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



Upcoming Events

- FLOWER & FINE ART FESTIVAL**
Fri., March 10 - Sun., March 12
- VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION PARTY**
Sun., March 19 at noon
- ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING**
Sun., March 19 at 1:30 p.m.
- GRAND OPENING OF BODINE VISITOR CENTER**
Sun., March 26
- ECO-FAIR WITH ST. CROIX ENVIRONMENTAL ASSOCIATION**
Thur. & Fri., April 20-21

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*
 - Wendy Ramos, *Vice President*
 - James Kobak, *Treasurer*
 - Sandi Savage, *Secretary*
-
- Robert Bartle
 - Peggy Bodine
 - Monette Booth
 - Amy Claire Dempsey
 - Connie Lemco
 - Joanne White
-
- Horticultural Director:** David Hamada
- Administrative Director:** Lesley Hoffman

Garden Hours
OPEN DAILY 9AM-5PM

New Members

- SPONSOR (\$250)**
Cecilia Cruickshank & John Frazer
- BENEFACTOR (\$100)**
Rick Fain
- FAMILY/DUAL (\$45)**
Therese & Michael Chretien
Chip Emmette & Clada Monteith
Brian & Karen Eslick
Patricia Laurencin
Robert & Nancy McIntosh
Vicky Pedersen & Adrian Claybourne
Cath & Rick Pollard
John & Judy Smith

- Lisa & Patrick Standing
- Toby & Tina Tobias
- Michael & Ruth Whitner
- Ted & Judy Ziegler
- INDIVIDUAL (\$30)**
Janis Bobeck
Karen Cater
Scott Chapman
Elaine Delsol
Lionel Downer
Diana Gooding
Gerville Larson
Patricia Morris
Betsy Rezendé
Bea Turner
- 58 RENEWING MEMBERS**

In Memoriam

The St. George Village Botanical Garden expresses sincere sympathy to:

Board member Sandi Savage and the family of James Savage, who passed away on December 23, 2005.

The family of Judith Joor Craske, who passed away January 10, 2006.

The family of Winifred (Freddi) Reedy, who passed away January 31, 2006.

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

1st Quarter 2006

President's Message

Dear Members:

This new year has brought about some changes. As most of you probably know, our Executive Director, Brinsley Burbidge, has moved on to other interests. We thank him for being a part of St. George Village Botanical Garden and its history. Rather than try to replace the executive director, the Board has taken a different approach and created a team that will, we believe, more effectively cover the needs of your Botanical Garden.

The Board has brought back David Hamada as our Horticultural Director. David is very gifted and knowledgeable and the grounds are already looking even more beautiful than before. David, along with Development Director Julia Sheen, will be working on reviving our Adopt-A-Spot program. Lesley Hoffman has been named Administrative Director. Anyone who has seen Lesley at work understands that she is very motivated and has continually taken it upon herself to ensure that visitors and clients have a professional experience at the Garden. Kathleen Montier, who is coming back on staff to manage the Museum Store in our new Bodine Visitor Center, completes our team. The Board of Governors, working with these four people and our current staff and contract workers, will do all we can to take care of your Botanical Garden.

Sunday, March 26, is the date set for the Grand Opening of the Bodine Visitor Center and Museum Store. Work will begin right after the Flower & Fine Art Festival weekend (March 10-12) to move the Garden Gate Gift Shop from its current location in the Great Hall to the new complex to be ready for the event. We hope to see all of you there – it will be held from 3 to 6 p.m. to allow everyone to see the new route through the Garden.

In conclusion, we are hoping for and working towards a good and productive 2006.

Sincerely,
Gary M. Bourdon

Art festival set for second weekend in March

Rasa Glengary, whose original painting adorns the Flower & Fine Art Festival poster, is chairing the 2006 event, now in its 12th year. The artists' reception and sale opens at 7 p.m. on Friday, March 10. Admission is just \$15 for SGVBG members; non-members pay \$25. This includes hors d'oeuvres and open bar.

The festival and art sales continue from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, March 11 and 12. Admission on those days is \$5 for adults; free for children under 12 accompanied by an adult. Thirty St. Croix artists will be exhibiting their work this year. We are also including Art in Bloom in the Education Building again, where floral designers interpret works of art; and Art in the Garden throughout the grounds. We are hoping to have some of the artists painting *en plein air* during the weekend. This is one of our three major fund-raisers of the year, and 40% of the price of art sold at the festival goes to the Garden.

Exhibits by the St. Croix Hibiscus, Orchid, Bonsai and Fern societies will grace the Great Hall; the Nursery will be open from noon to 3 p.m.; we will have workshops for children and adults both days; and there will be plenty of food and drinks. Glengary's original painting will be raffled to raise funds for the Garden, with the drawing on Sunday at 3 p.m.; posters are available for sale in the Gift Shop.



Rasa Glengary's tree frog is almost camouflaged within the Heliconia.

Bodine Visitor Center to open on March 26

Opening ceremonies for the Bodine Visitor Center will be held from 3 to 6 p.m. on Sunday, March 26, and all SGVBG members are invited to attend. Dignitaries from the Virgin Islands will be asked to witness Dick and Peggy Bodine cutting the ribbon at this long-awaited event.

The center includes a new Museum Store, modern restrooms, a children's pavilion and a courtyard paved with inscribed bricks. The Bodines funded the new center, which is named in memory of Virginia Bodine. Artist George Seaman has created a model

of the St. George plantation as it would have looked in 1890; it will be unveiled at the opening and will remain on view in the orientation center. Jay and Brenda Isherwood provided most of the funding for the model.

Artist Toni Lance has designed a poster especially for the opening and her original artwork will be auctioned at the event.

There will be a new map and a new route through the grounds once the center opens and everyone is encouraged to come and see the great new developments at the Garden.

Spotlight

on the NURSERY VOLUNTEERS

"Why be idle when there is so much to do?" asked Audrey McCarthy, a volunteer at the St. George Village Botanical Garden nursery since 1982. "We all get along well, and we all work hard," she said. Volunteers work two days a week, two to three hours each day, depending on what has to be done, to contribute to helping the Garden grow. They also put in extra hours during sales at the Garden's special events.

The volunteers are Carol Bamforth, a nine-year volunteer who succeeded her late husband, Ted, as nursery chair; McCarthy; Jean Kloss; Lynne Kent; Larry Sickinger; Joanne and Bob Erzoznik; Rosie Knight; Bill and Sue Hulbert; Pauline Price; Whit Brown; Judy Thompson; and Susan Sheehan.

Bamforth explained that on a regular basis they go out onto the grounds of the Botanical Garden to collect potting materials. On a recent Friday, she led them to a particular area to dig up ylang-ylang seedlings for planting in small pots.

"When they mature, they are used in perfumes and shampoo, and they produce a wonderful aroma," Bamforth said. "We try to get out on the grounds frequently and are always looking for seedlings for propagation, because 75 percent of our stock comes right from the Garden itself. We do just about anything to save the Garden money. Furthermore, what we propagate is acclimatized to St. Croix so that it has a better survival rate – as does using seedlings rather than seeds.

"We grow air plants for tourists to take home, and we propagate royal and Christmas palms from seedlings. We also do air-layering – removing the bark from stems, then covering them with sphagnum moss and, in a few months, we have more plants. We have the greatest greenhouse right here."

Bamforth also said that many new residents on St. Croix come out to the nursery to learn what to plant and how to plant it to have a good chance of survival.

The nursery is an excellent source for everything the home gardener needs. It is open Tuesday and Friday mornings to provide a wide variety of plants, soil, pots, peat moss and perlite.

THE GREATEST GREENHOUSE IS RIGHT HERE



Groundskeeper James Marius and Nursery volunteer chair Carol Bamforth admire some crotons.

"We save money by buying in quantity and are always interested in combining our orders with someone else," Bamforth said.

Jack and Judy Egnatinsky, volunteer caretakers for Laura's Garden (a walled garden area near the new Bodine Visitor Center), often provide seedlings or cuttings from there. The couple is also the biggest source for nursery volunteers right now, Bamforth said, adding that the number of volunteers is at an all-time high. Another great source for plant donations is James Marius, one of the Garden's groundskeepers, who has opened his own garden to visitors on special tours on several occasions. "He has a variety of everything, including cacti and succulents, palms, flowering shrubs, houseplants and gingers," Bamforth said.

It is not uncommon for a single plant to have five or six names, she said. "So when someone comes in to buy a particular plant and they don't know the name, we ask them to bring in a leaf or a bloom. We love what we do for ourselves and for the Garden and we are pleased to be of help in whatever way we can."

To learn more about volunteering at the nursery, stop by between 9 and 11 a.m. on Tuesday or Friday, or call the office at 692-2874.

-Anne Scigliano

PALM VISITORS ARRIVE FROM SOUTH AMERICA



Shortly after the storms and atypical southerly winds last October you may have noticed some unusual, three-inch diameter fruits that had been washed up on the beaches of St. Croix. You may also have found some smaller, 1-inch diameter seeds. They are both from the troolie (truli) or temiche palm (*Manicaria saccifera*) whose home is the low-lying swamps of South and Central America, especially Colombia, Venezuela and Guyana. The palm also occurs in Trinidad.

The warty part is the seed coat that usually disintegrates in the surf, leaving the round seed to be found by beachcombers. We understand, by talking to people with very long memories, that the last time these fruits reached St. Croix was around 20 years ago.



Gardens By Moonlight always a sellout

Since reviving the full-moon tours in 2004, the Gardens By Moonlight series has drawn a capacity crowd. The tours are held in February, June and October. Members benefit from a lower admission (\$20) than non-members (\$35), with the result that each tour has brought us new members. February's tour brought in nine new members. The evening starts with wine and cheese, live music and viewing of the night sky with the help of Woody Montier's telescope, followed by two separate tours. The group comes back to the Great Hall to enjoy more music, hors d'oeuvres, drinks, sky-watching and conversation before departing.

SGVBG BYLAWS UP FOR REVISION

Garden members are being asked this year to vote on revisions to the SGVBG bylaws. Last revised in 1999, the bylaws need to be changed to bring the institution into compliance with requirements specified by major grant providers.

The proposed revisions will be mailed out with the announcement of the 2006 Annual Meeting, which will be held immediately after the Volunteer Appreciation luncheon at noon on Sunday, March 19. Along with the Annual Meeting agenda, members will receive a list of nominees for the 2006 Board of Governors for review and voting.

Members have an opportunity at every Annual Meeting to address the board with any comments on its performance over the past year or suggestions for the upcoming year. We encourage all of you to attend.

Ed Lemco, Gladys Orr (center) and Connie Lemco stand in front of the miniature replica greathouse created by the late John Orr. The house was donated to the Garden by Gladys Orr and auctioned off at the Christmas Gala on December 9 for \$10,000; Ed Lemco was the successful bidder. The Christmas Spoken Here weekend of activities raised a record \$55,000 for the Garden.



The Herbarium needs help after partial facelift

The Garden's Herbarium contains an invaluable collection of more than 4,000 plant specimens, principally from St. Croix, that are a vital resource for the documentation and naming of plants on our island and in our Garden. The collection is maintained by three dedicated Garden volunteers and is used by researchers from many places.



For a long time the Herbarium was housed – with no air-conditioning to prevent mold and other damage – in the basement of the Manager's House at the Garden. A very generous challenge gift of \$1,500 from Garden supporter and volunteer librarian Barbara Murray spurred the Board of Governors to donate the balance to make \$3,000. Other gifts, including tile from Pan American Distributors, allowed us to

give one of the two basement rooms a complete makeover, install A/C, weatherproof the windows, paint the walls and purchase furniture. The results are seen in the photo above.

Now we have the second room to restore and you can see in the photo at right the poor state of this room. Weatherproofing to exclude damp penetration is the most critical need before we can make the space useable. We will need a further \$3,500 to do this. Are there any generous donors out there who would like to help this very important part of the Garden's work?



What's New

The Garden is under new management

Board president Gary Bourdon has announced that David Hamada has been named Horticultural Director and Lesley Hoffman Administrative Director.

Botanist Dr. Brinsley Burbidge, whose three-year leadership at St. George Village Botanical Garden has brought the 34-year-old organization closer to the rank of an internationally recognized scientific institution, has accepted an offer to create a private garden on St. Thomas.

"We were very sorry to see Brinsley go," Bourdon said, "and we decided not to try and replace him with a new executive director. So we asked David (Hamada) to come back on staff and take care of the horticultural aspects of the Garden."

Hamada was employed as horticulturist at SGVBG from 1998 to 2002, and has most recently been serving on its board of governors. He returned to working fulltime at the Garden on February 6.

"I am really pleased to be back on staff," Hamada said. "Having been on the board these past couple of years has given me a different perspective on the Garden, and now I will be responsible for implementing many of the things we have discussed at board meetings. It's going to be a challenge, but one I am ready to meet."

Bourdon said the board has made a wise decision.

"It was a natural thing for us to give Lesley (Hoffman) more responsibility," Bourdon said. "She started as a volunteer tour guide here in 1998 and began work as office manager in 2002. She's also been our events director for the past three years. She knows the place so well and she knows all the staff and volunteers very well."

THE GARDEN IS IN NEED OF:

Weeds! When you see flowering weeds, take a cutting that clearly shows the leaves, flowers & fruits (if available), and bring them into the Herbarium on Tuesday or Friday 9-11:30am.

A complete computer upgrade and DSL.

A Web site administrator to update and maintain current web site.

Commercial kitchen equipment (new or used), sinks, cabinets and other furnishings.