

BOTANICAL GARDEN

1st Quarter 2007

The Conch Call

President's Message

Dear Members:

This is our first Conch Call for the year and my last to you as President of the Garden. I would like to sincerely thank our past and current Board members, all the staff, members and volunteers for their support. It has been a very rewarding two years and I am proud to have served you as President.

Over the next few years there will, as always, be many issues and situations that this organization will need to address. The most promising way to move forward is to continue developing dynamic boards, maintain continuity in the transition of boards from one year to the next, and to stay true to our mission of conservation, education and preservation.

In keeping with our vision of the Garden as a horticultural, botanical and historical attraction for the people of St. Croix and their visitors, we have created a Museum Committee, which is working toward creating a museum focusing on the history of the grounds. It will tell the story of St. George through artifacts, photographs and the written word. It's a story of evolution from an Amerindian settlement in the early years of the first millennium, the plantation era of the 18th and 19th centuries, the creation of the Botanical Garden in the 1970s to the Bodine Visitors' Center in 2006 and into the future. This is a fiscal burden we do not wish to put on the Garden, so any financial aid you can give would be greatly appreciated. Also, if you have any items that may pertain to a time period mentioned above, please consider loaning them to the Garden Museum.

Finally, I would like to bid a fond farewell to James Marius who has left the Garden after some 26 years of employment with us. James has retired and will spend time at home in his own garden and will volunteer for us on Tuesdays. I hope he will keep Sweet Lime Walk looking as good as it always has. Good luck to you, James, and thanks for the years.

And thanks to all of you!

Sincerely, Gary M. Bourdon

FLOWER & FINE ART FESTIVAL OPENS MARCH 9

This year's Flower and Fine Art Festival at St. George Village Botanical Garden—the 13th—will again be chaired by St. Croix artist Rasa Glengary. The dates this year are March 9-11. This is one of the Garden's major fund-raising events of the year.

The Artists' Reception and Art Sale from 7 to 9 on Friday, March 9, in the Great Hall will kick off the weekend's events. Many of the participating artists will be present to discuss their techniques, the mediums they use, and the inspiration for their work. The beauty of St. Croix will be enjoyed over and over again in many of these creations, making them excellent focal pieces for homes here and further north. Artists are encouraged to price their work to sell.

Violinist Barbara Murray will play during the reception, and complimentary hors d'oeuvres and wine will be served (with an admission fee—\$15 for members and \$25 for non-members—paid at the door). The Art Sale will continue on Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Noted artist Karen Cooper has donated an original painting of an American Kestrel that graces the poster and flyers publicizing the festival. The posters are already on sale (for \$10), and the original work will be raffled off, with the drawing on Sunday at 3 p.m. You need not be present to win.

Also throughout the weekend, St. Croix's Hibiscus, Orchid, Bonsai

and Fern societies will emphasize the tropical delights of the island with elaborate and colorful displays that will remain in the Garden's Great Hall. Other highlights will include "Art in the Garden," with intriguing outdoor exhibits by local artists, including Mike Walsh.



Karen Cooper has donated her portrayal of an American Kestrel, which will be raffled off during this year's festival.

This will be the fourth year that the festival will include "Art in Bloom." David M. Hamada, the Garden's horticultural director, organized the premiere three years ago, which will again be

presented in the Garden's Education Center. It will be open Friday evening through Sunday afternoon. "Art in Bloom" originated at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in 1976. The idea is based on a floral designer interpreting a work of art, and both are exhibited together.

Workshops for adults will be held at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday in the Pavilion at the Bodine Visitors' Center. Workshops for youngsters will be held at the same time in the adjacent Children's Pavilion.

Free guided tours of the Garden will be held at noon and 2:30 on Saturday and Sunday. The Garden's Nursery will be open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. both days; and there will be local food and craft vendors and a cash bar. The Garden's Museum Store will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The admission (\$5 for adults; free to children under 12) for Saturday and Sunday is paid at the gate.

Spotlight

THE PALLETTERS

Art, it might be said, is how the soul sees nature. And the abundance of nature the Garden comprises is a magnet to those gifted with the talent to express that profusion on canvas. More often than not, the painters you spot laboring behind their easels on the grounds are St. Croix Palletteers.

The Palletteers is an informal circle of artists ranging from professional to rank amateur. Every Friday, or almost every Friday, they gather at a designated spot on the island to take in the view and paint what they see. The group is the brainchild of Emy Thomas and Sondra Catts, who 10 years ago began to arrange little conclaves to paint outdoors—en plein air, as Thomas says—and to exchange ideas, tell jokes and perhaps indulge in a little innocuous gossip. “Originally,” Thomas said, “there were just the two of us.” Others joined the group (accomplished by showing up at the designated painting hour at the designated painting place) as time went by. “They come and go,” Thomas said. “Sometimes there are only three of us and sometimes there might be 30.”

Not surprisingly, the seasonal migration of snowbirds greatly swells the ranks of the Palletteers. Some of them have never lifted a brush when they join; others have been selling their work for years. “What we really wanted in the beginning was company,” Thomas said. “Now we also work on lots of projects on the island.” Among those are cooperative efforts with the Nature Conservancy and the Garden. They also sell some of their work at the now-legendary Good Hope School Art Show & Sale and the Garden’s Flower & Fine Art Festival, donating 40 percent of the selling prices to the school and Garden. The Palletteers create most of the miniature art that graces the “Artistree” at the Garden’s annual Christmas Gala, sell their oeuvres in the Museum Store and create greeting cards for local sale, according to Catts.

Thomas, a Seven Sisters product (Wellesley ’55), spent nearly 13 years of her life living on a boat sailing all over the world, which she delightfully chronicles in her book *Home is Where the Boat Is*. She has lived on St. Croix long enough to become a legend herself, and her book *Life in the Left Lane*, in which she adoringly describes the island and its culture, has become a local classic since it was published in 2002. Before Thomas went on her seaborne odyssey, she had been a staff reporter for the *New York Herald Tribune* (killed by a labor strike) the *San Juan Star*. Her house—which she built on a hillside with a jaw-dropping view of Salt River Bay, Buck Island, Long Reef and the smudge of St. Thomas on a cobalt-blue horizon—is a modest museum of art. Hogging the walls of the airy main room are dozens of landscapes, seascapes and still-life renderings of her beloved Caribbean, many of which are Palletteer-made.

At the behest of one Palletteer a few years ago, the group decided to meet regularly and set Friday as their holy day. Each week at a pre-selected spot they break out their water colors, oils or pencils and let the creative waters flow. There is neither an age limit nor cost to being a Palletteer. The only requirement is that you bring your own equipment. For the acolytes, the more experienced Palletteers are happy to supply tips and guidance (but not secrets). Thomas can be reached by email at emy@viaccess.net.

— Robert Hoffman



Emy Thomas paints during a visit to the Garden.

Board completes Museum Assessment Program

The St. George Village Botanical Garden was one of 160 museums across the country that was awarded a Museum Assessment Program (MAP) grant in 2005 by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). MAP is a cooperative program between IMLS and the American Association of Museums (AAM) designed to help museums assess their strengths and weaknesses and plot a course for future improvements.

The MAP grant that was awarded to SGVBG was for a Governance Assessment, which examines the roles,

responsibilities, and performances of the Garden’s governing authority, the Board of Governors.

In 2006 the Board of Governors of SGVBG completed the first phase of MAP, the Self-Study. Board members met throughout the year to discuss topics and completed a series of activities provided by AAM in the form of a self-study workbook.

In early 2007, the second phase of the Governance Assessment included an on-site assessment by a museum professional. Robert Bowden, Executive

Director of the Harry P. Leu Gardens and Museum in Orlando, Florida, visited SGVBG January 9-11 and met with Board members and staff. Mr. Bowden will develop a report, based on his visit, which will recommend ways in which we can improve the way our Garden is governed.

In completing the Museum Assessment Program, the Board of Governors of SGVBG has demonstrated a commitment to ensuring the success of the Botanical Garden in developing into an institution that can effectively benefit our community.



photo, Nina is seen outside Limpricht Park on King Street. The park, which is usually locked, was opened specially for the group. It holds a commemorative monument to Peter Carl Limpricht, governor of the Danish West Indies 1908-1911, was so beloved by the island's citizens that they erected this memorial to him.

Nina York, right, talks to the group who participated in the first of two Christiansted Walking Tours held in January. Nina, an SGVBG board member who is an enthusiastic and knowledgeable amateur historian, and the Garden's horticultural director, David Hamada, led the group. People toured six private and public courtyards and gardens within the town of Christiansted. Both tours sold out within days of their announcement, which means we will definitely offer them again. In the

SGVBG PENDANT

A new and very special piece of jewelry is now available exclusively in the Garden's Museum Store. Jewelers Nelthropp and Low have created a beautiful pendant, offered in gold or silver, with the Botanical Garden's logo etched into the metal. Your purchase will show your support of the Botanical Garden and will help us further our mission of Conservation, Education & Preservation.



LONGTIME GROUNDSKEEPER JAMES MARIUS RETIRES

Written by David Hamada

After 26 years of dedicated service to the St. George Village Botanical Garden, gardener James Marius retired on February 9, 2007.

When someone is perfectly suited to a job, it becomes easy to forget what it was like when he wasn't doing that job. James has been such an important part of SGVBG for so long, few of us remember a time when he wasn't here. That became the challenge when we tried to get specific information about how he came to us. Combing through old Board minutes, talking with James and others who have been involved with the Garden for several decades, this is what we found:

James was born in Soufriere, on the island of St. Lucia, in 1944. In November of 1968, James decided to come to St. Croix in pursuit of job opportunities. His cousin Walter Marius was already living here at the time.

His first job on St. Croix was in a hardware store by the airport, and later he worked for the Bernier family, then owners of Gannet Hardware (later to become Gallows Bay Hardware). He worked at various jobs, mostly in construction, yard and landscaping work. For some time, he was involved in the construction of FHA housing throughout the island, followed by a stint working for Riggers and Erectors, a contractor for Hess Oil.

At the same time, he continued doing gardening and landscape work for private clients. Among his customers were Ray and Frankie Harris. James worked at their home in Prosperity, and when work slowed at Riggers and Erectors, Frankie, then Treasurer for SGVBG, recommended James for a position here at the Garden. James started as a gardener in 1981, working with Randolph Joseph under the supervision of Tito Rivera.

And now, only 26 years later, James has retired. Over the years, he has seen major changes here at the Garden. When asked what SGVBG was like when he first took this job, and he said it looked like a park, with more grass and trees than plantings.

He has been involved in the planting of nearly all of the botanical collections and ornamental areas, including, of course, James' Garden.



James Marius admires a portrait of himself done by Emy Thomas, which was presented to him at his retirement party.

When James started here, the nursery was just two tables of plants, donated and tended by the volunteers. In 1982, restoration began on the Village Manager's House, with the project goal of housing a professional horticulturist. During James' term at the Garden, it has housed three—Gordon Rutledge, Ken Jones and David Hamada. James was part of the enormous cleanup efforts waged by staff and volunteers after Hurricane Hugo ravaged the Garden in September of 1989. James has seen the Garden outgrow the Great Hall and the subsequent construction of the Bodine Visitors' Center and Museum Store.

More than a witness and participant to SGVBG's history, James is really part of the DNA of the place, having given the Garden many seedlings and cuttings. His love of gardening is evident when you view James' Garden, or for the lucky ones who have seen the amazing gardens at his home, where he has filled every imaginable container with blooming plants.

From all the staff, the Board of Directors, and the volunteers here at St. George, we'd like to say Thank You to James for putting his effort, his sweat, and most especially, his heart into this Garden. We hope to see him here, doing less and enjoying more, for many, many years to come.

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

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



Upcoming Events

FLOWER & FINE ART FESTIVAL
Opening reception
Friday, March 9, 7-9pm

FLOWER & FINE ART FESTIVAL
Saturday & Sunday, March 10-11, 10am-4pm
Nursery Sale both days 11am-3pm

GROW AND LEARN-100% Fad Free
Nutrition presented by Joanne White
Wednesday, March 14, 3-5pm

GROW AND LEARN-Foliage Arranging
presented by David Hamada
Wednesday, April 11, 3-5pm

ECO-FAIR WITH THE ST. CROIX ENVIRONMENTAL ASSOCIATION
Thursday, April 19 & Friday, April 20, 9am-1pm

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.sgvb.org or call 340-692-2874

Board of Governors

James Kobak, *President*
Gary Bourdon, *Vice President*
Ethel Ritch, *Treasurer*
Joanne White, *Secretary*

Robert Bartle	Sue Ladwig
Peggy Bodine	Max McIntosh
Monette Booth	Sandi Savage
Marilyn Chakroff	Nina York
Brian Eslick	

Horticultural Director: David Hamada

Administrative Director: Lesley Hoffman

Garden Hours
OPEN DAILY 9AM-5PM

New Members

* denotes renewal member

PLATINUM PALM
Jim & Hope Kobak*
Dick Schierloh & Heidi Gaillard*

SILVER PALM
Monette & Peter Booth*
Sally & Dick Capra*
Jack & Judy Egnatinsky*

BRONZE PALM
Keith & Esther Peregrine*
Lea Ann Robson & Buck Octalien*
David & Beverly Watts*

COUPLE
Sharon & Jim Early
Linda & Brad Fonger
David & Judy Ganz
Sharon & Steve Grimes
Kirana Kefalos & Tom Drillot
Michael & Maggie Mongeau

Phillip & Betsy Schoonover
Tom & Shirley Ziegler
Jamie Baston & Norm Rouleau*
Dulcie & David Crowther*
Chuck & Ann Fourtner*
Martha & Ron Hamada*
Ronald & Lekha Hamada*
Russ & Holly Herold*
Brad & Cat Lenhart*
Clada Monteith & Chip Emmette*
Roger & Kangia Morgan*
Kenneth & Patricia Schielke*
John & Judi Threlfall*
Toby & Tina Tobias*
Joanne & Bob White*

SENIOR COUPLE
June & Bill Buck
Arthur & Judi Epstein
Peter & Heidi McInnes
Tom & Everyn Morrisette
Burt & Diana Shepp

Daniel & Jeannette Sneberger
Joyce & Dave Thomas
Kathie & Rupe Werner
George & Rosemary Aldrich*
Stephen & Harriet Baker*
Robert & Joanne Erznosnik*
Ken Haines & Kris VandenBerg*
Margarita Hutchison & Dan Odell*
Jim & Carol Kobak*
Nan & Bob McIntosh*
Joseph Mather & Barbara Nellis*
Diane Moran & Dick LaRhette*
Rick & Cath Pollard*
Pauline & Bob Price*
Paul & Sandra Radczenko*
Larry & Jackie Sickinger*
John & Judy Smith*
Lisa & Patrick Standing*
Sharon & Roger Stockholm*

Jim & Kathy Thobe*
Norma & Ed Weinman*

INDIVIDUAL
Linda Burrel
Rhea Guertin
Lisa Koch
Liz Littlefield
Eddie Liversedge
Zendarene Parker
Carol Bamforth*
Karen Cater*
Valerie Combie*
Dan Coughlin*
Carol Cramer-Burke*
Jayne Edwards*
Janet Goodman*
Darryl Gross*
Pat Huyett*
Gary M. Lalor*
Pam Pearson*
Dee Petachenko*
Jill Wilson*

SENIOR INDIVIDUAL
Barbara Blank
Helen Engelhardt
Dorene James

Marie McKinstry
Eleanor Miles
Barbara Murphy
Mary Simpson
Enid Barrant*
Sylvia Brady*
Betty Cambra*
Muriel Carter*
Sondra Catts*
Carolyn Cody*
Ann Daum*
Chris Davies*
Debbie Flavia*
Valeria Gasperi*
Margaret Hayes*
Doug Millar*
Linda Morland*
Elizabeth Pedersen*
Susie Sheehan*
Clare Silka*
Phyllis Spaulding*

SPONSOR
Dick Kuehn

BENEFACTOR
Donald & Patricia Coupard*