



Winter News 2024



Happy Spring!

There are so many plants and trees in bloom this time of year, it makes my heart sing—which is something our fantastic volunteer Nell Smets does frequently in the garden.

About two weeks ago, one of our Past Presidents, Robin Robinson, wrote in the Keys News that she found herself doing absolutely nothing and recommended it to all. While Robin visited the Garden Club she sat and, while “doing nothing” was flooded with sights and sounds of the beauty of our beloved gardens.

When I saw Robin last Monday at the garden, I complimented her on that column and was blessed with her warm smile. And then on Wednesday night, using the opportunity to enjoy Robin’s suggestion, I did nothing. The Community Orchestra, a small but talented and mighty group performed their Spring concert amongst the palms, plants and orchids in the garden. For once, I was doing nothing! No weeding, no working, no organizing. Just nothing. And in that nothing, music wafted in the air, in a perfect harmonious and acoustical setting which nature had provided. The natural lighting from sunset highlighting the fountain and the African statue of mother and her children. People outside walking or bicycling. And stopping to move closer to the gates and do nothing other than listen...closing their eyes...and listening...while butterflies and doves danced among the thrill of the sounds.

Yes, my friends. We all need to do nothing once in a while. To regenerate, to rethink, and to reenergize. I welcome all to visit the gardens soon. And bring friends, lunch, and do nothing.

P.S. While we are doing nothing, the Construction Company Egan is busy deconstructing the green gazebo and bringing a new structure to life. Follow the progress, on Facebook, and our website.

May you enjoy a very happy spring,

Mary O.

Winter Luncheon

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





A special shout out to Jerry Caputo (in the middle pic with Shelli Chase). Jerry put together the whimsical succulent owls that members got to take home. Jerry has done amazing work with his succulent creations over his time with the Club and brought in plenty of donations to the Club. Sadly, he is leaving the Keys but has left a lasting impression with all of our members. ***Thank you, Jerry and good fortune in your next adventure. Our wonderful Shelli Chase has also left the Keys. What a delight and hard worker and fun person. Come back and visit, Shelli!!!***



The Vanda Orchid Arbor

Part of the finishing crew for our new arbor and Kitty Somerville, donating one of her prize vandas to help Pam Van Soest with filling in the orchids.

Orchid Fair

Congratulations to the KWGC Orchid Group!

Pam VanSoest has done a wonderful job as the head of the orchids for the Key West Garden Club. She entered several of the garden club's orchids into the judging show and won one a first-place ribbon and 4 second-place ribbons. This is a testament to her increasing knowledge of caring for various orchids in the environment of our garden club.



Kitty Somerville won 2 first-place and Pam VanSoest won 2 first-place and 2 second-place prizes for their personal entries. Kitty and Pam are pictured here as the two bookend assistants to Carlos of OFE orchids. A Broughtonia orchid called *Ctna. Cosmo Sanguine* was awarded a second-place ribbon. This orchid was a donated division of Kitty Somerville's parent orchid from a few years ago. A Vanda was judged second place in the "best of show". Looking great in the KWGC's birdcage.

A Big Thank You to the Key West Orchid Society.



Roberta Depiero won an orchid and goodies. Lucky girl!



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 with very 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 after-party was even more fun than the tours!!



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.

Patti Rodriguez is the Unsung Hero for the Garden Club this year. Patti is an amazing friend to the Garden Club. She is a whiz at growing crotons which we sell out of at the November sale, and you can count on her great cooking for events and delicious muffins for our Mimosa and muffins fertilizer parties. Many members helped Patti celebrate her recognition.



Maribel Boat Lift Lecture



Fred Borch is a historian and lawyer. He recently retired as Professor of Legal History and Leadership at the Army's law school in Charlottesville, Virginia. He gave a standing-room-only talk on the 1980 Maribel Boat Lift operation which had a huge impact on the United States in general and Key West in particular. Around 125,000 Cubans fled Castro



for Florida and the boat lift had lasting effects on South Florida. All proceeds generously went to the Club.

Lectures at the Club



Dr. Corey Malcom, Florida Keys History Center Historian, gave a lecture on the 200-year history of Monroe County. It was well attended and the social afterward had lots of goodies and a chance for friends to catch up. Lou Anne Steely always makes sure there are plenty of wonderful bites. Volunteers also help with interesting, delicious offerings.



Workings Around the Garden

New plants were bought to place on the hill by the labyrinth. They need to be very hardy for such a sunny windy area.

*Robin Robinson, Diane OConnell
placement of new plants.*

and Rosi Ware discussing the



Maryann propagating succulents by leaves. They will take less than a year to be ready to pot up



Young Rachel does a fab job with the bonsais.



Carol Borland and Lynne Bentley-Kemp give the bird cage a spiffier look.

Cathie Gottschalk and crew keep the butterfly garden looking beautiful.



Golden Mango Award

Awarded annually since 2015, The Golden Mango was established by The Studios of Key West to recognize “a person who fosters aesthetic, social, intellectual, and monetary contributions to our island arts community and its reputation as a center for the arts.”



In the most fundamental sense of the word, Rosi Ware, recipient of the 2024 Golden Mango Award, is a gardener. Her lifelong passion for planting, growing, and nurturing goes well beyond plants and flowers. Key West is her garden, and her care and influence can be felt in every corner of the island. In every role she’s undertaken, Rosi’s dedication, kindness, and vision has left an indelible mark on the community she loves. ***Congratulations to our Rosi!***

Propagation Retrospective

Kitty Somerville put together a timeline for our Propagation area. Many years of sheer determination and getting grants has turned our nursery into something we can be proud of.



Propagation 2007. We got bathtubs from the Navy and propagated in a community “bath”. The floor was dirt. The shelves were falling apart. Ron Zemlicka, our treasurer at the time, pitching in. We expanded the shade area.



In 2011, the plastic ground covering was a tripping problem. The wooden benches were all different heights and pressure treated.

In 2011 we got pea rock flooring Marlyn, Deb Crowley and Darin are overseeing.



2017, partly from the grant we purchased proper tops to the benches. Benches were now all the same height, to make it easy to weed.





The coated steel benches were bought later in 2017 with grant money. Sharon Lieberman will remember that they came in boxes of screws and steel parts that she and the men had to build.



Propagation 2021- the Tiki thatch roof was replaced by then. The shade area was added (you can see it in the back of the photo).

Pea rock was added after one of the Hurricanes dumped the beach sand into propagation.

This is a constant work in progress, as are all of the Gardens. We are so fortunate to have such dedicated volunteers!!

The Green Gazebo *(taken from the Garden Club's website blog page)*

It is finally time for our well-worn but much-loved Green Gazebo to be reborn as the Ficus Folly Courtyard Gazebo. In architecture, a folly is a 'building constructed primarily for decoration, but suggesting through its appearance some other purpose, or of such extravagant appearance that it transcends the range of usual garden buildings'. This new construction will be far from ordinary: nestled among two majestic ficus trees, our Ficus Folly Courtyard Gazebo will feel right at home. Designed by architect/member Nell Smets, it will shine in its period-appropriate design yet modern efficiency. Today, volunteers completed the final steps to make the area ready for construction to commence. We will say goodbye to the Green Gazebo as it is deconstructed. We will keep you posted! For your memories, here she is, ready for what comes:



We have received many positive reviews lately! Keep them coming in!

"A very cute and free garden" (this was in French, and I didn't even have to ask Sue to translate!!!)

Feb 8, 2024 K5932LWcatherineg, Nice, France

We discovered by chance this charming garden built in an old fort. It is free and once a week volunteers come to maintain it. There are beautiful orchids, a butterfly garden and beautiful cacti. No big deal but really cute and close to the beach.

A lush garden oasis

Review of **Key West Garden Club**

Reviewed 1 week ago via mobile

A beautiful oasis...loved the huge orchids, grafted into the trees. Garden areas are nestled into brick nooks in this former Civil War fort. Interesting architecture; & the host was very welcoming. There is some artwork & African-themed sculpture throughout. Butterflies flit among the flowering bushes. The ocean is adjacent; it's a lovely juxtaposition of lush garden & blue waters. And it's free! You can walk over to the restaurant Salut  afterwards, or Higg's Beach.

Free beautiful gardens

This is by far the best free attraction in Key West if you love nature. Pretty ocean views, plenty of resting spots to relax and enjoy the flowers. Friendly and informative staff.

Must-see garden!!!

Amazing that such a beautiful garden, maintained so well, is absolutely free to visit! We totally enjoyed the many varieties of flowers, plants and trees.



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

Thank you to Christa Varacalli for proofreading.

Sue Sullivan, Editor

