

BOTANICAL GARDEN

3rd Quarter 2005

The Conch Call

President's Message

Dear Members:

If you have toured the grounds of the Botanical Garden lately you have probably noticed some changes. The biggest—and possibly the most important—change to the Garden in the past 30 years is the construction of the Bodine Visitors Center and Museum Store. Caleb Romero and his team are continuing at a good and steady pace and I am happy to report that we are on schedule for a grand opening event that will take place this season!

In writing this message, it occurs to me that we, the members of the Botanical Garden, have to reflect upon and applaud the efforts and steadfastness of the individuals and changing boards that have seen this endeavor through. It has not been an easy road, but the benefits this work brings about will be many. The Visitors Center will become the material expression for representing our mission of Conservation, Education and Preservation. Over the course of the next few years, the Center will naturally be a changing entity, but one that holds our mission above all else.

Some of the areas that we, the Board members, are working on relating to the different aspects of the Visitors Center are: the new parking area and entry into the Center; the establishment of an education/orientation center that will be situated in the Pavilion; the completion of the courtyard, which of course includes the laying of the wonderful inscribed bricks that I'm sure all of us at this point have invested in or will in the near future; and the Museum Store. The end result of all this will be something we can all be proud of.

I urge all members to take the time to visit the site to see the changes taking place at the Garden.

Sincerely, Gary M. Bourdon

PLANS FOR CHRISTMAS WEEKEND WELL UNDER WAY

The Christmas Gala at the Garden is gearing up to be another spectacular event, with "A Victorian Christmas" as our theme. The date is Friday, December 9. On page 3 of this edition of the Conch Call, you will see that the early-bird price is \$100 per person; after October 17, the price goes up to \$125 per person.

Our co-chairs are again Connie Lemco (now also a board member); Rasa Glengary; and Vickie Wessel. This trio did a fabulous job last year in helping raise funds for the Garden. They work very well as a team and each has special talents that they bring to the event.

We will again have 10 trees, decorated by our talented and wonderful volunteers, to be auctioned off by Roger W. Morgan, who has graciously agreed to help us raise as much money as we can at the Gala. We will again have the "Artistree"—with original artwork by many of our St. Croix artists—which is a real crowd-pleaser. The fabulous sit-down dinner will be catered by GSBB Catering, Chef David Trask, and Patrick Baron will be providing the musical entertainment. A group of carolers will greet guests as they arrive.

December 2005

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Once again, past board president Christie Bartle has kindly agreed to chair Christmas Spoken Here, which will be held on Sunday, December 11. This family festival is always great fun and a wonderful source of income for the Botanical Garden. Many people come to the Garden with their Christmas lists in hand, ready to do all their shopping in one place, buying from the scores of vendors. The Nursery sale always goes well at this event as people buy plants for themselves and for friends.



The Garden is always looking for donations of items that can be sold at our "White Reindeer" tables. The adage that one man's trash is another man's treasure is very evident here. Please look through your closets and storage areas for things to donate to the Garden for this event; you can call Lesley in the office at 692-2874 or just come by and drop off your "trash". For many years, Jinny Hall, Gladys Orr, Fran Tobin, Darline Ward Clark and Christie Bartle have been involved in this activity at CSH. Not only do they gather up the donated items, but also they sort through them, price them and then, on the big day, sell them. Look for Gladys and Jinny in their signature reindeer headgear on December 11!

This year we have decided not to open the "Christmas Cupboard" for the annual bake sale. We now have so many vendors who sell tarts and cakes, and it seemed as if we were somehow competing with them. We will, however, still have coffee on offer for the early birds and the ladies who gallantly baked goodies for so many years will be lending their talents in other areas.

We will again have choirs singing on the hour every hour, whose music is enhanced by the skilful help of George Seaman and his sound system.

We look forward to a joyful and profitable weekend at the Garden!

Jack & Judy Egnatinsky

Two years after Jack and Judy Egnatinsky retired and moved to St. Croix in the mid-1980s, they offered to become volunteers at St. George Village Botanical Garden. Jack, an anesthesiologist, and Judy, a registered nurse, had worked together in the medical field, and as dedicated caregivers they could not have made a better decision.

“It was (former board president) Judy Pitts who got us interested,” the couple said, “and that was nearly 10 years ago.” At first, they worked together in the nursery. “But I wanted to do more than just pot plants,” Judy said. So she asked Ken Jones, then curator, if there was something she could do in the Garden.

“He said there were no tools for volunteers to use, so I told him I have my own tools. Realizing how willing I was, a week later he came back to me with the suggestion that I take over Laura’s Garden.”

It is believed that this section of the Botanical Garden was named in 1983 for the granddaughter of one of the early members, Lawrence Weyker, who was stillborn at Christmastime 1976. In the beginning, the plants and trees were of all colors. Over the years, Laura’s Garden, established in what had been an animal pen measuring approximately 40 feet square, has been producing only red and white blossoms in honor of Christmas.

“Ken – and later horticulturist David Hamada – had his own ideas of what gardening should be done there,” Judy said, “so the first week he instructed me in what I had to do in the first quarter, the second quarter the following week, the third the week after that, and finally the fourth. The walls are crumbling now, but there are lots of Christmas-time blooms that attract many admirers during the holidays.”

Judy said she has really appreciated Jack’s assistance, especially in the summer heat and now, because of the rain on St. Croix in the last several months, which Jack said has made the garden “a jungle out there.” They listed all the varieties of plants found in Laura’s Garden: clerodendron, hibiscus, jasmine, pinwheel flowers, local frangipani, chenille plants, red ixora, white crêpe myrtle, barleria, pentas, Christmas candles, bay rum trees (two of which were knocked down during Hurricane Lenny in 1999), Christmas palms and grasses.

Jack also has his own project, which takes him to the Garden as often as possible, six hours at a time. That project is the Blacksmith Shop, which had been deteriorating for a number of years before someone in the 1980s had the idea of putting it back



Jack and Judy Egnatinsky are valued Garden volunteers.

together. Five years ago, he registered for a three-week blacksmith course in New Mexico and came back to St. Croix to open the shop on cruise-ship days. “But since there are no more cruise ships, I haven’t been doing it.”

Jack added, “The fan has been broken for quite a while, and until it is fixed I cannot start a fire to run the dryer. Ernie Rothenberger knows what to do, so hopefully it will be fixed this fall so that I can continue to make those items that sell well in the Gift Shop.” Visitors to the Garden also enjoy his presentations and watching a “modern-day smithy” at work.

Judy spends an hour and a half every two weeks at the Garden; and they both work in the Nursery during special events when they’re on-island.

“I love the Garden. I like it for its therapeutic rewards,” Judy said. “I can just bury myself there.”

They both complimented the Garden’s longest and most dedicated volunteers – Virginia (“Jinny”) Hall, Gladys Orr and Darline Ward Clark – who for years have been walking the streets of Christiansted and Gallows Bay, seeking merchants’ donations for Christmas fund-raisers, among many other tasks at the Garden. But that is another story, for another time.

More volunteers are always needed and are welcome to call the office for information. If any reader has more information about the history of Laura’s Garden, please contact the office.

Summer camp brings fun and excitement

Danica David’s six-week Creative Adventure Summer Art Program completed its second year at the Botanical Garden on August 5. The children were based in the Education Building, next to the Orchid House, and ate their meals on the West Gallery.

Danica hosted about 20 youngsters, who studied art and drawing in the morning and gardening—courtesy of Ferdi Abraham—in the afternoon. The children planted the half-barrels that now grace the gallery outside the Gift Shop. The campers really liven up the quieter summer months at the Garden and the staff enjoys their youthful energy and excitement.

The camp concluded with an evening reception and judging of the children’s art. The camp is funded in part by the V.I. Council of the Arts; Danica is applying for a grant to hold it again next year at SGVBG.



Danica David announces the winning artists’ names.



Summer tropical fruit festival draws record crowd

Our 9th annual Mango Melee & Tropical Fruit Festival was very well attended, with more than 2,200 people coming through the gates. The original date of Sunday, July 3, had to be changed to Monday, July 4, after it was deemed to be a conflict with the Emancipation Day celebrations. Next year, the festival will be moved back to the Sunday, which will be July 2.

This is an event that appeals to all – residents, visitors, children and adults – and each year the committee works hard to improve the many activities. Errol Chichester, horticulturist at the V.I. Department of Agriculture, heads up the group, which also consists of representatives from the Botanical Garden, the University of the Virgin Islands' Cooperative Extension service and the UVI Agricultural Experiment Station. Our big sponsor this year was the V.I. Department of Tourism; we also received major contributions from Hovensa LLC; Plaza Extra; and BiolImpact, Inc.

Cruzan Rum, distributed by Premier Wines & Spirits, was the sponsor of the Mango Dis, Mango Dat Food Competition, which is growing in popularity. We are hoping for support from the company again next year so that this segment of Mango Melee becomes a "must-enter" event for the cooks and chefs of the Virgin Islands. This year's winners in all four categories took home \$50, a Mango Melee apron and a bottle of mango-flavored Cruzan Rum.

Chichester's display of tropical fruits in the Great Hall is always a tremendous draw as locals and visitors get to see, smell and touch a wide variety of fruits that they might be learning about for the first time. He also features a particular fruit in the center of the hall – this year it was coconuts, and people were fascinated to hear of the many uses of the plant. At the end of the day's activities, all the fruit on display is divided up into piles and a silent auction decides the lucky winners.

In another segment of the event that helps educate the public, SGVBG's executive director, Brinsley Burbidge, added a new dimension to the Tropical Fruit Identification Contest: He took some stunning photos of the flowers of eight island fruits, which the contestants then had to identify. (The winner was able to identify just six.)

The Mango Eating Contest is always a fun activity toward the end of the day, and this year was no exception. We even had one of our novice senators, Terrence Nelson, taking part. We now have had the same winner for two years in a row, so next year we will have to attract a serious challenger.

St. Croix graphic artist Terri Wunschel has designed the new logo for Mango Melee, which will "brand" the event and be used each year. The design for the T-shirts and tank tops, also created by Terri, will change every year.

The final accounting for the event was incomplete at press time, but we expect to have cleared about \$22,000 for the day. Our grateful thanks go to all our wonderful volunteers who make these events possible. The funds raised help the Garden to fulfill its mission of Conservation, Education and Preservation of the island's ethnobotanical heritage.

The Mango Melee committee is hoping to produce a recipe book to commemorate the 10th annual event in 2006. If any of our members would like to help bring this idea to fruition, please call Lesley Hoffman in the office. Thank you!

THE GARDEN IS IN NEED OF:

New or nearly-new filing cabinets • A powered hedge trimmer • Glass-fronted bookshelves for our botanical library • Items for the White Reindeer tables at Christmas Spoken Here



SGVBG welcomes new bookkeeper

Doris Isherwood has joined the small administrative team at the Garden, taking the place of Ethel Ritch. Ethel has been our bookkeeper for the past three years and has recently left us to take a full-time position in Christiansted. In addition to her bookkeeping duties, Ethel played many roles during her tenure at the Garden, and was instrumental in creating a board-approved employee manual. She was—and promises to continue to be—a wonderful volunteer at all our special events. She is also a terrific cook, as many of her friends can testify, and often produced cookies for the staff, and delicious hors d'oeuvres for our Gardens By Moonlight functions.

Doris has lived on St. Croix for the past 44 years and so is a familiar face to many SGVBG members. She worked for the Unitime Industries watch factory for 27 years and retired in 2003. She is the widow of Robert Isherwood and sister-in-law of the late James Hiram Isherwood.



Event chairman Errol Chichester (in Mango Melee T-shirt) talks about his tropical fruits.

Save The Date for our Annual Christmas Gala

at St. George Village Botanical Garden

"A Victorian Christmas"

Friday, December 9, 2005

6:30pm sharp

Limited seating – Reserve early!

*Sumptuous passed hors d'oeuvres
Elegant served dinner catered by
GSBB Catering, Chef David Trask*

*Live auction of decorated trees—
Auctioneer Roger W. Morgan
Silent auction*

Music by Patrick Baron

Call 692-2874 for information and reservations

Tickets \$100 per person prior to October 17

\$125 per person after October 17

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Upcoming Events

NURSERY SALE WITH THE ORCHID SOCIETY

Sunday, October 9

GARDENS BY MOONLIGHT

Monday, October 17

CHRISTMAS GALA

Friday, December 9

(early-bird reservation deadline is
October 17th)

CHRISTMAS SPOKEN HERE

Sunday, December 11

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

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Newsletter Editor: Lesley Hoffman

Garden
Hours
OPEN DAILY 9AM-5PM

New Members

FAMILY/DUAL (\$45)

Dulcie & David Crowther
Sue & Don Diddams
Richard & Patricia Gauthier
Nancy & Helen Green
Nancy & Junior Martin
Judith & James McWilliams
Dawn & Daniel Reiman
David Rogers & Barbara Walker

INDIVIDUAL (\$30)

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Teddy Richards
Brenda Sullivan
Lisa Verdugo-Thibou

Renewing

PATRON (\$500)

Dick Schierloh & Heidi Gaillard

SPONSOR (\$250)

Daniel & Amelia Musser

BENEFACTOR (\$100)

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Barbara Benner
Gary Bourdon & Ava-Gail Jagroop
Frances & John Fifield
Janice Giles
Philip & M. Rasa Glengary
George & Ruth Hazen
Susan & William Hulbert

Dan & Nancy Putnam
Wendy R. & W. Riley Waugh

FAMILY/DUAL (\$45)

Bunny & Doug Bewick
Jim & Marcy Davenport
Jennifer Jordan & Tom Eldridge
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Jean & Jim Kloss
Freda & George Logan
Eric Joyce & Judi Perazzo
Ethel & William Ritch
Anne & Alvin Rymsha
Anne & Peter Scigliano
Debbie & Richard Smullen

Andreas & Debra Tutein
Barbara Vogt & Robert Garlock
Diana & Roger White

INDIVIDUAL (\$30)

Jane Akin
Judy Baumgarten
Sherman Beresford
Lynn Fahy
Johanne Etkin Finley
Ethel Harris
Jeanette Jurman
Louise Lewis
Frances Molloy
Pamela Richards
Martha Shoemaker
Jessica Spacil

~ In memoriam ~

SGVBG expresses deep sympathy to the family of **Rudy Jurman**, who passed away on March 3, 2005;

to the family of **Alice Pfaelzer**, who passed away on August 9, 2005, and the family of

Maurice Barrant, who passed away on August 17, 2005.

