

Key West Garden Club at Fort West Martello

BEACH

ATLANTIC OCEAN

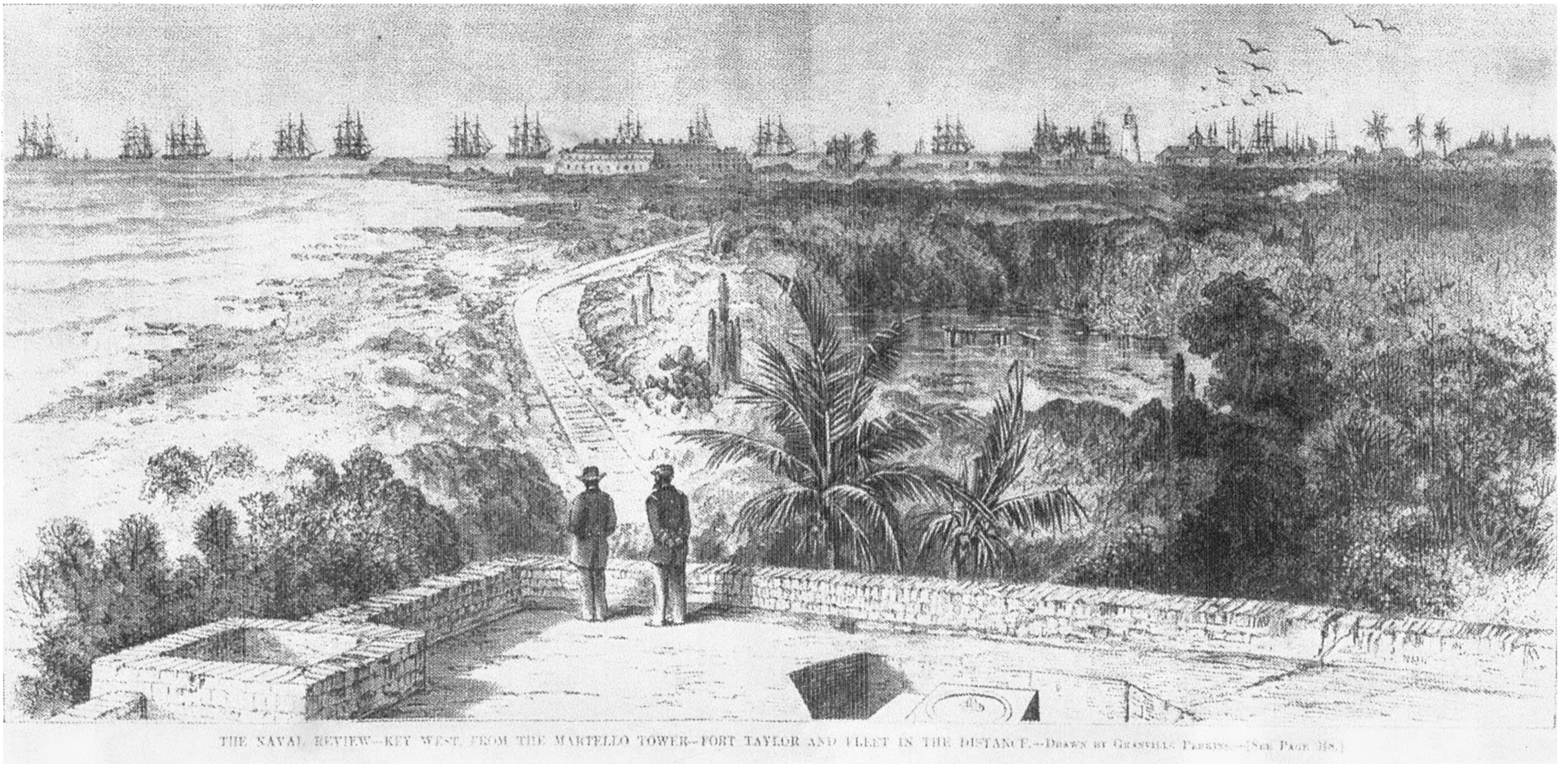
PLANT COLLECTIONS

- A. Fragrant/White
- B. Croton
- C. Cactus + Succulents
- D. Roses
- E. Orchid
- F. Crinum Lilies
- G. Bromeliads
- H. Butterfly Garden
- I. Fruit + Spice Trees
- J. Palms
- K. Xeriscapes
- L. Bonsai
- M. Natives
- N. Prehistoric

TREES

- 1. Lignum Vitae
- 2. Black Bamboo
- 3. Portlandia
- 4. Royal Poinciana
- 5. Strangler Fig
- 6. Short Leaf Fig
- 7. Lipstick Palm
- 8. Sea Grape
- 9. Kapok
- 10. Tropical Almond
- 11. Satinwood
- 12. Autograph Tree
- 13. Gumbo Limbo
- 14. Shaving Brush
- 15. Old Man Palm
- 16. Silver Buttonwood
- 17. Horseradish Tree





THE NAVAL REVIEW--KEY WEST, FROM THE MARTELLO TOWER--FORT TAYLOR AND FLEET IN THE DISTANCE.--DRAWN BY GRANVILLE PERKINS.--[SEE PAGE 38.]

Soldiers atop the Tower of West Martello Jan 24, 1874, viewing the largest Naval Review of the century in Key West Harbor
Drawing by Granville Perkins published in the April 18, 1874, issue of Harper's Weekly

Brief History of Fort West Martello

You are standing in a National Historic Site, West Martello Tower, one of three fortifications on our small 2x4 mile island. These are part of a series of fortifications designed to protect the Atlantic and Gulf coasts after the War of 1812 when the British burned Washington DC.

Construction on the major fort, Zachary Taylor, was started in 1845. Construction on the two Martellos, East and West, was not begun until after the Civil War started in 1861. Choice of this desirable site for the West Martello was complicated as 295 African refugees had been buried in 1860 along this beachfront.

Even though Florida was a Confederate state, Union troops controlled Key West and the Dry Tortugas. The union troops and ships were successful in blockading 299 Confederate ships. The military has been a continuous presence in Key West since the early 1820's when Commodore Porter was sent here to deal with piracy.

No battles were fought on this site but many deaths occurred due to yellow fever. This fortification was also used during the Spanish American War as well as WWs I and II, the Cold War and the Cuban missile crisis. See some historical photos in our library.

The military tore down much of the structure in the late 1800's as they needed rubble to support heavier armaments at Fort Taylor and this Martello fell into disrepair. And locals likely used West Martello as a free brickyard. Visit East Martello, now a history museum, to see our twin structure intact. You may also be interested in visiting Fort Zachary Taylor, now a state park.

The garden center is named for Joe Allen, a congressman and avid gardener, who saved the structure from demolition and brought in the Key West Garden Club in the 1950's to create the gardens you will see today. The gardens are designed and maintained by local volunteers who meet every Monday for a workday and educational session.