

The Conch Call



THIRD QUARTER 2010 • EDITOR: NINA YORK

ST. GEORGE VILLAGE BOTANICAL GARDEN ~ CONSERVATION, EDUCATION & PRESERVATION

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Garden Friends:

All gardens need rain, and this summer St. Croix and the SGVBG had a good amount. Perhaps not always in the quantities or at the times we might have liked, but for some things mortal man is not in charge. We were all doing a sun dance for Mango Melee in July, and the skies dried up just in time. With Herculean efforts on the part of Garden staff, event committee members, and volunteers, the grounds were made ready for the visitors expected -- and there were many. Mango Melee was a huge success. There were plenty of mangoes, music, vendors and mango-related activities such as the mango eating contest and the Mango Dis and Mango Dat competition -- all adding up to a day of fun.

We look forward to our next special event on October 10: Fall Heritage Festival. You will read more about it in this issue, and I urge you to come out to enjoy this culture-packed event. It is a new venture for SGVBG, and we hope to capture and present the rich heritage attached to the Garden and St. Croix, from very early times right up to the present. Don't miss it.

We are on Facebook! We have a website! Take a look. Both sites have lots of pictures and information. Our email communications are stepping up to the plate as well. One day soon you will have the

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OUR ST. GEORGE HERITAGE INSPIRES A NEW FALL FESTIVAL

!!!MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!

FALL HERITAGE FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 10, 2010

12 NOON - 4 PM

Join us for lunch, cultural demonstrations
Bully and the Kafooners, and so much more...

&

In recent years, the Garden calendar has provided major events for every season except the fall months. This gave rise to the idea of scheduling a fall family event for the entire Crucian community. What is more worthy of recognition than our own site, steeped in history that documents the lives of some of its enslaved residents as well as more contemporary reports of what life was like for families that lived on Estate St. George before 1972 when the Garden was founded.

This idea grew to let the celebration embrace significant island cultural contributors. We are blessed with a large number of culture bearers that take pride in keeping our traditions alive.

Among the individuals and groups we are including as participants in the Fall Heritage Festival on Sunday, October 10 from noon to 4 pm are: The Quelbe Music Ensemble of Bully and the Musical Kafooners, who will provide music accompaniment for the Junior Quadrille Dancers and for the Bamboula Dance group of Per Ankh, each group presenting an important cultural tradition.

The focus of this event is a celebration of the Estate St. George site, and toward this end we feature a reading by Michelle Moore of her grandmother Frances Christensen's recollections of her family's life there. Mini-biographies of documented enslaved persons at this site in the late 18th and early 19th cen-

tury, based on the research done by George Tyson, will be enacted by Per Ankh troupe members.

In true island style, the event starts with the blowing of the conch shell by

Junie Alick. The Garden's old blacksmith shop will be up and running thanks to blacksmith Richard Waugh. Gary Bourdon discusses the site's early history. Veronica Gordon leads a tour of our medicinal herb garden and other important historical plant sites; she will also demonstrate traditional crafts from plants and jewelry making from seeds as well as help revive traditional children's games. Donkey cart rides by Stephen O'Dea and Eeyore are another fun pastime for the kids. Other traditional demonstrations feature cassava bread baking by Aziya Shabazz, and basket and doll making by Judy Bain. Sheets of stamp-like seals illustrating local cultural traditions are for sale to benefit the Garden.

Always a highlight of any island event is the sale of traditional foods and drink of many kinds, from kallaloo to tarts, maubi to sea moss. Lunch is provided by Good to Chew Catering at the Educational Complex, led by Chef/Instructor Anton Doos, and other treats and refreshments are prepared by well known island food vendors.

We welcome one and all to this significant event celebrating our Garden History. Admission is only \$5 for adults and \$2 for children age 5-12.

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option of receiving your Conch Call via email as well as through regular mail or on our website. Our emails include notices of our regularly scheduled events and educational offerings as well as notices of our special events and offerings such as Lunch At The Garden, new items available for purchase at both the Museum Store and the Nursery and special discounts for St. Croix residents. If you would like to be added to our email list, please forward your email to: InfoAtTheGarden@gmail.com

Just as in all of our lives – change is one thing you can count on when you visit the Garden. It is especially apparent during this rainy season. Every day brings a new bloom or leaf. We are gorgeous and green. If you aren't a member – please join. If you are a member – thank you and we look forward to your continued support. Visit us often and watch us grow.

*Monette Booth
President, Board of Governors*

What Is Nature-Deficit Disorder?

By Marilyn Chakroff, Education Chair

There is a growing body of evidence that today's children are living with a "Nature-Deficit Disorder." Author Richard Luov, the Chairman of the Children & Nature Network, recently wrote a book titled, Last Child in the Woods. Here is one statement from this book:

"In the United States, children are spending less time playing outdoors, or in any unstructured way. From 1997 to 2003, there was a decline of 50 % in the proportion of children 9 to 12 who spent time in such outdoors activities as hiking, walking, fishing, gardening, or playing on the beach. In a survey, 71 % of today's mothers said they played outdoors every day as children, and yet only 26% of them said their own children play outdoors daily. "

As this "nature deficit" grows, there is increasing evidence that direct exposure to nature is essential for human physical and emotional health. New studies suggest that exposure to nature may reduce the symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Children with ADHD are characterized by restlessness, and they have trouble paying attention, listening, following directions, and focusing on tasks. There are a growing number of researchers who think that ADHD has always been around, but it was never a problem before, because for most of human history, energetic children were prized for their strength, speed, and agility. These were necessary skills for hunting and gathering, or exploration and settlement, or life on a farm, filled with outdoor chores. However, today's children do not live on farms. They do not have the opportunity to work or

play outdoors. It may be that more children are diagnosed with ADHD now because today's children have no outlet for ordinary, everyday, rambunctious outdoor work or play. If children are always contained and supervised, what do they do with their natural energy? I'd guess they would fidget and day dream! ADHD, anyone?

Recent studies show that today's children spend approximately 6.5 hours a day watching television. That means children spend more than 40 hours a week in front of the tube – an entire work week! And this does not include time spent texting, on cell phones, or listening to their iPods, or Googling. Guess how much time these same children spent in outdoor, unstructured play daily? Approximately 7 minutes.

There are other studies that describe the decline in attendance at National Parks. When people do come to visit national parks, they often opt for what is called "windshield tours" – that is, looking at the park through the windshields of their cars. These visitors never walk a trail, or put up a tent, or sit by the side of a burbling brook.

Many of today's children are deficient in Vitamin D, a vitamin our bodies manufacture from exposure to sunlight. All of us need to have sunlight on our (unprotected) skin for about 15 minutes every day to make the necessary Vitamin D. Another reason children no longer play outdoors unsupervised is the fear factor. Some parents are afraid to allow their children out of their sight. These and many other factors all contribute to the growing nature deficit in today's children.

So what is the solution? How do we grow the next generation of naturalists, environmentalists, farmers, and gardeners?

Those of us who live on St. Croix full time are actually quite lucky. We are living in and surrounded by the natural world. We can go snorkeling among beautiful coral reefs, hiking in the rain forest, and walking through lovely gardens. In fact, you can hardly avoid nature here on St. Croix. So take advantage of the fact that we are surrounded by nature, and take your children or grandchildren, or even borrow a child or two, and come have natural fun at our wonderful Garden. Come to a Second Saturdays workshop, or attend Mango Melee or the upcoming Fall Heritage Day in October. We can defeat "nature deficit disorder" by growing the next generation of outdoor savvy children right here on our island!

ABOUT THE SGVBG NURSERY

The nursery was started in 1981 by five volunteers who set up shop at two tables under a mahogany tree. Today we have a good-sized area with mist tables located at the rear of the Garden grounds. We propagate plants to sell to the St. Croix community as well as maintain stock for the Garden. Our goal is to increase the planting of flowers and trees on the island of St. Croix. The nursery is open every Tuesday and Friday from 9 to 11 a.m. for sale to the public. In addition to this, we are open five times a year for special events. We offer orchids, hibiscus, and annuals at good prices. Please visit the nursery and chat with our knowledgeable volunteers.

Top Ten Things to Do with Your Child at St. George Village Botanical Garden

by Kate Lincoln

10. Play follow the leader through the rainforest trails. When you touch, they touch, when you smell they smell. Crouch, take giant steps, tip toe and stretch!
9. Count how many blooms you can see in the Orchid House. Ask your child what color the blooms are. Its fun to make up names for the different shades of pink, orange, red. "Daddy's face when he's mad red" and "mosquito bite pink" are some favorites.
8. Roll down the grassy hill on the North East side of the Great House.
7. Ask your child to find five things that are YELLOW—if completed, give them a yellow lollipop. Do this with other colors each time you come back!
6. Look for the tiny red bugs that live on the Prickly Pear Cactus (they are called cochineal) – squash them in your hands and watch their dye come out!! This color, known as carmine red, is extracted from these little bugs to use as food coloring. Look for the white, waxy webs on the prickly pear- the cochineal hide inside there.
5. Play hide and seek in the worker's ruins.
4. Find five different leaves. Look at them close with your child and find the differences. Do some have rough edges while others have smooth? Some are thick, some are thin, etc. Then go stand under a palm leaf. That's ONE BIG leaf!
3. Lie down in the grass, take your child's hand. Both of you close your eyes and have them tell you what they hear.
2. Find the perfect walking stick (from the ground, not from a tree!) - this works best after a storm. Finding sticks on the ground is great for building imaginations...and sticks are very useful. Find ways to use your new "tool". Can you dig with it? Can you pick up leaves? Is it a sword? Is it a magic wand?

and number 1....

...Discover nature through your child's eyes, let THEM lead YOU through the garden! Connection to Nature builds imaginations, not to mention the exercise both you and your child will get. Enjoy your botanical garden with your child. That's why its here!

FALL HERITAGE FESTIVAL
Plan lunch with Good to Chew!
October 10 - Noon to 4 pm

Students of Overland Summers Help our Garden Grow

Once again this summer, SGVBG was fortunate to host the students of Overland Summers. Based in Massachusetts, Overland Summers operates programs for students to develop skills in leadership, teamwork, and community service during excursions throughout the U.S. and in several foreign countries.

For three years now, students from Overland have offered invaluable volunteer service at SGVBG in cleaning up, maintaining and caring for various garden areas. This year, during the month of July, the students, ages 14-18 provided 252 hours of service hours by helping in the Visitors' Center parking area, the Medicinal Herb Garden, the Vegetable Garden and the trails through the Naturalized Forest. They also helped with some basic, but much needed maintenance in the Great Hall.

These young adults also volunteered time with other community organizations on St. Croix during their two weeks here, then continued on to spend a week on St. John to assist the National Park Service in maintaining trails in the Virgin Islands National Park.

SGVBG is very much indebted to these young volunteers who choose to spend their summer experiencing diverse communities and leaving them better than they found them.

Caps Are IN at the Museum Store

At Our Museum Store....New Caps Have Arrived!!! Show your support and promote our exquisite Garden with one of our new hats. Artfully embroidered across the front with "St. George Village Botanical Garden" and various flower and palm tree motifs, the hats come in an assortment of colors and designs to appeal to both men and women. These caps make wonderful gifts (keep this in mind for Christmas), or pick one up for yourself!





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Upcoming 2010 **EVENTS**

OCTOBER

9 9 - noon *Second Saturdays*
10 noon - 4 pm *Fall Heritage Festival*
23 7 -10 pm *Gardens by Moonlight*

NOVEMBER

13 9 - noon *Second Saturdays*

SAVE THE DATES OF DECEMBER 3 - for our *CHRISTMAS GALA*; DECEMBER 11 for *SIP & SHOP in the Museum Store*, and DECEMBER 5 for *CHRISTMAS SPOKEN HERE!*

Garden **HOURS**

Every day except Christmas: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Herbarium Hours:By appointment:
Call 340.692.2874

Library Hours: Tuesday 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Or by appointment: Call 860.303.7478
three days in advance

Nursery Hours:Tuesday and Friday 9 -11 a.m.

Museum Hours: Monday - Friday
9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
and weekend days when a cruise ship is in port

Museum Store Hours:
Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
and during special events