

# The Conch Call

FOURTH QUARTER NOVEMBER 2008

ST. GEORGE VILLAGE BOTANICAL GARDEN ~ CONSERVATION, EDUCATION & PRESERVATION

## President's Message

Dear Members:

What a time it's been! As we were preparing for our first cruise-ship arrivals in years and the upcoming Christmas Gala and Christmas Spoken Here weekend, Hurricane Omar paid us a visit on Oct. 15 and definitely left his mark on the Garden. The storm downed many of our larger trees and left much debris scattered over the entire 16 acres of the Garden. Some good news is that our wonderful historic structures were left unharmed by the storm. As I write this, the cleanup is still very much under way.

I really can't praise enough the efforts our Horticultural Director David Hamada and his crew, Howard Remy and Paul Modeste. They are doing a remarkable job. The morning after the storm, David was literally hand-clearing debris from the entry road leading from the public road to the Great Hall in order to make way for a planned wedding reception that Saturday evening. Thanks to David's efforts, along with a little patience and a lot of help from the wedding party, the night was a success.

I also would like to thank all of the volunteers who have worked so hard helping to get the grounds back in order.

On Nov. 28, for the first time in approximately six years, the Botanical Garden will host a tour of cruise-ship passengers. We have tours booked throughout January and we'll receive confirmation on many more in 2009.

Cruise-ship tours in the past accounted for roughly 42 percent of the Botanical Garden's yearly income. We wholeheartedly welcome their return, and we will do all we can to ensure their visit to the St. George Village Botanical Garden is a very rewarding experience.

Allow me to wish everyone a Happy Holiday Season, and the Board hopes to see you at our Christmas Gala and Christmas Spoken Here weekend.

*Sincerely, Gary M. Bourdon*



*Horticultural Director David M. Hamada stands by the tibet tree (Albizia lebbek) that Omar knocked down at the Garden on Oct. 15.*

## Omar's wrath uproots trees, creates new opportunities

The abundant late-summer and autumn rainfall this year had seemingly blessed the St. George Village Botanical Garden. The grounds of SGVBG were at their prime with verdant growth and blooms when Hurricane Omar brushed the south shore and east end of St. Croix on Oct. 15 as a Category 3 hurricane. Unfortunately, this late-season storm was particularly damaging as the copious rainfall had caused lush growth and saturated the ground. The trees were in full leaf, which created more wind resistance and resulted in substantial damage to the canopies of almost all of our trees. The soft, waterlogged soils were not able to support some of the larger trees against the powerful hurricane-force winds, and many were toppled.

The 16 acres were strewn with fallen branches and palm leaves, and our telephone lines had fallen across the main driveway. In all, we lost about a dozen mid-sized trees and about five large trees. Almost all of the newly planted Thatch and Weaving Garden was destroyed, and a stately 25-foot-tall Euphorbia that towered over the Cacti and Succulent Garden was blown over. One of the most disappointing sights was the magnificent specimen of African Baobab, which greets our visitors in the new parking area, lying flat on the ground.

While our structures were spared any significant damage, a few gutters and downspouts either blew off or were struck by debris. A large branch that fell on the corner of the Blacksmith's Shop damaged

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# Christmas is coming

As they say in show business: "The show must go on" -- and this year, despite Hurricane Omar's untimely visit, St. Croix and the Garden will be greeting our usual winter influx of visitors from far and near, with cruise-ship passengers being a welcome addition. New tour guides have received training and are ready to greet them. The world economic situation may put a damper on the season, although a heavy influx of Danish visitors is expected, and St. Croix has been favored by several recent encouraging initiatives that we hope will carry us through these difficult times.

When times are tough, our holidays are emotional anchors that steady and comfort us. They are times of family celebration, visiting friends, and reinforcing traditions that help establish our identity.

A wonderful tradition on St. Croix is the Garden's own Christmas Spoken Here celebration, this year scheduled for the weekend of December 5, 6 and 7. Starting out on December 5 with the Christmas Gala at the Garden under the theme "Carnival Christmas," we can look forward to a spectacular evening. For the live auction of 10 decorated Christmas trees, congenial and entertaining Mike Taras will show off his auctioneering talents, with lively help from Connie Lemco. The Artistree, an annual tradition, is one of the trees to be auctioned; it features miniature original works created by many of our local artists. Fabulous items on the auction block, thanks to an active and energetic committee, include two holiday wreaths, a flying adventure donated by Ed and Connie Lemco to a neighboring island in Ed's plane, a champagne aerial tour of St. Croix from Seaborne Airlines, and some rare original art. A helicopter ride for two, courtesy of John and Laura Ballard, will be raffled off, with tickets at just \$5 for one or a book of five for \$20.

The Silent Auction offers a cornucopia of fabulous or practical items and services to entice many bidders, including a week's stay at a co-op in New York City, a flight from Seaborne Airlines to St. Thomas, a stay at the Divi Carina Bay Resort, a week of car rental from Olympic Rent-a-Car, and lots more.

This year, we will need your support more than ever and urge your participation. For the sit-down dinner, preceded by a cocktail hour, a delicious menu by chef Dave Trask of Good Spirits Catering has been prepared. The Gala starts at 6:30 pm; attire is Caribbean elegant, and tickets are \$150 per person. Call the office at 692-2874 for your reservations.

Following the Sip and Shop Saturday event at the Museum Store on December 6 (see page 3), Christmas Spoken Here, our big family day, is on Sunday, December 7, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The trees that were auctioned off on

Friday evening remain on display in the Great Hall all day, where school and community choirs perform seasonal music on the hour every hour from noon until 4 p.m. On the East Gallery of the Great Hall, volunteers will conduct the second annual Christmas Cooks contest. Sponsored this year by Diamond Industrial Corporation, the contest has four categories: Sweet Bread; Vienna



*The theme of the 2007 Christmas Gala at the Garden was "Christmas Around the World. This year, it is "Carnival Christmas."*

Cake; Tarts; and Coquito. There is a \$5 entry fee per submission; you can enter as many recipes as you like prior to December 3. Entries must be brought to the Garden Sunday between 11 a.m and 12:30 p.m. There are cash prizes in all four categories.

At the Visitors' Center, the Museum Store will be open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. At the same time, the "White Reindeer" flea market volunteers will sell gently used items along the Pergola.

Kids' activities will take place from noon to 4 p.m. in the Pavilion. Santa will be on hand, so be sure to bring your camera. There will be fun things for children of all ages conducted by Education Coordinator Melanie Feltmate and her volunteers.

There will be free guided tours of the Garden; two bars selling soft and alcoholic drinks; and local food and drink vendors and craft vendors lining the driveway from the Great Hall to the Nursery -- which will be open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission for Christmas Spoken Here is \$5 for adults; children under 12 are admitted free. Pay at the Gate. Call 692-2874 for more details.

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a portion of the roof and fascia board. In the Volunteer Nursery, a large tree was shattered by the winds and managed to spare the fence but came crashing through a portion of the shade cloth. The Garden was without power to the Great Hall and offices for 15 days, since damage to many trees along our southern perimeter had downed the power lines.

As discouraging as the destruction has been, there have certainly been some opportunities to rethink and reconsider some of our plantings. The loss of the two Poor Man's Orchid Trees in front of the Manager's House allows visitors a full view of this historic structure, which had become obstructed by the surrounding growth. The lovely green hills to the north of St. George are once again visible behind the Overseer's House.

Perhaps the most encouraging result of the storm has been the support of our membership and community. Sam and Marie Graci, who had planned for their daughter's wedding on the Saturday after the storm, were very understanding and a tremendous help in clearing the driveways and areas around the Great Hall. They even brought in their own generator so they could proceed with the party as planned!

Past President Bob Bartle has lent his time and skills with a chainsaw in cleanup efforts, and HOVENSA has contributed funding towards the expense of removing the fallen trees. Owen and Carol Johnson, who had originally presented SGVBG with the Baobab tree in the new parking area, arranged to have the tree righted, replanted and securely staked.

The Nursery volunteers have been busy cleaning and caring for plants even while we had no power and water in that area.

Once again the people and plants of this historic and beautiful Garden have demonstrated their resilience and dedication!

-- David M. Hamada

### **Board of Governors, 2008**

Gary M. Bourdon (**President**)

Susan J. Ladwig (**Vice President**)

James Bland, Jr. (**Treasurer**)

Monette Booth (**Secretary**)

Marilyn Chakroff, Brian Daley, James Kobak,  
Max McIntosh, Sandi Savage, Virginia Stevens,  
Joanne White, Nina York

**Horticultural Director:** David Hamada

**Administrative Director:** Lesley Hoffman

## **Upcoming Events at the Garden**

### **-2008-**

#### **December**

*Friday 5th, 6:30 pm, Christmas Gala at the Garden*

*Saturday 6th, 10 am to 4 pm, Sip & Shop*

*Sunday 7th, 11am-5pm, Christmas Spoken Here*

*11 am-4pm, Nursery Sale*

*Wednesday 10th, 3-5 pm, Grow and Learn –*

**All About Noni, the Painkiller Tree**

*Saturday 13th, 9-noon, Second Saturdays –*

**Botanical Scents and Potpourri**

### **-2009-**

#### **January**

*Saturday 10th, 9-noon, Second Saturdays*

*Wednesday 14th, 3-5 pm, Grow and Learn*

#### **February**

*Monday 9th, 7-10 pm, Gardens By Moonlight*

*Wednesday 11th, 3-5 pm, Grow and Learn*

*Saturday 14th, 9-noon, Second Saturdays*

*Sunday 22nd, noon, Volunteer Appreciation Party*

*Sunday 22nd, 1:30 pm, Annual Meeting*

**(election of new Board)**

## **‘Sip and Shop’ for gifts in the Museum Store**

“Sip and Shop”, scheduled for Saturday, December 6, from 10 to 4 is becoming a Christmas tradition at the Garden's lovely Museum Store.

Enjoy wine, punch and hors d'oeuvres while you browse for the perfect gifts.

The selection is impressive, and prices reasonable (with the added 10% member discount even better!). Gift selections to consider include the ceramic sugar mill tree ornaments by Sara Lee Hayes, lotus blossom tea lights, hand-beaded jewelry, home-made jams and jellies, Shirryl Hughes' Mocko Jumbies, reversible hand-made tote bags, Tom Eimer's silver jewelry, a wonderful selection of cook-books, books by local authors, nature books and original art or prints as well as note cards created by local artists.

Admission to the Garden is free for shoppers at the Museum Store, which is open during the winter season Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm.



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***New and Renewing  
Members, September  
through November  
2008***

**PLATINUM PALM**

*Arnold & Jill Lange\**

**SILVER PALM**

*John & Theresa Harper\**  
*Emy Thomas\**

**BRONZE PALM**

*Robert & Cynthia Goldberg\**  
*Scot McChain*  
*Gerry & Susan Sikorski\**

**COUPLE**

*John & Patty Colburn\**  
*Frances & John Fifield\**  
*Owen Harper & Catherine  
Blakely\**

*Angela Hummel & Bernie  
Thiel\**  
*Chase & Cristina McCarthy\**  
*Barb Osborne & Bill  
Mosiman\**  
*Elizabeth & Biko Robb*  
*Sally & Fred Schantz\**  
*Seth & Linda Smith*  
*Suga & Jared Smith\**  
*Tom & Shirley Ziegler\**

**SENIOR COUPLE**

*John & Inge Barker\**  
*Britt & Peter Duthie\**  
*Philip & Rasa Glengary\**  
*Jean & Francis Lange\**  
*Diane Moran & Richard  
LaRhette\**  
*Dorothy & Henry Nelson\**  
*Pat & Ted O'Lear\**  
*Marsha & Phil Shuman\**  
*Richard & Judith  
Thompson\**

*Bob & Sue Winslow\**

**INDIVIDUAL**

*Peter Dybing\**  
*Dolores Fielding\**  
*Elizabeth Lieberman\**  
*Elizabeth Rezende\**  
*Jim Richardson\**  
*Barbara Sannino\**  
*Maron Thorne\**

**SENIOR INDIVIDUAL**

*Chris Davies\**  
*Lynn Fahy\**  
*Ethel Harris\**  
*Lindsay Houston*  
*Michael Makedonsky\**

**\* denotes renewing  
members, listed in  
alphabetical order  
by last name**