



Spring Newsletter 2024

Message from the President



Hurricane Season. The words that put all on notice. We also call it the slow season for the Keys. Visitor numbers to the Gardens drop dramatically during this time of year. Our stalwart volunteers do their very best to fill in for many of us who travel some in the summer. We give them great thanks and respect for whatever they can get done during these hot months.

During my recent trek to Alaska, I was able to take my fifteen-year-old grandson salmon fishing. We had a great time, and the two of us brought back many pounds of fantastic fresh Sockeye and King salmon which we caught and the lodge processed for us. This trip was my eighth into our 49th state, and my seventh time fishing there.

Before we flew out to King Salmon, AK we had a chance to do some sightseeing. I am in awe of their very long days, which

produce some of the largest blooms and such deep colors on common bedding plants, as well as gorgeous huge produce. It reminds me of how thrilled our Northern visitors are when they first walk into the garden and just stop and take it all in.

Each growing zone has its own magic and specialty. Ours is sub-tropical, allowing us to grow those orchids, palms, and plants that other zones wish they could do. When you stop in or bring visitors, you can be very proud of how you are a part of what our volunteers accomplish with your membership and donations.

The long-awaited Ficus Folly Gazebo is complete and the fences are down. A few finishing touches will be added in the coming months. We cannot thank our fabulous Nell Smets enough for being our architect, permit chaser, and for supervising the contractor. She is an amazing gift to the garden and also serves as a Board member. When you see her next time, please share your gratitude with her.

Keep those hurricanes away,

Mary

New Board Elected for 2024



Who's Who

(Left to right 1st row) Director/Recording Secretary: Lynne Bentley-Kemp, VP/Director/Propagation: Kitty Somerville, Director/Chair Programs: Cathie Gottschalk, VP/Director/Fort Curator: Hazel Hans, Director/Chair Membership/Web Guru: Christa Varacalli, Director/at Large Nell Smets, President/Director/Administration: Mary Olson, Director/Hospitality Chair: Lou Ann Steely, Director/Corresponding & Communications Secretary: Sue Sullivan, VP/Director/Gardens Co-Curator: Rosi Ware,

Not in group picture are: Director/Treasurer: Sharon Lieberman, and our wise Counsel: Sharon Thomas



Work Around the Garden



The summer volunteers are Garden Club Heroes! We can't thank them

enough for showing up on Monday mornings: Pictured are Julie Barron, Nell Smets, Mary Olson, Cathie Gottschalk, Jeannie Richbourg, Carol Borland, Maryann Michon, Barbara McShea, some of the wonderful members who have put in lots of sweat equity.

In spite of the hill plants getting "salt burned" after the storm, our curb appeal still looks fantastic. The stephanotis has its beautiful, fragrant white flowers and the Jatropha shows off its red flowers. Our mulch bin also got spiffed up. *Love our curb appeal!*



New Plants



Three dwarf palmettos (sabal minor) were planted in the palm garden on the hill. These were planted in honor of Bill Hartman, who recently passed. He was a brilliant artist and partner to member Jill Benado. Bill very generously contributed his talents to the Garden Club. He gave us some very cool logos for tees.

Four cordylines (pink harlequin) were also planted. We had to look far and wide for these plants. Digging and planting was done in 100-degree heat. Kudos to the planting crew!

Butterflies

The endangered Atala butterflies are plentiful in the Butterfly Garden. They love our Coontie plants. Coonties are ancient cycads. They are Florida seed plants and the only cycad native to the United States. In the early 1900s the tuber roots were converted to a flour (Florida arrowroot) for bread.

Lynne Bentley Kemp says the Atalas seem to hatch in the mornings, and our early bird visitors get to see them "in a colorful cloud of purple and orange".



Birth of the Ficus Folly Courtyard Gazebo

It has been a long, complicated process but the Ficus Folly Gazebo is almost done. There will be brick paving around the structure and we will be getting a marine-grade fridge that will weather the elements and will go in the accompanying structure. The roof has cedar shingles and the counter is an exterior-grade quartz. It is a wonderful addition to the courtyard. Rosi is sourcing an honor wall, which will hold the names of all who contributed. Nell Smets was the architect and the power that got this done.



New Master Gardener Interns



Welcome to three more Garden Club members who are now Master Gardener Interns. (Left to right) Maria Quirico, Extension agent; Kitty Somerville (MG mentor); **Tim Tschanz**, **Nell Smets**, **Debbie Fischer** and Pam Van Soest (MG mentor). Hazel Hans will also help guide them with projects around the Gardens.

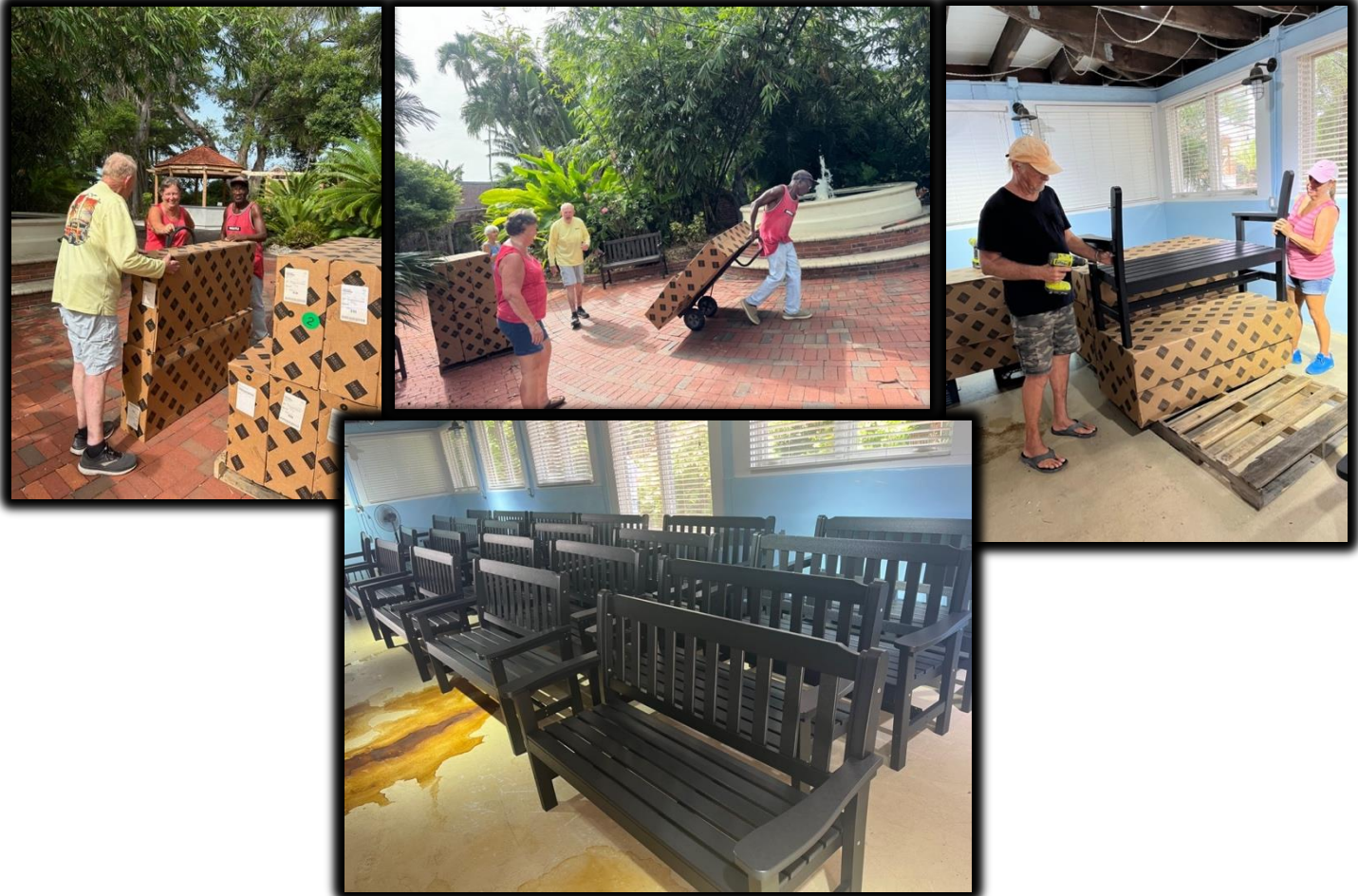
New Orchids

Pam Van Soest, Nell Smets, Mike Sheehan and Kitty Somerville went to the Redlands Orchid Festival in May. This is how Pam picks out beautiful orchids for the garden club's orchid arbors. Mike and Pam built this cart to carry their treasures and keep them from getting burned in the hot sun. Nell was the best cart driver. It was a fun day.



New Furniture

The Club is updating its furniture after many years of patching together various styles. Lynn Bentley-Kemp has found items from DutchCrafters. We will be getting a new desk and chairs in the mission style. Our new benches have arrived. Thank you to Lou Ann and Butch Steeley, Danny and Julie Barron, Caro and all else who helped put together 22 benches. We will now have uniformity throughout.



Lectures at the Club

Member Rachel O'Connor gave the last Monday lesson of the season in the Butterfly Garden. Her talk on Bromeliads was well researched and very well presented.

Alison Higgins, the Sustainability Coordinator for Key West, gave an informative presentation on how the City is dealing with the complex aspects of a sustainable life in the Keys.

Check out the web site:

<https://cityofkeywest-fl.gov/898/Adaptation-Resilience>



A Big Thank You Shout Out to the Summer Volunteers. It's hot!!!

Nikki Cevrvorst
Carol Borland
Nancy Henning
Kitty Somerville
Steve Somerville
Barbara McShea (Recently Citizen of the Day)
Butch Steely
Lou Ann Steely
Synda Patton
Jeanne Richbourg
Jan Blackman
Jane Tiedeman
Pam Van Soest
Julie Barron
Danny Barron
Lynne Bentley-Kemp
Beth Ceilley
Hazel Hans
Christa Varacalli
Cathie Gottschalk
(Sorry if I missed anyone--make sure you sign in when you arrive!)



Thank you to Walt Gallati, a friend of the Club, who helped extend our wi-fi to much of the Gardens. We can now have secure wi-fi in our pavilion!

Our Vanilla orchid has bloomed. *Vanilla planifolia* is a vining orchid native to Mexico and is one of the most highly sought after spices in cultivation. The Aztecs first used vanilla for flavoring in cocoa. The long vanilla bean pods were dried and cured to produce its distinctive flavor. Today, the pods are sometimes used whole and the flavoring is drawn out by infusion, or the pods are split and the tiny seeds are scraped out.



Summer Hours

It's been a hot steamy summer and the Garden Club has decided we need to observe reduced summer hours. We've had many days of heat advisories and need to protect our visitors and workers.

The garden will be closed on Wednesdays and Thursdays from August 14 through September 12:

Aug 14 and 15
Sept 4 and 5

Aug 21 and 22
Sept 11 and 12

Aug 28 and 29



In Memoriam

Fondly remembering Margaret Nygren, KWGC member and Propagation Department volunteer for over 10 years. Margaret passed in May 2024 in Gorham, Maine. She grew up in New York and spent her adult life in Maine. Margaret and her husband had a successful chain of McDonalds restaurants. We remember her talking about how they started having lobster rolls at the Maine McDonalds. What we remember most about Margaret was her beautiful smile and her great sarcastic humor that entertained us as we pulled weeds and made new plants. She started volunteering in early 2000 when she became a "snowbird" coming to Key West in the winter months. We have missed seeing her for the last 10 years and are sad to know that she has passed. -*Kitty Somerville*

KEY WEST GARDEN CLUB ANNUAL PLANT SALE AND ARTIST MARKET NOV 2024

The Key West Garden Club will hold its annual fall plant sale and artist market at the West Martello Tower in Key West on Friday, November 22nd and Saturday November 23rd from 10am – 3pm. Put it on your calendars. We will need lots of volunteers for this and it's really fun!!

Donations

A donation was made in May to the Garden Club in honor of Barbara McShea by Lauren & Mike Pearce.

Thank you for photo contributions from Lynne Bentley-Kemp, Nell Smets, Kitty Somerville and Hazel Hans.

Thank you to Christa Varacalli for proofreading.

Editor, Sue Sullivan

