



# THE HIBISCUS LEAFLET

*Cultivate. Educate. Create. Inspire.*

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

## Happy New Year!

### *President's Message*

What a year it has been! It feels as though we were just beginning to plan our Centennial celebrations, and suddenly we are closing out a truly remarkable chapter in our club's history. I hope you and your families enjoyed a joyful holiday season and are feeling refreshed and ready for what promises to be another exciting year for the Coral Gables Garden Club.

As we look ahead, there is so much to anticipate. At the forefront is our major fundraiser, **Fashions and Florals: Nightfall in the Garden**, which will be paired with our juried flower show, **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, both taking place at the Coral Gables Country Club on April 24, 2026. In addition, members can look forward to a wonderful lineup of activities, including Diggin' It Workshops, Garden Therapy at Crystal Academy, a field trip to Patch of Heaven Sanctuary, Fun with Flowers, Heritage Garden activities, and, of course, a Snip 'n Sip!

The continued success of our club depends on your enthusiastic participation and generous support of our programs and fundraising efforts. Because of you, we are able to offer engaging programming while continuing our commitment to meaningful community initiatives such as the Project Canopy Micro Forest Program, Camp Mahachie Restoration, Scholarships, and many other projects that reflect our mission.

I am also thrilled to share the success of our final Centennial event, the unveiling of our **Planting Pollinators** sculpture on Saturday, December 6, 2025. In partnership with the City of Coral Gables and Miami-Dade County, we proudly dedicated this beautiful work, commissioned by renowned artist Xavier Cortada, at the Coral Gables Library Butterfly Garden. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of our Centennial Chairs, Teresa Zohn and Kristal Meyer, this event, and the entire Centennial Celebration, was impeccably executed. These moments will stand as lasting tributes to our club for years to come.

Warmly,

**Bonnie Seipp**

President, Coral Gables Garden Club



## Club Events Coming Up:

**January 10th @ 10:00am**

**Diggin It Workshop - Microgreens & Herbs - How, When, Why.**

Hands-on workshop featuring  
Michele Dudley  
Garden Cottage, Biltmore Hotel

**01/24 @ 9:00 am**

**Heritage Garden**

Merrick House

**01/26 @ 11:15 am**

**General Meeting**

Biltmore Hotel

**Get Your Tickets for  
Fashions and Florals**



## Fashion and Florals Fundraiser “Nightfall in the Garden”

April 24th, 2026

We are delighted to invite you to join us for a very special evening in support of the Garden Club’s annual Fundraiser, taking place on **Friday, April 24, 2026**, at the beautiful **Coral Gables Country Club**. This event brings together neighbors, supporters, and community leaders who share a passion for preserving the natural beauty and historic charm of Coral Gables.

Your generosity plays a vital role in sustaining the Garden Club’s mission. With your support, we are able to:

- 🌿 Expand native planting and conservation efforts
- 🌿 Provide environmental education for youth
- 🌿 Maintain the floral heritage that defines our community

The evening will include a welcome reception, dinner, a silent auction, a fashion show by Julian Chang, and opportunities to learn more about the projects your

contribution makes possible. Together, we can continue to cultivate a greener, more vibrant Coral Gables for generations to come.

We hope you will consider making a donation and joining us for this meaningful celebration. Your presence—and your support—truly make a difference.

**With appreciation,**

**Jo Wanda & Barbara**

*Committee Co-Chairs*

### A Midsummer Night’s Dream - Flower Show

*A Shakespeare inspired Flower Show will be held in April along with the Fashions and Florals event.*

🌸 The Flower Show will be built around Shakespeare’s work “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*” which will open up rich, magical and romantic possibilities - blending Elizabethan elegance with floral fantasy. With categories such as Puck’s Prank, Forest Enchantment, Moonlight Interlude or The Curtain Falls, there will be something for everyone to participate in Horticulture and this year will have three fabulous Educational Exhibits.

🌸 Save the date - April 24, 2026, put on your creative hat, nature your green thumbs and join in the fun with flowers! There will be ribbons and prizes galore! Schedule coming soon!

Contact **Sharon Trbovich** or **Susan Rodriguez** for more information or to volunteer!!



## Member Highlight: *History of Granada Shops*

### *A Coral Gables family business inspired by George Merrick*

*By Dinah Wilkins Marzullo*



Granada Shops was founded in 1924 by Ralph L. Wilkins Sr., my grandfather as well as my cousin Lynn Kerdyk's grandfather. Ralph was born in 1896 in South Milford, Indiana. He graduated from University of Michigan and served in the United States Tank Corps in Europe during WWI.

In 1924, Ralph and his wife Margaret (our grandmother) arrived in Coral Gables after touring the country in their Model T Ford. Ralph had the good fortune of meeting George Merrick, who was building The City Beautiful in Mediterranean style. Ralph realized that there was a void in Merrick's plan as the interior furniture for these buildings and homes needed to match the Mediterranean architecture and design.

Merrick responded enthusiastically and had his architects (Denman Fink and Phineas Paist) design a workshop in the Ponce Circle "Crafts Center." Located at 2900 Ponce De Leon Blvd, the beautiful Spanish style building was perfect for Granada Shops. The first floor housed the showroom, the second floor the office and drafting work, and the rear for an assembly area and woodcarving workshop. The third floor became the upholstery area and his family's living quarters until they purchased a home in Coral Gables in 1927.

The historic building later became the University of Miami School of Music Work Shop and then the popular Charade Restaurant, until it was unfortunately destroyed by an arson's fire in 1995. The property remains an empty lot.

To set-up his new business, Ralph traveled to Havana and hired a Cuban foreman. He also hired an international staff of craftsmen, draftsmen, hand carvers, assembly, and machine men from Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, and Scotland.

In 1932, Ralph's brother, Leland Wilkins, joined the business as Chief Decorator. During this time, they created Spanish style hand carved ornate furniture, upholstered in velvets, brocades and leathers for Coral Gables homes including the Mathesons and Deerings (the Deering Estate still has some of Granada Shops furniture.) They also created furniture for the Biltmore Hotel, the Bath Club, the Surf Club, the Douglas Entrance Building, Coral Gables City Hall, and Coral Gables Country Club.

Granada Shops also manufactured the benches, judge's desk, witness stand, the bar and jury box in the largest and "famous" Dade County Courtroom 630 (aka 6-1), which held the trials of Al Capone, Giuseppe Zangara (he attempted to assassinate President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt) and where the largest jury award in US history against Big Tobacco took place.

As the United States entered WWII and many of the craftsmen were drafted into shipbuilding for the country, Granada Shops closed until the end of the war. During this time, Ralph served as the Area Director of War Manpower in Atlanta and Tampa. He was appointed by the then and first President of University of Miami, Dr. Bowman Ashe.

In 1946, Granada Shops reopened. As a new era of machine-made furniture production overtook the custom furniture market, Granada Shops responded by designing commercial furniture for banks and public buildings and large retailers, notably Burdines and Jordan Marsh.

Ralph managed the company until he retired in 1963. His son and my father, Ralph L. Wilkins Jr (known as Jack) became President. As the business grew, Granada Shops was relocated from Coral Gables to a brand-new large warehouse building on North Waterway Drive in Miami in 1971. A year later, the family sold Granada Shops to Amertec Associates, a competitor at the time. As homage to the historic company, they incorporated "Granada" in their name: Ameritec-Granada Inc.

## Member Highlight: *History of Granada Shops - cont.*

### *A Coral Gables family business inspired by George Merrick*

*By Dinah Wilkins Marzullo*

In 1983, the Wilkins family (Margaret Wilkins, Barbara Burroughs, Jack Wilkins, and Patricia Fryer) donated furniture to the City of Coral Gables. The city's historic architect at the time was Charles Chase. The plan was to place the pieces in City Hall and in the Coral Gables House, the original home of George Merrick.

The Granada Shops Furniture is very collectible and still resides in numerous homes and businesses in Dade County, e.g. The Biltmore Hotel, The Merrick House and Deering Estate.

I have the first Granada Shops piece made – a buffet table, along with four other furniture pieces. My cousin Lynn Fryer Kerdyk also has Granada Shops furniture in her Coral Gables home as well as Don Slesnick, whose dining room furniture is original Granada Shops.

*Interesting to Note: The Granada Shops furniture was not stamped or signed. Thus, people may own a piece or two and not know it. I have the original portfolio book with photos of the many furniture pieces they created.*

#### **Wilkins Family**

Ralph Wilkins (1896 – 1997)

Margaret Mason Wilkins – (1896 – 1986)



*Ralph Wilkins in front of City Hall*

As pioneers of Coral Gables, Ralph and Margaret Wilkins were members of the Biltmore Country Club and Coral Gables Country Club. Ralph was a founding member and president of the Coral Gables Kiwanis Club, President of Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce, and member of the Dade County School Board.

They purchased their Coral Gables home at 4122 Palmarito Street in 1927 and lived there until Margaret's passing in 1986.

Ralph and Margaret Wilkins had three children, which were all born and raised in Coral Gables and graduated from Ponce de Leon Sr. High School. Jack and Tish attended and graduated from University of Miami.

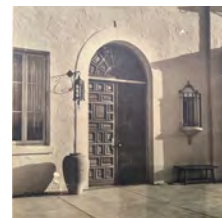
Barbara Wilkins Lamb Borouhgs (1925 – 2006)

Ralph (Jack) L. Wilkins Jr – (1928 – 2018)

Patricia (Tish) Wilkins Fryer – (1930 – 2011)

Seven Grandchildren – All attended Coral Gables Sr High School

Of the seven grandchildren, my cousin Lynn Fryer Kerdyk and I still live in Coral Gables along with our husbands, William (Bill) Kerdyk and Randy Marzullo. Lynn's brother and my cousin Tom Fryer, resides in Cutler Bay.



*Shop's Front Door*



*Showroom*

*Piece made at the shops*



*Me & my father*

## Garden Wisdom: The Perfect Guest Firespike -*Odontonema Strictum*-

By Betsy Tilghman - Horticulture

Much like the penta with its cosmopolitan ways (a proper world traveler, always cheerful, never rude or aggressively out of bounds), firespike is a welcome foreigner to our gardens. This lovely lady hails from Central America and dresses herself most of the year in South Florida with outrageously fun spikes of red or purple tubular flowers. She has a stately stature with upright posture and can reach a height of 6 feet. Yet she takes no offense at a little snipping. And being a grateful guest she is happy to share herself with you, and will encourage you to pass her along to friends through soft stem cuttings which root easily. She is also happy to bloom for you in dappled shade, although a good amount of sun (but not that wilting afternoon blaze, please!) is ideal. Indeed, she will ask very little of you – she eats and drinks in moderation and rarely needs medical care. She almost never sends a bunch of ill-mannered children out into your garden to cause trouble. It comes as no surprise, then, that given her many exceptional qualities there is always a buzz around her – she is quite a magnet for our favorite garden denizens, the butterflies, hummingbirds and bees.

I'm sure she has already won you over and you are close to sending her an invitation to your garden, but if you are still sitting on the proverbial fence, you must know that she also excels as a cut flower. Your writer received a bouquet of flowers for Thanksgiving – mostly beautiful lilies and roses. Not being a design diva, she stuck them in a vase and tried to make them look like they were not just – yeah – sunk in a vase. With little luck. So, she went out into her garden and gathered some firespike and fern. The firespike were nothing short of fun and unexpected –they waved above the traditional blooms as if Dr. Suess had made a guest appearance. And they stayed until the party was over – like a courteous guest who appreciates her new country and new friends!

Betsy Tilghman  
Horticulture



## Garden Events Highlights:

### *Centennial Sculpture Unveiling*



### *Field Trip to Fairchild*



### *Merrick House Holiday Decorating*



## Garden Events Highlights:

### Heritage Garden



### Fun with Flowers



## Harvest Kitchen: Rooted in Health - A Plant-Forward New Year's Resolution

By Michele Dudley, RDN, Culinary Coach, founder of Barefoot Nutrition®

Eating more plants isn't about restriction or perfection—it's about abundance. More color, more flavor, more nourishment, and more connection to the food that fuels us. When we shift our plates toward plants, we're choosing a way of eating that supports our bodies, our communities, and the planet.

**Plants nourish deeply** - Vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts, and seeds are packed with fiber, vitamins, minerals, and powerful antioxidants. These nutrients support overall health and vitality. Eating more plants is a simple, everyday way to care for our bodies.

**Plants bring variety and joy to the table** - From creamy lentils and roasted root vegetables to fresh herbs, vibrant salads, and comforting soups, plant-based foods offer endless creativity. Eating more plants invites us to cook differently, try new flavors, and rediscover seasonal ingredients. It's less about what we remove and more about what we add!

**It's better for the planet** - Plant-forward eating has a lighter environmental footprint. Producing plants generally requires fewer resources—less land, water, and energy—than animal-based foods. Choosing more plants is a quiet but powerful way to care for the earth and future generations.

**It doesn't have to be all or nothing** - Eating more plants doesn't mean becoming vegan overnight. It can start with small, meaningful shifts: adding an extra vegetable to dinner, swapping one meat-based meal a week for a plant-forward one, or building meals around vegetables instead of treating them as a side. Progress, not perfection.

**A return to balance** - At its heart, eating more plants is a return to how food was meant to be enjoyed—simple, colorful, seasonal, and nourishing. It's about slowing down, listening to our bodies, and choosing foods that make us feel good today and for years to come.

**Take advantage of South Florida's growing season** - Right now, our region is at its peak for fresh, local produce—making it the perfect time to visit farmers markets, join a CSA, and support local farmers. Cook with what's in season and enjoy what's growing right now.

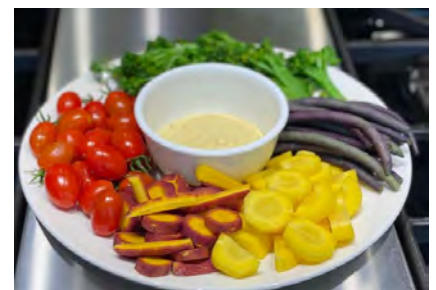
This year, let plants take up more space on your plate. Not as a rule, but as an invitation—to better health, greater variety, and a more connected way of eating... Let's Eat More Plants! 🌿

### Dijon Garlic Aioli

This aioli pairs beautifully with vegetables of all kinds, whether roasted, steamed, or raw. Give it a try—it's a simple addition to a more plant-forward way of eating!

#### Ingredients:

¼ cup of avocado mayonnaise  
2 Tablespoon Dijon Mustard  
1 Tablespoon olive oil  
1 teaspoon lemon juice  
2 clove of garlic, minced  
Salt & pepper to taste



**Directions:** Combine all ingredients and refrigerate! You can refrigerate it for about a week.

I like to make it in advance and let the flavors combine really well. Enjoy!

*For more tips and recipes go to [BarefootNutrition.com](https://www.barefootnutrition.com)*



## 2026 Club Happenings

2026 Date	Time	Event	Location
01/10 (Sat)	10:00 AM	Diggin' It Workshop	Biltmore Hotel Garden Cottage
01/24 (Wed)	9:00 AM	Heritage Garden	Merrick House 907 Coral Way
01/26 (Mon)	11:15 AM	General Meeting & Plant Sale	Biltmore Hotel
02/13 (Fri)	11:30 AM	Garden Therapy	Crystal Academy 107 Antilla Avenue
02/14 (Sat)	10:00 AM	Fun with Flowers	Biltmore Hotel Garden Cottage
02/28 (Sat)	9:00 AM	Heritage Garden	Merrick House 907 Coral Way
03/05 (Thu)	10:00 AM	Field Trip & Lunch	Patch of Heaven Sanctuary 21900 SW 157th Avenue Miami, Florida
03/07 (Sat)	10:00 AM	Fun with Flowers	Biltmore Hotel Garden Cottage
03/12 (Wed)	5:30 PM	Sip 'N' Snip	Lamar Louise Curry Park 2665 De Soto Boulevard
03/28 (Sat)	9:00 AM	Heritage Garden	Merrick House 907 Coral Way
04/07 (Tue)	2:00 PM	Garden Therapy	Riviera Health Resort 6901 Yumuri Street
04/11 (Sat)	10:00 AM	Diggin' It Workshop	Biltmore Hotel Garden Cottage
04/14 - 04/19 (Wed-Sun)	TBD	FFGG Convention	Embassy Suites Kissimmee, Florida
04/24 (Fri)	10:00 AM	National Arbor Day Tree Planting	TBD
04/24 (Fri)	TBD	Flower Show	Coral Gables Country Club 997 North Greenway Drive
04/24 (Fri)	7:00 PM	Fashions & Florals Fundraiser	Coral Gables Country Club 997 North Greenway Drive
04/25 (Sat)	9:00 AM	Heritage Garden	Merrick House 907 Coral Way
05/02 (Sat)	9:00 AM	Fun with Flowers	Biltmore Hotel Garden Cottage
05/06 (Wed)	11:30 AM	Installation Luncheon	Coral Reef Yacht Club 2484 South Bayshore Drive Coconut Grove, Florida

Questions about the Newsletter? Email [hibiscusnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:hibiscusnewsletter@gmail.com) or contact Michele Dudley (Editor)