



The Garden Club of the Upper Keys

News & Notes

PUBLIC EDITION

September 2020

Inside this issue:

PRESIDENT'S Message	2
A note from the editor...	3
DIRECTORS' Notes	3-4
Plant of the Month	5
Hurricane Preparedness for Gardeners	6-7
Notable Dates and Birthdays	8
Out & About at Francis Tracy Garden Center	9

General Membership Meeting via Zoom

Please join us at 11:00 AM on Tuesday, September 15 for our monthly General Membership meeting. Due to the continued threat from COVID-19, this is currently the safest way for us to conduct our meetings. The last page of this newsletter (Members only version) provides the meeting link (url), Meeting ID, Passcode, and some basic instructions.

If you are new to Zoom, clicking on the meeting url should automatically download Zoom. You can click on the link prior to the actual meeting. You will be the only person in the meeting, but it will give you a chance to test out your video and microphone ahead of time.

Several board members are planning to join the meeting 30 minutes ahead of time. This will enable members who are new to Zoom (or members who just want to join early to socialize a bit) to try out the Zoom application and try to resolve any issues with audio or video.

Our program will not be announced to the public, but members are welcome to share the link in the members edition with interested friends.

Meeting Agenda

- **Call to Order and Welcome to our First Virtual Meeting:** President Kathy Janco will welcome members to our first meeting of the 2020-2021 club year.
- **Guest Speaker Presentation:** Program Director Laura Hartner will introduce Franco D'Ascanio who is the president of D'Assign Source, Marathon, FL and D'Assign Source Botanicals, Loxahatchee, FL.
- **Guest Speaker Presentation—Hurricane Planting:** Our speaker, Franco D'Ascanio, will focus on "Hurricane Planting" to discuss gardeners' needs before and after a hurricane. As a Keys' native and resident, Mr. D'Ascanio has a wealth of experience in our tropical environment. He believes that outdoor living is a true extension of the home and his companies embody that belief. His companies offer landscaping and a garden center that includes exotic palms, salt tolerant plants and much more. His companies' longevity in the Keys is a testament to his knowledge of what works in terms of planting and care, especially with the occurrence of hurricanes.
- **Business Meeting:** Presiding over the business meeting, President Janco will share recent Board actions and decisions. She will introduce members of the Board and they will provide highlights of their work over the summer hiatus.

Please take our survey if you haven't already!

Vice-President and Director of Community Outreach and Education Laurie Brooks, Program Director Laura Hartner, and Membership and Communications Director Charlene Regenhart worked together to compile a survey to determine what types of programs and outreach opportunities our members are interested in. The survey was sent to members on August 31. The close date for the survey is September 20.

To date, 18 members have completed the survey. If you haven't already done so, please take the survey—it only takes 5 minutes! We will publish the survey results in the October *News and Notes* newsletter.





"We will have a new vision for ourselves and the future of our club as the year rolls on but also keeping with what we do hold dear: tradition."

The Garden Club
of the
Upper Keys, Inc.
at
The Francis Tracy
Garden Center
94040 Overseas Hwy.
Key Largo, FL 33037

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P.O. Box 373
Tavernier, FL 33070

Board of Directors

President - Kathy Janco
V-President - Laurie Brooks
Treasurer - Anne Makowsky
Secretary - Suzy Cushman
Directors of:
Fundraising - Kathy Holmes
Hospitality - Betty Ann Gear
and Fran Reig
House - Christine Hudson
Membership - Charlene
Regenhardt
Program - Laura Hartner
Property - Beverly Middleton
Publicity - Patti Graham

From the desk of President Kathy Janco ...

Welcome to the start of the 2020-2021 year at our wonderful Garden Club.

"Necessity is the mother of invention." – Anonymous

Your board members have been hard at work since March and all through the summer. We have explored and tested new ways to keep in touch with each other and we are formulating new approaches to enable our membership to communicate and interact despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Our board has been using Zoom to meet virtually and members have practiced social distancing during garden clean-up days. We continue to adapt during these challenging times and continue to look forward to whatever this year brings.

The Francis Tracy Garden Center started with 10 strong women with a vision in mind for themselves and their community. Like our past members and many of you, I love living on our beautiful island. My family moved to Key Largo in 1964; the Keys are my roots and history. I have been a member of our club since 2004 and the more I read and learn about our wonderful and very historic club the more cherished it becomes to me.

I cannot believe how lucky I am this year despite these challenging times to be your president for a second term. We are facing adversities as a board and as members to preserve our traditions, to be good stewards and ambassadors, and to uphold our fiduciary responsibility to our club and its past. We will have a new vision for ourselves and the future of our club as the year rolls on but also keeping with what we do hold dear: tradition.

History is knowledge and the more we know about our club's past the more bonded we are to it. I have asked Gerry Yeager when she returns to the Keys to help us understand more of our past by finding things of interest—the hidden treasures in our scrapbooks—that we all would love to learn about. The more we know the more we will feel connected to the women and men that came before us. I'm sure we will all find our club's historical facts fascinating.

Sincerely,
Kathy

The GCUK Board of Directors gratefully acknowledges the following generous charitable gifts:

Sea Grape ~ Friends of the Garden Club

- Clarice Yentsch

Moonflower ~ Patrons of the Garden Club

- DeeDee and Richard Barreto
- Maxine Enkey
- Sandra Paradis

Satinleaf ~ Sponsors of the Garden Club

- Phyllis Mitchell
- Charlene Regenhardt

Lignum Vitae ~ Benefactors of the Garden Club

- Patti and Felton Graham

A note from the editor...

Welcome to the first edition of *News and Notes* for this membership year! Our last two editors, Debbie Sue Jonas and Laura Hartner, have made many improvements to our newsletter over the past year, making it more colorful and interesting than ever while keeping it informative. I have some very BIG shoes to fill and will try my best to meet the challenge! Laura volunteered to be my proofreader, saving me from embarrassment for the inevitable typos that I am prone to make — Thank you, Laura!

Several of our board members recently met with me to come up with some new ideas for newsletter topics this year. One of our planned series of articles is a featured “Plant of the Month,” and Laurie Brooks has penned an interesting and informative article on the satinleaf tree, an endangered Florida native species. Our garden club property has a spectacular specimen between the clubhouse and Peace Garden. When possible, we hope to have seeds, seedlings or rooted cuttings of the featured plant available for our members.

We also plan to add articles about other relevant topics. Since September is the height of hurricane season, we thought an article on hurricane preparedness for gardeners would be timely. This topic will be discussed at our upcoming General Membership meeting as well.

Many of our members are actively engaged in various outreach activities, and we will feature the organizations and activities in future issues. For example, our club’s next date to cook for God’s Kitchen is October 29, so we plan to feature this worthy charitable cause in the October edition.

Finally, we will include a few photos of interest on the back page, featuring interesting flora or fauna that club members have spotted while visiting our beautiful grounds. I do hope all of you continue to visit the Francis Tracy Garden Center from time to time, and please share your pictures with me when you discover something interesting!

If you have any suggestions for articles, plants to feature, pictures to share, or general comments, don’t hesitate to give me a call or e-mail. This is YOUR newsletter and we want it to spark your continued interest and enthusiasm for the GCUK.

Cordially,
Charlene Regenhardt



Notes from the Directors...

HOSPITALITY CO-DIRECTORS Betty Ann Gear and Fran Reig need volunteers for the upcoming club year once we are able to meet at the clubhouse again. Assistance includes helping set-up and clean-up refreshments at monthly General Membership meetings and special events. You can volunteer for specific months or for the entire club year. It’s a great way for new members to connect with others and be active. If you are interested in helping out, please call Betty Ann or Fran.

HOUSE DIRECTOR Christine Hudson says that the painting of the outside of the clubhouse has been delayed due to COVID-19. However, it is finally scheduled for the second week in September. Members can look forward to seeing a fresh face on our clubhouse when they return in the fall.

PROPERTY DIRECTOR Beverly Middleton reports that work has begun on refreshing the front berm. With the astute advice of five club member/master gardeners, we are installing hardy natives. Hopefully they will thrive better than some previous plantings. The berm is

54 feet long and varies in width from 9 to 15 feet wide. In cleaning up some overgrown areas, we discovered two fabulous lignum vitae specimens near the south edge of the berm that were almost totally obscured. Mulch was placed around specimen trees, which are also being trimmed.

The diseased Bahama strongbark tree on the north side of the garden was removed as advised by multiple experts. Several beautiful specimens of this tree are still on our property and they currently display beautiful orange circular seeds about 1/2-inch in diameter. Look for them at the northeast corner of the garden.

(Continued on page 4)



Notes from the Directors...

(continued from page 3)

Hearty thanks to Charlene Regenhardt, Jean Neudorf, Suzy Cushman, Gayle Kolasa, Marilyn Rogers, DeeDee and Richard Barretto and Donna Hanson for their advice and hard work. We received an anonymous donation of 35 bags of mulch, additional metal hose, sprinklers and 10 coontie plants. The coontie plant is currently being considered as a prime replacement plant for the shady parts of the berm.

We have been researching ways to make the front entrance safer to navigate and will give a verbal report and invite discussion.

Wednesdays at noon for the foreseeable future will find members of the property crew working away. Water, hand sanitizer and bug repellent are available on the table near the grouping of benches. Feel free to stop in and pull a few weeds; as Kathy Janco said, "There are many to choose from."

VICE-PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION Laurie

Brooks set up the next three meetings of the Florida Keys Native Plant ID class with Jim Duquesnel. They will be held via Zoom on Thursday, September 17; Tuesday, October 20; and Thursday, November 19 at 5:30 PM. September's class will be on the identification of native orchids and epiphytes. August's presentation by Dr. Lucas Majure of UF on cacti was terrific!

The four ecosystem themed planters in front of Ocean Studies Charter School's new building are looking great! Laurie dropped off booklets on Florida-Friendly Gardening from the UF IFAS Extension for the school's garden club and science teacher.

Laurie continues to be actively engaged with REEF. She spent time with REEF's new interns: Gabby, Alyssa, Dara, and Melanie. She talked to them about the interconnection between what we do in our gardens and the reef. All of the interns have backgrounds in the biological sciences. They reviewed the nine principles of Florida Friendly Gardening and toured the REEF butterfly and Connect to Protect gardens. The next scheduled work day at REEF is Saturday morning, September 19 (9:30-11 am). The goal is to plant some non-native flowering plants in colorful pots next to the gardens. If you have any medium to large ceramic/clay flower pots that you can donate, please contact Laurie.

Laurie registered for the upcoming Master Gardener class and looks forward to exploring ways for our club to interact more with the program.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR Laura Hartner has been lining up speakers for our upcoming General Membership meetings. This fall's lineup includes:

- **October 20: *When to Prepare and Plant your Keys Edible Garden*** presented by Edward Katell, founder of the Islamorada Community Garden.
- **November 17: *Growing Vanilla in Florida: From Native Species to Commercial Opportunities*** presented by Dr. Alan H. Chambers, Assistant Professor, Tropical Fruit Genetics and Breeding Tropical Research and Education Center, Horticultural Sciences Department, University of Florida.

Laura is also looking for various "in-reach" activities to be held at the clubhouse.

PUBLICITY DIRECTOR Patti Graham announces that the re-design of our club website is complete! Much appreciation is given to webmaster Amy Jorgensen and Lonell Rice. One of the new features is a link to our Facebook page by clicking the Facebook icon.

The new club brochure, designed by Patti and Laura Hartner, will be available this month. The brochure is designed for prospective members and is planned to be shared with realtors and Chambers of Commerce.

FACEBOOK EDITOR Joan Hilt wishes that everyone is staying safe and in good health and looking forward to when we can all see each other again. She hopes that you are enjoying the wealth of educational and fun information on Facebook. Newly added to Facebook is the Amazon Smile link.

FUNDRAISING DIRECTOR Kathy Holmes reports that the Board decided to cancel the Holiday Market scheduled for Saturday, November 28, 2020, based on current mandates to limit the size of gatherings. The Garden Walk is currently still scheduled for Saturday, February 12, 2021. We will continue to monitor this extremely fluid situation and advise you of any decisions. Our top priority is to keep our members, volunteers and patrons safe. If anyone has fundraising ideas, please connect with Kathy.

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR Charlene Regenhardt is processing membership forms. So far, 16 members have replied. A big "Thank You" to those who promptly submitted their dues! If you have not yet mailed yours, please do so before September 20! Charlene recently updated the Address Book into two files; one with mailing addresses and the other with email addresses and phone numbers. Although the data are now in two files instead of one, they are easier to read and shorter overall. Both documents are available under the "Members Only" section of our website.



Plant of the Month

Satinleaf

(*Chrysophyllum oliviforme*)

by Laurie Brooks

This issue's featured plant is the satinleaf tree. Its genus name *Chrysophyllum* refers to the golden hairs on the underside of the leaves that give them their gold/rust coloring. The species name *oliviforme* refers to the shape of the fruit, which when ripe resemble little black olives.

The leaves are very attractive, dark green above and bronzy-satin below, creating an attractive display when wind blows through the trees. While worth the effort, satinleaf can be finicky to establish in cultivation and may take a couple of attempts. The roots are especially sensitive to transplant shock and plants can be permanently damaged by inadequate watering or by mechanical damage. It may require more water and time to establish than other native hardwoods. Recovery following transplanting may take 6-12 months or more. Fruits may stain walkways and other surfaces, and may stick to ones feet and be tracked around. It is fairly easy to grow from seed and I have several small babies (less than a foot tall) if anyone would like one.



If you walk out the front door of our clubhouse and turn left towards our Peace Garden, you will see a beautiful specimen tree right next to the house. This species is state listed as endangered in the wild in Florida but is commonly available here from local nurseries for landscaping. It is invasive in Hawaii. The champion tree in Florida was noted in 1976 – a Miami specimen that had a circumference of 6 feet and was 41 feet tall! Most references list a satinleaf as attaining 25-30 feet in height for landscape purposes.



Like many members of its family, Sapotaceae, the satinleaf produces edible fruit that are sweet and somewhat sticky when ripe. They can be eaten raw, made into jelly, or left for the blue jays and pigeons to enjoy. The family name comes from the Nahuatl word *tzapotl* which was the Aztec name for the tree and fruit we call sapote or manilkara.



Cultivation Data

Source: www.regionalconservation.org

Soils: Moist, well-drained sandy or limestone soils, with humusy top layer.

Nutritional Requirements: Moderate to high; grows best with some organic content and may languish in nutrient poor soils.

Salt Water Tolerance: Low; does not tolerate long-term flooding by salt or brackish water.

Salt Wind Tolerance: Moderate; grows near salt water but is protected from direct salt spray by other vegetation.

Drought Tolerance: Moderate; generally requires moist soils, but tolerant of short periods of drought once established.

Light Requirements: Full sun to light shade.

Flower Color: Whitish-yellow. Flower Characteristics: Inconspicuous.

Flowering Season: Irregularly all year; peak summer-fall.

Fruit: Dark purple to black berry, oval, 1/2" or more long. Edible; juicy but sticky.

Wildlife and Ecology: Provides significant food and some cover for wildlife.

Hurricane Preparedness for Gardeners

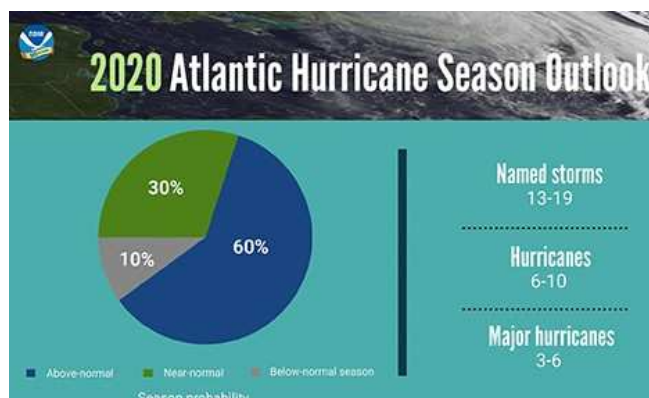
by Charlene Regenhardt

Although we are already well into hurricane season as of this issue of *News and Notes*, the “peak” season is typically now in September. In addition to taking the recommended health and safety precautions (having ample amounts of drinking water, nonperishable food, and buttoning up the house), there are additional preparations that can be taken to protect our outdoor spaces. Below are a few tips taken from a variety of sources including University of Florida (UF/IFAS), gardening publications and insurance companies.

Landscaping Tips

Minimizing damage to landscaping begins with the overall landscaping plan. When you install or enhance your outdoor space, consider the following tips and recommendations:

- **Use salt-tolerant greenery**, especially in areas prone to flooding. Native palms such as buccaneer, sabal, and silver are recognized for their salt tolerance. Salt tolerant trees include geiger, live oak, mahogany, pigeon plum, satinleaf, sea grape, buttonwoods, and the stoppers.
- **Plant the right trees in the right places.** Some trees are more prone to breakage and shallow-rooted trees can topple over from high winds. Trees that are notable for wind tolerance are often natives and include tamarind, geiger, live oak, gumbo limbo, mango, and many of the palms.



- **Pay attention to drainage.** Assess the ground elevation across the property and especially around your house or sheds/outbuildings. The ground should slope away from these structures. When installing raised beds or berms, make sure that they are placed so that they don't cause water to pond and help direct water away from the house. These measures help prevent flooding and can help keep insects and other pests from entering your home.

Annual To-Do List

Consider making an annual outdoor maintenance list that will have you nearly hurricane-ready before the first storm of the season and will shorten your list of last-minute preparations. Suggestions include:

- **Pruning.** Take time early in the year, before new growth develops, to thin out the canopy of trees. Pay attention to trees and shrubs against the house and remove limbs that might whip against walls or windows, potentially causing damage and creating a racket. Regular pruning mitigates property damage and helps keep insects and other pests from finding a home along the perimeter of your house. Later in the year, trim off coconuts and dead fronds from palms, but do not remove palm leaves that are still green as they protect the crown and their removal can cause nutrient deficiencies.
- **Hire an Arborist.** Schedule an annual or biannual inspection and mitigation service from a tree services company. An arborist will inspect for disease and prune dead or diseased branches from trees, which are the most likely to break in a storm. The arborist will also know if a permit is required and will ensure the work is compliant with regulations. All it takes is a phone call from an overzealous neighbor to initiate a code compliance investigation. (See September 8 news release at <https://www.monroecounty-fl.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=1388>.)

(Continued from page 6)

- **Perform gutter maintenance.** Clear gutters of leaves and other debris at the beginning of our rainy season (June). Make sure gutters are firmly attached and direct water away from the house. If there are no gutters and the water pours off the roof in a concentrated area, consider placing pavers in the runoff area to reduce erosion and ponding. If storm drains are nearby, ensure they are also clear of debris. Although gutters and drains may need to be serviced more than once a year, maintenance at the onset of the hurricane season will lighten the load later in the summer.



- **Treat the dog days of summer like northerners treat winter.** For most of the year, our garden ornaments and outdoor furniture are aesthetically pleasing. Come hurricane season, these items can become projectiles. July through September is generally quite hot, so most of us don't spend as much time outdoors. Consider tidying up and minimizing outdoor furniture, decorations, and gardening equipment during the heat of summer to reduce the effort required to secure them right before a storm.
- **Make late summer the "fallow season."** If you are a veggie gardener, you are already aware that most vegetables languish in the summer heat. Many of us grow vegetables in containers that are apt to topple over from high winds. Instead of fighting to keep vegetable plants producing, clear off the garden, begin planning your fall garden, and start seedlings such as tomatoes and peppers in September to get a jump start once the weather is better for growing. For example, I empty large light-weight pots holding my now mostly-dead tomato plants, use or stockpile the soil for other landscaping purposes, and stack and move the pots and tomato cages to the back of the garage. Come fall, I purchase new soil for the tomatoes.

Batten Down the Hatches

If a storm is imminent, take measures to safeguard remaining outdoor furniture and equipment:

- **De-decorate your garden.** Now is the time to gather up wind chimes, bird feeders, garden ornaments, and the like. Lift the water basin of a two-piece birdbath and lay it on the ground to keep it from toppling over.

- **Protect potted plants.** If plants are small enough, it's best to move them indoors. If they are too big or you have too many, wedge the plants behind hedges or shrubs where they will have some



- protection from the wind. Large potted plants can be laid on their sides and tucked out of the wind. Move potted plants to the lee side of the house or place against a sturdy fence. Group your pots as closely together as possible and lay bags of soil or mulch around the cluster of potted plants to help secure them.
- **Secure outdoor furniture.** Indoors or a storage shed is best, but if you don't have the space, take advantage of existing structures. Some people with a pool put the lawn furniture in the pool. You can also strap lawn furniture to the pillars on an elevated house to keep it from blowing away. Don't forget to secure the trash and yard waste cans as well.
- **Minimize water seepage under garage doors.** Lay down bags of mulch outside of the doors. Bags of mulch are larger and cheaper than sand, do just as good a job of redirecting water, and you can use the mulch in your garden later.
- **Don't prune right before a storm unless absolutely necessary.** It's best not to prune if the debris can't be collected and disposed since it will be blown around in the storm. Over-pruning can also make some trees and palms more vulnerable to damage.

Want to learn more?

- The University of Florida website has a number of useful publications (go to <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/> and search on "hurricane")
- An excellent article by botanist Rodger Keller (1943-2006) is maintained on the Key West Garden Club website (<https://keywestgardenclub.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/rodger-keller.pdf>)
- *Landscape Hurricane Preparedness* by Michelle Leonard-Mularz, UF-IFAS Monroe County Environmental Horticulture Agent can be found at: www.monroecounty-fl.gov/DocumentCenter/View/17819/June-2019-Newsletterpdf
- Crawford, Pamela. (2006) *Stormscaping: Landscaping to Minimize Wind Damage in Florida* Canton, GA: Color Garden, Inc. (available at Amazon or other booksellers)

Notable Dates and Birthdays

A warm birthday wish to our members with August and September birthdays!

August

- * Deborah A.
- * Pamela G.
- * Martha M.
- * Sandra P.
- * Susan P.
- * Heidi P.
- * Hellen S.
- * Cheryl S.

September

- * Jim C.
- * Steve H.
- * Karen K.
- * Deborah M.
- * Evelyn M.
- * Beverly M.
- * Sylvia M.
- * Carol S.
- * Harold S.
- * Ann Y.
- * Ray Y.



Upcoming meetings and club activities:

September

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

- 9** GCUK Board Meeting (10 am)
- 15** GCUK General Membership Meeting (11 am)
- 17** Florida Native Plant ID Class (Zoom, 5:30 pm)
- 19** Work day at REEF gardens (9:30—11 am)
- 20** Last day to submit member survey and pay dues!

Notes:

- Stop by the clubhouse on Wednesdays at noon to help with property maintenance chores

October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

- 13** GCUK Board Meeting (10 am)
- 20** GCUK General Membership Meeting (11 am)
- 20** Florida Native Plant ID Class (Zoom, 5:30 pm)
- 29** Cooking for God's Kitchen

Notes:

- Stop by the clubhouse on Wednesdays at noon to help with property maintenance chores

Looking Forward...

- **Board** meetings at 10 am on Sep 8, Oct 13, Nov 10, Dec 8, Jan 12, Feb 9, Mar 9, Apr 13, May 11
 - **General Membership** meetings on Sep 15, Oct 20, Nov 17, Dec 15, Jan 19, Feb 16, Mar 16, Apr 20, May 18. Meetings begin at 11 am; If held at the clubhouse, doors open at 10 am for social time.
 - **Special Events: Garden Walk** – Feb. 13, 2021; **Members Only Garden Walk** – Mar. 23, 2021.
- NOTE:** The Gingerbread Craft Market - scheduled for Nov. 28, 2020 is CANCELLED

Out & About at Francis Tracy Garden Center

Our Connect to Protect Garden is thriving! Here are a few photos of the plants and some visitors. It appears that the wild lantana (button sage) is a big hit with the butterflies!



The Queen Emma Crinum lily behind the clubhouse is blooming as well as a few of the bromeliads. If you visit our clubhouse grounds this coming month, please share your photos for next month's issue!

