

# BOTANICAL GARDEN

2nd Quarter 2007

*The Conch Call*

## President's *Message*

Dear Members:

In this, my first President's Message, I thought I would remind you of what a rare treasure the Garden is.

Where else in this world can you find a combination of an historical site, a botanical garden and a museum—as well as a major center of Island educational and social activities—all in just 16 acres on our beautiful island of St. Croix?

Officially it is a Botanical Garden, but it is so much more:

*A must for casual visitors:* Perhaps the most beautiful Garden in the Caribbean, augmented by its historical significance.

*A must for historians:* To get a real feeling for just what life was like on a sugar plantation, with several buildings that have been restored, a small museum which is being developed, and even a smithy which is in active operation.

*A must for plant lovers* who want to explore the background, history and care of tropical plants.

*A center for those who live on the Island:* The Great Hall, where school, governmental and social events of all kinds are held.

The Bodine Visitors' Center, where visitors and locals can learn about activities and visit the Museum Store.

The Wedding Bower—what a lovely place to start out married life.

The Children's Pavilion—with its educational activities.

The Nursery—where wonderful plants can be purchased.

The scene of annual major events, such as Christmas Spoken Here, Mango Melee, and the Flower and Fine Art Festival.

Or: a quiet and beautiful place to explore—or to just sit and enjoy.

**Sincerely, James B. Kobak**

## TROPICAL FRUITS TAKE CENTER STAGE JULY 1

This will mark the 11th year that the St. George Village Botanical Garden has hosted the annual Mango Melee and Tropical Fruit Festival. It is co-sponsored by the V.I. Department of Agriculture, UVI Cooperative Extension Service and UVI Agricultural Experiment Station, with assistance from the V.I. Department of Tourism and several generous corporate sponsors.

St. Croix's most popular summer festival, drawing thousands of residents and visitors to the Botanical Garden's 16-acre property, will be held from noon to 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, July 1. This year, the Department of Agriculture's Errol Chichester relinquished the chairman position to UVI's Stafford Crossman, a longtime member of the committee. Chichester will continue in his invaluable role for the festival in collecting fruits for display (and auction) from his neighbors and friends across the island.

"Things look very, very favorable for a good mango crop this year," Chichester said as the planning got under way.

In addition to featuring scores of different varieties of mangoes, this year's festival will highlight bananas and plantains. Workshops on mango production, banana cultivation and the many ways of using bananas will be held in the new Pavilion at the Bodine Visitors' Center throughout the day.

There will be samples of juices made from local fruits to taste and, of course, the ever-popular Mango Eating Contest.

"This year will have decided to hold two separate competitions—one for the children 12 and under and one for the adults," said the Botanical Garden's Administrative Director, Lesley Hoffman.



Mangoes and all kinds of tropical fruits will be on display—and for sale—at this year's Mango Melee.

Mango Dis, Mango Dat is a food competition that is open to all cooks, whether professional or amateur. Entries must feature mangoes as the main ingredient and will be judged on best use of the fruit; taste; creativity; and presentation. Cash and other prizes

are awarded in all three categories; there is a small entry fee.

There will also be a Leaf Identification Contest. "Last year we had people identify plants from showing them the seeds, and the year before that it was the flowers," said David Hamada, the Garden's Horticultural Director.

The event will also draw dozens of vendors of food, local drinks and crafts. Local farmers will have their crops for sale as well. Children's games are held on the Great Lawn. Free hour-long guided tours of the grounds are offered and the Garden's Nursery will be open from noon to 4 p.m. The Museum Store at the Visitors' Center will be open from noon until 5 p.m.

For more information, call the Garden at 692-2874.

The featured fruit this year is bananas and plantains. These bacubas came from the Garden.



# Spotlight THE CEMETERY AT ESTATE ST. GEORGE

This past spring we were given yet another reminder of the “Priceless Heritage” of which the St. George Village Garden is custodian. The Danish colonial-era cemetery is part of the historical tapestry of Estate St. George and has always generated a great deal of interest among visitors to the Garden, but the stories of those who have been laid to rest here have managed to remain a secret.

In early March, Dr. Pia Bennike of the Laboratory of Biological Anthropology at the University of Copenhagen helped us learn a little more about this very special part of the Garden.

Dr. Bennike had come to St. Croix along with three graduate-level archaeology students from the University of Copenhagen to examine pre-Emancipation burials of enslaved Africans at another site on St. Croix. Their research was meant to provide new information on the diet, health and mortality of the enslaved African population. Previously, all the information available regarding the lives of Africans who were enslaved in the Danish West Indies was based on European property records and censuses. The project was funded by grant from the Danish government to be part of the international research expedition, Galathea3. This expedition, led by over 30 Danish scientists, lasted eight months and traveled the globe participating in research projects ranging from marine biology to forensic anthropology.

When Dr. Bennike and her archaeology students, Lise Harvig, Camilla Haarby Hansen, and Charlotte Rimstad, arrived on St. Croix they had intended to excavate burials with the approval of the Virgin Islands State Historic Preservation Office (VISHPO). Upon arrival, however, they had encountered some administrative delays with the owner of the previously identified site. As they were working within the time constraints of the arrival of the Galathea3 expedition in Frederiksted at the end of March, they began to look for alternatives.

It was then that Dr. Bennike and her students, along with archaeologists from Soltech International, met with Garden staff and board members and Myron Jackson of VISHPO to look at the colonial-era cemetery at the Garden. Previously, the visible burial sites here had been thought to be primarily of European owners or managers and their families (possibly including Sarah Kortright Heyliger, the sister-in-law of James Monroe, the third president of the United States; Sarah died on Estate St. George in 1799). However, the archaeology students were quickly able to reveal at least eight clearly defined ground-level burials that had the characteristics of African burials and had been forgotten at some point during the last 150 years. None of these sites was disturbed in any way.

Dr. Bennike and the archaeologists determined that the burials here had equal or greater potential for yielding significant information. The well-documented history of Estate St. George provided an ideal historical context that could be substantially augmented by Dr. Bennike’s research, which offered potential revelations about the people who were forced to live and work on this site.

The Board of Governors of the Botanical Garden recognized the potential value of this research, but felt the public should have an opportunity to voice concerns regarding the possible excavation of ancestral burials. After a series of public hearings at the Garden, it was decided that the accelerated time frame of the project did not allow for the necessary public education to enable the community to understand the methods and goals of the research.

Coincidentally, during Dr. Bennike’s visit, construction at another location disturbed an historic burial site. Even though the researchers focused on examining the remains from this discovery, they indicated that the St. George site was more desirable because of the substantial recorded history of the property.

While the St. George Village Botanical Garden was not able to meet the scheduling demands of the Galathea3 and the research of the “Voices from Beyond the Grave” project, the Garden undoubtedly benefited from the experience. The archaeologists were able to identify almost 30 possible gravesites that had been lost to memory many years ago. The staff and Board of Governors of the Garden are indebted to Dr. Bennike and her students for helping us learn more about the remarkable story of Estate St. George and the people who shaped its history. Their individual stories remain a mystery, but it is our hope that we can help the St. Croix community and all our visitors remember the contributions, skills, and talents of those who were enslaved and forced to work this land.

— David Hamada



The three Danish archaeology graduate students, left, and Dr. Pia Bennike, right, are seen with Horticultural Director David Hamada, center, and Carlos Solis of Soltech International at one of the surface-cleared gravesites.

## DO YOU HAVE E-MAIL?

*Due to today’s high postage rates, we are compiling an e-mail database for our members.*

*To be included in e-mailings, please send your name and e-mail address to us at [garden2@viaccess.net](mailto:garden2@viaccess.net)*

## DID YOU KNOW...

The Botanical Garden is open every day of the year except Christmas from 9am-5pm. On Sundays we have a special price of \$4 for Virgin Islands residents; accompanying children are free.

The Garden’s Nursery, which staffed entirely by volunteers, is open from 9-11am every Tuesday & Friday, as well as during special events. **New volunteers are always welcomed.**

The Garden’s Museum Store is open from 10am-4pm Monday-Friday (summer) & Monday-Saturday (in season).

## LIBRARY CORNER

All members of the St. George Village Botanical Garden owe a debt of gratitude to Barbara Murray who has for the past several years devoted her "wintering" time on St. Croix to volunteer work in the library. Barbara has catalogued a number of additions to the library's book collection. She has maintained records of periodicals received on subscription. She has kept circulation records, and has generally preserved the "library" atmosphere. Virginia Stevens, a recently retired librarian on St. Croix, will continue Barbara's dedication to maintaining this valuable resource for SGVBG staff and members.

The library at the present time is open by appointment only. If you wish to examine the books or investigate other library holdings on your subject of interest, please call the office at 692-2874.

To acquaint members with some of the resources available, one of our books is noted in this issue of *The Conch Call*, and others will be highlighted in future issues. As other materials are catalogued and made available, they will likewise be noted so that members will become more aware of the wealth of materials available. The call number of the title precedes it.

F2103 S9 1995

*Sypkens Smit, M. P. (Menno P.) Beyond the tourist trap : a study of Sint Maarten culture, by M.P. Sypkens Smit. Amsterdam : Natuurwetenschappelijke Studiekring voor het Caraïbisch Gebied, 1995. xii, 262 p. : ill., maps ; 25 cm.*

For anyone who wishes to learn more about the Dutch-French bi-country island to the east of St. Croix, this book would be a very good start. The first chapter describes the island in terms of



New library volunteer Virginia Stevens

its geology, flora and fauna. In the second chapter, island culture and life are described for the pre-Columbus era. Subsequent chapters describe more fully the happenings on St. Maarten (note that is the Dutch side of the island), and little in the remainder of the book deals with the St. Martin (the French side). After going through the post-Columbus centuries until recent time, points of the local culture and society criteria are indicated (emphasizing the difference between the Simpsonbayers and the Eastenders from town).

Those interested in archaeology will find interesting the many photographs of pieces of old Dutch relics of history, including one of a skeleton of a Spanish ensign killed in a battle with the Dutch in 1655. Environmentalists might cringe at the location of the island's municipal land fill (dump) smack in the middle of the former Great Salt Pond. Crucians would be pleased to know that tourism throughout the entire island was first developed in the Simpson Bay area by none other than Erik Lavaetz (sic), known to us as "Lawaetz." Starting with a purchase of 1,000 acres of wasteland for \$30,000 in the early '50s, Lawaetz oversaw the development of the area so that tourism then began to blossom throughout the island.

## GROW AND LEARN CONTINUES TO GROW

Our monthly series, Grow and Learn, which is organized by board member Joanne White, draws participants who are interested in the variety of topics presented. These are held from 3 to 5 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month in the Pavilion at the Bodine Visitors' Center. Reservations are preferred, but not required. Joanne asks that requests for future presentations be referred to her; we want to make sure we respond to our members' suggestions. Joanne's e-mail address is [jojoshumate@hotmail.com](mailto:jojoshumate@hotmail.com).

On April 11, Horticultural Director David Hamada shared his expertise with a demonstration of Foliage Arranging. David has the artistic ability to place a few cuttings of greenery into a container and transform them into an outstanding and attractive arrangement. Participants were shown just how simple and easy this art form can be to achieve (provided you also have David's talent).

On May 9, retired St. Croix educator Cy Levine demonstrated the art of paper folding known as Origami. The small but enthusiastic group of participants called for another session to learn more about this fascinating subject.

On June 13, local artist Jane Akin presented a workshop on How Artists Interpret Flowers. Jane's specialty includes flowers and architecture and a hands-on demonstration on just how talented artists can recreate nature's beauty.

For information on upcoming Grow and Learn events, contact Joanne White or the office.




## MANGO DIS, MANGO DAT COMPETITION HEATS UP

Our annual Mango Melee food competition, Mango Dis, Mango Dat, offers cooks an opportunity to compete in three categories: Sips (and drinks); Salsas (and sauces); and Sweets (and desserts). Entries must feature mangoes prominently, be pre-registered (\$5 per entry), and be brought to the Garden on Sunday, July 1, between 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. First-place winners will take home \$50 and a Mango Melee apron; second-place winners get \$25 and an apron. Call the office at 692-2874 or come in and pick up an application form.

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE PAID  
KINGSHILL, VI  
PERMIT NO. 40

ST. GEORGE VILLAGE BOTANICAL GARDEN  
127 Estate St. George  
Frederiksted, VI 00840



## Upcoming Events

**MANGO MELEE**  
Sunday, July 1, Noon-6:30pm

**GROW AND LEARN**  
Wednesday, July 11, 3-5pm

**GROW AND LEARN**  
Wednesday, August 8, 3-5pm

**GROW AND LEARN**  
Wednesday, September 12, 3-5pm

## In memoriam

SGVBG expresses deep sympathy to the family of **Jack W. Brown**, who passed away on April 10, 2007, in Princeton, NJ.

## The Conch Call Newsletter

A publication of the St. George Village Botanical Garden. SGVBG is a non-profit membership organization.

We welcome articles, photos, letters, and content suggestions, and reserve the right to edit.

Submit to: SGVBG, 127 Estate St. George, Frederiksted, VI 00840, email to garden2@viaccess.net or fax 340-692-6154

Visit us at [www.sgvbg.org](http://www.sgvbg.org) or call 340-692-2874

## Board of Governors

James Kobak, *President*  
Gary Bourdon, *Vice President*  
Ethel Ritch, *Treasurer*  
Joanne White, *Secretary*

Robert Bartle	Sue Ladwig
Peggy Bodine	Max McIntosh
Monette Booth	Sandi Savage
Marilyn Chakroff	Nina York
Brian Eslick	

**Horticultural Director:** David Hamada

**Administrative Director:** Lesley Hoffman

**Garden Hours**  
OPEN DAILY 9AM-5PM

## New Members

\* denotes renewal member

**GOLD PALM**  
Joe & Vickie Richardson\*  
Red & Bee Wylie\*

**SILVER PALM**  
Cecilia Cruickshank & John Frazer\*  
Francis & Gilda Hurite\*

**BRONZE PALM**  
Larry & Ginny Angus\*  
Stafford & Lona Crossman\*  
John & Fran Fifield\*  
Cynthia & Robert Goldberg\*  
Connie Hadala\*  
Judy & Graham Hunt\*  
Kathleen & Woody Montier\*  
Ted Montigel & Trudy Little\*

Peter & Julie Rasmussen\*  
Ruth & Mike Whitner\*

**COUPLE**  
Billy & Laurie Bohlke  
Denise Rae & Brian Silber  
Chad & Becky Robacker  
Hugh & Mary Roddis  
Pattie & Jim Bland\*  
Terry Chretien & Michael Dance\*  
Mike & Tetra DiNapoli\*  
Brian & Michelle Flavia\*  
Gerry Groner & Lisa Yntema\*  
Phil Holzman & Laurie LeGrande\*  
Roz & Dudley Hughes\*  
Doris & Janelle Isherwood\*  
Kate Kroska & Steve Freeman\*  
Bonnie Luria & Kelly Gloger\*

Fred Perry & Anne Ogg\*  
Myrtle Pemberton & Akil Roebuck\*  
Jane & Robert Prantis\*  
Paul & Charlotte Pyles\*  
John & Vickie Wessel\*

**SENIOR COUPLE**  
Elwood & Betty Kinne  
John & Ingela Moorhead  
Barbara & Wayne Myers  
Lou & Anne Neron  
Harry & Carol Salo  
Lowell & Claudia Weicker  
Patti & John Aldous\*  
Gerry & Frances Caroll\*  
Houghton & Jennifer Carr\*  
Bill & Helen Gilbert\*  
Ed & Mary Grimes\*  
Dick & Eva Harris\*  
Don & Judith Hinkel\*

Fred & Judy Huettig\*  
Bill & Sue Hulbert\*  
Dick & Ellie Hurt\*  
Owen & Carol Johnson\*  
Pat & Larry Knudsen\*  
Rod & Janie Koopmans\*  
Barbara Murray & Emerson Kolesnikoff\*  
Bent & Sally Lawaetz\*  
George Novey & Jeanne Peil\*  
Don & Gabby Pratt\*  
Ginny & Ed Riebel\*  
George & Carmen Seaman\*  
Virginia & Stiles Stevens\*  
Linda & Gary Surdyke\*  
Gary & Sherry Trommer\*  
Ed & Nina York\*

**INDIVIDUAL**  
David Bornn  
John Lawless, Jr.

Anne Leicht  
Pamela Reid  
Patricia Wyatt  
Kathryn Zieran  
Claudia Carrington\*  
Danica David\*  
Lori Hirons\*  
Patrice Kelly\*  
Teddi Morrison\*  
Jessica Spacil\*  
Chanel Wheeler\*

**SENIOR INDIVIDUAL**  
Terry Aiden\*  
William Anzick\*  
Lloyd Austin\*  
Connie Dehler\*  
Marilyn Humphrey\*  
Douglas Jones\*  
Marianne Leh\*  
Janet Vollmer\*

**BENEFACTOR**  
Bill & Emily Danner\*

**FAMILY/DUAL**  
Lorie & Tim Atkins