



## Fall Newsletter 2023

### Message from the President

Happy Holidays

Here we go, off and running into the New Year! There are so many exciting things happening at your Garden Club. The new Vanda Orchid arbor is stunning, and the current batch of purchased pavers and bricks have been laid. If you have already purchased one, be sure to visit and locate your paver. There is still space remaining for new pavers. Find the information at our website



<https://keywestgardenclub.com/club/vanda-arbor-inscribed-paver/>. Events are already using this new pergola for weddings, bar set-ups, and we recently used it for Lynne Bentley-Kemp's book-signing event. Her books are available at our gift shop and are a fantastic book for anyone who has visited the gardens, or as a gift for new visitors, at the low cost of \$25. All proceeds go to the Garden.

We will look forward to having so many of our snowbirds returning this year, some for one or two months or more—and even those in town for a week or two. We welcome all. When they leave, we are sad to see them go. They are happy to share their many talents with us to help us catch up on projects left over from the summer.

Upcoming is our annual Luncheon on January 28<sup>th</sup>. Look for details. In early spring we will start the gazebo tear-down and new construction.

From a generous donation from the Stearns family to the CFFK, we also received \$17,500 in extra donations recently from three different donors. The Stearns are providing immediate funds to nonprofits which have been named by anyone as a legacy to the Garden Club. This is totally free money and does not cost the donor anything when it comes from the Stearns legacy. It is an extra gift. If you are interested in leaving a donation to the garden as part of your Will or Trust, please reach out to me at [kwgcpres@gmail.com](mailto:kwgcpres@gmail.com).

Have a Fabulous New Year,

Mary



## The November Plant Sale and Art Market

Our annual sale took place and was a big success. This is such a wonderful community event and a chance for folks to mingle with neighbors and buy plants, great art and gifts and wonderful food. Thursday was move-plants-off-the-truck and set-up day. Friday and Saturday were welcome-the-crowds days. Thanks to Kitty Somerville, Mary Olson, Shelli Chase, Sue Sullivan and all the volunteers for pulling off a such a well-organized event.



*Nell Smets was our outstanding seller of all things green.*



*Great food and brats.*

*A future Garden Club member.*

**An enormous thank you to all who helped in every way!!!**





## Orchid Arbor



The Orchid arbor is beautiful, and is turning into a real focal point in the Garden. Here is a set-up for a wedding; you can also see how the pavers are displayed.

## Lynne Bentley-Kemp Book Signing

Another example of the use of the arbor was shown at Lynne's book signing. Lynne was a 2022 Anne McKee Artists Fund grant recipient. Her project "Botanical..." – is an exhibit of a series of horticultural photographic images that have been made at Key West Garden Club. They include both color and black-and-white framed, archival digital prints and explore the structure and texture of plants.





## Unsung Hero



KWGC President Mary Olson crowned Patti Rodriguez as our Unsung Hero. The Board unanimously voted that Patti has earned this distinction in a myriad of ways.

Patti is the “Croton Whisperer” for the Club. She has taken many croton cuttings and turned them into healthy plants which sell quickly at our Plant Sale.

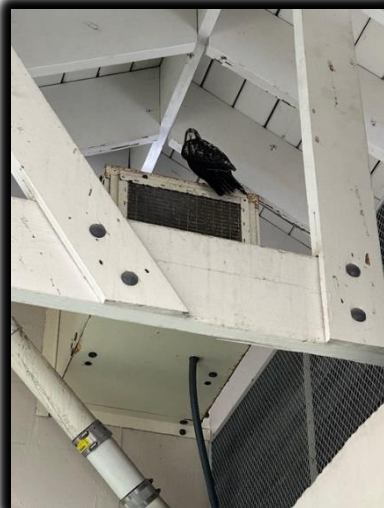
Patti also is a wonderful baker, and supplies us with delicious goodies for many events. And, she is a very sweet lady.

Since 2001, the Community Foundation of the Florida Keys has been hosting an annual event to recognize the service of volunteers. Monroe County 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations are

invited to nominate one Unsung Hero to recognize that individual’s unpaid contributions over the past year. Each Unsung Hero will be presented with a certificate of appreciation at our celebratory luncheon and be recognized in all three editions of the *Keys Weekly*. This year’s event will be Feb 2, 2024.

## Sunday Morning in the Garden – by Hazel Hans

“A glorious morning turned out to be more exciting than I expected. I went down to set the chicken trap and prep the plant stand and Julia (the receptionist) told me there was a bird trapped in the bathroom. It freaked her out when she opened up! I called and Tom Sweets, the director of Wildlife, came right over. He was in a big rush as he had several other calls to answer! But he has since called, texted and posted a photo on their Facebook page. It was a broad-winged hawk, pretty banged up, but they took care of it and already released it over at the Indigenous Park. Tom also posted a photo on Facebook. Migration time keeps Wildlife very busy. The Keys is a major byway for the raptors. Enjoy the photos, Julia caught him inside the Fort holding the hawk answering another call.”





## Working Crew



Not quite the Rockettes, but these are our star volunteer leads in the garden. Each one is responsible for an area of the Garden. These leads worked through a very hot summer to keep the Garden beautiful. They were each awarded a copy of Lynne Bentley-Kemp's book.

*Below, left to right: Rachel, Jeanne, Shelli, Carol, Nell, Pam, Synda and Hazel, missing was Cathie Gotschalk.*





## Does the Apple Watch Camera Really Work?

*Lynne, Brenda, Kitty, Marcia and Maryann. Taking a break to try out Apple Watch remote photography.*

Propagation looks like fun! A reminder that they put out plants for sale in the Courtyard and you can get some beautiful plants a great price. Come check it out!



## Education

Learning about plants and related issues is still a primary directive of the Club. Kitty Somerville has put together an impressive series for the "10:30" meetings for the volunteers on Monday mornings, and Cathie Gottschalk has an impressive array of speakers for the General Meetings on the first Thursday of the month.



*Pam Van Soest kept us up to date on orchids.*

*Rosi Ware gave a walking tour of the crotons in the Garden. Part of the original collection was donated by Sally Dodd*





## “Hidden Gem”

Here are some quotes from visitors to the Club posted on Facebook:

- “Today I stumbled upon a hidden gem at the Key West Garden Club: a breathtaking labyrinth meditation space nestled high on top of a hill, offering a serene escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life...I couldn’t help but feel a profound sense of peace and introspection wash over me.... In our fast-paced world, taking the time to breathe and connect with our inner selves is more important than ever.
- *The Incredible Hike in Florida that Leads to a Fascinating Former Civil War Fort*  
by Megan Toderro for *Only in Your State*



“Right in the heart of bustling Key West, the Key West Garden Club and West Martello Tower combine historical charm with natural beauty. The West Martello Tower, a striking relic of the past, serves as the centerpiece of the garden club. Originally constructed during the Civil War era to defend the island, the tower is an architectural gem that stands as a testament to the island's rich history.

The Key West Garden Club's story is intertwined with the West Martello Tower's history. This dedicated group of horticulture enthusiasts took over the tower's grounds in the 1950s when the tower was abandoned, and they transformed it into a thriving botanical garden.

Today, their labor of love is a testament to the power of community and the preservation of both history and nature.”

*We, as members of the Garden Club, should take some pride in our goals of promoting education of local history, flora and fauna.*



## Honor Donations

Donations to the Club this quarter were made in honor of:

Bijan by Mary Boorsma  
Dee Prince by Cathy Dezelon  
Marcella Ploegman by Suzanne Campbell  
Karen Maichrowicz by Ronald Stravinsky  
Karen Maichrowicz by The Manaher/Jenkins Family

### The Gazebo Project - Nell Smets

We are now off and running!!! After many starts and stops (mainly stops) Nell—through sheer persistence—has finally gotten all the permits, and contactors Check Electric and Egan Construction in line to start work on the structure that will replace the “Green Gazebo.” The start date is March 18<sup>th</sup> and the result will be beautiful.

*The Green Gazebo in 2007, after Irma in 2017 and what it will look like in 2024!*





## Holiday Decorations

Once again Jane Tiedeman worked her magic on the gardens and did a lovely job making the Club look so festive—especially if you drive by at night. We shine! Thanks, Jane.

### 12 Days of Christmas – *by Jane Tiedeman*

“A number of years ago the KWGC was gifted a set of House of Hatton Twelve Days of Christmas ornaments. The source of the gift is unknown (anyone with insight please come forward and let us know the origin of the gift). It is known that the set was usually displayed on a swag that would adorn the reception area of the Fort. As the ornaments began showing their age and it was more difficult to attach swags to the aging bricks the ornaments were not displayed. However, Sharon Jones, a former KWGC Board Member, mentioned that she wished they could be displayed. Our late receptionist, Michael, took the ornaments and arranged them in a basket attempting to hide some of their damage and make them a part of our holiday décor. It was a lovely display. They were once again stored for the year. The water damage and continuous dampness in our storage area appeared to take a toll on the ornaments.

Once again Sharon brought them to my attention. She enlisted Nancy Henning to help evaluate the ornaments and see what could be done to refurbish them. Replacement ornaments are available on the internet but are a bit pricey (\$30 to \$50 each). A whole set on Etsy sells for around \$500!

Nancy was kind enough to take them home and “clean them up.” Her recommendation was to leave them in her home in the off-season. When the season approached Jane decided to arrange them on a wreath, attempting to camouflage some broken parts and hang the wreath near the yearly Christmas tree location.

If you visit the Fort, please take time to enjoy these fabulous ornaments on the wreath. Guaranteed you will start singing the song... Enjoy!”





Kitty Somerville and Carol Borland also helped with colorful additions to the *Plants for Sale* area. They cleverly took air plants, small grapevine wreaths and shells and created beautiful wreaths that sold out as soon as they were made!



## Upcoming Events

January 4<sup>th</sup> - General Meeting at KWGC 1:30 pm  
Speaker: Ethnobiologist Marc Williams, Topic: Food as Medicine

January 18<sup>th</sup> - the Little Hamaca Trail Native Plant ID Walk 9:30 am. It will be limited to 20 people. Call Kitty Somerville at (305) 304-4882 to reserve a spot.

January 28<sup>th</sup> - **Holiday Luncheon at Hyatt Centric** from 12 to 2 pm. Details in Christa's e-mail.

February 6<sup>th</sup> - at KWGC 6 – 9 pm. Military Historian and member Fred Borch will give a special lecture on the Mariel Boat Lift. More details to come in January.







**May you all have a joyous, healthy, Holiday Season!!**

Thank you for photo and other contributions from Lynne Bentley-Kemp, Kitty Somerville, Hazel Hans, Sue Sullivan, Eloise Pratt. Thank you to Christa Varacalli for proofreading.

Sue Sullivan, Editor

