



Message from the President

Dear Garden Club friends & Members:

It's been a very different summer this year, with only a handful of volunteers to keep the Gardens and Propagation maintained given the Covid restrictions, but I am happy to report that we have kept the gardens looking beautiful and even completed a major project!

The gardens were completely closed for a few months, but we are now open Saturday & Sunday mornings, thanks to our receptionist, Michael Perkinson, who has volunteered his time these past 3 months. In October we will increase our open hours to Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday mornings.

We have hosted a number of wonderful small-scale weddings, where the wedding party have been able to enjoy the entire grounds to themselves!

Our Orchid team have religiously tended our orchid collection every week, resulting in an even showier display than usual.

But the major project we were able to do this summer whilst the gardens were mainly closed was to install a classic Labyrinth at the top of the hill, in the Peace Garden, overlooking the ocean.

"A labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. The Labyrinth represents a journey to our own center and back again out into the world."

We think this will be a big hit with families, and maybe even weddings, as the couple could say their vows from the center of the labyrinth.

Our Monday volunteers cleared the entire area after the Bunker roof project was complete. Thanks to a member, we were able to buy a large design "mat" and attractive, creamy bricks which were laid out to outline the pathways. We decided to use Flexi-Paving as the secondary material to make the labyrinth easy to walk on and easy to maintain for many years to come.

Special thanks go to Jeff Ware for the brickwork and to Blake Hunter and Murphy Davies for helping to fund the Flexi-Paving.

I hope to see many of you as you return to Key West over the winter months...the Gardens are one of the few places where it is safe to visit...lots of open space and fresh air, with those gorgeous views over the ocean.

We will NOT be resuming our monthly member meetings in person this year, but are organizing monthly ZOOM meetings in January, February and March...details to come later on who our speakers will be and how you can join the meetings from your computer at home.

Do check our website and Facebook for up-to-date news and fabulous photographs of the gardens by our very own Lynne Bentley-Kemp!

Stay safe and stay well,
Rosi

Garden Club Closed

The Gardens closed to the public at the end of March. The County allowed us to have a few socially distanced volunteers to come in and keep an eye on things.

Some volunteers:
Paul McGovern,
Sahar Babi, Eloise
Pratt, Shelli
Chase, Rosi Ware.

Shelli Chase -
thinning out the
bamboo.



Tunie Hamlen
in the cactus
garden

Rahn Clayton - having
fun with his
wheelbarrow.



**Early June-
Reopening
for
weekends.
Come on
down...**

We are
baaack (at
least part
of the
time)! And
we are still
gorgeous!



Labyrinth

The Labyrinth is finished. Our Monday volunteers helped clear the entire area; Jeff Ware did sterling work of laying out the bricks, securing them in place and then covering them in masking tape before the Flexi-Paving was installed this week. The Flexi-Pave team installed the Flexi-Paving in one day. And it looks magnificent!



Things that happened while we were away...

The orchids were happy. Sharon Jones, Pam Van Soest and Lou Anne Steely all came in at various times to keep them feeling spectacular.



The yellow orchid is a vanilla orchid. Lou Anne Steely is propagating this **planifolia** (**vanilla** is usually **propagated** from **cuttings**). Be aware it will take 2-3 years for the cutting to root and an additional 3-4 years to flower. The **plant** will then flower once a year. If the flower is successfully hand pollinated the morning it opens, it will take another 9 months for the pod to mature.



Bombax Tree

In March the Bombax trees were blooming all over town. The one at the Garden Club is *Bombax ceiba* - Red Silk Cotton Tree. The bark of the tree is very spiny. The flowers are produced while the tree is bare. Fruits are woody, filled with cottony silk. Each flower lasts 5-7 days and the tree blooms for approximately one month. After flowering, new foliage appears in March - April, and large 6" woody fruit capsules begin forming. These capsules are filled with small brown seeds embedded in silky hairs. The capsules split open in April and May and the seeds float down from the tree attached to the silky cotton and are carried by the wind great distances.



Wax Jambu -*Syzygium samarangense*



Jambu fruit trees vary greatly in height, from 16 to 50 feet. However, all feature a stout, 10- to 12-inch trunk and a spreading canopy like a large shrub. The fruit starts out light green or creamy white, later ripening to a glossy, brownish-red color. The fruit of jambu trees possess slightly spongy flesh that ranges from dry to juicy. They need temperatures consistently above 60 degrees Fahrenheit to successfully fruit.

Hurricane Laura

We were lucky that Laura passed us by, but bands of strong winds did a job on our plants: a lot of wind burn. Mother Nature heals and we are looking better.





Many thanks to Donna Farrow, Bridget Dawson, Ellen Engleson, Tami Kirkbride, Laurie Tift, Debbie Jo Clem, Sandy Bergin, Kathy Comanski and Gladys Aldrich for helping out in the Butterfly Garden.

Weddings are still going on. Much smaller, but still beautiful and safe. Thank you to Sharon Jones for facilitating these events.



Propagation

Many volunteers have been propagating plants at home. Kitty Somerville has kept up with propagation of natives by seed. Steve Somerville and Kitty mounted 8 staghorn ferns on frames built by Mike Sheehan. The regular weekly crew in propagation have been Patti Rodriguez, Sharon Thomas, Christa Varacalli and Kitty Somerville, with help from Carol Borland, Mary Brady and Lynne Bentley-Kemp. We made a little money selling plants for a few weekends when the desert roses were in bloom and looking glorious, but the majority of our time is keeping up with weeding and keeping our plants healthy. We've had 2 different issues with our irrigation system, where we had to check 3 or 4 times a week and water plants. It takes more than an hour to water all the plants if the system is down. Then we had the wind event with Hurricane Laura passing out to the west. It took down one of our shade cloths, which was quickly fixed by Mike Sheehan. He also fixed our spigot that is attached at the end of the tiki table. Caro has been great about emptying our yard waste each month. Many thanks to Sharon Jones and the orchid crew who have been doing the weekly watering of the birdcage.



Jewell Orchids. *Ludisia discolor*



Our stellar volunteer, Fort Chair and all-around amazing woman, Hazel Hans is practicing her Olympic dive into the fountain.



President and Garden Chair Rosi Ware, and Fort Chair Hazel Hans.

The Club owes much gratitude to these two women, who are indefatigable in keeping the Garden Club in tip top shape!

Thank you to all the volunteers who have come in to help. My apologies if I missed some names.



Photo contributions from Eloise Pratt, Kitty Somerville, Hazel Hans, Christa Varacalli, and Rosi Ware. Extra special thanks to Lynne Bentley-Kemp for her photos and info. Thank you to Christa Varacalli for proofreading. Follow us on FaceBook [facebook.com/gardeninafort](https://www.facebook.com/gardeninafort) . Website <https://keywestgardenclub.com/>

Sue Sullivan, Editor

