

The Conch Call



First QUARTER 2011

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Garden Friends,

This issue of the Conch Call is the first of the new decade, and it ushers in a period of hope for the Garden. The Board of Governors has been working hard 'behind the scenes' to provide methods and guidelines for good governance for the future.

Our best news is that we have asked David Hamada to be our Executive Director, and he has graciously accepted. David has a keen understanding of St. George Village Botanical Garden, not only about the horticultural collection, but also about what it takes to make the Garden tick, how to keep its mission foremost in our endeavors, and what is important to keep it a viable, important part of St. Croix. Holly Herold continues her important job as our Director of Administration and Development.

After many hours of work and consultation, the Board has revised two important governance tools: first is the Employee Handbook, and the second is our Policies and Procedures Manual. Dry sounding documents, but so very important for the sound running of a non-profit organization.

Continued on Page 2

Art in the Garden

Art in the Garden, our spring fundraiser, will again showcase the work of the Palletteers of St. Croix, a local painting group, at an art show and sale in the great hall.

The exhibit will open Saturday night, March 26, with a cocktail reception from 6 to 9 PM (\$20). Garden volunteers and the Palletteers, who are known for their food as well as their artwork, will provide homemade hors d'oeuvres.



The show and sale will continue on Sunday, March 27, from 11 AM to 4 PM (\$5), when there will also be displays by the Hibiscus, Orchid and Bonsai Societies. Lunch will be available for purchase from Good to Chew Catering.

A family activity will be added this year with an exhibit in the Bodine Visitors Center of children's art. This art will be created during a special workshop scheduled March 26th from 9am-noon.

This will be the third year in a row that Art in the Garden will feature the work of The Palletteers, a group of women and a few men who get together once a week, year around, to paint *en plein air* (outdoors). They claim "We paint St. Croix!", choosing a different location each week. The Botanical Garden is one of their favorite sites.

The art exhibit will feature about 25 painters, who work mostly in watercolor but also oil, acrylic and pastel. Their originals, which include studio work as well as *en plein air*, are generally priced between \$150 and \$1000. The Garden will receive 40 percent of all sales from this fundraiser. Less expensive prints and cards will also be for sale at an on-site "shop".

Phyllis Charles is the artist for the exhibit's poster this year. A former president and executive director of the Garden, she was the originator of Art in the Garden. She started painting after moving to Florida and joins the Palletteers whenever she returns to the island for a visit. Her painting for the poster will be raffled off during the show.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Continued From Page 1

As our Board of Governors changes over time with new members, these two guides will keep SGVBG on a straight course to responsible management. It follows that with our renewed commitment, our financial outlook is better than it has ever been, and your membership is as important as ever to keep us on track.

Although this is my last year as a Board member, and the end of my year as President, I will stay involved with this wonderful St. Croix institution. The Garden counts on its volunteers, its members, and the contributions you all make so generously to it. At a time when we have taken real steps of responsibility as a Board, I encourage you to continue your support, your loyalty, and your good will for The St. George Village Botanical Garden.

Monette Booth

President, Board of Governors

LUNCH AT THE GARDEN

“We get to show off at the Garden lunches”

Students and Chef Doos from St. Croix Career and Technical Education create innovative three course luncheons. The lunches are usually held twice a month, depending on the students' schedules. Reviews on the food and service have been glowing. The most recent lunch was sold out two days in advance!

This collaboration between the Garden and the Educational Complex brings very positive energy while providing income for the students' culinary program, which helps fund their travels to competitions. The program also has increased interest in Garden membership and many attendees stay for the afternoon, enjoying the grounds and working off the calories.

LIBRARY CORNER



Ray York is our most recent library benefactor with a donation of eleven (11) books and two periodical articles having to do with designing gardens, building decks and patios and preserving foods. Ray and his late wife, Elaine, have contributed much over the years to the development of the Garden Library. To get a full listing of the titles, go to our online catalog at www.librarything.com and sign on with “BotanicalGardens” and password “SGVBG.” Detailed information on using the Library's online catalog will be made available in a future issue of the *Library Newsletter*.

Thanks to a donation by David Hayes and work contributed by Owen Johnson, the Library is now outfitted with new modern lighting fixtures, and no longer looks like a “cave”! Because of the age of the building and the almost equally ancient illumination, work in the library was difficult, at best, even with the flood lights that David Hamada had provided (a *very* inefficient use of WAPA power). So now volunteers and library users alike can enjoy the ambiance of an “old world” atmosphere lit by “new age” lighting.

We are continually seeking donations for the Library, books having to do with horticulture, *flora* of the Caribbean, and gardening. What about books that have nothing to do with the main focus of the Library? We will take those, too! Sue Baccalao has graciously agreed to set up a cart in the Garden gift shop with books that do not fit the criteria of the acquisition policy of the Library. These books are marked at \$.50, \$1.00 and none more than \$2.00, with the entire proceeds marked by our accountant, Ken Silva, for the benefit of the Library. The funds will be used to purchase books for the Library, and supplies as needed by Library volunteers.

The Library is open on Tuesdays and Fridays from 1:00—4:00 pm, or by appointment. Come on by and check it out!!

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

EDUCATION AND TIPS FROM GARDEN STAFF

GROWING, GROWING, GROWING!

Jennifer A. Travis

It's an exciting time for the education program at the Garden—we are growing, growing, growing! While we continue our previously successful programs, we are introducing several new ones.

In February, we introduce our newest program—StoryHour. Held twice monthly on the first Saturday and the second Wednesday at 10am, StoryHour invites preschool-age children and their families into the Garden to hear special guests read aloud from botanically themed books. Designed to increase literary awareness and encourage excitement about the natural world, StoryHour hopes to increase the number of young people enjoying the grounds. Participants pay only regular admission fees (members are free!) and are encouraged to bring a blanket to sit on and a snack. If you or someone you know is interested in reading for StoryHour, leave your information with the office.

As a tasty nod to Valentine's Day, the Grow & Learn workshop will focus on chocolate in February. Participants will learn where chocolate comes from, who first enjoyed chocolate, and then make their own yummy chocolate treats! Come to the Grow & Learn February 26, 10am to noon with special guest presenter Melanie Feltmate.

Join us in March for 2nd Saturdays where we'll get curious for coconuts. The coconut palm lends itself to thousands of human applications ranging from medicine to food to crafts. Come to learn some of the fun and practical ways you can use the "tree of life" Saturday, March 12 from 10am to noon.

Our school programs and workshops are getting a makeover! We are always adding new workshops available to school and private groups, but we have recently made an exciting improvement—all workshops are aligned to the Virgin Islands Standards of Learning in science and



math content areas! In addition, we now offer art-based workshops for student groups—inspired by the Garden, made in the Garden. Also, summer camp is coming faster than you think—the Garden will offer all our workshops to summer camp groups during June and July.

If you want your student's class or camp to get involved in outdoor education, contact Jenn for more information!

Several more exciting additions merit attention too. We are working on a Garden BINGO card to excite our young visitors while walking through the self-guided tour with family. We need simple artwork to include on the BINGO card; contact Jenn if you'd like to contribute.

Finally, as March looms near and everyone prepares for Art in the Garden, the Education program announces its participation! This year, we introduce a workshop for young people to generate artwork inspired by the Garden on Saturday, March 26 from 9am to noon. Artwork from this and previous workshops will be displayed at the Bodine Center during Sunday's Art in the Garden. Additionally, we will have an art project station setup at the Bodine Center during Sunday's event for kids.

Do you have an idea for future workshops or programs? Email Jenn at sgvbg.edu@gmail.com.

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

EDUCATION AND TIPS FROM GARDEN STAFF



An ancient Mayan glyph for their bitter chocolate drink

A Treat for both Ancient and Modern

Jenn Travis

Betwixt a Puerto Rican Royal Palm (*Roystonea borinquena*) with a clinging vanilla orchid (*Vanilla planifolia*) and a bed of bromeliads, there are two cacao trees (*Theobroma cacao*) along the Rainforest pathway. But

just what is cacao and why do you care that it grows within the Garden boundaries?

Cacao is a small, tropical tree native to the tropical Americas. It thrives in the moist, shady environment of the rainforest understory. The tree's tiny white flowers emerge directly from the trunk—a condition called cauliflory. To be pollinated, these flowers rely on a visit from a tiny fly, or midge. After pollination, the cacao fruit, or seed pod, develops. It is the fruit, or more specifically, the seed of the cacao tree which is the starting point for chocolate!

The seed pods range from green to orange to bright red and are filled with up to 60 seeds. When fresh, the oval seeds are encased in a fleshy white substance which is sometimes pressed to create juice. To make chocolate, however, the white pulp must be removed and the seeds, sometimes called cocoa beans, cleaned and roasted. After roasting, the cacao seeds are crushed, to reveal the tiny nibs that reside inside the bean's hull. The nibs are then pulverized into a paste—this is pure cocoa!

The Mayans of Central America were the first people to make chocolate from the cacao fruit. In ancient Mayan society, the nibs were crushed and water and spices added to make a bitter drink. Chocolate was so important to the daily and spiritual life of the Mayans they carved the image of cacao pods and trees into the walls of their temples. They had terraced, irrigated plots of cultivated cacao trees. In fact, the word chocolate probably comes from a Mayan word for the tree “cacahuaquchtli.” Eventually, the Mayans were conquered by the Aztecs, who did not cultivate cacao, but taxed the Mayan villagers for a supply of cacao seeds.

Aztecs ground up the seeds and made a chocolate drink similar to the Mayan. They called the bitter chocolate drink ‘xocatlal’ which could also be the source of the English word.

Since 460 BC, humans have consumed chocolate in some form; and according to the Nutrition and Food Safety Department at Hershey Foods, every American eats nearly ten pounds of chocolate every year! Get your chocolate fix and learn more about chocolate at February's Grow & Learn February 26 from 10am to noon. Garden members enjoy a reduced fee for these programs. Call the office at 692-2874 to reserve your space!

Did you know--

Contrary to the name, the Strangler Fig doesn't physically strangle existing trees. Instead, the strangler figs compete with the existing tree—almost always winning! Here's how it works: the mature Strangler Fig fruit is eaten by birds. When the birds fly to roost in a different tree, they excrete the seed contained within the pulp. If this seed finds a crevice high in a tree, it begins to send vine-like roots down to the ground. As roots reach the ground, they bury themselves and grow larger and larger. In essence, the Strangler Fig grows upside-down!

Eventually the growing foliage of the Strangler Fig out-competes the existing tree for sunlight, water and nutrient uptake and the existing tree dies and rots away. In some very old and large Stranglers, you will see an empty middle where the first tree used to be. In Miami, these empty Stranglers are sometimes used by the homeless as a nightly shelter!

Interestingly, the Strangler Fig is responsible for the name of the down island land mass known as Barbados. As Portugese explorers sailed to shore, they saw the hanging roots of the Strangler Figs drooping beardlike from trees. The Portugese word for “bearded” is “barbado” or “barbudo,” thus the name, Barbados!

WHAT A WONDERFUL WEEKEND



Doubles, Bangles and Beads Gala kicked off the holiday season in high style. Guests were greeted with a specially designed holiday cocktail courtesy of Diageo USVI and the students from *Lifelong Learning*. Anton Doos and his students from St. Croix Career and Technical Education Center (CTEC) prepared and served lots of luscious food. Guests wandered amid a dazzling display of trees and silent auction items. The evening concluded with the sale of decorated trees, trips and other goodies with auctioneer extraordinaire Bruce Wilson. Thank you to co-chairs Amanda Friedman and Kim Jones!

Attendees at Christmas Spoken Here shopped until they dropped at the various vendor booths, White Reindeer tables, the Nursery and the Museum Store. Everyone enjoyed the entertainment by local choirs and Santa Cruz Brass before checking out other offerings including children's activities and Santa in his sleigh, all set amid the beauty of the Botanical Garden.

NURSERY NOOK

The Nursery continues to be open every Tuesday and Friday from 9:00am to 11am. We have a very wide variety of tropical plants and trees available for sale to the public. This month we are offering a special sale on *Aclypha wilkesiana* (Copperleaf or Jacob's Coat), a shrub that adds great leaf color and contrast to the garden, and *Polyscias frutescens* (ming aralia also called parsley aralia). These plants are sold as two for the price of one.

As always we invite people to come in to browse around the Nursery and to feel free to ask questions regarding your particular planting needs. We have a knowledgeable volunteer staff who are friendly and eager to help answer or seek out the answer to your questions.

At this time we are doing some needed repairs and improvements to the potting shed and want to thank Gary Doty for his construction expertise and his helpers, Dave Kent, Bill Schultz, Bob Erznosnik and Larry O'Toole.

Hope to see you soon at the Nursery



VALUED VOLUNTEER SUE LADWIG

Sue Ladwig has made a huge impact at the Garden during her tenure here. Her business background as well as expertise in organizational development, databases and research were instrumental in completing several large projects including, but certainly not limited to our new Employee Handbook and Policies and Procedures Manual. She was elected to the Board in 2007 and re-elected in 2010, serving as Vice President for four years. Her commitment to the Garden and her work behind the scenes will benefit the Garden for years to come.

Sue and her husband Don have moved on to their next adventure in Sarasota, FL. Our loss is their gain.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR GALA AND CHRISTMAS SPOKEN HERE SPONSORS:
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Botanical Garden

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Upcoming Garden Events

FEBRUARY

20	Volunteer Lunch & Annual Meeting	Noon-3pm
26	Grow & Learn	2pm-3pm

MARCH

5	StoryHour	10-10:30am
9	StoryHour	10-10:30am
11	Lunch at the Garden	11:30am-1pm
12	2nd Saturday	9am-Noon
26	Art in the Garden Kid's Workshop	9am-Noon
26	Art in the Garden Artist's Reception	6-9pm
27	Art in the Garden	10am-4pm
27	Nursery Sale	11am-3pm
30	Lunch at the Garden	11:30am-1pm

APRIL

9	2nd Saturday	9am-Noon
13	Lunch at the Garden	11:30am-1pm
23	Grow & Learn	10am-Noon
29	Lunch at the Garden	11:30am-1pm

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:

Tuesday & 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.

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