THE HIBISCUS LEAFLET

Cultivate. Educate. Create. Inspire.
A proud member of the National Garden Club, Inc. & the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs

"Keep America Blooming"

President's Message



Dear Members:

It is an honor to serve as President of the Coral Gables Garden Club as we begin our 102nd year together.

As we begin this year, I invite you to join me in celebrating this special time in our Country's history by planting pollinator -friendly plants and trees for the future of our nation and our City Beautiful.

My inspiration for this year's theme, "Keep America Blooming", came from the NCG's "Plant America" initiative. The FFGC also encourage its members to embrace patriotic garden themes celebrating the 250 Anniversary of our Country, red petals for courage, white for purity and blue for liberty. This summer we partnered with the City of Coral Gables planting red, white and blue flowers in various areas of the Gables. In June, we collaborated with the City planting flowers at the Blue Star Memorial, the Coral Way Entrances and the Merrick House with additional plantings planned for the holidays. These efforts beautifully reflect one of the longstanding missions of our Club: community beautification.

I am also thrilled to share progress on several projects that will leave a lasting impact on our community.

Thanks to our Club's $50,000 donation to the micro-forest project, the City has notified us that Phase One is expected to begin this fall with the installation of larger trees. The Coral Gables Magazine will feature an article on the micro-forest and our Garden Club's involvement, along with a special series showcasing the remarkable gardens of our some of our members.

The series begins in September with Susan Thomas, followed by Joanne Meagher in October, Tracy Umansky in November, Eli Jelke in December, Bonnie Seipp in January, Liz Parnes in February, Betsy Tilghman in March, Maureen Gragg in April, and Judy Mangasarian in May. Thank you to each of these members for graciously opening your gardens and helping showcase the beauty and the spirit of our Club.

Our Camp Mahachee Restoration Project also continues with our $25,000 donation towards tree plantings. On October 18th, we will plant 250 trees for Project 250, while the Girl Scouts work toward

Club Events Coming Up:

Saturday, September 12th @ 10:00am
Diggin' It Workshop
Garden Center, Biltmore Hotel

Saturday, September 26th @ 9:00 am
Heritage Garden
Merrick House

Saturday, October 3rd @ 10:00 am
Fun with Flowers
Garden Center, Biltmore Hotel

Sunday, October 18th @ 2:00-5:00 pm
Camp Mahachee Planting & Badge Day
9950 Old Cutler Road

Tuesday, October 20th @ 9:30 am
District XII Autumn Meeting
Coral Gables Congregational Church

Get Your Tickets for *A Floral Extravaganza*

Details on Page 7

"Keep America Blooming" - cont.

President's Message

their Gardening Patch and Tree Badge. Please save the date and join us as we watch this important project take root.

We anticipate that our Butterfly Garden will be completed this year with the collaboration of the City of Coral Gables and Miami-Dade County.

Our Club will host the FFGC District meeting this year on October 20, 2026. I hope you will join us in welcoming our fellow garden club members and supporting this special gathering.

More exciting news on the horizon in "Keeping America Blooming". Susan Rodriguez has generously offered to chair a wonderful Floral Extravaganza on November 5th. Mario, from Belle Fleur, will be our designer. We are especially grateful to the Marlene Kerdyk Beautification Fund for sponsoring this event. Please see invite in this newsletter. It will be a wonderful community fundraiser.

A perfect blooming event is one of our most anticipated events of the year, our NGC Flower Show at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens on April 14th and 15th, **Passports to Petals**, chaired by Sharon Trbovich and Bonnie Seipp. Our main fundraiser this year will be on April 14th 6:00 pm at Fairchild chaired by Teresa Zohn and Jo Wanda Peterson. This special evening will kick-off our amazing Flower Show. It will include cocktails, music and a wonderful buffet where you will experience a culinary journey from around the world. You will not want to miss this event filled with flora, delectable fare and fun!

As you can see, we have many exciting blooming events planned for this year. I encourage you all to check on all our wonderful workshops and community plantings, programs and special events that are planned by our dedicated members. You can find details about everything planned for the year in our beautiful, newly improved Yearbook chaired by Peggy Groves. My sincere thanks to Peggy for the many hours she devoted to it over the summer.

I would also like to thank Michele Dudley, our Hibiscus Leaflet chair, for creating our wonderful first issue this year.

As we begin our 102nd year, I hope "Keep American Blooming" becomes more than our theme. I hope it reminds us of what this Club has done for more than a century: planting today so that generations to come can enjoy something more beautiful tomorrow.

I am looking forward to seeing you all at our first meeting of the year on September 28th at 11:15 am in the Danielson Gallery.

Warmest wishes,

Barbara Reese
President, Coral Gables Garden Club



"Where flowers bloom, so does hope,
carried on wings of butterflies"

Garden Wisdom: June, Johnny and Horticulture from the North Carolina Mountains

By Betsy Tilghman - Horticulture



Well, maybe not exactly horticulture – let's call it witnessing nature.

I know you all are on the edges of your seats wondering if the two male Ruby Throated hummingbirds I wrote about last fall came back. They did! And they brought their gals and maybe they had babies, because I am feeding many hummers this year. These tiny birds are constantly running each other off, so they are hard to count, but I have read that a good rule of thumb for approximating the number of hummers that come to your feeder is to multiply by 6 the number you see at any one time together. I've seen three, so I could have 18!



The hummingbirds don't get along, but I have my Juncos. We have had two nestings in our outside baskets and décor – the first in a basket in the carport where we store the car dust buster and the second in the wreath at our front door. I gently moved the wreath to a nearby spot and this little lady (we call her June, her mate Johnny) seems to be fine with that. She nestles deep in her nest but I see the white triangle of her little beak when I walk by. I think she is usually at our bird feeder in the early evening with a bevy of other Juncos – I'm wondering if they are all nesting moms briefly leaving their nests for food and companionship. As I finish this article the babies have now hatched and Johnny has taken over his share of feeding and sentry duties. The babies should be fledging any day – we will miss their presence!



And then there is the saga of our Imperial moth – a large, gorgeous specimen with a wing span of nearly five inches and the color of molted leaves. She decided to lay her eggs on the wooden landing of our garage apartment. It took her a couple of days, and then she died – right there. Imperial moths belong to the Saturniidae family, which includes some of the largest moths in the world, including the beautiful Luna moth. These moths do not pollinate or eat – they have no mouths or internal organs to digest food. What a strange and stark evolutionary niche they occupy. Nature's benefits are food for birds – the caterpillars can grow to more than 5 inches in length - and their plentiful poop, or frass, which enriches the soil.

I placed the eggs in a little cup and after about 10 days they hatched. I transferred the tiny caterpillars to a homemade container with a screen top and fed them the leaves AI said were their preferred diet. They grew, but sadly they didn't thrive and slowly they died. I'm still trying to figure out what went wrong.

Imperial moths have a vast range that extends into the Florida Keys, and although their population has declined in the northern states, the moth is still abundant across the American South. Maybe you too have seen one of these amazing creatures.

Lastly, a recent BBC article mentioned the recent surge in birdwatching, especially Gen Z birders who have discovered the Cornell University Merlin Bird ID app. Some of you may remember that I recommended this app a few years ago. This free app has now been downloaded over 42 million times and can identify 11,000 species, most of the time correctly. If you haven't downloaded the app yet, now is a great time, to identify not only our local birds but those migrating as well. Check out who is warbling in your neighborhood!

Member Highlight: *Marina Berberian*



Marina Berberian is a distinguished pianist, educator, and the founder and director of Hi Key Piano Studio in Coral Gables, Florida. Born in Armenia, she was trained in the world-renowned Soviet-Russian music education tradition. She earned her Bachelor of Music with honors from the Romanos Melikyan Music College in Yerevan, followed by a Master's degree in music pedagogy, solo performance, and chamber music accompaniment from the Yerevan State Conservatory after Komitas.

After immigrating to the United States in 1991, Marina continued to refine her craft in South Florida. In 2008, she attended Florida International University on a full scholarship, earning a Master's degree in Piano Performance under the tutelage of celebrated pianist Kemal Gekic.

Over the past 25 years, Marina has established herself as one of Miami's most sought-after piano pedagogues. A long-standing member of the Miami Music Teachers Foundation, she is a Steinway Educational Partner and has been recognized as a Top Steinway Teacher annually since 2014. In addition to running Hi Key Piano Studio, she serves on the faculty at Fisher Island Day School and holds the position of organist at St. Mary Armenian Church in Cooper City.

Her expertise makes her a frequent choice as an adjudicator for major regional competitions, including the Florida Federation of Music Clubs, the Miami Dade Community College Piano Concerto Competition, and the Youth Fair Competitions.

As a performer, Marina has appeared extensively throughout South Florida and internationally as both a soloist and collaborative pianist. Notable highlights include duo recitals with Dr. Irena Kofman in Curaçao and performance appearances in Yerevan, Armenia, for the *My Armenia Music Festival*. In recognition of her global advocacy for Armenian music, she was honored with the Honorary Award by the Ministry of Armenian Diaspora. Expanding her artistic reach to digital audiences, Marina recently launched her second recording on Spotify, featuring works by contemporary American composer Donald Waxman.



We are honored to have the incredibly talented **Marina performing at A Floral Extravaganza** on November 5th! Don't miss the opportunity to experience her beautiful music and talent.

We hope you'll join us for an unforgettable morning filled with flowers, music, and celebration!



Special Highlight: Partnership with the Girl Scouts Continues and Grows

By Bonnie Seipp

The Coral Gables Garden Club has enjoyed a long-standing partnership with the Girl Scouts of Tropical Florida, and I am delighted to share that our relationship continues to grow in exciting new ways.
Our connection with **Camp Mahachee** began in 2022, when members of the Coral Gables Garden Club voted to help restore the entrance to the camp with native and pollinator-friendly plants. Working together with the Girl Scouts, Coral Gables Community Foundation, The William Kerdyk's Parknership Fund, Miami-Dade County, and the City of Coral Gables, the Garden Club has helped transform the entrance into a beautiful landscape that welcomes campers while supporting native wildlife and pollinators.

During the 2025–2026 club year, the Garden Club renewed its commitment to the Girl Scouts' **Plant It Forward** campaign with a $25,000 pledge—$5,000 each year for five years. The campaign has an ambitious goal: planting **10,000 additional native trees at Camp Mahachee** while providing funding for the camp's restoration and ongoing maintenance. Nearly 2,000 trees have already been planted over the past two years.

In celebration of America's 250th anniversary, our club is also donating **250 trees**. They will be planted during a community planting day at Camp Mahachee on **Sunday, October 18, from 2–5 p.m.**, as part of an effort to plant more than 2,500 additional trees. We look forward to seeing our members participate in this exciting day of service and environmental stewardship.

Growing Our Educational Partnership

Our partnership with the Girl Scouts is also expanding through their **Badge Program**, providing an exciting opportunity for Garden Club members to share our knowledge and love of gardening with a new generation.

The Girl Scouts offer Badge Programs on Saturdays from September through May and are exploring a special **"Badge Day"** featuring educational stations where girls can complete activities and earn badges. Several badges are particularly well suited to the expertise of our members:

- **Gardener Badge** – 4th and 5th grade
- **Bugs, Pollinators & Butterflies Badge** – 2nd and 3rd grade
- **Flowers/Plant Structure Badge** – 4th and 5th grade
- **Trees Badge** – Cadets, 6th–8th grade



We are exploring workshops to take place in 2027 in gardening, flower arranging, growing microgreens, and other activities that complement the Girl Scouts' badge requirements. We may also introduce younger Girl Scouts to the pollinator plantings at the Camp Mahachee entrance and incorporate our Garden Club coloring book into their experience.

In addition to earning a Girl Scout badge, participants will receive a **Coral Gables Garden Club patch**, originally created as part of the Camp Mahachee restoration project. The patch is currently being updated with our new Garden Club logo.

We are excited about the possibilities this partnership offers to inspire young gardeners, encourage environmental stewardship, and share our passion for plants and nature with the next generation.

Be on the lookout for more exciting opportunities to grow with the Girl Scouts this year!

Coral Gables Library Butterfly Garden Update: *Butterflies, Blooms & Community!*

By Susan Rodriguez

After years of anticipation, we're delighted to share some exciting news: the restoration of the Coral Gables Library butterfly garden is finally becoming a reality!

On August 26th, we had a very productive meeting with County and City of Coral Gables officials and learned more about the landscaping plans. The new butterfly garden will be planted along the sunny west wall of the library, north of the sculpture, a perfect spot for our fluttering friends! There are many butterfly shrubs and trees that will remain, and the library team has agreed to work with James Duncan, our honorary member, to ensure we plant the right plants in the right places.

Even better, we've agreed to host a community planting day and to create a team of our amazing volunteers to help care for and maintain the garden.

Planting Day: We're hoping for sometime in early November! The County will provide a firm date by the first week of October.

Want to help us plan this fun, community-wide event?
We'd love to have you! Whether you have a green thumb, love butterflies, enjoy bringing people together, or simply want to pitch in, there's a place for everyone. Meeting time in October TBA.

Interested in joining the planning team? Please contact Susan Rodriguez at susan56athome@gmail.com



Pictured left to right: Shiham Lorenzo, James Rustin, President Barbara Reese, Susan Rodriguez, Brent Capley, Lydia Lopez, James Duncan, Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson, Julio Rodriguez, Page Perez.



A Floral Extravaganza

Thursday, November 5th
10:00 AM

with master floral designer
Mario Fernandez of
Belle Fleur

250 Years of Celebrating the Holidays "American Style"

Bring the holidays home with Mario's creative ideas.
Enjoy tables of sweet and savory treats, bubbly, a bake sale,
a holiday raffle & holiday items for sale.
Music performed by Marina Berberian.

Price:$45
Scan the QR Code for
Payment on EventBrite
Or Zelle
TreasurerCGGC@gmail.com

Doors open at 9:30 am
Coral Gables Congregational
United Church of Christ
3010 De Soto Blvd.
Coral Gables, FL

Checks may be written, made payable to Coral Gables Garden Club,
and mailed to Susan Rodriguez, 900 Coral Way, Coral Gables, Fl 33134

Coral Gables Garden Club
Sponsored by The Marlene Kerdyk Beautification Fund

A Floral Extravaganza



The Marlene Kerdyk Beautification Fund is a beautiful tribute to a remarkable woman who loved flowers, flower arranging, and the beauty they bring to our community. Created in 2018 by the Kerdyk family in honor of their beloved mother, Marlene was a devoted longtime member of the Coral Gables Garden Club and a true pillar of a family whose name has long been synonymous with service to our city.

We are deeply grateful to the Kerdyk family for their continued generosity and support. Their sponsorship of our Floral Extravaganza event is especially meaningful and fitting, a wonderful way to honor Marlene's love of flowers while helping carry forward her legacy of beautifying Coral Gables.

Coral Gables Garden Club
Sponsored by The Marlene Kerdyk Beautification Fund

A Floral Extravaganza with Mario Fernandez

By Susan Rodriguez



Join us on **November 5th** at the **Coral Gables Congregational Church** for a festive morning of flowers, creativity, and holiday inspiration!

Internationally renowned floral designer, educator, and honorary member of the Coral Gables Garden Club, **Mario Fernandez** will share his extraordinary talent, along with his tips and tricks of the trade. His spectacular designs will be **holiday-inspired and created in celebration of our nation's 250th birthday**.



Mario has been a cherished supporter of the Coral Gables Garden Club for more than 15 years. His presentations are always a delight, filled with humor, grace, generosity, and of course, breathtaking flowers.

Over the years, Mario's floral artistry has graced the homes and events of numerous celebrities and distinguished figures, including **Oprah Winfrey, Gloria and Emilio Estefan, Jennifer Lopez, Madonna, Celine Dion, Luis Miguel, Arturo Sandoval, Alonzo Mourning, Dwyane Wade, and Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush and their families**, among many others.

Come join the fun and let Mario's magnificent creations set the mood for the holiday season! Enjoy a nice lunch, a bake sale, music from our member Marina Berberian and more.

Tickets: $45 Limited Seating so buy your tickets now.

Purchase through **Eventbrite**, by searching "A Floral Extravaganza" or Scan the QR Code below.







Pay by Zelle to **TreasurerCGGC@gmail.com**.

If you would like to pay by, check please make your check payable to Coral Gables Garden Club and mail to Susan Rodriguez, 900 Coral Way, Coral Gables, Fl 33134

We hope to see you there for an unforgettable morning of flowers, friendship, and celebration!

September: *The Start of South Florida's Growing Season*

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


This is me in my vegetable home garden at the peak of the season.

September is the start of the growing season here in South Florida. It's the time when farmers and home gardeners start getting their fields and garden beds ready, planting seedlings, and preparing for another season of delicious, fresh vegetables.

Our growing season is a little different from most of the country. While much of the country is starting to cool down and wrapping up their gardens for the year, South Florida's weather is becoming ideal for growing vegetables. So, if you've been thinking about starting a vegetable garden, **now is the time to get ready!**

There are several places where you can find seedlings that grow well in our South Florida climate. One of our favorites is **Little River Cooperative**, located in the Redland Area.

If you'd rather grow your own plants from seeds, **Johnny's Selected Seeds** is another great option for ordering seeds.

September also brings another exciting part of the season: **farmers markets start opening back up!**
Two of my favorites are:

- 🍅 **Legion Park Farmers Market** — 6601 Biscayne Blvd, Miami, FL 33138
  Saturdays, 9:00 AM–2:00 PM
- 🥕 **Vizcaya Village Farmers Market** — 3250 S. Miami Ave, Miami, FL 33129
  Sundays, 9:30 AM–2:30 PM

What I especially love about these two markets is that they feature local **artisans and farmers** who grow right here in our community. You'll find **locally grown** produce rather than fruits and vegetables shipped in from far away. These markets are run by **Urban Oasis**, an amazing organization that provides families in need with boxes of farm-fresh produce, along with a variety of other programs that support our community. Supporting these markets is a wonderful way to shop local while **supporting** our **farmers**, local **artisans**, and the **community** we call home.

And if getting to a farmers market isn't always possible, but you still want fresh, locally grown produce, there are several farms in our own backyard that offer **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)** programs. Some local options include **French Farms, Nana's Greens, Tiny Farm, Empower Farms, and Paradise Farms.**


Vegetables from our home garden!

So, this September, let's get outside and grow something! Plant a garden, visit a farmers market, sign up for a CSA, or do all three!

However you choose to do it, let's make this growing season about eating fresh, eating local, and supporting the farmers who work hard to grow food right here in our community.

Happy growing! 🌱

Disclaimer: I am the owner of the farm where Little River and French Farms are located, but I do not receive anything from their sales. I simply love what they offer and recommend them because they're a great local resource!

For more tips and recipes go to BarefootNutrition.com

Garden Club Events Highlights:



Heritage Garden Clean Up





Making Floral Arrangements for Granada Church's Fundraiser Gala









Garden Club Events Highlights - cont.

Planting for Patriotism







2026 Club Happenings

2026 Date	Time	Event	Location
09/09(Wed)	9:30 AM	Board Meeting	Garden Center Biltmore Hotel
09/10 (Thu)	7:00 PM	Provisionals Orientation	Sissy Schute's Residence
09/12 (Sat)	10:00 AM	Diggin' It Workshop	Garden Center Biltmore Hotel
09/26 (Sat)	9:00 AM	Heritage Garden	Merrick House 907 Coral Way
09/28 (Mon)	11:15 AM	General Meeting & Plant Sale	Danielson Gallery Biltmore Hotel
10/03 (Sat)	10:00 AM	Fun with Flowers	Garden Center Biltmore Hotel
10/14 (Wed)	10:00 AM	Board Meeting	Garden Center Biltmore Hotel
10/18 (Sun)	2:00 - 5:00 PM	Camp Mahachee Planting & Badge Day	Camp Mahachee 9950 Old Cutler Road
10/20 (Tue)	9:30 AM	District XII Autumn Meeting	Coral Gables Congregational Church UCC 3010 De Soto Blvd
10/26 (Mon)	6:30 PM	General Meeting & Plant Sale	Danielson Gallery Biltmore Hotel
10/27 (Tues)	10:00 AM	Field Trip to Montgomery Botanical Center	Montgomery Botanical Center 11901 Old Cutler Road
10/31 (Sat)	9:00 AM	Heritage Garden	Merrick House 907 Coral Way
11/05 (Thu)	10:00 AM	A Floral Extravaganza	Coral Gables Congregational Church UCC 3010 De Soto Blvd
11/07 (Sat)	10:00 AM	Diggin' It Workshop	Garden Center Biltmore Hotel
11/12 (Thu)	9:30 AM	Board Meeting	Garden Center Biltmore Hotel
11/12 (Thu)	5:30 PM	Sip 'N' Snip	Lamar Louise Curry Park 2665 De Soto Boulevard
11/21 (Sat)	9:00 AM	Heritage Garden	Merrick House 907 Coral Way
11/23 (Mon)	11:15 AM	General Meeting & Plant Sale	Danielson Gallery Biltmore Hotel

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