



THE HIBISCUS LEAFLET

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

A proud member of the National Garden Club, Inc. and the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs

March 2021

A challenging year...We are blooming and even stronger

Can you believe it? One year ago this month our lives took a dramatic turn. Business-as-usual turned into life-in-lockdown, and we could not have foreseen what the year would bring. But one of my favorite sayings is “Bloom where you’re planted”, and that’s what we tried to do. We made the best of a bad situation, and bloomed despite the circumstances.

Our website took shape over the summer and blossomed in October, along with our first-ever virtual fundraiser, Project Canopy. Susan Rodriguez was largely responsible for shepherding the website to fruition, along with a crew of hard-working members who spent hours every day on their computers so it would become a reality. Project Canopy took shape as well, and through Project Canopy, we have now planted trees at 4 public schools in Coral Gables, thanks to our own funding and generous donations from friends and neighbors, many of them in honor of member, Sallye Jude.

We continued to meet, but learned to do so virtually, using a technology we may never have used otherwise. Now we feel part of a wider world where communications are not hampered by distance. Our members can attend meetings from wherever they happen to be, and we can still enjoy fascinating programs from great speakers.

We remained connected to the City as the Lamar Louise Curry Park took shape and, amazingly, it is still on schedule to be completed by December 31st, 2021. We recently refreshed the Merrick House’s Heritage and Althea’s Gardens with donations from the Marlene Kerdyk Beautification Fund (\$400 for flowers and herbs), the Tropical Rose Society (6 rose bushes), and Florida Boys Caladiums (a bushel of bulbs). As a little fundraiser, Betsy Tilghman’s caladium sale netted over \$400, and in place of our major fundraiser, the Garden Tour, a photography contest is being planned for April 15th to May 31st. Get your iPhones and cameras ready!

All this was possible because of a dedicated core of members who never gave up. Their hard work made this a productive and exciting year. “Bloom where you’re planted” has taken on a deeper meaning for me. The Garden Club has not only survived, but thrived in this challenging year and along the way has become stronger.

Please try to attend our Annual Business Meeting on March 22nd. We will be electing officers who will lead us into the future and will consider By-Laws amendments that will make our club even more vital. You’ll hear updates on our projects and our plans for the future. A year from now, I predict we’ll still be blooming

~ With love from my garden, Judy



Mark your calendars:

General Meeting: March 22, 2021 - via Zoom

Doors open 9:30 am ~ Come and chat with our members

10:00: Business Meeting: Election of Officers and Directors and approval of By-laws amendment.

Website News: Look for future workshops given by the PetalPushers, Sharon Trbovich, Lucy Reinhardt and Ruth Markham. For the next workshop, make an arrangement using cuttings from your own backyard. Visit us at wwwcoralgablesgardenclub.org

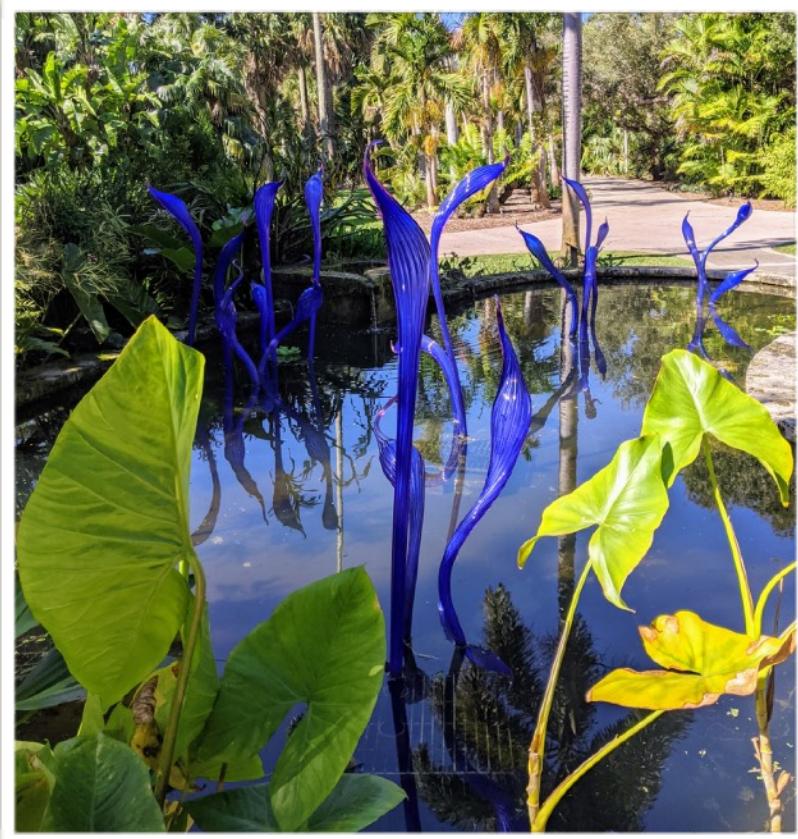
Just another day in paradise...photowalking in Fairchild

Living in condominiums, my sister, Phyllis, and I have long considered Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden our “backyard”. In the world of the Covid pandemic, it has become even more important to us as a place we visit three times a week to be safely outdoors where we can enjoy nature and try to walk off some of the excess pounds that have accumulated over the past year. To make our visits even better, we recently ran into Susan Thomas there. Susan has been the garden club’s Horticulture Chair for a number of years, and she has been a

Fairchild volunteer off and on for 30 years. Her current work at Fairchild is focused on the Orchid Lab, but she is knowledgeable in all parts of the garden, having had years of experience as a tour guide there.



In February, we had a walk with Susan, who gave us a fascinating tour of Fairchild’s Palmetum, one of the world’s largest collections of palms. The Oil Palm is grown in both Southeast Asia and South America; the one we saw was



South American. Commercially valuable, the Oil Palm’s seeds produce a thick fat that is used in the production of cooking oil and soap (think Palmolive). The Copernicia Baileyana Palm is a slow-growing tree that originated in Cuba. From the Middle East comes the Split-Trunk Palm. In its native countries, it is frequently seen at desert oasis locations. The Haitian cousin to Florida’s Buccaneer Palm has flowers that bees and lizards

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love; they swarm the trees during flowering season. Petticoat Palms come from Cuba and are perfectly named for their petticoat-like lower fronds. Spindle and Bottle Palms are native to the Macaserene Islands where they are endangered; however, here in Florida, we can buy them at Home Depot!



Susan also pointed out Fairchild's large collection of Cycads. Because of their appearance, Cycads are often confused with palms although they are not closely related. Cycads are living fossils unchanged from the Jurassic age.



On other days that my sister and I visit the garden, we are fascinated by the changing scene of blooming shrubs and trees that add to the garden's beauty. Some of the blooms from recent visits are pictured here.



Evidence of wildlife is around every corner in Fairchild. Lizards and iguanas of all sizes and shapes are frequently spotted. Ibises travel the garden in a pack and can be seen in different areas of the garden on different days. Around the lakes, ducks and pelicans are visible, and we have even seen a huge crocodile having a sunbath at the water's edge.



Fairchild has its share of surprises. Magnificent glass sculptures by Dale Chihuly show up in several locations in the garden. A bronze sculpture of Marjory Stoneman Douglas is moved around to different parts of the garden, and we never know where she might turn up. And tucked away, down a sloping gravel path, Susan Thomas surprised us with a lovely hidden grotto that features a beautiful waterfall.

Loving hands give Althea's Garden welcome additions



Members, Judy Mangasarian, Susan Rodriguez, along with Barbara LaPradd from the Tropical Rose Society, and her friend, Lisa, put the finishing touches on the Althea Gardens at Merrick House. Six beautiful antique rose bushes were installed with the help of Hannibal of the city landscaping department. Multiple fragrant buds will be blooming soon, so come and visit and see what roses do well in the South Florida environment.