

# The Conch Call



THIRD QUARTER 2012

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

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Garden Friends,

The mission of the St. George Village Botanical Garden is an ambitious one, but one that I feel we have grown increasingly successful in supporting:

*"The Mission of St. George Village Botanical Garden shall be to promote knowledge, respect for and the responsible use of plants, especially the plants of St. Croix, and the eastern Caribbean. It will achieve this by means of education, conservation, horticulture, historical and research programs and by creating an exciting, enlightening and aesthetic experience for Garden visitors of all ages."*

I am constantly reviewing this mission to remind myself that the work we do is important and necessary. In reviewing the mission, I am always proud of how successful SGVBG is in devoting the very limited financial, human, and material resources available to sharing the fascinating story of the people and plants of Estate St. George and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The story of the people and plant interactions over the 2,000 year human history is a rich and well researched and documented one, that is rewarding to interpret for our visitors, but there are always challenges.

This year, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the St. George Village Botanical Garden, has been a particularly difficult one. The limitations of our remote location and the limited resources have always presented formidable challenges, but the slow, world-wide economy, the closure of the HOVENSA oil refinery on St. Croix, and the resulting losses of many of our local businesses and friends with this closure in 2012 have had very real effects in our local community and at the Garden.

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## Somewhere in Time

Friday, December 7th the Great Hall is the place to be! First Lady Cecile de Jongh and committee members invite you to spend a magical evening benefitting the Garden.

The sit down dinner will be catered by Chef Doos and his students. Bruce Wilson will keep the auction action lively.

The elders at Herbert Grigg Home and children at other local organizations will be anxiously waiting to hear if there will be a tree donated to them this year. A donated tree benefits the Garden, the recipient of the tree and the donor can count the price of the tree as a donation. It's a win-win-win combination!



This year's auction already has some wonderful items.

Trip destinations include: The Grand Hotel (location of Somewhere in Time movie), Old San Juan, Nevis, Dominica, St. Thomas, Water Island, St. John and any JetBlue destination. We are hoping to add Paris to the list!!

We will be offering several wreaths in addition to the trees. Two wreaths, donated by Sandi Savage, were created by Connie Lemco with decorations made by the late Jean Merwin. The entire auction catalogue will be available on our website and sent via email so you may peruse and pick out the perfect presents from the plethora of possibilities.

Remember, even if you are unable to attend, you may place bids on items prior to the auction by calling the office and giving your bid and credit card number.

\$125 per person or reserved table for eight \$1,000

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE**

*Continued From Page 1*

However, as difficult as it has been, it has been rewarding to see how our community and island visitors value the St. George Village Botanical Garden as an essential custodian of the important ethno-botanical heritage of the U.S. Virgin Islands. With so many organizations, causes, activities, and efforts also struggling, it is through our roles as a center of community for educational and social events, in conserving our own important historic and research-oriented landscape, and as a community partner in island-wide efforts in supporting aesthetic and sustainable horticulture on our island home we have demonstrated that SGVBG is a vital resource worthy of the tremendous support we receive.

So far this year, SGVBG has hosted over 20,000 visitors to our 16.5 acres of history and beauty in self-guided tours, guided group tours, and at special events and activities (like Mango Melee, Heritage Festival, Gardens by Moonlight, Second Saturdays, Story Hour and more!), offering island visitors and residents many opportunities to experience the rich ethno-botanical heritage of our region. As part of a network of almost 500 public gardens in the American Public Garden Association (APGA) and Botanical Garden Conservation International (BGCI), SGVBG participates in world-wide efforts to care for public gardens as vital landscapes in diverse regions of the world. SGVBG has participated in and contributed to cooperative efforts with the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism, the U.S.V.I. Department of Agriculture, the University of the Virgin Islands, the Virgin Islands Urban and Community Forestry Council, the 1<sup>st</sup> Caribbean Landscape Conservation Cooperative (San Juan, Puerto Rico), and the 8<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Education in Botanical Gardens (Mexico City).

Even as SGVBG struggles to maintain our own beautiful property, we understand we are not a sole destination for island visitors, and that we only prosper when our community prospers. With this in mind, SGVBG has recently shared resources to help beautify areas in downtown Christiansted, around schools, for the St. Croix Women's Coalition, and the Estate Whim Plantation Museum.

These are just some of the important efforts SGVBG has made that extend well beyond the borders of our beautiful and historic 16.5 acres. And these are just some of the many reasons we thank all the individuals, businesses from our local community and beyond for all your past support, and ask you to please take a moment to review our mission and understand the necessary role SGVBG plays and the needs we serve in St. Croix and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The upcoming Holiday season will bring many unique opportunities to show your support. The Holiday Gala on Friday, December 7 will feature exciting vacations, beautiful jewelry, and other tempting items that have been generously offered by individuals and businesses who support our mission. The lavishly decorated Christmas Trees represent a commitment of support from people who sponsor them, as well as the people who decorate them and are an opportunity for you to show your support of not only the Garden, but other organizations who always welcome a gift of one the decorated trees for the Holiday season!

A gift to the Garden, really is a gift that keeps on giving!

Sincerely,

David M. Hamada

There are many ways to invest in St George Village Botanical Garden. One of the most important and least utilized is a planned gift. Your attorney can show you how easy it is to ensure that we continue to grow in the future.

**If your family doesn't  
know what to get for your**

***CHRISTMAS***

**How do you expect them  
to know how to handle  
your**

***ESTATE?***

We have a very special place available for a few of our friends. Under the spreading branches (and exploding seed pods) of a magnificent sandbox tree are a limited number of plots for the interment of ashes. Call for more information

**SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR  
FALL HERITAGE SPONSORS:**

**HOVENSA**

**A Better Copy  
A Friend**


**JKC Communications  
A Garden Volunteer  
Caribbean Country 93.5  
Innovative**

## Nursery Nook



The Garden's Nursery will be open on Sunday, December 9 for Christmas Spoken Here. We have a really great selection of assorted palms and crotons as well as other exotic plants. Again we will have a display of new orchids for sale.

Please come in and visit our knowledgeable and friendly volunteer staff. They are always willing to assist you in your planting and landscape needs.



**Visit the Museum Store for  
Holiday Gift Giving!**

Come and browse through our expanded collection of children's books and educational toys.

We offer even more items from local craftspeople and artists including:

**From the C** -Sea Glass Ornaments

**Sylvia Brady** - Angels and Jewelry

**Sandra Michael** - Moko Jumbies

**Kirsten Olsen** - Prints

**Judith King** - Jewelry and Artwork



Our tropical and island themed gifts are sure to please everyone on your list. Remember - members receive a 10% discount. Remind your non-member friends that there is no admission when going to the store

### BOARD OF GOVERNORS

SANDI SAVAGE, PRESIDENT

LARRY SICKINGER, VICE PRESIDENT

SANDY RADZENKO, TREASURER

CAROLYN FORNO, SECRETARY

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### BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RICHARD & PEGGY BODINE

MONETTE BOOTH

## EDUCATION

Tis the season to be drinking sorrel by Saskia Corke

The days are getting shorter and there's a cool nip in the air, enough to contemplate a light sweater. Wintertime is coming, and with it, the holiday season.

This time of year can inspire many different thoughts and ideas in many different people, but usually strings of glittering lights, festive music, and lingering spices comes to mind. But something that always inspires the thoughts of Christmas and holiday season are the botanicals that many people have used for hundreds of years to decorate their homes and give food and drinks that holiday touch. From hanging of evergreen wreaths, erecting Christmas trees, or the strategically placed mistletoe, plants play an ever present role of welcoming and sharing the holiday spirit across the planet. Although St. Croix does not have the climate to support the growth of tall coniferous evergreens, Christmas lights can be seen strung from palm trees, tinsel wrapped around its slanting stalk, for a simple tropical touch.

Our tropical climate allows for an abundance of holiday horticulture alternatives. Many folks create vines wreathes wrapped with bright, festive madras bows; yards ablaze with clever lights and decorations; and Carnival music in the air. Growing up, nothing reminded me more of the holiday season than an ice-cold glass of sorrel juice. Sorrel—*Hibiscus sabdariffa*, has many different names in a myriad of different countries. It is a member of the hibiscus family that characteristically blooms in fall. By the end of the year, it is ready to be harvested for various uses in infusions, foods or jellies. The species of sorrel most familiar in the Caribbean is a herbaceous shrub that can reach upwards of 8ft in height. A native to southeastern Asia, sorrel was believed to have been brought to Africa and from there it was distributed throughout the tropics and subtropics of both hemispheres where it has become a naturalized plant in the West Indies and Central America.

A common misconception is that sorrel drink is obtained from an infusion of the petals of the hibiscus flowers, when really the sepals of the flower (collectively called the calyx) are what produce the scarlet, acidic drink. A calyx is the outermost part of a flower, which provide protection and support during various stages of flowering. In *Hibiscus sabdariffa*, after the flower has withered at the end of the day, the typically red calyx begins to enlarge and becomes fleshy and crisp. These enlarged calyces are picked when they are full-grown but still tender, so they are easy to be picked by hand. If harvested a bit too late, they can be picked with the use of clippers because the stem becomes a bit tougher. Sorrel can be

prepared with fresh calyces or dried, as they are more commonly packaged. Dry sorrel can be kept for months, making it possible to enjoy at any time of the year.

Not only is this hibiscus species a beautiful ornamental plant, it can be a healthy choice for the holiday season; it is considered to be a highly nutritious drink—high in vitamins and minerals. Either drank hot or cold, sorrel is an excellent source of Vitamin C! Many cultures across the globe use these sorrel infusions medicinally. A tea from the leaves or calyces is used as a diuretic, to lower blood pressure, strengthen the immune system, control cholesterol, weight loss, and due to its Vitamin C richness, an herbal cold and cough remedy.

There can be many ways to prepare sorrel. Here is a simple sorrel recipe to try in the coming months if you can: Place 3 cups of plump, washed sorrel sepals, whole cloves, small chunks of ginger, and the peel of an orange in a large jar. Boil six cup of water then pour over the spice and sorrel mixture and allow to sit for at least 24 hours—the longer it sits the stronger the taste and color. When ready, strain, sweeten to taste and then pour in a pitcher for serving or bottles for storage. Feel free to “spice” up your freshly made sorrel drink anyway you'd like for a tasty holiday treat!

Families can learn more about the sorrel plant, and other plants and botanicals that bring the sights and smells of the holidays at the Botanical Garden's monthly Second Saturday workshop on December 8th. Garden members enjoy a reduced fee for these programs. Call the office at 692-2874 to reserve your space!

Not to be forgotten, Grow and Learn workshops for adults every fourth Saturday of the month, features exciting topics that have ranged from Hurricane Preparedness, Soap Making, and Alcohol Infusions. Stay tuned for updates on these winter topics.

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 spend the day. Call or email if you would like more information.

Do you have an idea for future workshops or programs? Or would you like to be a guest reader at a Story Hour? Email Saskia Corke, the Education Coordinator at [sgvbg.edu@gmail.com](mailto:sgvbg.edu@gmail.com). Have a happy and healthy holiday season and I hope to see you and your family at one of garden events this winter!

*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 are open 364 days a year so all naughty AND nice children and adults have a chance to visit? 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 gutters on Great Hall (\$25,000)
- Repair of Great Hall Doors and cane-bolts (\$12,000)
- Metal handrails for stairs in factory ruins (\$2,500)
- Replacement of exterior light fixtures in Great Hall (\$7,800)
- Leaf Rakes – both metal and plastic tines (\$20-25 each)
- New desktop computer for Administrative office (\$1,200)
- Circular saw \$250
- Digital projector (\$700)
- Repair of chain-link fence along east and south borders of the Garden (\$4,500)
- 3 Energy Star rated refrigerators for Great Hall Kitchen, Manager's House, and Visitors' Center (\$750 each)
- 18" Chainsaw (\$900)
- 6 Round tables for Visitors' Center events (\$700)
- Gift Certificates in any amount from local hardware stores

*Sincerely,*

*Sandy, Carolyn, Larry, Sandi, Nathan, Gary, Marilyn, Richard, Max, Robert, Monette, Peggy, Dick, David, Holly, Ken, Saskia, Denise, Catherine, Angela, Vinecia, Velta, Paul, Norman and Mary.*

## **CHRISTMAS SPOKEN HERE**

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9  
11AM-5PM**

***We have it all - Santa and elves, white reindeer table, Christmas Choirs, food vendors, craft vendors, local products, children's games & crafts***

*Christmas Spoken Here* is everyone's favorite family friendly holiday season kick-off. The Great Hall will be transformed into a fairyland of sparkling, fully decorated Christmas trees. The air will be filled with the sounds of the season with performances from local choirs. You will not be able to resist the tantalizing fragrances emanating from the food vendor booths.

Don't forget to purchase your raffle tickets for a chance to win the beautiful tree covered with Jan Mitchell's ornaments.

Be sure to bring your holiday gift list. The grounds will be full of all types of vendors, the White Reindeer tables will be filled with goodies and both the Nursery and Museum Store will be holding special sales.

Admission: Adults \$5 children under 12 FREE





St. George Village  
Botanical Garden

**NONPROFIT ORG**  
US POSTAGE PAID  
KINGSHILL, VI  
PERMIT NO.40

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**

**www.sgvbg.org**

## *Upcoming Garden Events*

### NOVEMBER

20	Lunch at the Garden	11:30am
21	StoryHour	10am
24	Grow & Learn	10am-noon

### DECEMBER

1	StoryHour	11:30am
4	Lunch at the Garden	11:30am
7	Somewhere in Time Gala	6pm
8	Second Saturday	9am-noon
9	Christmas Spoken Here	11am-5pm
19	StoryHour	10:00
21	Lunch at the Garden	11:30am
22	Grow & Learn	10am-noon

### JANUARY

8	Lunch at the Garden	11:30
12	2nd Saturday	9am-noon
16	StoryHour	10am
25	Lunch at the Garden	11:30am
26	Grow & Learn	10am-noon