



THE HIBISCUS LEAFLET

Coral Gables Garden Club, Coral Gables, Florida ~ Celebrating our 96th Year

January 2021

Members learning new ways to stay active and involved

How life has changed since my message to you last January! Little did we know how the year would unfold. 2020 was a year of unforeseen challenges and we have adapted well to meet them, with Zoom meetings and video workshops taking the place of in-person gatherings. I'm so proud of you all for giving these virtual options a try and for visiting our new website too.

As we look forward to 2021, I'm optimistic that, with a vaccine becoming available, we eventually will be able to resume some of our normal activities. In-person meetings may not be possible until next Fall, but decisions will be made as the situation evolves. Thank you so much for your understanding and patience.

I do hope your holidays were happy. I truly enjoyed the lovely lull in my usual busyness, as traditions and family took on more importance. Now I feel a sense of renewed hope and vigor as 2021 unfolds. The Garden Club still has much to do in the next four months, and I know, as the specter of Covid19 fades, we will all welcome a chance to get back to normal. Stay in touch and let us know if you'd like to help with any of our projects. Small groups, carefully spaced, can still make things happen!

I hope to see you all at our next General Membership Meeting on **January 25th at 10 am**, when Barbara LaPradd will speak to us about **Easy Care Roses for South Florida**. I'll send the Zoom invitation about a week before, so be on the lookout for it! The Workshop, **Inspiring Tabletop Floral Design with Roses** by one of our Petal Pushers, will be videotaped and posted on our website for your enjoyment anytime. At our business meeting, I will update you all regarding our Springtime plans.



Until then, I send you love from my sleeping garden...

~ Judy Mangarsarian, President

HAPPY HAPPENINGS HEADING YOUR WAY...

Join us at our Zoom January Meeting, January 25 at 10:00 as we begin our first meeting of 2021. Come and learn from our January program, *Easy Care Roses for South Florida* with Barbara LaPradd.

Have you checked out the new postings on our website?

<https://www.coralgablesgardenclub.org/linda-waldron-designing-your-garden-part-1/>

<https://www.coralgablesgardenclub.org/linda-waldron-designing-your-garden-part-2/>

<https://www.coralgablesgardenclub.org/complex-underwater-structures-called-stony-corals/>

<https://www.coralgablesgardenclub.org/member-floral-designs/>

Join us at [coralgablesgardenclub.org](https://www.coralgablesgardenclub.org) And don't forget to join our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CoralGablesGardenClub>

Just recently, Kitty Winkler sent out an email request. To encourage you to get some exercise and enjoy your day in Paradise, she wants to write and journal your walks in your neighborhood. So, take your smartphone, (read Susan Rodriguez's article on our December Photo Workshop) capture photos and work off some of your Covid pounds. Send photos and your write-up to Kitty. Hope to see lots of photos in the February issue.



Coral Gables Garden Club, Inc. is a proud member of the National Garden Clubs, Inc; and the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs.

George E. Merrick's Boyhood ...The Shaping of a leader

It is almost impossible to live in Coral Gables without knowing about its founder, George Merrick. However, what we hear and read about George is mostly limited to the period in his adulthood when he was a real estate success who conceived and built Coral Gables.

What made George the man he became? What early boyhood lessons shaped who he would be? Were the admirable characteristics that he displayed in adulthood evident when he was a boy?

Solomon and Althea Merrick welcomed their first child, George Edgar Merrick, into the world on June 2, 1886 at Althea's family home in Springdale, Pennsylvania. In that year, Grover Cleveland was President, the Statue of Liberty was dedicated in New York Harbor, Coca-Cola was invented, and 60 people died in a devastating earthquake in Charleston, South Carolina.

When George was a month old, the young family settled in the farming town of Gaines, New York, where Solomon had accepted employment as minister of the Congregational Church. It was there that George learned his love of growing things and gained respect for the farming families that made up his father's congregation. Solomon and Althea were well-loved, and there was great sadness among the congregation in 1895 when Solomon moved his family to Duxbury, Massachusetts where he had been offered a higher salary to become minister of the larger Congregational Church there.

George was nine years old when his family left Gaines, New York, but his special talents were already being recognized by his parents and teachers. He had read every book the family owned and devoured the works of contemporary authors he found at the public library. He had shown a flair for writing that his Grandfather Fink, Althea's father, recognized by having George's poem, "The Pilgrims," typeset for him as a gift. His mother shared a love of poetry and encouraged his writing.

Life in Duxbury was hard for the Merricks because of financial struggles and the depression that plagued Solomon throughout his life. Unlike Solomon, George and Althea's outlook on life was cheerful and optimistic. Solomon scorned their rosy view of life as being like Grandfather Fink, who was too flamboyant and light-hearted for Solomon's taste.

A vicious winter storm brought weeks of high winds and severe blizzards in early 1899; and the Merrick home was extremely cold. George survived a near-death case of pneumonia, but his 5-year-old sister, Ruth, died of diphtheria.

To cheer the family, Grandfather Fink came to visit and brought a friend who enchanted George with tales of a land of opportunity where the new city of Miami, Florida was just being built. Solomon was a hard sell, but eventually he became committed to the idea of moving the family to Florida. Through correspondence with Coconut Grove's Congregational Church Minister, Solomon bought 160 acres of property near Coconut Grove for the sum of \$1100, almost the family's entire savings.

In September, 1899, when thirteen-year-old George and his father arrived in Florida, they were shocked to find that only one acre of the 160 acres they owned had been cleared, and the house on the property was a 30'X20' board and batten shack with two rooms. There was no money for the grapefruit trees that Solomon hoped to plant, so the existing guava trees on the property provided their livelihood in the first year. George would climb the guava trees and shake the limbs so the ripe fruit would fall to the ground. Mosquitos were thick, so George had to wear heavy clothing and netting to protect his face from bites. He then packed the ripe fruit in boxes and drove the wagonload of fruit an hour and a half to the manufacturing facility at the current site of the Kampong, where Captain A. F. Simmons made jelly, marmalade, wine, syrup, vinegar, cider and cheese from the fruit.

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Meanwhile, George and his father were clearing more of the land and planted large vegetable gardens. To sell the vegetables, George would get up at 2:00 in the morning daily from November to May and drive a loaded wagon to Miami where he sold the produce to the Royal Palm Hotel and brokers at the dock and train depot.

For the eight years from arrival in Florida in 1899 to his 1907 departure to take up his education at Rollins College, George was little more than a farmhand doing hard labor. In the process, he got to know many of the early settlers of South Florida and Bahamian immigrants who taught him to identify the trees and fruits. He had friends among the simple farmers and among the leading families in the Miami area alike. He was charismatic, optimistic, and a brilliant salesman like his Grandfather Fink.



By George's twenty-first birthday in 1907, the Merrick family had become successful, having a 1000-tree-grapefruit and orange grove and shipping two train carloads of fruit to locations throughout the U.S. Solomon's vegetables were renowned and prize-winning, and Althea's dream house was about to be completed. George would go on to complete his education at Rollins College and Yale Law School, returning to Florida to become the real estate entrepreneur who developed the City Beautiful, one of the most successful planned cities in the United States.

George's connections to the Coral Gables Garden Club are many. The club funded the statue of George Merrick that stands outside of City Hall. We also funded the statue of Althea Merrick

that sits in the garden of her dream home at 907 Coral Way. The club's project to erect distinctive entrances to the city was part of Merrick's grand design. And, Eunie Peacock Merrick, George's wife, was the second President of the Coral Gables Garden club in 1926 and 1927.

~ Written by Kitty Winkler

Sources: *George Merrick, Son of the South Wind*, by Arva Moore Parks, published in 2015 by The University Press of Florida; *George Edgar Merrick*, by Helen C. Freeland, published in "Tequesta" the magazine of the Historical Society of Southern Florida in August, 1942; and *George E. Merrick was Above All a Good Man*, by Karelia Martinez Carbonell, an article in Miami's Community News, October 26, 2020. Photo courtesy of the Coral Gables Museum. Photo of Betsy Adams at statue dedication service.

Members enjoy and learn from Smart Phone Photo Workshop

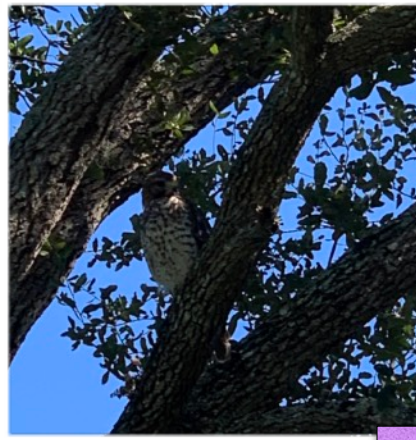
December 11th we had a fun Zoom Smart phone photography workshop with wildlife photographer, world traveler, author and conservationist Kirsten Hines

Kirsten's workshop focused on composition and discussed in detail the "Rule of Thirds". "The Rule of Thirds" is a guideline to help photographers or artists whether in design, film or painting to create visually more tension, energy and interest in the composition than simply centering the subject.

So, to apply this concept she showed us examples of how you split your image up into 9 equal parts, creating a grid, by using two vertical lines and 2 horizontal lines. The intersections of these lines and the lines themselves are where your subject should be. In other words, don't center your subject, shift it to the left or right and you will probably land on an intersection of the grid.

The above photo is an example of the "The Rule of Thirds"

Surprisingly for most of us, who have a phone that is a later model than an iPhone 6, we learned that in our camera settings a grid option can be enabled to help you with your composition while setting up your photo. "Good photographs are created" as Kirsten emphatically said throughout her presentation and urged us to keep taking photographs of the same subject until you get the right shot. She went over several compositional tools and



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concepts such as Focal Points, Isolation, Framing, Triangles, Leading Lines, and Patterns. I started recording this workshop after she discussed "The Rule Of Thirds", so go to the website if you want to learn more at www.coralgablesgardenclub.org and you can watch her presentation in the member section under videos.

Visit <https://kirstenhines.com/> to learn about her work, upcoming shows and view her gallery photos. Kirsten Hines has a master's degree in biology and background as an environmental educator. Her work highlights nature and wildlife around the world, as well as

closer to home where she aims to inspire the re-greening of South Florida's urban corridor. Her photography illustrates several of her published books, including the award-winning titles *Birds of Fairchild*, and *Attracting Birds to South Florida Gardens*, as well as *Biscayne National Park*.

~ Susan Rodriguez



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Members try their hand: Photo 1: Pat Keon, Photo 2: Susan Rodriguez, Photo 3: Susan Rodriguez, Photo 4: Suzuyo Fox

Happy Faces We Miss Seeing In Person...Virtual Hugs To All



