



Fall Newsletter 2024

Message from the President



Happy Holidays!

Your Garden Club has been busy.

The Annual Fall Plant Sale was a great success. It has turned into a community event. It is fun to see so many familiar faces. The plants your propagation team grew were gorgeous and healthy, and the plants which came from the mainland were fantastic too -- so many were in bloom that it made selling so much easier. From Sue Sullivan's team in managing vendor sites, and organization, to Kitty Somerville's plant sellers to

the food team in the new Ficus Folly gazebo, we had a busy but fruitful two days.

Now we roll into the holidays. With elves decorating the garden, you really should stop by! And before you know it, we will be ringing in the New Year.

2025 will be the 70th Anniversary of the Garden Club taking over the West Fort Martello. Yes, it was 1955, when the agreement began with Monroe County, and what started as a messy, bare slate is now one of the most beautiful areas in Key West. You should all be proud of what has been accomplished over 70 years. I know I am.

Enjoy your holiday with family and friends. And greet 2025 with renewed joy.



Mary

Walk Around the Garden and Fort

A photo of our front area right after Hurricane Milton, with the stephanotis blooming like crazy; what great curb appeal! This is all Synda Patton's area and she works very hard every Monday! Thanks, Synda!

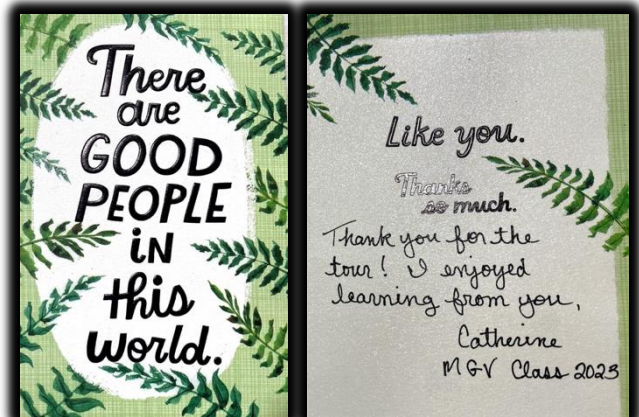


This is Nicole Cuervorst, who has been working all summer and fall in the fragrance garden, doing a fantastic job. The *Musical Note clerodendrum* was in bloom here. She has a good eye for landscape design and is a hardworking volunteer.

A huge thank you to ALL the volunteers who put in sweat equity this past summer and fall.

Tour of Gardens

Hazel Hans was surprised to receive this lovely thank you card for the recent Garden/Fort tour she gave, and wanted to share it with us. It was the couple's 35th anniversary and she is a Master Gardener intern in Gainesville. Hazel & Mary give private tours.



Recognition

Our UF IFAS Monroe County Extension Master Gardener Virtual Help Desk won the State *2024 Award of Excellence for MG Volunteer Team*. This group of 5 has assisted Monroe County Florida residents with horticultural issues and has created a blueprint for a virtual approach to assisting our community in widespread horticultural areas.

A huge congratulations to Kitty Somerville, Susie Reutling, Sharon Thomas, Barbara Martinkosky and Karen Sunderland on their outstanding achievement! This is a 'well done' that is very much deserved and serves as a fantastic example for the whole team of what dedication and hard work can accomplish! ***Kitty and Sharon are KWGC members.***



Visitors



Member Barbara McShea took a pic of these unusual visitors to the Gardens. These two squirrel monkeys came to check out the greenery at West Martello Garden. They are pictured here in the Butterfly Garden.

They are so cute!



Our Scholarship recipient

Marsella Munoz is in her last year at FSU. She switched her major from Biology to Environmental Science and Policy because the courses are better aligned with her interests and future career goals.

Classes have gone well and she has maintained her 100% Bright Futures scholarship. As a requirement for graduation, all FSU students must complete 9 summer credits. Because of this, she could not visit Key West as much as she had hoped to continue SCUBA-instructing 10- to 18-year-old students with the non-profit DiveN2Life.

Marsella did use her limited time off before summer classes began to return to St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands, and monitor the coral she had outplanted with VI Reef Response in 2021. Seeing the outplanted *Acropora* fragments fusing to the reef and thriving was very rewarding for her.



After summer classes ended, she and her Dad went on an incredible trip to Iceland. She checked off a bucket list item and snorkeled between the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates in glacial water. Marsella is excited to continue the upper-division coursework specific to my major such as Coral Reef Ecology. She is anticipating another busy and fulfilling year! ***The Club is proud of all her efforts.***

New Furniture

The Club updated its furniture after many years of patching together various styles. Lynne Bentley-Kemp did a lot of research and we got these beautiful Amish Mission Style pieces from Dutch Crafters in Sarasota. What a lovely improvement! Hazel Hans did a great job of recycling and selling our old furniture and benches. A special thanks to Julia, our enthusiastic receptionist, for her signage. Some of the benches were heading back to Palm Coast after a 50th birthday celebration.



2025 Unsung Celebration

Heroes

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 the Key West Garden Club has nominated Christa Varacalli. Christa is our Membership Chair, but in the last few years she has worked tirelessly on updating our website, social media, and also making payments and recording volunteers so easy. She does seem excited about the nomination in this pic!



November Plant Sale and Art Market

Our November event was once again a highlight for us and the community. It is such a joyful event, and we did very well financially. It is one of two events that bring money into the Club along with the Garden Tours which will occur Feb 21-22, 2025. We'll be looking for volunteer docents soon, so please put it on your calendar.

Our Propagation plants are beefed up with plants from Homestead, which we get at wholesale prices. Kitty Somerville and her crew did a wonderful job of picking out plants that sold well. The plants are delivered on Thursday before the sale and set up according to their categories such as light, water, Natives.

Nell Smets prints out tags for the plants that come from Ingram's in Homestead. Sue Sullivan, Carol Borland and Pam VanSoest made sure the tags go in the right pots. Victor is one of the drivers from Homestead who helps Kitty Somerville get our plants sorted. Volunteers help unload the truck and place the plants in the courtyard. Here are Roberta DePiero, Jody Gross, Mike Sheehan, and Stephen Patten moving carts.





Pam Van Soest, Nell Smets, Kitty Somerville (Fearless Leader of Propagation) and Marcia Lara doing strategy planning. Marcia did a fantastic job of taking care of vendors and making sure things went smoothly.



Bob Hobson and Hannah Schenk ready with their friendly smiles.



Cathie Gottschalk looking over the plants for sale.

Nell Smets in her chef's hat is our resident architect (we are so lucky) and creative idea lady, as well as an eager gardener. Here she is selling microgreens to Conner Boyd. Conner is putting together our Garden Tours again this year.



Nell also came up with the idea of an ad banner for her golf cart. She was advertising us all over town!



Lou Ann Steely and Mary Olson ran our very successful food booth. Our new *Ficus Folly Gazebo* is beautiful and a much more comfortable setting. They had help with smiling, efficient volunteers.

Here are: Mary, Lou Anne, Nancy Johnson and Patti Rodriguez. Our "Great Bratwurst Grillers" were Steve Somerville and Jeff Ware. Thank you to the Chefs!



A huge thanks to all our volunteers, plant sellers, food booth, gate checkers, fertilizer ball and membership sellers, cashiers.

What a fantastic group we have!

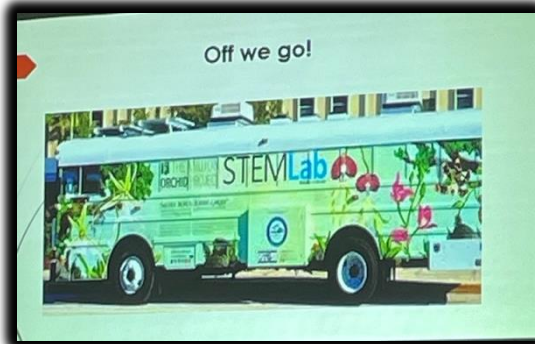
We also had some very colorful vendors!



December Educational Talk

Leigh Coolidge, VP of the KW Orchid Society, gave a lecture on the joint project between the Orchid Society and the KW Tropical Forest & Botanical Garden. The two groups are combining their expertise to restore native Keys orchids to the Botanical Garden and eventually all of the Florida Keys. Fairchild Botanical Garden in Coral Gables is also involved with their Million Orchid Project (MOP).

FBG has a mobile micro-propagation STEM lab to help promote the project.



Monroe County Liaison

This is Pablo. He works with Monroe County Facilities and Parks Departments. He is a valuable connection with the County and a pleasure for Hazel Hans to work with. ***If you see him at the Gardens say Hi! and Thank You!***



Christmas Comes to the Garden Club

Jane Tiedeman did a smashing job of decorating the Club. Kudos to her and her elves. Seated in the Bird Cage Room are Rosi Ware and Bob Hobson. Bob has been an amazing volunteer for the Gardens. By the Christmas tree are Rosi and Karyn Bradshaw. Karyn is one of our exceptional receptionists.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPIEST OF HOLIDAYS TO ALL!



Don't forget our winter Luncheon



**Saturday, January 18, 2025
from 12pm to 3pm**

in the beautiful Ocean Room of

La Trattoria Oceanside*

3593 S Roosevelt Blvd, Key West

**There is ample parking behind the building, but carpooling is nice.*

Member/guest tickets are \$40

**Please enter a name for each person on your ticket order.
This is so we can take attendance.**

**Please purchase your ticket by
January 13, 2025**

For members to purchase online, please refer to the December Membership Email, or email Christa Varacalli and she will re-send you the link for that purchase. kwgcmembership@gmail.com

Questions? Please email Sue Sullivan, keywestsuzie@gmail.com

*Thank you for photo contributions from
Lynne Bentley-Kemp, Nell Smets, Kitty Somerville, Hazel Hans and Barbara McShea.
Thank you to Christa Varacalli for proofreading.*

Editor, Sue Sullivan