



# **KEY WEST GARDEN CLUB**

## **Summer Newsletter**

### **2019**

#### **Message from the President**

What a long, hot summer we have had this year; but forever thankful that Dorian did not decide

to visit us – our hearts and prayers go to our sister islands in the Bahamas. Our small group of dedicated Summer volunteers have kept on top of all the major Garden maintenance jobs, and the gardens look beautiful – the white perfume garden is full of fragrant blooms, the butterfly garden is full of brightly colored flowers and butterflies, and the top of the hill native plants and wildflowers are happy and healthy!

The rare palm trees we planted post Irma, less than 2 years ago, are now well established and are growing beautifully opposite the white gazebo.

The MAJOR restoration project on the Fort itself is now well under way; all of the crumbling bricks are being replaced and repointed by specialists in historic preservation.

The first area they are tackling is the “Birdcage” and then the inside of the old fort itself.

The second phase will be the arched pathway to the entrance and exterior walls, and the final phase will be the exterior walls on the beach.

This will disrupt our Reception considerably, but we aim to stay open throughout this important restoration work and will have a beautifully restored Fort by next Spring!

This project is being funded by a large TDC (Tourist Development Council) Grant; which is also funding the installation of air conditioning in the old fort after the brick restoration work is all complete!

Another project, funded by FEMA, is projected to start in December – this will be to replace the ceilings/roofs of the old ammunition rooms (or dungeons) off the meeting room.

This will entail digging up much of the Peace Garden, which we will have to redesign and replace once they have finished...

So, 2020 will be a “banner” year for both the West Martello and the Key West Garden Club. I will keep you updated on each of these projects as the work continues!

Meanwhile I look forward to welcoming you all back home for our first General meeting on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

Safe travels and see you very soon.

Rosi

#### **Scholarship Award**

Our current Scholarship recipient, Sydney Gallagher, graduated from Key West HS in 2016 and just finished her Junior year at the University of Florida with flying colors. We are delighted with her hard work and academic success (3.33 GPA) as a Marine Science major with coursework on environmental and sustainability issues.



Sydney had a busy summer working on the Fury and taking classes. In July, Sydney visited with some of the Monday volunteers and was thrilled to receive this year's check for \$2,000.

Here is Sydney's description of her activities:

"This year I was in the Galapagos for the fall semester. That was by far my favorite semester of college. My classes were based on field work, which is definitely something I really like and value in a class. We did things such as whale watching, coral surveys, dive trips, etc.

I started volunteering at the USGS benthic ecology lab. There I was doing things to help the team prep for their trips at sea and also learning some things about tank care and maintenance. I was working at the lab about 8 hours a week. Beyond that, I was involved with Wahines of the Waves, an all-girls board sports club. I was also involved heavily with Surf Club, as well as Unlitter, which is an organization dedicated to reducing waste of businesses and organizations.

The renewal of this scholarship means the world to me in reducing the stress of costs of being in school."

**Beyond our mission of education our gardens provide respite to many in need of healing.**



**Task Force Dagger Foundation** provides assistance to wounded, ill, or injured US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) members and their families. They respond to urgent needs, conduct Rehabilitative Therapy Events (RTE), and provide next-generation health solutions for issues facing our service members. They are a rally point to combat traumatic brain injury (TBI), Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS), and environmental exposures. Their cohesive programs enable families to seize the moment and live life. The TF Dagger Foundation brought US SOCOM service members and their families to Key West as part of their Rehabilitative Therapy Events program. Several families came through the Gardens and had individual mini photography sessions.



### **Little Pink Houses of Hope**

Since the organization began, their mission has been to provide week long vacation retreats for breast cancer patients and their families, where their energy for the week can focus on healing and growing as a family unit. Because they offer a wonderful respite from the stressful world of doctor appointments and treatment, demand for their retreats is incredibly high. In June the Club offered our gardens for their box lunches after a paddle boarding event.

### **Fourth of July Celebration**

It was another lovely evening. The fireworks were spectacular. All went off without a hitch. These are photos from Hazel Hans. Starting the morning with a rainbow and ending the day with a Big Bang!





## Fort Restoration

The TDC has agreed to pay the County \$800,000 for brick and mortar repair at West Martello! Everything has been emptied out and the process has started. Keith Bring is the project manager for the County. We are looking a little barren. But in a few months (hopefully) the Fort will look refreshed and repointed and safer.



## Plumeria Warning



Kitty Somerville had a scary experience with her plumeria.

“After cutting big branches from mine and then taking off about 100 leaves from the stems and being exposed to the milky substance, I had a mild itch in my left eye and it was very slightly blurred. In the morning, we cancelled plans and headed to the optometrist as I could hardly see in my left eye. There was no redness or itching, just a fully clouded blur. I could barely read the biggest letter “E” on the chart. She was concerned, so we went right away to the ophthalmologist. Left there with a steroid eye drop to use every 2 hours and through the night and a return this morning first thing. He was concerned that if there was no improvement from being poisoned, that I would be going to Bascom-Palmer ASAP. It was scary. This morning I had improved

overnight in less than 24 hours to about 50%, so no need to go to Miami. Will be doing drops during day hours through Monday AM when I go back for a check. Whew!”

**Lesson learned is that I will wear eye protection and always gloves (washing them immediately after exposure) when dealing with cutting plumeria, or any plant with a milky substance. I love gardening and propagating, so will not stop that!**

Here are some of the warnings online about plumeria:

...the sap is poisonous and will cause itching, burning sensation, and redness on the body part that comes in contact with the sap.

... This widespread plant is mildly poisonous, ingesting leaves or flowers can irritate the digestive tract. It's the sap that's irritating, and a few people develop rashes when they get it on their hands from breaking a branch or leaves.



## More from Kitty

If anyone bought any plants last November and they are looking particularly good, send a photo to me. [kscudjoe@bellsouth.net](mailto:kscudjoe@bellsouth.net) We can use them in our newsletters and possibly in emails to members.



Succulents do bloom. Isn't this pretty?

**Sapphire Showers *Duranta*** is a multi-stemmed evergreen shrub with an upright, spreading growth habit. Its large size and upright habit of growth makes it great for use as a solitary accent or can be mixed in with other plants in your landscape or planted in a row-garden-style hedge.

The Plant and Art sale will be November 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mark your calendars.

## Thank you lunch at Salute for the summer volunteers

The Garden would not survive in such a splendor if it were not for the hard-working volunteers. Can you say **sweat**? A whole lot of that goes on. These members are so dedicated they plug along even though there is a great resemblance to wet noodles. They really enjoyed the lunch at our neighborhood restaurant. Thank you all!!!!



## Member health report

Many of you may have heard that Robin Robinson had a stroke. Robin is a past president of the Club and writer of a Sunday column on horticulture in the *Citizen*. Robin is doing very well. She did not lose any limb function and gets around quite nicely with her "red racer" walker. Robin is still writing her column and is doing a great job of recovering. She said we could share this info. Robin is usually at the desk on Monday mornings at the Club.







## What do our volunteers do when not working in the gardens?

Jan Blackmon, who has been a Garden Club member for many years, also works with the Florida Wildlife Conservancy to capture the very invasive Burmese Pythons in the Everglades

“Here is a python caught in the Everglades a few weeks ago after a tumultuous battle that would have been worthy of the world wrestling genre. It was approximately 8 feet long and was taken to the U.S. Geological Survey lab in the Glades to be euthanized and necropsied. One down and a million to go!”

Jan also works as a receptionist on weekends at the club. Talk about multi-tasking!

Thank you, Jan for all that you do.

Jan, on the left, with a very serious look

## More photos from Lynne Bentley-Kemp

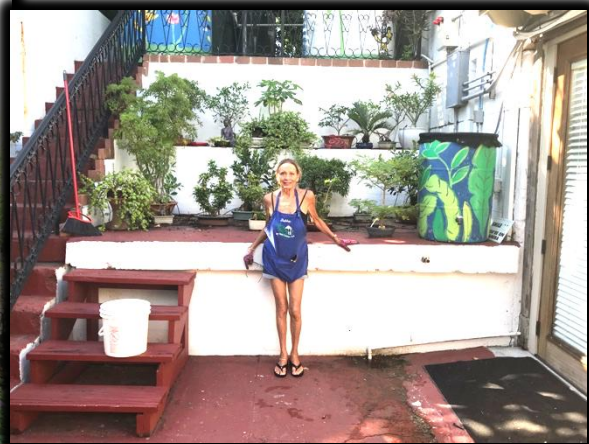
The Ligum Vitae was so chock full of flowers and seeds that Chuck had to prune the tree.







**Some of the Monday morning crew**



**Mosquito Control reminders of best practices to cut down on mosquitoes breeding by:**

- Emptying all standing water and water-holding containers in yards
- Keeping hot tubs and pools in working condition and chlorinated
- Emptying plastic swimming pools when not in regular use
- Flushing out water-holding plants like bromeliads
- Cleaning clogged roof gutters and draining flat roofs
- Stocking ornamental ponds with mosquito-eating fish
- Drilling holes in garbage cans and recycle bins
- Removing old tires with stagnant water
- Removing water from stored boats
- Changing water in pet bowls, vases and birdbaths at least twice a week
- Screening rain barrels, water tanks and cisterns or requesting fish

## Comments

This letter came to our Receptionists:

I spent a week in Key West on vacation recently, and I just wanted to say, one of my very best memories was of the Botanical Gardens there at Higgs Beach and the information provided to me, when I expressed interest in the African Cemetery there. It meant a lot to me to visit and pay homage to my ancestors who were buried there.

The lady that greeted me when I came in there, was friendly, and knowledgeable. Besides the Butterfly Conservatory, I honestly spent my best and most peaceful moments there.

Whenever anyone asks me about my Key West experience, the Gardens will always be included!

Sincere thanks,  
Mrs. Leslie Hatchett-Hill, Nashville, TN

## Trip Advisor

Thank you to Kitty and Steve Somerville for monitoring the Trip Advisor Site. And a huge thank you to all who volunteer, and our receptionists for making this such a lovely place to visit.

A visitor from **Bardney, United Kingdom** gave us 5 stars.

“Really nice and relaxing place to visit! Lovely staff and amazing plants! They even have monarch butterflies!”

## Programs

We look forward to welcoming our members back from their travels. Cathie Gottshalk has a great line-up for our general meetings.

**Dr. Lynne Bentley-Kemp will be our speaker for October 3 at 1:30 at the Club and her presentation is entitled "Picturing Gardens."**

Lynne has been heavily involved in the local arts community as an advocate, curator, teacher and artist including years of teaching photography and humanities at FKCC and outstanding service with The Studios of Key West, the Sculpture Garden and the Key West Garden Club.

Many thanks for photos from Kitty Somerville, Lynne Bentley-Kemp, Sue Sullivan and Hazel Hans. Thank you for edits from Christa Varacalli.

Editor,  
Sue Sullivan