



## Winter News 2022



### PRESIDENT'S LETTER

This is the last Letter I will be writing to you as president of the Key West Garden Club!

I have thoroughly enjoyed serving you all over the last 6 years...and look how far we've come in that time!

Just as I stepped in as president in 2017, Hurricane Irma slammed through the Keys, creating total destruction for many of our members living in the Lower Keys, as well as creating total havoc in our own gardens at West Martello as the strong winds brought down our amazing and HUGE Strangler Fig tree. The damage caused by that huge tree coming down has taken a few years to address fully...it literally took weeks to even get the fallen tree out of the gardens. Wherever it fell, it crushed and destroyed existing plants, it brought down the archway and inner walls in the courtyard, and created a diagonal tear in the center citadel!

Suddenly our shady garden was in full sunlight all day. With grants and generous donations, we redesigned the gardens, creating the large round pond and fountain bracketed by stands of black bamboo and heliconia as a key feature where people want to be photographed. We rebuilt the waterfall, created a pretty white fragrance garden in the Inner Courtyard, planted an educational "prehistoric" garden where there was just waste, and created a rare Palm Collection on the side of the hill where the huge pandanus/screw pine had stood before being blown over. The County and Garden Club worked together to apply for grants from the Tourist Development Council and FEMA to help pay for repairing the damaged brick walls and arches of the Fort. We also used the quiet months when we had to be closed for the pandemic to install more flexi-paving paths plus a unique Labyrinth in our Southernmost Peace Park. Through working together, we created the most beautiful gardens in a fabulously restored Civil War era fort for all our visitors to enjoy!

As I write this letter our visitor numbers have increased significantly, we are in line to welcome over 50,000 visitors this year, and provide the perfect venue for over 100 weddings!

I am extremely proud of everything we have achieved together and am now happy to hand over the president's mantle to our incoming president, Mary Olson. I know that the Garden Club will continue to thrive and grow under Mary's excellent leadership. I will continue to look after the gardens themselves as "Garden Curator" and will work with Mary to ensure a very smooth and successful transition.

Thank you all,

Rosi

## GARDEN TOURS

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



The lectures at the gardens about orchids, landscaping and growing edibles were a huge success. The after-party at president Rosi Ware's home was amazing!

## UNSUNG HERO

The Community Foundation of the Florida Keys holds an event each year to honor the tireless volunteers who are the backbone of our nonprofit organizations.

Kris Griffin was the Unsung Hero for the Garden Club this year. Kris is a delightful volunteer and our "Energizer Bunny". Kris always has a positive outlook and is a wonderful worker in Propagation.

President Rosi Ware was the MC for this fabulous event and was also an Unsung Hero for the American Red Cross Foundation. We have a lot of heroes in our Club!





## WORKING AROUND THE GARDEN

Mary Olson, Lou Ann Steely, Pam VanSoest and Sharon Jones are seen here working on the resident orchids.

As you can see, they are quite successful. The Lignum Vitae tree in the courtyard is spectacular.



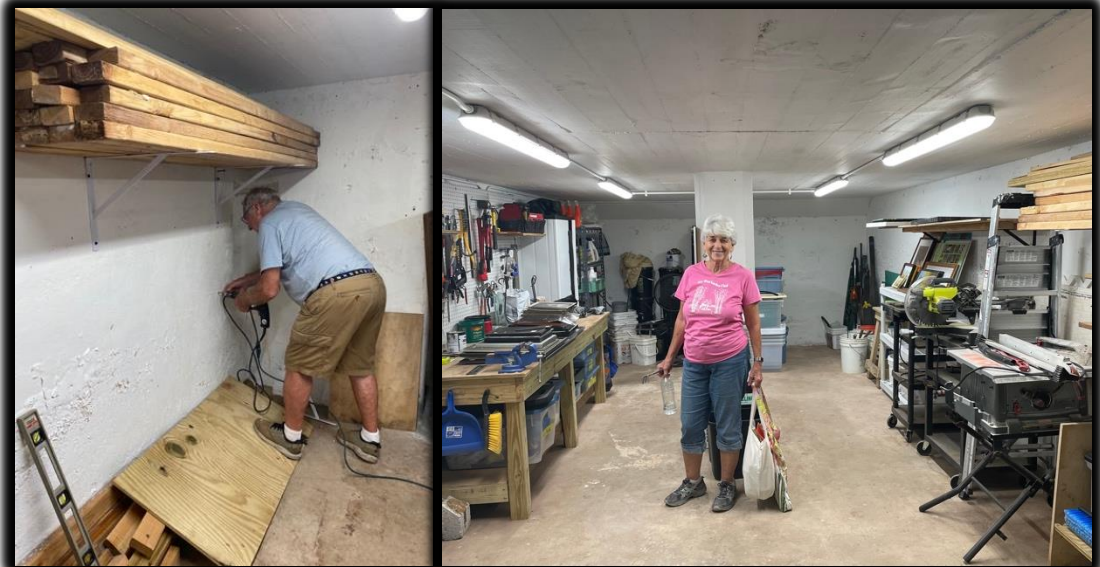


Davin and with his wheelbarrow buddy, Butch. Caro and Davin setting bricks. Rusty is happy with his weeds!



Dave Deck has worked tirelessly on all sorts of projects at the Club. Here he is installing shelves in one of the “dungeons.”

Hazel Hans, our hardworking Fort Chair, is proudly showing off the final results of Dave’s and other volunteers’ efforts.



Who is hiding in the bushes?



Dianne O’Connell! Not only can she get down and dirty, Dianne also was very generous in helping fund the new labyrinth at the top of the hill.





## 10:30s

Kitty Somerville gave a talk on growing pea shoots, and many folks went on to grow their own to be used in salads. Hazel gave the last 10:30 of the season on different types of mulch.



The 10:30s are a wonderful addition to the Garden Club's education mission. Propagation leads put ideas and speakers together at the beginning of the season, and all the volunteers learn something and appreciate the break in the morning. Sometimes there are even Mimosas and goodies to eat like the party after Fertilization Day.



Another educational opportunity happened on a cool Valentine's Day. IFAS Environmental Horticulture Agent Michelle Leonard Mularz, with the assistance of Rosi Ware, came out to give a detailed presentation on proper pruning techniques. She and Rosi chose the Native Garden as the demonstration zone.





## GENERAL MEETING LECTURE

Hats off to our own Lynne Bentley -Kemp! She filled in at the very last minute when one of the scheduled meeting speakers became ill.

Lynne presented a wonderful talk on photography and types of cameras and all sorts of inside information for taking great plant photos.

Thanks to Cathie Gottschalk for putting together our programs in a difficult year.



## PROPAGATION

Hazel Hans and Kitty Somerville did a tour with the Master Gardener interns, focusing on ornamental plants, and followed that with an hour-long lesson on propagation by rooting, by cuttings, by leaf cuttings and by seeds. It was well received.

The Native Yellow Milkweed project is off to a good start with Carol Borland and Pam VanSoest planting over 50 pots. More will be planted in Propagation and at several of the volunteers' homes. They are hoping to have sufficient stock for the November Plant Sale. Butterfly weed, *Asclepias tuberosa*, is attractive, available, and native to Florida. The courtyard and Monday morning plant sales are continuing to be profitable. The succulent planters are a big hit.



## MEMORIAL

Michael Perkinson, who worked as a receptionist for the Club, passed away suddenly in October. Michael was a sweet "curmudgeon" of a guy. He helped us reorganize our office space and was a wonderful receptionist. We had a memorial service for him in March. Flowers were donated by the knitting group who meet on Sunday and got to know Michael well. It was a lovely evening with warm and funny stories. His roommate Dave was very thankful as Michael did not have family here. The event ended with a champagne

toast which Michael would have greatly appreciated.





## THE ORCHID FAIR

The Orchid Society held their annual Orchid Fair in March. It was well attended and there were lots of beautiful orchids. Our own Kitty Somerville won a first place for her Jewell Orchid. Congrats!!



## UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN...

Sharon Thomas has moved on to a new adventure in her life. Sharon, who was a mainstay in Propagation, a great grower of tomatoes that she shared with us all, and an insightful contributor to the Garden Cub Board, is off to Colorado. She and her husband Dave are now the proud owners of land near Boulder which they are returning to its original natural state. We will miss her but are hopeful that she can come back and visit in the winter. Good luck with the new project!



## MEET COURTNEY



We are fortunate to have found a new receptionist in Courtney Burger. She has quickly fit into the position and has made a couple of useful suggestions already. She seems to really be enjoying her opportunity to work with us. She has even taken on catching chickens and taking them to the Wildlife Center.





## Helen Thomas Koger



Helen's daughter-in-law brought her in about 15+ years ago thinking she would enjoy volunteering and being with people. Helen sat at the reception desk on Monday mornings and got to interact with all of us, including our guests. We adopted her right away, as she had a warm, loving personality and had a sharp mind. Every year we celebrated her birthday during our 10:30 break. Kitty Somerville remembers that she once told Helen how much she missed her mother's hugs. After that, every Monday Kitty came in she got a loving hug from Helen.

We honor and appreciate members like Helen. Happy belated birthday from all of us!



ROB O'NEAL/The Citizen

**Helen Thomas was born in Applegate, Michigan, and married her neighbor, Seabring Koger, in 1942. After working for the Burroughs Corp. for 27 years in Detroit, Thomas retired and was a member of the Warren Quilt Group before moving to Key West in 2004 when her husband passed away. The former member of the Key West Garden Club said she loves her many friends on the island, particularly her hairdresser, Frank Cicalese, and her Conch girls lunch group. The friendly and vivacious former Michigander will celebrate her 100th birthday Sunday, March 20.**

*Photo courtesy Key West Citizen*



## MERCHANDISE



New merchandise has come in!! Wait, it is almost gone again. Stay tuned, more is on the way.

PS - The Easter Bunny who is visiting Pat's Garden doesn't need a t-shirt!



Many thanks for photo contributions from Kitty Somerville, Rosi Ware, Hazel Hans, Eloise Pratt, Sue Sullivan and especially to Lynne Bentley-Kemp.

Thank you to Christa Varacalli for proofreading.

Sue Sullivan, Editor

## HAPPY SPRING!!!

