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ST. GEORGE VILLAGE BOTANICAL GARDEN
127 Estate St. George
Frederiksted, VI 00840



Upcoming Events

MANGO MELEE
Sun., July 2, noon-6:30pm

GROW AND LEARN
Wed., July 12 & Aug 9, 3-5pm

In memoriam

The St. George Village Botanical Garden expresses sincere sympathy to the families of Life Members who have passed away:

Phyllis Gillette, November 17, 2005
and Gladys Gehrt Milnes, April 5, 2006.

Thanks to those who have made donations to the Garden in memory of those who have passed away.

New Members

SPONSOR (\$250)
Graham & Judy Hunt

BENEFACTOR (\$100)
Herb & Sunny Aston
Art & Sallie Schwotzer
Warren & Barbara Wylie

FAMILY/DUAL (\$45)
Jim & Pattie Bland
Houghton & Jennifer Carr
Cynthia & Robert Goldberg
Lisa Yntema & Gerry Groner
David & Deborah Harrison
Philip Holzman & Laurie LeGrand
Janelle & Doris Isherwood
Larry & Pat Knudsen

Kathleen Kroska & Steve Freeman
Irene & Sidney Silverman
Stiles & Virginia Stevens
Davon & Janet Walter

INDIVIDUAL (\$30)
Margaret Baseman
Jane Brown
Duke Deller
Warren & Barbara Wylie
Maria Grigg
Lori Hirons
Shirryl Hughes
Elizabeth Lieberman
Laurie MacMakin
Midge Wheaton Morse
Carolyn Roblyer
Jeff Teel

77 RENEWING MEMBERS

The Conch Call Newsletter

A publication of the St. George Village Botanical Garden. SGVBG is a non-profit membership organization.

We welcome articles, photos, letters, and content suggestions, and reserve the right to edit.

Submit to: SGVBG, 127 Estate St. George, Frederiksted, VI 00840, email to garden2@viaccess.net or fax 340-692-6154

Visit us at www.sgvbg.org or call 340-692-2874

Board of Governors

Gary Bourdon, *President*
Ethel Ritch, *Treasurer*
Sandi Savage, *Secretary*

Robert Bartle Amy Claire Dempsey
Peggy Bodine Joanne White
Monette Booth Nina York

Horticultural Director: David Hamada
Administrative Director: Lesley Hoffman

Garden Hours
OPEN DAILY 9AM-5PM

More volunteers sought

The Botanical Garden relies on its wonderful cadre of volunteers to maintain funding to fulfill its mission of Conservation, Education and Preservation. We encourage new members to offer to help put on our three major annual events: Mango Melee in July; the Christmas Gala at the Garden and Christmas Spoken Here in December; and the Flower & Fine Art Festival in March. As many of our volunteers move away from the island, or get too busy to shoulder the many responsibilities, our small staff needs help in planning and implementing these events. There are many ways to get involved: If you can commit to the time, please call the office to see how your talents can benefit your Garden.

*We would like to extend our grateful thanks to:
Denali Asset Management for their continued support in helping produce our quarterly Conch Call in full color.*

St. George Village BOTANICAL GARDEN

CONSERVATION, EDUCATION & PRESERVATION

The Conch Call

2nd Quarter 2006

President's Message

I would first like welcome our newly elected Board members, Nina York and Ethel Ritch. Both bring with them varied knowledge and skills that will have a positive impact on the Garden. Ethel has come on as our Treasurer and Nina has already undertaken translating our brochures and information packages into Danish. The Danes, as we all know, are major supporters of the Garden and therefore we need to make their visit as pleasant as possible and have a familiar touch for them. I also thank all of the returning Board members for their support throughout my last term and say that it is a pleasure to be working with them again this year.

Our focus, our mantra so to speak, throughout the coming year at the Botanical Garden will be to put our house in order. We have contracted with Rooftops for the repair of the roof in the Great Hall and that will be started shortly. We will review the most important areas and concentrate our efforts where they are most needed.

We, the members of the board, are currently coming to a close with our work that is required for the Museum Assessment Program. Completion of the MAP is the first step required under a grant we have received from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Successful completion of this program is key to the Garden getting other grants in the future.

The long-awaited Bodine Visitors' Center is open and the Museum Store is doing great business.

Lastly, I would like to thank Kathleen and Woody Montier for all their help over the years and more recently with the Visitors' Center and Museum Store. I wish them every success for the future.

Sincerely, Gary M. Bourdon

Mango Melee celebrates 10 delicious years

Mango Melee is becoming a traditional part of St. Croix's Emancipation Day/Fourth of July weekend activities. This year we are marking our 10th year; the event is from noon to 6:30 pm on Sunday, July 2, at St. George Village Botanical Garden. This celebration of the bounty of mangoes and other tropical fruits found on St. Croix becomes more and more popular—last year's event drew more than 2,200 people.



Volunteer Mathilde Wilson pours homemade juices.

This year we have the added attraction of the new Bodine Visitors' Center to incorporate into the festival. In past years all activities

have centered around the Great Hall, with presentations held in a nearby tent to accommodate the crowds. This year, with the lovely air-conditioned Museum Store nearby, workshops (including one on pruning tropical fruit trees and another on the varieties of mangoes and their best uses) will be held in the cool and breezy Pavilion at the Visitors' Center, and juices for sampling will be lined up under the Pergola.

Vendors are also being offered spots along the road from the Great Lawn over the stone bridge, linking the Great Hall and the new Center, where there is also additional parking. The Nursery, with special plants on sale, will be open throughout the day.

Our annual food competition, Mango Dis, Mango Dat, offers all cooks an opportunity to showcase their best creations in four categories. Since this contest is sponsored by Premier Wines and Spirits, the use of Flavored Cruzan Rums in recipes is encouraged. Winners in all categories take home prizes. Call the office to get an entry form.

(continued on page 2)

New Museum Store has much to offer

The Bodine Visitors' Center opened in March 2006. The old Garden Gate Gift Shop next to the Great Hall has been turned into offices, making way for the modern Museum Store, which is bright, airy and well stocked with exciting new products.



(See page 3 for story.)

Spotlight

The Howard Fern Garden: A show not to be missed



Board member Sandi Howard Savage stands inside the newly renovated Ruth Howard Fern House at the Botanical Garden.

Until recently, the Ruth S. Howard Fern House and Walter Howard Fern Garden were seen only by those who sought out this embowered corner of the Botanical Garden. Dedicated in honor of the late Walter and Ruth Howard, Life Members of the Botanical Garden and the parents of Sandi Savage, a current member of the Board of Governors, this area

was hidden by the lush growth that crowded one of the few areas of the Garden that is irrigated regularly.

A recent restoration of the Fern House gazebo and the surrounding Fern Garden, and the clearing of a great deal of growth on the west bank of Mint Gut have changed all that. The Garden's groundskeepers and volunteers, led by Horticultural Director David Hamada, have now transformed the entire space, making it more visible, open and accessible. All visitors to the Botanical Garden can now enjoy the tranquility that once was known only by those who were adventurous enough to seek it out.

Built in 1992, the Ruth S. Howard Fern House was dedicated in March of 1993. An endowment established by the late Merle Blumke, another Garden Life Member, ensures

that funding is available to maintain and develop the Howard Fern House and Garden. Teak benches, given as additional memorials, are marked with bronze plaques remembering these special Garden members who made it possible to create and maintain this shady sanctuary.

"It's amazing," Savage says, "that with the hurricanes St. Croix has experienced since the Fern Garden was dedicated, the Fern House has never been touched." Branches from trees shattered by storms have landed around, but never on, the lattice gazebo. However, general wear and tear made the recent refurbishment essential.

Former Board member Wendy Ramos updated the irrigation system, ensuring the necessary moisture level that the ferns require. Volunteer Ray Lutz replaced the deteriorating lattice and shade cloth on the Fern House and arborist Jeff Trumbull was hired to do some major tree work, opening up the area to more light and exposing the magnificent hogplum tree that dominates this area. Board member Bob Bartle has added more emitters to the irrigation system, allowing more ferns to be planted and volunteer Audrey McCarthy took care of the plants from the Garden's fern collection in her own home during the renovation. Volunteers from the Garden's nursery regularly nurture and groom the ferns, which have been artistically displayed in hanging baskets in the Fern House.

There are now more than 20 varieties of ferns thriving in their special location. Members are encouraged to visit the Howard Fern Garden, and enjoy the cool, shady retreat that has been created and maintained by dedicated supporters and volunteers.

-Anne Scigliano

Adopt-A-Spot program gets boost

SGVBG members Charles and Barbara Gachot spearheaded a gathering for new and renewing Adopt-A-Spot sponsors in late March this year.

Driven by enthusiasm over the appointment of David Hamada as horticultural director, Charlie Gachot offered to help foster support for the languishing fund-raising program.

Hamada took the challenge: He created new spots, enlarged existing ones, and renamed some more appropriately.

At the March 30 event, held in the Pavilion at the Bodine Visitors Center, Hamada gave a short overview of the program to the two dozen people attending. After some refreshments, he led the group on a tour of three of the new spots. Back at the Pavilion, three people immediately adopted spots; since then several more have been taken under the wing of generous supporters.

There are now 55 spots throughout the Garden, with about 27 still available. Adoption ranges from \$500 to \$1,000 per year; for more information, call the office at 692-2874.



Mango Melee

(Continued from page one)

The ever-popular Mango Eating Contest will be held on the Great Lawn again this year, giving spectators a good view of the fun. We've had the same winner two years in a row, so we need a good challenger in 2006!

The day's events are wrapped up with a Silent Auction of the fruits gathered by event chair Errol Chichester that have been on display in the Great Hall all day. Some of the fruits that were auctioned off in 2005 are pictured below.

Admission is the same as last year: \$5 for adults; \$2 for children under 12.

Volunteers are always needed for all of our events so if you would like to help on July 2nd please call the office.



Kathleen & Woody Montier head home to Texas

Longtime Garden volunteers Kathleen and Woody Montier, who departed St. Croix for Texas in early June, will leave a great void at SGVBG.

Kathleen has been involved in myriad ways, both paid and unpaid, since she arrived on-island 13 years ago when Woody joined HOVENSA. Over the past four years in particular, Kathleen has provided invaluable help for the staff with Garden events. Always an optimist, she has often been heard to cheerfully say, "Oh, don't worry. We'll make it work." Or, "I'm sure we can figure it out." Or, "I'll take it home and do it." Nothing is too difficult for Kathleen to accomplish. She has been a longtime Christmas Tree Decorator for our annual Gala at the Garden; she has impressive computer skills; she has created wonderful dishes for Gardens By Moonlight and the Flower & Fine Art Festival opening receptions; and has always provided enormous support for the overloaded staff.

Most recently, she took on the task of managing the new Museum Store at the Bodine Visitors' Center, transforming the large empty space into a beautiful, attractive shop that has more than doubled business since it opened.

Woody has volunteered at all our events, working wherever he was needed. Most impressive has been his bringing his huge telescopes to our Gardens By Moonlight events, offering star-gazing opportunities for participants, always patiently explaining what the novice viewer is seeing.

We wish Kathleen and Woody a happy future in their native Texas; they will be greatly missed by their many friends.

New Museum Store is a very cool place to shop

March 2006 saw the Grand Opening of the Bodine Visitors' Center, which features the new 1,100 square-foot air-conditioned Museum Store.



Sunlight streams through the expansive windows, showcasing a variety of glass products, including two sun-catchers created exclusively for SGVBG by St. Croix artist Jan Mitchell.

One captures the extraordinary red orchid, *Renanthera mauricette* Brin, named for a longtime friend of the Garden. The late Mauricette Brin was passionate about orchids and was a judge for the American Orchid Society for many years.

The other is the St. Croix Century Plant, *Agave eggersiana*, a native species now extinct in the wild.

The Garden is working to preserve these plants as part of our Conservation, Education and Preservation mission.

Each ornament is available with a cobalt blue or iridescent background and costs \$15. The Museum Store also carries a selection of Mitchell's other botanical sun-catchers.

New products include Bird Brain hummingbird feeders and Pot Perchers, with more items being added all the time. The special painting by Toni Lance, created as a gift for the Bodine Visitors' Center's Grand Opening, is available on archival paper as a signed print for \$100, and as a poster for \$25.

All SGVBG members receive a 10% discount on Museum Store purchases.

-Kathleen Montier

What's New

Come 'Grow and Learn' with us at the Garden

Have you ever wondered what life was like for the original residents of the St. George Village Botanical Garden? Do you want to learn how to make impressive food garnishes out of everyday foods to impress your next dinner party guests? Does lemon-grass bush tea really soothe you, help when you have a cold?

Starting in June this year, the Garden began hosting a monthly afternoon session of informative talks. These two-hour sessions have the goal of encouraging people to visit the Garden and raising awareness of the intricate ways that people and plants have existed together for so many years. Topics will range from the archaeological history of the Garden to flower arranging. June's workshop was on creating beautiful and edible garnishes.

Board member Joanne White is coordinating these presentations, so if you have ideas for future talks (ones you could give yourself, or ones you would like to hear), please call Joanne at 773-1519.

So mark your calendars for the second Wednesday (at 3 p.m.) of every month; the next presentation will be on Pre-Columbian History at the Garden on Wednesday, July 12. Flyers will be mailed out to Garden members giving details of each presentation. The cost for the educational sessions is \$5 for SGVBG members and \$15 for non-members. They will be held in the beautiful Pavilion at the new Bodine Visitors' Center; pay at the door. Come support your Garden—and Grow and Learn together!

WISH LIST

The Garden's grounds staff has a long list of tools that would help them do their work. This includes the following:

- 20" commercial chainsaw (\$500)
- 6 hp push mower (\$250)
- Extendable pole saw/pruner (\$70)
- Heavy-duty long-handled bypass lopping shears (\$50)