope to see you at the Garden Nursery!!

## MEET OUR NEW EDUCATION COORDINATOR: JENNIFER TRAVIS

Jennifer Travis has joined the staff at SGVBG as Education Coordinator this fall. Jenn will be overseeing the planning and administration of the educational activities at the Garden including existing programs like Second Saturdays as well as several new programs.

Jenn received a BA in Anthropology from Auburn University and is completing a Masters of Science in Education from Old Dominion University. She moved to St. Croix in October 2009 with her boyfriend, who is a wildlife biologist for the USDA. They moved from southern Florida, where Jenn was leading educational and interpretive programs for the Everglades National Park.

SGVBG is excited to welcome Jenn! Her background and skills in anthropology and non-traditional education make her an ideal educator for interpreting the wealth of educational opportunities offered by our beautiful 16 acre living classroom!

## VALUED VOLUNTEER VIRGINIA STEVENS

*Virginia Stevens, a star Garden volunteer, has revitalized the St. George Village Botanical Garden Library along with help from a few of her friends and husband Stiles.* She has set ambitious goals for our library including: entering all books into the online catalog called LibraryThing.com; retro-converting all titles in the card catalog records to the on-line catalog and formulating a program for educating Garden members to the value of the materials in the Library. Virginia has made great strides in reaching these lofty goals. Virginia and Stiles can be found in our library Tuesdays and Fridays 1-4pm.

The St. George Village Botanical Gardens appreciates each and every volunteer; this month we'd like to especially thank Virginia for her tireless efforts at the Garden. *Thank you Virginia.*

## SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FALL HERITAGE FESTIVAL SPONSORS:

A Better Copy \* JKC Communications \* A Friend  
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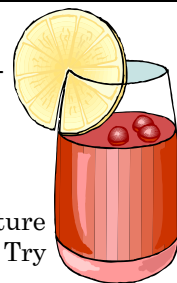
### *Sweet Sorrel Drink*

The holiday season is upon us and very soon you'll see great mounds of red sorrel sepals on the roadside stands. Do you love the sweet seasonal sorrel juice? Try making some of your own.

3 cups of plump sorrel sepals  
 2 cups sugar or local honey

Small chunk of ginger root  
 Whole cloves

6 cups of water  
 Orange Peel



Place washed sorrel, cloves, ginger, and orange peel in a large jar. Pour boiling water over the mixture and allow to sit for at least 24 hours. Strain, sweeten to taste, and pour into bottles for storage. Try adding one part rum to two parts sorrel juice for a festive holiday treat!

### *Upcoming Garden Events*

#### **DECEMBER 2010**

3	Christmas Gala	6 pm until...
5	Christmas Spoken Here	11 am – 4 pm
5	Nursery Sale	11 am – 4 pm
11	Second Saturdays	9 am – Noon
11	Sip N Shop at the Museum Store	10 am – 4 pm

#### **JANUARY 2011**

15	Second Saturdays (3rd Saturday)	9 am – Noon
19	Gardens by Moonlight	7 pm – 10 pm

#### **FEBRUARY 2011**

12	Second Saturdays	9 am – Noon
20	Volunteer Appreciation Lunch	Noon – 2 pm
20	SGVBG Annual Meeting	2 pm – 3 pm

**Lunch @ the Garden dates to be announced**  
 Check our Website, Facebook Page, or call the office at 340.692.2874

### *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:**

Monday & Friday; 1 pm - 4 pm,  
 Or by appointment. Call 340.718.4729

#### **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.