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



Upcoming Events

GARDENS BY MOONLIGHT
Wednesday, June 22

MANGO MELEE & TROPICAL FRUIT FESTIVAL AND NURSERY SALE
Monday, July 4

In memoriam

SGVBG extends our deep sympathy to the family of **Mary King "liz" Wilson** who passed away on March 5th, 2005.

New Members

- BENEFACTOR (\$100)**
 Ross C. Barker
 Ed & Mary Grimes
 Phillip & Florence Wood
- FAMILY/DUAL (\$45)**
 Jimmy & Susan Breunlin
 Frances & Gerry Carroll
 Ray & Patricia Emory
 Ray & Pristeen Hamilton
 Dan & Pam Janish
 Jane & Steve Kaufman
 Wendy & Holly Lucas
 Dorothy Flash & Henry Nelson
 Fred Perry & Ann Ogg
 Ted & Patricia O'Lear
 Peter & Julie Rasmussen
 Peter & Marie Ziegler
- INDIVIDUAL (\$30)**
 Teresa Falcone
 Patrice Kelly
 Kenneth Kotch
 Linda Surdyke
 Gloria S. Tassone

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

Gary Bourdon, *President*
 Wendy Ramos, *Vice President*
 James Kobak, *Treasurer*
 Sandi Savage, *Secretary*

Robert Bartle	David Hamada
Peggy Bodine	Margaret Hayes
Monette Booth	Connie Lemco
K. Stewart Budd	Tom Pinchbeck
Amy Claire Dempsey	Joanne White
Teresa Falcone	

Executive Director: Brinsley Burbidge

Garden Hours
OPEN DAILY 9AM-5PM

Thank You!



Thanks to the generosity of Garden member Gary M. Lalor, SGVBG now owns an almost-new Husquvana ZTR mower. Groundskeeper Howard Remy is seen here getting acquainted with the mower. The ZTR has made a tremendous difference to cutting the grass.

Thank you from Country Day!

These are some of the handmade thank-you notes written by Country Day School second-graders after guides Lynn Fahy and Veronica Gordon led the 38 youngsters on a tour of the Garden on April 27. It's obvious that the young visitors had an exciting and educational day and were anxious to let us know how much they enjoyed themselves.



St. George Village BOTANICAL GARDEN

CONSERVATION, EDUCATION & PRESERVATION

The Conch Call

2nd Quarter 2005

President's Message

Dear Members:
It is with great pride that I take on the role and responsibilities of being your President. It's my hope that with the help of the 2005 Board of Governors, staff and volunteers, we can continue to move the St. George Village Botanical Garden forward as a financially secure, internationally recognized institution that is the number-one destination spot for St. Croix students, teachers, residents and visitors.

We have four new dynamic board members this year: Monette Booth, Connie Lemco, K. Stewart Budd and Teresa Falcone. Each brings a new set of talents and perspectives, which are vital to our growth. I also look forward to working with our returning board members, Peggy Bodine; Joanne White; Amy Dempsey; David Hamada; Margaret Hayes; Jim Kobak; Tom Pinchbeck; Past Presidents, Wendy Ramos, Sandi Savage and Bob Bartle; and our Executive Director, Brinsley Burbidge. I know I can speak for all in pledging to work together and letting the best interests of the Botanical Garden guide us through the year ahead.

This will be a year of excitement: The Bodine Visitor Center, which has been in design and under construction over the past several years, will be opening! This will allow the Garden to fully express itself as a major educational center, focusing on the relationship between people and plants that has flourished within the Botanical Garden grounds over the last 2,000 years.

The challenges in front of us are many. Just to name two, there is a need to upgrade the Garden's infrastructure, and to build the Garden's endowment; these will be focused on throughout this year.

Thanks for supporting the St. George Village Botanical Garden and I look forward to your ongoing involvement with this great institution.

Sincerely,
Gary M. Bourdon

ST. CROIX'S MANGO MELEE CELEBRATES THE MANY DELIGHTS OF TROPICAL FRUITS

The 9th annual Mango Melee & Tropical Fruit Festival will be held from noon to 6:30 p.m. on Monday, July 4th. This popular summer event helps develop a greater appreciation for tropical fruits, especially mangoes, and educates the public about growing these fruits and the many ways they can be used; Mango Melee offers educational workshops as well as fun activities for children and helps raise funds for the programs the Garden presents throughout the year.



Errol Chichester is the event chairperson; others on the committee are representatives from UVI, the Department of Agriculture and the St. George Village Botanical Garden.

We will be featuring the Mango Dis, Mango Dat food competition that has been building in popularity over the past couple of years. Chefs and cooks from around the Virgin Islands will be invited to compete. There are four categories in which mangoes must feature prominently and there will be prizes in all categories. Entries will be judged on taste, best use of mango, creativity and presentation. Entrants will be asked to allow the event committee to use the recipe in our proposed 10th Anniversary Mango Melee Cookbook in 2006.

Carol Blake-Hodge and Linda James, two island entrepreneurs who have achieved success using tropical fruits in their businesses, will make presentations under the tent on the Great Lawn.

Two workshops will be held: the popular propagation of tropical fruit trees (those who sign up first on the day will get a mango seedling to plant); and one on drip irrigation.

Free tours of the Garden will be offered at 1, 2 and 3 p.m.

Other highlights of the day will include an Ice-cream Making Demonstration, a Tropical Fruit Identification contest and the ever-popular kids' Mango Eating Contest.



Tropical fruits dominate the scene at our annual Mango Melee festival.

We'll have local food and drinks on sale as well as scores of craft vendors. The Botanical Garden will also have a bar featuring tropical rum drinks; the 4-H Club will sell hotdogs and burgers. The Garden's Nursery will have a plant sale too. The day ends with a Silent Auction of the tropical fruits that have been on display in the Great Hall for the event.

For more information, call the office at 692-2874.

Spotlight

Teamwork brings Orchid House back to life

ORCHID HOUSE

Were it not for the generosity and dedication of four very committed members of St. George Village Botanical Garden, St. Croix would not have one of its most beautiful crown jewels.

Led by Gary Briggs, who recognized the decaying condition into which the Orchid House had fallen and was determined to restore it, the team includes Gary M. Lalor, whose love for the Garden prompted him to provide ongoing funding for upgrading and maintenance. He buys at least one blooming orchid a month, thus "guaranteeing a continuing show," as horticulturist David Hamada put it. Hamada is a team member and also a member of SGVBG's board of governors. Rounding out the team is Diana Freas-Lutz, president of the St. Croix Orchid Society, who organized her members to contribute their time and expertise to make the Orchid House a vibrant showcase for the enjoyment of members and visitors.

Mauricette Brin, nationally known orchid grower for 40 years, who passed away in July 2004, had willed her diverse collection of nearly 100 plants to the Garden's Orchid House. Hamada, who attended an orchid show in Miami in May, brought back many hybrids, including one named for her.

Briggs, who owned Cruzan Gardens until recently, summarized the extent of disrepair, neglect and deterioration over the years of the former slave quarters that now house the Orchid House, and pointed to the many improvements that have already been made: "We installed a new irrigation system and underground piping, replacing the overhead sprinklers and the rusted and leaking piping with a more direct system for better coverage, with automatic timers. We repaired the waterfall, cleared all the overgrowth, added ferns and lilies, replaced the roof and rafters and the metal framing along the base with wood and stones, and added seating so that anyone can now sit and enjoy the plantings." A new center column was added to secure the roof.

Briggs' wife, Aileen, painted the wooden seats; and his Cruzan Gardens helpers, who worked when they could be spared, redefined the pathway by adding natural materials. Leaves and dead wood were added to the plantings themselves to create a more natural look.



Gary Briggs, left, discusses improvements to the Orchid House with Bob Bartle, past-president of the board of governors.

"My entire reason for taking it on was to cultivate and propagate the orchids," Briggs said. "I used to raise orchids in Virginia and enjoyed it."

Lalor, formerly of Iowa and Nebraska, who bought an historic great house on the West End in 1998, said, "The Orchid House is such a wonderful thing. If there is a big display of color, it is such a nice introduction (to the Garden). I feel certain that when visitors see this, they say, 'My Lord, I wonder what the rest of the place looks like.' Tourists certainly go home saying to their friends and relatives, 'You have got to see what that wonderful place looks like.'" Lalor compared it to a buffet: "If the table is covered with eye-catching and colorful foods, isn't it more welcoming?"

That is his reason for providing a blooming orchid each month, he said, noting that John Edwards, an employee at Gallows Bay Hardware's Garden Shop, does the ordering. "A lot of these people give so much that I want them to get up and take a bow. It's a nice program and I wanted to be involved. There are no strings at all."

Freas-Lutz has had help from Orchid Society members Valerie Combie, Myrtle Pemberton and Vanessa Forbes. With the help of Hamada, they have repotted 200 to 300 orchids over the past year.

Hats off to hard work, teamwork and dedication. Our appreciation to them all!



What's New

Wish List

Don't throw out your old refrigerator! Our grounds staff would love to have a working fridge up in their tool-shed area to keep their drinks and lunch cool. The one they have now is barely operable.

The Garden is in need of some bookshelves (preferably glass-fronted) to keep our botanical reference books in good shape.

The office desperately needs some good-quality filing cabinets. The ones we have now are so dented and rusty, it is difficult to open the drawers.

We need your weeds



There are 1,100 to 1,200 native or naturalized plant species on St. Croix. We have specimens in the Garden's Herbarium of about 80 percent of these. We need your help in filling that 20 percent.

The specimens we need are of the herbaceous type; largely those plants that we all might call "weeds." When you see flowering weeds, take a cutting that clearly shows the leaves, flowers and fruits (if available), and kindly bring them into the Herbarium. We are there Tuesday and Friday mornings from 9 to 11:30 a.m. The fresher the cutting, the better, as far as identifying it goes. Many thanks from Margaret, Christie and Sjeff.

Flower & Fine Art Festival a success

The 2005 festival, held March 11-13, brought in \$18,400. Twenty-eight artists participated in the show, which also featured Art in the Garden (Mike Walsh and Cindy Male's creations) and Art in Bloom (floral interpretation of paintings by local artists). Violinist Barbara Murray entertained during the Friday-evening artists reception. Jane Akin donated her painting of a heliconia for the poster, which Betsy Campen and Jim Bierowski matted and framed. The original was raffled off during the event. Beatrice Ramos of Wild Orchid Gifts and Flowers presented two workshops on floral design. We are most grateful to our sponsors of this event: Hovensia; Monette Booth; Gary M. Lalor; and Francie Whittenburg.

Caledonia Mountain and its tropical vegetation will be featured in Brinsley Burbidge's talk on 6/22.

Full moon illuminates the Garden

The next Gardens By Moonlight will be held on Wednesday, June 22, from 7 to 9 pm at the Garden.

Anyone who has not yet experienced one of these magical evenings should make a point of attending the June presentation. We plan to hold this event on the full moon date in February, June and October every year.

Volunteers bring in an array of hors d'oeuvres; the Garden provides wine and cheese and we have live musical entertainment. Woody Montier sets up his massive telescope and is on hand to enlighten everyone and to help novices explore the heavens. Once you've seen Saturn and its rings through Woody's telescope, the night sky will never look the same again.

On June 22, board member and horticulturist David Hamada will lead participants in tours of the Garden, sharing his abundant knowledge of the flora of St. Croix, particularly those that bloom in the Garden at night.

The Garden's Executive Director, Brinsley Burbidge, will present an illustrated talk on a botanical hike up Caledonia Mountain, the highest point on Maroon Ridge on the northwest corner of St. Croix. He will take us on a short but challenging hike from sea level in Caledonia Gut to the top at 916 feet elevation.

He will introduce us to the different tropical vegetation types found on the mountain, beginning in the "liana heaven" of the rainforest, ascending the fern-clad waterfalls of the gut, cutting through the dense bush of the steep mountainside and ending on the orchid- and bromeliad-covered rocks of the summit with spectacular views of the north shore.

The talk will be illustrated by stunning slides of this beautiful part of St. Croix.

Chairs will be provided as you relax under the stars, with lighting provided by the full moon.

All of the Gardens By Moonlight tours thus far have been sold out; reservations are essential. Garden members pay \$20; non-members, \$35 (but they can get \$15 off their membership if they join that evening). Call Lesley at 692-2874 to reserve your places.

CONGRATULATIONS!



Gerard Boyce and Angela Fontenelle, who began working as gate security personnel at the Botanical Garden in January, have been honored by the Rotary Club of St. Croix, Mid-Isle. They were nominated for, and received the Vocational

Service Award for exceptional above-the-call-of-duty service to visitors. The awards were presented on May 18. As you drive in to the Garden, please offer your congratulations to these two great ambassadors of St. Croix.

