



THE HIBISCUS LEAFLET

Coral Gables Garden Club Coral Gables, Florida ~ Celebrating our 97th Year

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

September 2021

Rain Rain Rain by Frankie Laine and The Four Lads

President's Message by Susan Rodriguez

Greetings Garden Club Members — Welcome to the 96th-97th season of the Coral Gables Garden Club. As the club's new president, I am confident this year will prove to be an interesting and stellar new year for all of us.

A Top 10 hit in 1954, "Rain, Rain, Rain" is the perfect song to describe the Summer of 2021 here in Coral Gables! For some, rain may be an inconvenience, but for gardeners, it is a welcome guest. I'm sure your gardens are looking lush and green. Butterfly plants in my yard this summer are full of blooms; the butterflies are happy and multiplying. The white and yellow Sulphurs are dancing together like whirling dervishes, it's fun to watch. Even though I have a whole new family of plants I need to identify, and maybe pull out, rain has been a blessing. It has also given me the opportunity to sit down and review a great deal of the history of this amazing Garden Club, and to form a board with new and seasoned members. I want to thank all the board members who have agreed to take on

positions this year, and for our new members who have chosen to jump in and contribute right out of the gate. Special thanks to Marci Montgomery for agreeing to be our Newsletter editor this year.

Traditionally, a theme sets the tone for the year and is selected by the president, so I am delighted to choose "Pollinators in the Garden." I think you would all agree that to increase the number of pollinators is one of the most important things we can do for our planet, both individually and collectively as a club. With a dwindling natural habitat and 20% of our food supply dependent on pollination, we must be proactive in saving our pollinators. ~ *President's Message continues on page 2*



Photo credit: Lou Lazado, "As I See It" entry: Looking out a Biltmore Window



Photo credit: Bonnie Masdeu: Hummingbird with Chinese Hat Vine

September Program News

by Teresa Zohn

Welcome back! I think you all will agree, flexibility and safety will be our biggest concerns this year, but fun and enjoyment are also high on our list. We are doing a few new things during the year and hope everyone will go along with us and try them. We are offering **two evening meetings** and have scheduled many floral design opportunities and horticulture explorations, COVID permitting.

I hope you will join us for our first general meeting on **September 27th**, via **Zoom**. The Zoom room will open at 9:30AM, and the meeting will start at 10:00AM. You will be receiving an email with the invitation from the Coral Gables Garden Club, one week prior to our meeting date. The program presenter for September will be **Dennis Olle** from the Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association, speaking on **South Florida Butterflies**.

Maureen Gragg has agreed to provide individual sessions with people who would like to enhance their ability to navigate Zoom. Contact her between **September 22 and 25**, at **305-439-1380** or at mgragg@jemerika.com. She will set an appointment to walk you through the process. We hope this will lead to more people joining us at the Zoom meetings.

I hope you are excited for the year, and I look forward to seeing all of you soon. Any updates or changes to our yearbook for meetings and programs will be in our newsletter and email blasts.

President's Message, continued from pg. 1

Flowers, native plants and trees play a big role in enticing pollinators—including hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies—into our gardens at home and in public spaces. I hope you will support the club's efforts in projects citywide and, if possible, consider planting a pollinator garden at home, even a container garden for those with limited space. Your work will be rewarded with hours of enjoyment watching the rapid beating wings of the hummingbird drinking the nectar of their favorite flower, or watching butterflies emerging from their chrysalis, drying their wings, then playfully skipping from one flower to the next—all doing the most important job of pollination. A big thank you goes out to Linda Waldron for contributing to our newsletter this year, every month, with a focus on Pollinators!

Summer happenings...

Two events happened in June, both organized by Sharon Trbovich. The Tour of Kitchens, which is usually in February but was delayed last year because of COVID, was a wonderful event. It was a hot day filled with fun, laughter and camaraderie (*Read more on TOK, page 8*). Sharon also

*Meet & Greet (right)
Back row, left to right: New
members Marci Montgomery,
Daria Feinstein, Sherry
Puerto, Rosita Gardiner, (front
row) Jodi Zaban (l) and
Paula Biehler*



organized our first Meet and Greet with our new members, held at my home on June 24th. We had a lovely gathering of Directors, Executive Board and Committee Chairs, along with our past two years of new members. The goal was to get to know our new members better by meeting in person. It was a festive event and hopefully will be a tradition going forward. If you want to get an invitation to that party next year, Chair a committee! Thank you, Sharon, for organizing the Prosecco cocktails, and to all the members who brought sweet and savory bites.

I am pleased to say we have made progress with our garden center renovation. The exterior was painted and is looking lovely; the cabinet maker is beginning our shop drawings; and, by the time you read this newsletter, the demolition will have started for the much-needed interior renovation.

~ President's Message continues on page 3



*Meet & Greet (above)
Left to right: Frank Rodriguez,
Sandy Milledge,
Donna Box*

*Meet & Greet (right)
Left to right: Connie Cabeza,
Denise West, Alexis Ehrenhaft,
Cathy Zuckerman*



*(Above) Newly painted Garden Center at the
Biltmore*

President's Message, continued from pg. 2

Chip Withers agreed to store the contents of the garden center until construction is finished. I am so grateful to Chip for his appreciation of the Garden Club. The Biltmore has agreed to repave the entrance, so it will be safe for all of us to enter the building. Thank you, Judy, Denise, Kitty, Sandy, Julie, Evelyn and Nita, for helping organize our files and pack them for storage. I will keep you all posted on the estimated time of completion.

Motions approved by the board this summer

First, we had a lovely opportunity to gift our archives to the University of Miami Archival Library. They were interested in our scrapbooks and all written materials dating back to 1925. The gift would allow the archivists at UM to preserve the old scrapbooks and papers that are in a state of disrepair and keep them in a cool environment that would protect them from further damage. Sharon Trbovich made a motion via email on May 21, 2021 to gift our scrapbooks and all written material from 1925-1999 to the UM Library for preservation and storage. A second was given by Julie Connor. The board approved the motion with a unanimous vote.

Before we let the archives go, a group of wonderful ladies came to help photograph all our scrapbooks! We now have a digital copy of the 20th century scrapbooks, which you can access on our website under resources on the links page. Several years are missing, so if you have insight on where the entire decade of the 60's might be, let me know. Thank you, Kitty, Denise, Sandy, Donna and Sharon, for your help. I also want to thank Nita Norman for beginning the process and establishing the relationship with the UM Library. I urge you to read Betsy Tilghman's beautiful tribute to Nita in this month's newsletter.

The second motion was to support the Merrick House fundraiser with an AD for Doc Dammer's Day at a cost of \$250.00 and the third was to approve a new community service project in the historic MacFarlane district. Read more about that initiative on page 5.

Much to do and a place for everybody

We are a diverse group of individuals with many different talents, much like a beehive. In the beehive model, there are three types of bees, each with different functions. Each type of bee is adapted to its job. Different individuals are accepted and appreciated. Each group is qualified and experienced and therefore has something to offer to the team. I think this analogy relates to our club perfectly. Each of us can bring something to the table that will improve our functionality as a whole. Our club has seasoned members who can mentor our new members. We can have fun and enjoy each other's differences, talents and abilities. Importantly, we can work together as a team in attaining our goals for the year. I look forward to sharing this year with all of you—so pick your two committees and volunteer!

We are planning a fun year, but the health and safety of our members is the first priority. Our first meeting is a scheduled Zoom meeting but please read your emails from the CORAL GABLES GARDEN CLUB for updated news that would impact our meetings and workshops. These communications have other fun and exciting news from the Garden Club, so be on the lookout.

See you soon,

Susan Rodriguez

President



Kitty Winkler, Nita Norman, Judy Mangasarian, Sandy Milledge (back) Julie Connor and Evelyn Budde. Front kneeling: Denise West



Moving out of the Garden Center



Photo credit: Denayer Mueller, Queen Butterfly

Pollinator Focus: Meet the Atala

by Linda Waldron



Eumaeus atala Poey, pinned and spread adult female.
Photograph by Donald W. Hall, University of Florida.

The Atala butterfly was thought to be extinct and is still on the endangered list because its sole host plant—coontie—was extensively harvested to produce starch. Atala is a rare hairstreak butterfly with satiny black wings, featuring an iridescent turquoise shimmer and a red and orange abdomen.

The coontie plant has a symbiotic relationship with Atala caterpillars, providing food for the caterpillars while benefiting from their droppings as fertilizer. In a fantastic twist, the coontie plant contains toxins that make the caterpillar toxic to predators! This toxicity is signaled to predators by striking markings: bright red with 12 bright yellow spots marching two by two down the caterpillar's back.

What are the adult Atala's nectar plants? Well, the Atala has a variety of plants as nectar sources, including porterweed, beautyberry, golden dew drop and wild sage—i.e., *Lantana involucrata*. Wild sage is a wonderful

shrub with tiny flowers and purple fruits. It is considered one of the best plants for attracting butterflies, including the Atala, Miami Blue, Cassius Blue, Sulphur, Skipper, and the list goes on. Birds eat the fruit too!

Don't you think your garden has room for a coontie and a *Lantana involucrata*? Go to PlantRealFlorida.org for a list of native nurseries to buy from, and enjoy.

Summer Fun

"I am in the Blue Ridge Mts of VA, near Shenandoah, enjoying a retreat with my husband, two adult children, their respective spouses, and 3 y/o granddaughter. I regifted the visor from our CGGC May gift bag...she wears it better!" — JoAnne Matthews



"Donating food in Coconut Grove..."
— Marlin Ebbert



"Summer Heaven in Cashiers, North Carolina!"
— Betsy Tilghman



Community Service: The MacFarlane Project

by Susan Rodriguez

In June, our Project Canopy Chair, Commissioner Rhonda Anderson, and I met with local resident and Home Association President, Edwina Prime, to discuss planting trees in the historic MacFarlane district. We had a wonderful meeting, drove around the neighborhood and discovered some opportunities to plant trees in our efforts to re-leaf the district with beautiful native and flowering trees.



Rhonda Anderson, Louis Duncanson, & Susan Rodriguez, under the Moringa Tree

Edwina introduced me to a neighbor, Louis Duncanson, who owned an empty lot on the corner of Florida Avenue and Jefferson Street. I arranged a meeting with him with Rhonda and learned he is from the Bahamas, an organic farmer specializing in wheat grass and microgreens, herbalist, expert in bush medicine, creator of bush teas, tonics and oils, and a licensed nutritionist in the state of Florida. He works extensively with FIU, supplying his worm castings for agricultural projects down in the Redlands.

Louis invited along his friend, Robert Dobiecki, who was a dear friend of Dr. Julia Morton. Robert will be speaking to our club in the spring about the life and work of Julia Morton. I didn't fully understand the connection between Dr. Morton and Louis until I read her 1996 obituary, written by Howard Teas, which was in one of our yearbooks. I've excerpted some of it here:

Dr. Julia Morton was a world-renowned economic botanist of the mid-20th Century. She worked on a variety of projects during her career, including growing wild rice and Chinese water chestnuts in Florida. She created the chart of poisonous plants that today is in every pediatrician's office and hospital Emergency Department (and was the basis of the CGGC's coloring book). In 1956, Dr. Morton spoke at a Garden Club meeting on poisonous plants, thus

starting a long relationship with the Club.

"She was involved in several studies of plants containing carcinogens. In one, she found the plant or plants that might be responsible for the high incidence of esophageal cancer among residents of the Island of Curacao in the Netherlands Antilles. With the help of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Morton found that three of these plants used in bush teas produced tumors in 100% of experimental animals tested." —from obituary by Howard Teas

Louis' fondness for Dr. Morton is understandable. They had common knowledge and shared information about bush medicine. After more discussion about what Louis was growing on his lot, and why, we got into the possibility of planting a pollinator garden to help beautify the community, create a peaceful place for residents and help him pollinate his many fruit and native trees on the lot. Louis has agreed to use his empty lot and collaborate with the Garden Club on a pollinator garden featuring native plants. He also wants to dedicate the garden space to Dr. Julia Morton. How cool is that?

Many thanks go to our board for approving this wonderful community effort with a unanimous vote. The plan is for Louis to create paths, lay mulch, install plants and maintain the garden with the help of residents in the neighborhood. The City has donated a truckload of mulch, and the Garden Club will be spending \$1,000 to supply plants.

I hope we can get some benches donated and educational materials provided. Other nice-to-haves would be a pollinator patch sign with links and plant markers. Possibly a little mobile library would be perfect for this garden. If you have ideas on sponsors, please let me know.

Dr. Morton's quote below is what Louis would love to have on a dedication plaque for the garden:

"How little we know of the excellent things smart people create - to our benefit! Enjoy!" — Julia



Louis Duncanson with a gorgeous Jackfruit tree

Volunteers Needed: Sign up for the Spade Brigade

by Paula Biehler

As fall approaches, bringing some slightly cooler and dryer weather (hopefully), it's time to refresh the Merrick House heritage garden beds. Check your calendars and mark Friday, October 8th as our first Brigade work day. The garden beds need our TLC, so grab your gardening hand tools, and let's give those beds their own garden spa day. We will meet at 9:30

Friday morning and spend time cleaning, mulching, soil amending, and planting, along with enjoying each other's company in this beautiful garden. If you want to be part of the Brigade, contact Paula Biehler at 305-669-9844 (home), 305-606-1903 (cell), or miamicook835@yahoo.com



*Merrick House Gardens.
Photos by Susan Rodriguez*

Attention Members: Yearbook Pickup Plans

by Denise West

The 2021/22 CGGC Yearbooks will be ready to be distributed in September!

As both the September board and general membership meetings will be on Zoom, we are asking members to pick up their yearbooks at a North Gables or South Gables location. You can help by picking up a neighbor's yearbook and delivering it to them.

Scheduled dates to pick up Yearbooks are: Friday, **September 10** and **Saturday, September 11** between the hours of 10 AM and 5 PM.

If your home address is **North of US 1**, your Yearbook pickup location is:

Home of Susan Rodriguez

900 Coral Way, CG 33134 ph. 305 439-3440

If your home address is **South of US 1**, your Yearbook pickup location is:

Home of Denise West

5325 Orduna Drive CG 33146 ph. 305 546-3012

Many thanks to our advertisers who have helped underwrite the printing costs! Please review their ads and express your appreciation to these generous sponsors.

—Denise West, Yearbook Editor

Club Happenings and Volunteer Opportunities 2021/22*

2021

- Nov 20 (Sat) **Fun with Flowers 10:00-12:00 Thanksgiving and Fall Designs** (Sign-up deadline is Thursday, November 18)
- Dec 6 (Mon) **Merrick House Christmas Decorating 9:00 am.** Our traditional holiday decorating of the Merrick House is back. Please contact Alexis Ehrenhaft at aje47@hotmail.com or (305) 606-5054
- Dec 7 (Tue) **Fun with Flowers 10:00-12:00 Holiday Designs** (Sign-up deadline is Sunday, December 5)

2022

- Feb (TBD) **Tour of Kitchens:** The Coral Gables Community Foundation's annual event is scheduled to return in February. To chair this event, please contact Susan Rodriguez at susan56athome@gmail.com.
- Feb 16 (Wed) **Field Trip: Casey's Corner Natives Nursery**, Homestead, FL
- Feb 26 (Sat) **Fun with Flowers 10:00 AM-12:00 PM** – Winter Wonderland Designs (Sign-up deadline is Thursday, February 24).
- Mar (TBD) **Garden Therapy** - COVID -19 permitting
- Mar 18 (Fri) **Spring Floral and Fashion Show**
A very special Floral and Fashion Show chaired by Barbara Reese and Jowanda Peterson, this will be our main Fundraiser and open to the public. The show will be held at the Biltmore Hotel, Alhambra Room, starting at 11:00 AM. Plan now to bring your friends, as this promises to be a fabulous event! Please sign up for a committee by contacting Barbara Reese: barbarareese1@aol.com, (305)-445-2258 or Jowanda Peterson: jogpeterson@gmail.com, (305)-669-3140.
- April 1 (Fri) **CGGC Photo Contest**
April 1st - April 31st, 2022—Our 2nd annual Photography Competition that reaches all photographers in the State of Florida. Participate in this virtual fundraiser from the convenience of your home. Volunteers who have website, Excel and/or social media experience are needed. We will be distributing promotional materials at our Farmers markets, so we need volunteers to participate in the setup and the day's events. Contact Susan Rodriguez at susan56athome@gmail.com. An exhibition after the results is being discussed; we would need a Chair to plan this event. Please contact Sherry Jordan or Susan Rodriguez. To become a sponsor of this event, contact Margaret (Peggy) Groves, our new member at mmgrovesint@gmail.com or (305)-804-6751.
- April 23 (Sat) **Fun with Flowers 10:00-12:00** – *Springtime Designs* (Sign-up deadline is Thursday, April 21)
- April (TBD) **Arbor Day** To be arranged with the City of Coral Gables
- May (TBD) **Luncheon and Installation of CGGC Officers:** Contact Liz Parnes at ecparnes1@aol.com to sign up for that committee.

*2021-2022 club happenings subject to change based on COVID Guidelines

Feb, 2022 note: The Lamar Louise Curry Park, a collaboration between the Garden Club and the city of Coral Gables, is beginning construction and scheduled to open in February 2022. The triangular plot of city land in front of Venetian Pool at 2701 De Soto Boulevard was chosen by our club and the city to turn into a flowering park and was officially named the Lamar Louise Curry Park on October 9, 2018 by the city commission. The ribbon-cutting ceremony is scheduled to be in February, so if you would like to be involved in the planning, contact Audrey Ross at aross@miamirealestate.com or Sharon Trbovich skyyeterriers1@gmail.com.

There are many opportunities to volunteer; please review our committees on the website and in your Yearbooks, and contact the appropriate Chair to volunteer.

Tour of Kitchens Herb Sale

by Sharon Trbovich

Each spring, the CGGC traditionally joins with the Community Foundation Kitchen Tour—a fundraising event for the Community Foundation. Proceeds go towards providing culinary scholarships to Gables High students, so we felt that selling herbs (and a few gorgeous orchids) would be appropriate. In years past, we have also sold vegetables straight from the farms down in the Redlands. Beautiful, healthy herbs were purchased by Susan Rodriguez from a vendor we have used in the past, who also supplies many local shops here in Miami. The herbs arrived on the 11th of

June in the midst of a heat wave, and my concern was keeping 210 herb plants alive for two days!!

Normally after the May Luncheon, club members scatter to the winds. Would we have enough helpers, I wondered? Not to worry: we had 18 in addition to Susan and myself. Setup took place on Friday, and we were ready to go at 10 AM Saturday morning. That day produced the highest temperatures and humidity of the year and even a brief rain shower with thunder.

Despite the weather and unusual date for the event, our sale went well. The few herbs that were left were sold afterwards from my home, one day only, at half off. The seven remaining herb plants were donated to the Merrick House Kitchen Garden.

The annual Tour of Kitchens event gives our club the opportunity to work with another civic minded organization, meet the public and promote what we are all about. Each goodie bag tour goers received had a flyer letting them know of past Garden Club projects and efforts we continue to support.

Thanks to all who purchased herbs and to the wonderful helpers who survived the heat and humidity. Thanks to our President, Susan Rodriguez and helpers France Ingraham, Lynn Kerdyk, Jodi Zaban, Judy Mangasarian, Connie Cabeza, Marci Montgomery, JoAnne Matthews, Susan Thomas, Victoria Cabeza, Maria Gonzalez, Mercy Arrieta, Maria More, Carmen Cason, Cathy Zukerman, Denise West, Christina Soler, and Leti Ateca. Special thanks to Beth Werner for her peppers and the “Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” plants hand propagated by Beth! While profits were good, the camaraderie developed was huge...see you next year!



Tour goers, Maria More



Victoria Cabeza, Maria Gonzalez, Carmen Cason, Maria More, President & CEO of the CGCF Mary Snow, Susan Rodriguez, Sharon Trbovich

Green Tip of the Month by Marlin Ebbert



“Switching out paper coffee filters for a permanent filter like the gold filter shown at right is a simple tip to help the environment. A French Press style coffeemaker (left) has a permanent filter already embedded. For an added bonus, sprinkle those coffee grounds throughout your garden.”

— Marlin Ebbert



Fun With Flowers Returns!

by Sharon Trbovich & Kitty Winkler



By popular demand, one of our best-loved programs for members will be returning in 2021-2022. "Fun with Flowers" gives participating members a chance to get creative with floral designs while enjoying catch-up time with Garden Club friends. A few learning points and help when needed will be supplied by Sharon Trbovich and Kitty Winkler, who are leading the program. But mostly, it is all about having a good time while working with beautiful flowers.

Four of our Saturday morning "Fun with Flowers" sessions are planned for the coming club year: November, December, February and April (COVID protocols permitting). Members attending bring their own clippers. Participation in each session is \$10 to cover cost of containers and flowers. To sign up, contact Sharon at skyyeterriers1@gmail.com or 401-935-6709; or Kitty at kittywink1@gmail.com or 786-479-3599. Look for program times, themes and sign-up details in your Yearbook, and join the fun!

September Flower Show

by Donna Box

September's meeting is on Zoom, so we would like to encourage virtual participation in this month's flower show. To be part of the show, read over the guidelines below and send a picture of a cut flower or plant material you have had in your procession for 90 days to Susan Rodriguez at susan56athome@gmail.com. We will post the pictures on our website and share at our meeting.

The rules outlined here explain how your submission would be judged in the flower show, Horticulture Division, Class 6, Cut Flowers. (For more detail, see this topic in the new Yearbook.) But don't stress over being judged. The goal for our September meeting is to have fun and learn more about horticulture.

Horticulture Division "Our Favorite Flora" Class 6, Cut Flowers

Requirements: (1 stem if large, max 18 inches, 3 blooms if small) and displayed in a clear glass container.

Please include with your picture the complete botanical nomenclature, which includes the Genus and species, underlined. (If you're not sure what those are for your plant, try a quick internet search. If that doesn't help, you can send a photo of your flower or plant to Donna Box at bbox@galtran.com for help with identification.)

For the flower show, your specimen should be groomed (i.e., no torn leaves) and displayed in a clear glass container. Small entry examples include dwarf varieties or small blooms like Chives or the yellow walking Iris. Large entries are not to exceed 18 inches; examples include Anthurium, Bougainvillea, Ixora or Rose. Entries must be displayed in a clear glass container provided by the exhibitor and in proportion to the specimen. (A word of caution about crystal vases: judges need to see the stem without distortion.)

For the example photo, I have chosen a dwarf Bougainvillea Sunvillea Rose[™]. The TM is for Trademark. Traditionally, the entry card is placed flat next to the example. This example is in a small crystal vase, but distortion of the stem is not apparent. "Cling wrap" was used to wedge the cutting into a straight position.

Bottom line: Share with us and participate in our September Flower Show!



Looking back, looking forward: An Interview With Nita Norman

by Betsy Tilghman

When I became President of the Garden Club in 2017, Nita Norman invited me to lunch. It's funny, I don't remember much about our conversation, but I came away knowing I had an ally, a friend and a window into our past.

The preservation of our past has been a focus of Nita's for many years. Several years ago, while at a dinner party at Arva Moore Parks' home, Nita met and talked with the new head of the University of Miami Library, William Walker. He spoke of their exciting new website for Special Collections. Not missing a beat, Nita asked if the Coral Gables Garden Club's old and fragile scrapbooks and other early history from the 1920s-1930s could be included. Mr. Walker was delighted to oblige, and, through the years, these historic archives were digitized and became available to all on the UM Special Collections website. (You will find them as well in the Resources section of our CGGC website.)

Now, as we prepare for the temporary removal of everything from the Garden Center in anticipation of renovations, Nita and our President, Susan Rodriguez, again approached the University about digitizing more of our history. Cristina Favretto, Head of Special Collections at UM, explained that they are focused on acquiring original inventory and would be honored to accept our history, storing it in protective boxes in their Special Collections Archives.

Nita joined the CGGC in 1981—or so she thinks. At one point, there was a little confusion about that date; maybe her card went missing from our oh-so-quiet member card file, or some other misadventure, but she has concluded that 1981 is a good guess. A card may go missing, and so might history if it is not preserved. So here begins a garden clubber's highlights of her chat with Nita as she spoke about her life.

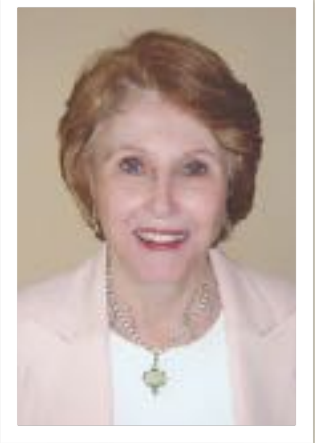
Nita was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama to Thomas and Allie Todd. She remembers a happy childhood, living in various cities with her older brother, Tommy (her younger brother not yet born), as her father relocated the family, building radio stations around the country. One momentous snowfall in Ohio, however, sent him fleeing south for good, back to the relative warmth of Tuscaloosa, where he continued to grow his business.

One forgets that the 1930s through the 1940s were the golden years of radio. The intimacy and immediacy of radio ushered in a new era, providing current war news, education and upbeat entertainment and solace, which were of immense value during the Great Depression. Our country was connected like never before. Of course, after the war came television. Nita laughs, remembering that when she moved to Miami, we were still watching TV through our stand-alone antennas while in the little town of Tuscaloosa, thanks to her dad's company, they enjoyed cable TV.

Nita met her husband, Harold, in a German class at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. When I asked what prompted her to take German, she said—with a twinkle in her eyes that sparkled through the phone—that pre-med students always took German as it was a requirement back then for medical school. She admits that Spanish might have been more useful to her, but then she wouldn't have met Harold!

The promised "just four years" of medical school tripled, and Harold eventually became a distinguished plastic surgeon here in Coral Gables. They moved to Coral Gables knowing no one other than Harold's new partner, on the advice that their son Harold's asthma would improve in our warm climate. And here they stayed and raised four children – Bonita, Harold, Katherine and Todd.

The Normans rented a little house on Veronese and then bought a home on Saldano. University Drive was Harold's route from Doctor's Hospital to the office and one day in 1977 he saw for sale a magnificent Mediterranean style home backing up to the Coral Gables waterway. Nita and Harold jumped in their little boat and motored up the canal to see their future home from the water. It was instant love! Their home on University Drive, where Nita continues to live, was the first Mediterranean style home honored with historic designation by the City. The residence was built by the Skinner Brothers. Telfair Knight, the VP/General Manager of the Coral Gables Corporation, and Merrick's close confidant, was the home's first resident. Nita remembers that the home was actually built for a couple living in Coconut Grove, but on completion, the wife decided she couldn't move to someplace so far out in the country! John and Coulton Skinner designed many of the large homes in Coral Gables, including homes in the Italian Village, the French Normandy Village and the Florida Pioneer Village.



Nita Norman Interview, continued from pg. 10

Although Nita was a Civics and History teacher in her early years of marriage, she eventually put teaching aside to raise her four children. And she became involved in an organization that would hold her interest and love for the rest of her life: the Coral Gables Garden Club. Nita has played an important role in all of the major accomplishments of our Club – from the four new City of Coral Gables entrances spearheaded by Betsy and Larry Adams, to the bronze statues of George and Althea Merrick. Look for plaques—Nita's name is often on them. She is one of only two members who have held the role of President for three terms. During one of her terms, she started the Junior Gardeners' Club at Coral Gables Elementary School, an endeavor she is most proud of. And we became a 501(C)(3) nonprofit through her efforts. Three times Nita graciously opened her historic home to our home tours, and, while I was president, she sweet-talked a neighbor into putting her home on our current tour. Then we walked her street, contemplating other willing victims on whom Nita was happy to call.

Now, as we create a park with the City for her friend Lamar Louise Curry, Nita has held a keen interest in the proceedings, speaking her voice, lending her hand and sharing her own unique perspective born of forty years' caring and loyalty to our Club.

I can feel Nita wincing—she is still, after all, a southern gal from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, compelled to speak up and lead, but demurring the spotlight. Got'cha, dear friend!



Photo credit: Behzad Ghaffarian, Sunflower

Membership Update

by Sally Stoltz

Greetings, Garden Club Members! I want to introduce myself as the new membership chair, and challenge our members to bring in new prospective members this year. Do you have a new neighbor...or a friend from a community group or other organizations you belong to?

A reminder of our bylaws pertaining to membership applications:

- Be a resident of Coral Gables.
- Have three letters of recommendation: One (1) sponsor letter and endorsement letters by two (2) members in good standing.
- Be brought to and introduced as a guest at two (2) general meetings before the deadline (first week in March). Note: February would be the last meeting a proposed member could attend.

Annual dues are \$100, with the exception of \$150 for the provisional year. Membership forms are available on our website or provided at the meetings.

September (and all Zoom meetings) note: If you have a prospective member you would like to invite to the September general meeting as a guest, be sure to let me know—send their email in advance to Susan Rodriguez: susan56athome@gmail.com for the Zoom invitation, and copy me on the message: morris.sally@comcast.net.

Please don't hesitate to call me if you have any questions.

—Sally Stoltz Morris, Membership Chair

(786) 514-8984

Scholarship News

by Ruth Markham

Our club has a generous scholarship program that funds one student at \$5,000.00 per year or two students at \$2,500.00 each per year. This year, member generosity has made it possible to offer three of the \$2,500.00 scholarships.

Miami-Dade Colleges, Universities and Botanical Gardens have been very helpful in finding us qualified candidates, and we are grateful for their assistance. The Scholarship Committee would now like to offer our members a first look at our funding aid to students.

Do you know a student who might qualify? Go to The Coral Gables Garden Club Website and click on Scholarships. You will find eligibility requirements and instructions for applying. I am also happy to talk by phone. Contact me: Ruth Markham, 305-458-6457, rhmarkham@hotmail.com

We would like to mention that we are a 501(C)(3) organization, and that your contributions to the Scholarship Fund are fully tax deductible. We have received donations in all denominations from our members that make us so grateful and remind us that this club is committed to our stated mission of educating our youth.

—Ruth Markham, Co-chair, Scholarship Committee

—Sharon Trbovich, Co-chair, Scholarship Committee

Scholar's Letter to Coral Gables Garden Club

by Seokmin Kim

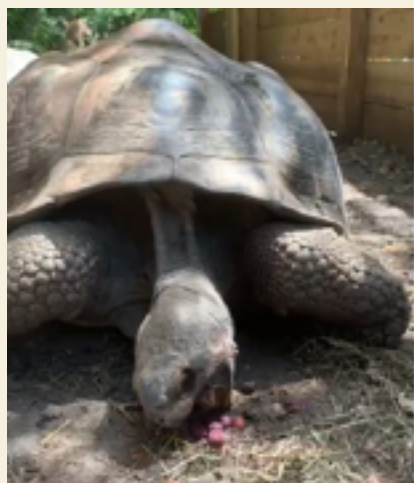
Hello, my name is Seokmin Kim. I am a Ph.D. student with Dr. Mauro Galetti at the University of Miami. I was a recipient of the Coral Gables Garden Club grant this past summer.

Thank you for your support with my research. It has been invaluable in supporting research related to my dissertation.

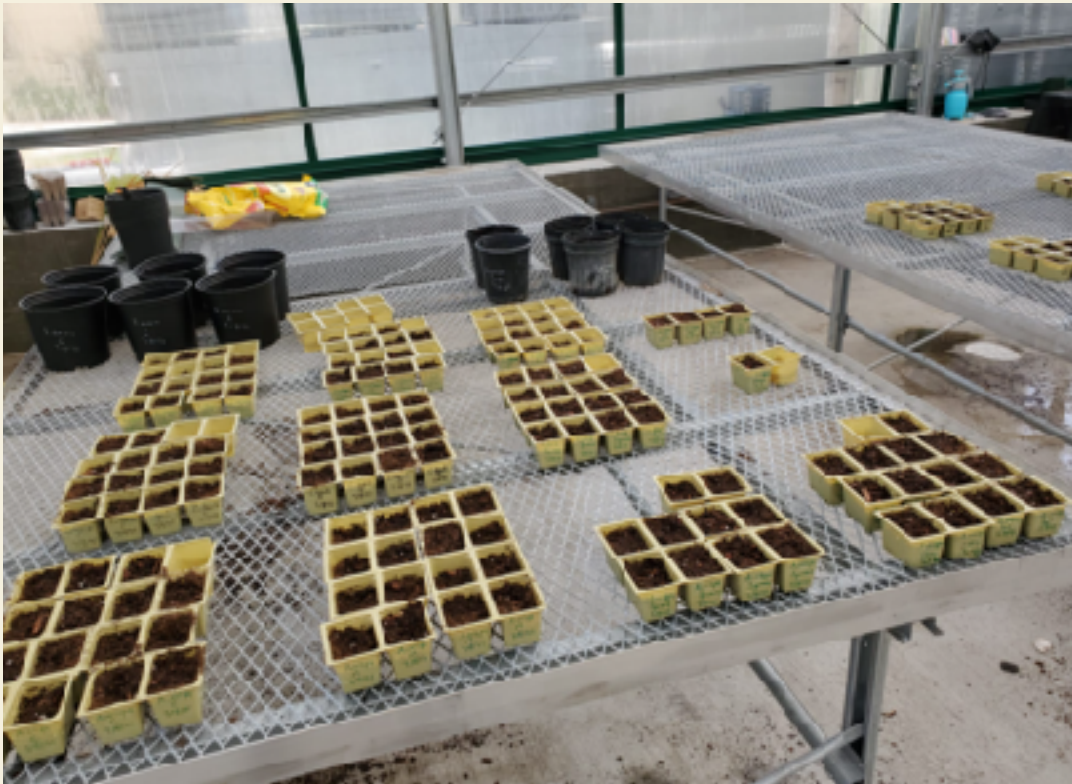
I started the summer continuing my work studying the seed dispersal potential of giant tortoises and iguanas. These animals used to inhabit islands throughout the Caribbean, but their populations have significantly declined after the arrival of people. Giant tortoises have become completely extinct in the area, and while iguana population declines have not been as drastic, they have become locally extinct from many islands.

To study the lost interaction between these animals and fruiting plants in the Caribbean, I worked with captive giant tortoises and iguanas at Three J's Tortoise Sanctuary at Miami and Iguanaland at Punta Gorda, to feed Caribbean fruits obtained from Montgomery Botanical Center and Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden. I then recovered any deposited seeds and planted them in individual plots in the University of Miami greenhouse to determine if the ingestion process aids in faster germination. While the experiment is ongoing, previous pilot studies we have done showed a clear pattern of ingested seeds germinating faster than control. This significantly clarifies the role that these large-bodied animals have in maintaining plant community and diversity in the Caribbean.

Scholar's letter continues on pg. 13



Scholar's letter continued from pg. 12



*Photo credit: Seokmin Kim,
Specimens in the UM Greenhouse*

Later in the summer, I traveled with Dr. Galetti to Eleuthera island in the Bahamas. There, we established contacts with Leon Levy Native Plant Preserve and Cape Eleuthera Institute. These contacts will hopefully allow for future collaborations and field courses. Furthermore, their expertise was crucial in helping us better understand the nature of field research in the Caribbean, as I had not worked in the Caribbean before. Their expertise proved useful almost immediately, as they helped us locate and measure the characteristics of endemic, and sometimes rare, fruiting plants such as the *Catesbaea spinosa* (Lily-Thorn).

From the Desk of: Your Hibiscus Leaflet Editor

by Marci Montgomery

Greetings from the editor's desk, and a big thank you to our contributors, our Managing Editor Susan Rodriguez, and my immediate predecessor, Suzuyo Fox, who generously helped me get started on the right foot—you all have made this newsletter possible. Added welcome and thank you to our loyal readers, who have gotten through 13 full pages in this issue!!

I am new to the Club and in my provisional year, so I am particularly grateful to each and every one of you for showing me the ropes, introducing me to the central players, writing your articles and reports, taking pictures and helping gather everything needed to create this publication in time for deadline.

As you know, the ongoing challenge for a monthly publication is content—as today's marketers and brand stewards like to say, "Content is King!" For those of you who chair committees, your reports and updates are welcome and valued. For each of our members, if you have a story idea, please let us know! You can reach Susan or me by email at:

Susan Rodriguez

susan56athome@gmail.com

Marci Montgomery

marci.montgomery@icloud.com

Submission deadline is the Sunday following the general meeting each month. Please include in your email subject line: Garden Club Newsletter

Looking forward to a wonderful year of news—thank you, everyone!!!

—Marci Montgomery, Editor