



Winter News 2023



As we come out of winter and enter the spring months at the garden, so much comes alive again. Our lignum vitae tree is exploding with orchids, as well as its tiny purple blooms. The bottlebrush tree has already sent out its lovely flowers, and the garden is full of new growth tended to by so many who come in on Monday mornings. All is waiting for the rainy season to begin, and this drought to end.

Kudos to our volunteers! We are so fortunate to have such dedicated volunteers, both the year-round and short-term visitors who are here during our busy winter months. We do an appreciation potluck every year to celebrate the hard work and accomplishments. Many projects were completed over the winter: painting, constructing, planting, primping up the curb appeal, mulching and pruning. The gardens are gorgeous once again. Without so many winter workers we would not be able to complete these innumerable projects.

A special thank you to Conner Boyd, who tackled the Annual Garden Tours the weekend of February 24th and 25th. Over 500 tickets were sold and the hosts and guests were very pleased with the diversity and selection of the five special gardens. Thankfully the tours were a huge success, and Conner has agreed to take on the very big task of heading up the 2024 Garden Tours. She is already identifying an area and some gardens. Our goal is to make it walking friendly, and I am confident that Conner will succeed.

As warmer months come our way, we will begin the demolition of the green gazebo and construction of our new beautiful white gazebo. The projected starting date is mid-May, and completion by the end of June. Nell Smets, our Unsung Hero of the year, is heading up this project and doing a phenomenal job dealing with all its challenges and obstacles.

All in all, it has been a busy Winter, and a very successful time for the Garden Club. Thank you for your continued support.

See you next time,
Mary Olson

Winter Luncheon

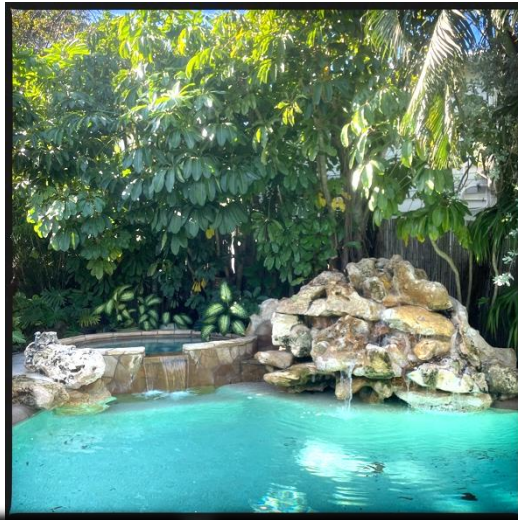
The January luncheon was held at the beautiful Shor Restaurant at the Hyatt Centric. Sharon Jones did a wonderful job of coordinating the event. Food and friends were wonderful.





GARDEN TOURS

Thank you to Conner Boyd and her crew for another very successful tour. We had beautiful gardens that were all a walkable distance and great weather. All that, combined with organized planning, made for a wonderful community event. An enormous thanks to all the volunteers who were docents and the wonderful homeowners who allowed us into their amazing gardens.



The lectures at the gardens about orchids, hurricane recovery and ponds and plants were a huge success. The after-party and food were amazing!



UNSUNG HERO

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

Nell Smets was the Unsung Hero for the Garden Club this year. Nell is an amazing volunteer and a talented architect

who designed our new gazebo, which will be completed this spring.



The two versions of Nell.



Pearock in Propagation

Our propagation area was inundated with sand during Hurricane Ian. After a lot of shoveling and removing sand, and MORE shoveling and adding new pearock, the area for growing plants looks neat and tidy.



Here are Kris Griffin, Marcia Lara, Maryann Michon, and Janet Borch, hard at work propagating Baby Sunrose plants for the area in the garden next to the white gazebo on the hill.

Below is a before and after of the shade area that Hurricane Ian took down. Mike Sheehan put up one that will withstand future hurricanes. He did an excellent job!



More Work around the Garden

A big Monday project was the mulch pile. We moved “lan sand” - black dirt created by the mulch - and spread the rest of the mulch, all at Kenny King’s request as he was concerned his bucket truck would sink in when he next delivered mulch. Dianne O’Connell was the team leader.



Bull and Davin, Shelli and others working under Dianne’s orders.

Work in other areas of the garden is a “never-ending story”.



10:30s

The 10:30 sessions on Mondays continue to be a great source of information for members. Pre-garden tour info on the different gardens were a good way to familiarize docents with various plants on the tours.



Cathie, Hazel and Synda gave info on plants on the tours.





Pam Van Soest's topic was re-potting phalaenopsis orchids. Our grocery stores are selling lots of them and they're flowering all around us here in the Keys. Re-potting them gives them a better chance at survival. Pam uses clay orchid pots and a special mix designed for phals. She puts wine corks in the bottom of the pots instead of Styrofoam.

A lesson on invasive plants - a Florida Friendly Landscape topic - was presented by Janet Borch. The plants discussed were ruellia, an invasive senna that caught us by surprise, and ground orchids that have been hiding in mulch being purchased commercially. It was also Janet's birthday. So, we were treated to some yummy goodies while we listened to Janet's talk.



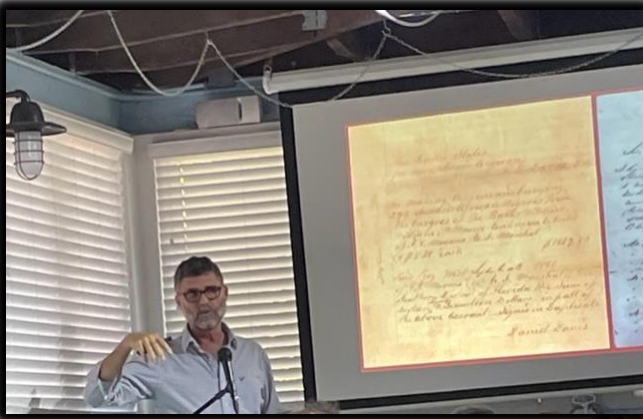
Trail Walk on Cudjoe Key

A hike on Cudjoe Key with identification of plants was organized by Kitty Somerville and others in Propagation. Sharon Lieberman and Sharon Thomas came back for a visit to the Keys. So wonderful to catch up with Garden Club Members who have moved to new places.



General Meeting Lecture

One of our lecturers was historian Cory Malcolm who gave a history of the African Memorial adjacent to the West Martello. The cemetery at Higgs Beach contains the remains of nearly 300 men, woman and children who died in Key West in 1860. In the summer of that year, the U.S. Navy rescued 1,432 Africans from three American-owned ships engaged in the illegal slave trade.



The ships bound for Cuba were intercepted by the Navy, which brought the Africans to Key West where they were provided clothing, shelter and medical care.



Thanks to Cathie Gottschalk for putting together our programs.

Butterfly Garden

Hurricane Ian was very destructive to the Butterfly garden. Lots of hard work has it looking beautiful again. The "Hairy Balls" are a popular sight for visitors.



The Milkweed 'Hairy Balls' are growing well in the butterfly garden. Cathie is harvesting seeds for propagation to grow more of these plants.

Part of the Butterfly Crew Betty, Marcy, Pam, Cathie, Jane and Jackie.

DeAnn Schofield and Nell Smets attacked the Rampart where the water tanks are so they could be repainted and neatened up.



The Orchid Fair

The Orchid Society held their annual Orchid Fair in March. It was well attended and lots of beautiful orchids.



Our own Pam Van Soest was awarded a 1st place, Best of Class, for KWGC. Under her direction this beautiful orange Cattleya hybrid flourished.

Pam also won a 1st place Best of Class ribbon for her white Phalaenopsis.

Pam heads up the orchid crew for the Club (just one of the many hats she wears).



The Garden Club's other "orchid grower", Kitty Somerville, won a 1st place Best of Class ribbons for her Guaritonia Cosmo Sanguine and her Ludisia discolor (Jewel orchid)

Scholarship

The Garden Club Scholarship recipient, Marsella Munoz was included in an article in the Citizen on Sunday. She is an active member of DiveN2Life. It is an extracurricular STEM Enrichment Program and a way to engage students in science through diving. Members involved in this group have done diving and coral restoration in such places as the Virgin Islands and the Bahamas. Marsella is continuing her pursuit of environmental studies.



DiveN2Life members, from left, Marsella Munoz, Cameron Smith and Kara Norman hold their lionfish catch after removing the invasive species from Florida Keys reefs.

PotLuck Thank You Party



Once again Lou Ann Steely and her helpers put together a super thank you potluck for the volunteers. Lots of wonderful food and great camaraderie.



Rosi 's Stroke Recovery

Rosi wants to thank her Garden Club friends for all the love, kind wishes and support they have sent to her in hospital and now back at home...it has meant the world to her and helps get her up in the morning ready to do battle in the rehab arena each day!!

Big thanks for all the truly delicious food...Rosi is building up her strength after 4 weeks in hospital! It's going to be a long road until she can return to working in the gardens...but will be able to visit in her wheelchair very soon.

Below is Jeff's latest update:

"Is it just me, or is it getting harder to keep track of time nowadays? The days just seem to fly by. Rosi and I are in a nice routine with regard to the road to recovery. Monday, Wednesday and Friday usually start at 8am with dropping Rosi off at rehab for two hours of intense work. Then usually one of our wonderful Team Recovery members will pick her up and bring her home. I'm allowed to duck out of the pickup duties so I can continue to work out at my studio on my latest creation. It's actually good therapy for me to be honest. We are united again for lunch and the rest of the day thereafter.

Rehab is getting quite intense. The therapists have actually strapped Rosi to the exercise bike so that the arm and leg stay attached.

The days when Rosi doesn't go to rehab bring no rest for her. We start the day with about 90 minutes of exercises and stretches before one of her designated "walkers" arrives to walk with her around the neighborhood so I can go to the studio and work. A block used to take around 45 minutes to complete, but today's was achieved in just over 30 minutes, such has been her improvement recently. We now also have a PT Table at home for Rosi to do her exercises on -- though you could be excused for thinking that the table is actually for Leroy to use. He just loves being involved in things all the time. On more than one occasion he has been trapped under one of Rosi's limbs, but he just doesn't seem to care and is happy to come back for more.

Despite all this rehab work, a full recovery will still take quite a bit of time, but at least we are able to see little improvements every day so we know that all the effort is worth it.

Love, Jeff"

And she's back!!!

Rosi came to the potluck party and is showing great improvement. Needless to say, the entire Club was ecstatic to see her!!



Many thanks for photo contributions from Kitty Somerville, Hazel Hans, Eloise Pratt, Sue Sullivan, Diane O'Connell, Tunie Hamlen and special thanks to Lynne Bentley-Kemp, photographer extraordinaire.

Thank you to Christa Varacalli for proofreading.

Sue Sullivan, Editor

Happy Spring!!!

