



WINTER NEWS 2020



President's Letter

What extraordinary times we live in! I never thought I'd be writing this newsletter during a global pandemic...unprecedented during our lifetimes.

There is, however, much good news to celebrate during these uncertain times.

Both large construction projects at West Martello are completed! The restoration of the historic bricks throughout the Fort and external walls and arches is outstanding! The team from Boston who did the work were all experts in Historic restoration, true Artisans who took extreme pride in their work – and it shows! The domed ceilings and arches have never looked better.

The separate project, restoring the roofs of the ammo bunkers, was carried out by another team of experts from Minnesota. This was a technically difficult job, which the team completed very successfully. Our meeting pavilion room and the storage areas are now all open for us to use again; and we will be using them in our upcoming season, once we are able to meet again.

The gardens themselves are also looking the best they've looked for ages...everything is blooming, more birds and butterflies and bees are flying around the gardens...it is a very happy place!

We have kept the gardens open to the public for as long we were able to, but today, Sunday 29th March, the entire Higgs Beach and West Martello area has been officially closed to the public, by the County. This is such a shame, as I truly believe it is good for one's spirit and soul, especially during these trying times.

We are so fortunate to have such a wonderful active club, with many members still volunteering to maintain our gardens; working in ones and twos to keep the orchids blooming; the perfume plants smelling so sweet and the courtyard plants and trees well pruned.

Check our Facebook page and website regularly for updates about the gardens.

Wherever you are, please stay safe and stay well;

Hope to see you very soon,
Rosi

Winter Luncheon

Sharon Jones and Pam Van Soest did a fantastic job for our winter luncheon at the Hyatt Centric. It was a beautiful day with a beautiful view. The menu was delicious and we all got very cute reusable bags. It is always a wonderful way to catch up with folks we have not seen in a while.





GARDEN TOURS

Thank you to Mary Olson and her crew for one of the most successful tours the Club has had. We had beautiful gardens that were all a walkable distance and great weather. All that, along with the great planning, made for a wonderful community event. An enormous thanks to all the volunteers who volunteered to docent and the wonderful homeowners who allowed us into their amazing gardens.





UNSUNG HERO

Synda Patten was the Unsung Hero for the Garden Club this year. Synda is a delightful volunteer to work with and has done a marvelous job of keeping the “Colonel’s Garden” in tip-top shape. This was exceptionally hard with all the brickwork that went on at the Fort.





Butterfly Garden is looking great!

Fort Restoration

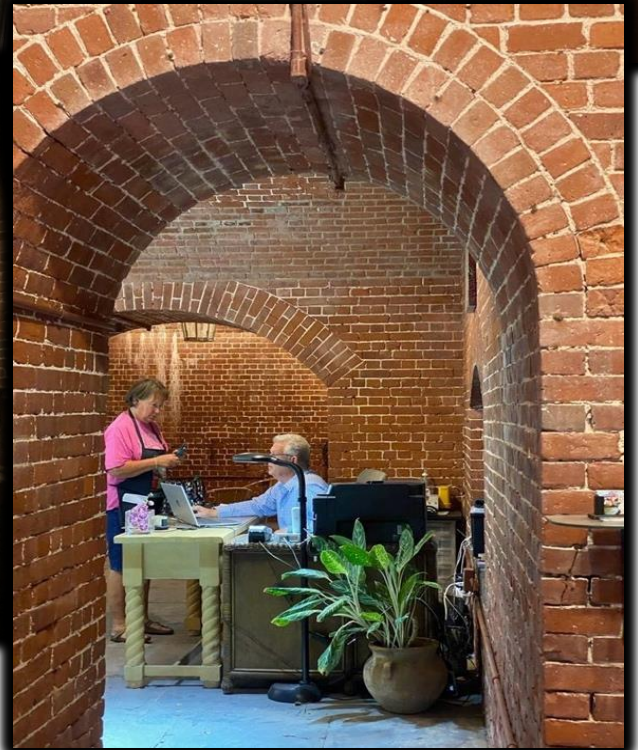
The top of the hill where the Peace Garden is located was all dug up so the workers could pour concrete down to the ceiling area of the “dungeons”.

They then had to shore everything up to complete the ceiling work. The concrete floors were then painted.

This should get rid of all the mold concerns that affected our members while in the meeting room.



All the chairs were cleaned before restacking them in the storage rooms.



The brickwork is done. The reception area has been moved to the library room. This has opened up the entrance and made it much roomier for the receptionists to deal with a large number of visitors. A big shout out to our receptionists: Kathleen Gillis, Michael Perkinson and Sharon Jones. They did an amazing job dealing with all the discomforts and disturbances.

Report from Hazel Hans, Fort Chair

We had great Monday volunteer help cleaning furniture etc. on the 2nd of March when we moved reception, and again on the 23rd when we were able to work on clearing the Pavilion. The majority of the work was done outside the Monday volunteer hours by the following people:

Lou Langlois did an amazing amount of work with the reception area both taking it down and putting it back together.

Chuck Zenter came in several days and rehung photos and pictures in the Fort, including the antique photo hangers back in their original place.

The Pavilion was an absolute nightmare as everything ended up covered with a thick layer of dust even though we had been told the dust would be contained.

The core team of **Lou Ann and Butch Steely** and **Elaine Belanger** and **Hazel Hans** came in a number of times to



work on cleaning, sorting, disposing of and moving items back into the bunkers for storage.

Dave Deck has spent a lot of time planning and building a new workbench and organizing all our facility maintenance storage. It will be wonderful to have a work space again.

Monday the 23rd the "users" organized their storage spaces: Orchid Society - **Sharon Jones**, Fall Fair - **Mary Brady**, Garden Tours - **Mary Olson**, Decorations - **Jane Tiedeman**, Refreshments - **Mary Olson** and **Lou Ann Steely**, Butterfly Garden - **Donna Farrow** and electrical and irrigation supplies - **Jeff Ware**.

Wildflowers at the Top of the Hill



Saying Goodbye



Our wonderful volunteer Barbara Smith has moved to the West Coast. Barbara has been a member for many years. She was president in the early 2000s and is a whiz at propagation. We shall miss her. Maybe we can do a field trip to Portland?

Educational Sessions



We continue on with our educational sessions on Mondays. Sharon Jones did a demonstration on repotting orchids. Sharon and the orchid crew are responsible for keeping all the orchids happy in the garden. This talk was very informative, and now the rest of us can be as successful with our plants.

General Meeting Lecture



Bill Irwin, Professor of Biology at Florida Keys Community College, gave a fascinating talk on mushrooms.

Some Interesting facts: 4.5 billion years ago, fungus climbed out of the sea to make soil. 2.4 billion years old fossilized fungus was found in lava.

Fungus can to clean our environment by sopping up oil, asbestos, copper and other contaminants.

Mushrooms have been used to save bee hives from a virus, the mycelium they produce protects the bees from colony collapse disorder. The larger part of a mushroom grows underground in the form of mycelium, long thin threads of root growth. Every step you take there are 300 miles of fungi underneath. Pretty neat, huh?

If you get a chance to see *Fantastic Fungi: The Mushroom Movie*, don't miss it!



Propagation

With access to Propagation being a hazard for a few weeks during construction and scaffolding blocking the entrance, we managed to put the birdcage back in place and keep the plants for sale in the courtyard.

Mike Sheehan was delayed 2 weeks on starting the framework for the shade area, but as you see in the photo, he was able to finish and it looks magnificent. He says he's just a handyman, but his carpentry skills are quite good. He designed the framework in a way that it complements the roof of the birdcage. Next time you're outside, take a look back into propagation to see how well the design worked. Sharon Lieberman is now working on getting the appropriate shade cloth to cover this new frame and the existing shade area.



In a short period of time our team of galvanized plant sign creators added 7 new signs making our grand total 74. We were able to use 25 signs among the 4 gardens on tour. Many docents said that the comments during the garden tour were most positive on the signs, and many people took photos of the signs to have the plant ID and information. Special thanks for completing the 7 signs goes to Lynne Bentley-Kemp, Christa Varacalli, Sharon Thomas, Sue Sullivan and Kitty Somerville.

Surprise!

We were pleasantly surprised to see this blossom on a tree that was donated to the garden. It is a *Saraca Dives*. "Sorrowless Tree". According to legend the Queen of the Jiapiluowei Kingdom (2500 years ago) gave birth to Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism and doctrine of Nirvana, under this tree. The tree is worshipped by Buddhists. The color of its golden-orange flowers is copied in the Buddhist monks' cloth.





This is a difficult time for everyone. Working in the garden is a good outside activity to do when you are sheltering at home.

Stay safe and we will see you when this is over. Many hugs and positive thoughts to all.

Thank you for photo contributions from Kitty Somerville, Rosi Ware, Hazel Hans, Robin Robinson, Eloise Pratt Sue Sullivan and especially to Lynne Bentley-Kemp.

Thank you to Christa Varacalli for proofreading.

Sue Sullivan, Editor