

**THE GARDEN GRAPEVINE**  
**THE OFFICIAL E-NEWSLETTER OF THE**  
**ST JOHNS BOTANICAL GARDEN & NATURE PRESERVE**  
**FIRST EDITION - VOLUME 1 - January 2024**

**LETTER FROM THE EDITOR**

Welcome to the first edition of the SJBGNP e-Newsletter! The Garden Grapevine will be sent out to our members bimonthly, that is every two months, to keep them informed of the latest happenings at the St. Johns Botanical Garden. With so much happening, it was felt that a quarterly edition may not be nimble enough to stay current with all of the events and changes to the Garden.

The newsletter will feature the latest news from the Garden, and coming events, and spotlights on volunteers, so everyone has the opportunity to stay involved or get involved! We encourage our board members, staff, advisors and volunteers to contribute articles about their Garden related achievements as well, and look forward to expanding the newsletter to include new additions, photographs, plants of the month, and animal sightings in the Garden and Nature Preserve.

**LATEST HAPPENINGS AT THE GARDEN**

WOW! Trying to keep up with everything going on at this Garden is like trying to drink from a firehose! Numerous new volunteers have come aboard and have been starting to add their touches to the Garden. Experienced botanists, Lana Mack, and Jane Villa-Lobos have added new beds, and been plant labelling machines! Jane is especially knowledgeable about bromeliads and succulents and been bringing the nursery up to speed with new labels and plant care! And Lana has been helping to identify native plants. Longtime volunteer Tracy Hines has been steadily getting the vines and weeds under control along the edges of the tropical trail.

Meanwhile, Dr. Rossi has been heading to South Florida to hunt down some rare new palm species for the Garden and Nursery. He is particularly excited about acquiring several new members of the genus *Chrysalidocarpus* (formerly *Dypsis*), a large genus from Madagascar, and especially 3 *Roystonea maisiana*, a species of royal palm found only near Guantanamo Bay in Cuba! Behind the scenes, he is working to communicate with state legislators and corporations about helping to sponsor the Garden. VP Tony Molinaro is using his skills to repair fountains, add electrical outlets, and run water to new areas of the Garden, and longtime employee of the Garden, Brandon Terrell has been planting new beds and trimming areas that really needed trimming!

Office Manager and Media Director Kaitlyn Fair has been getting the word out about upcoming events and current happenings, as well as helping patrons at the Barn! Outreach Coordinator Bobbi Kantor has been scheduling events and lining up vendors for months in advance, no easy feat! Secretary Libby Luedeke has been keeping track of new members and information, and coming regularly to attack the vines on the Tropical Trail, sometimes along with her friend, Tracy. Treasurer Adam Halstead is working ferociously behind the scenes to keep us up to date with all of the necessary paperwork needed to keep the Garden in compliance. And Kevin Davis has been working diligently on grants for the Garden! Becky Noth, our gardening friend from Arizona, keeps sending us wonderful cacti and succulents from out West, along with seeds of other desert plants for us to try here! Lastly, brand new volunteer Kit Schiller is busy learning the ropes. **WELL DONE ALL!**

**RECENT PAST EVENTS**

On January 7th, the Garden hosted its first Winter Wonderland event. It was well attended and everyone seemed to have a great time. **CATHLEEN AND COMPANY** led the kids present on a scavenger hunt! The sunny, warm day didn't make it seem very wintery in our little sub-tropical paradise, but not a single complaint was heard, especially given the weather in the rest of the country!

## SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS

John and Ann Griffiths have been volunteers at the Garden since long before we opened. They just showed up one day while we were working near the front gate and said they wanted to volunteer! And did they ever!!! John, a retired contractor, has been working to refinish lots of wooden furniture in the Garden, as well as rebuild sections of the Tiki Hut, on Tiki Key! And Ann, a realtor in Palm Coast, has been using her artistic talents to make all sorts of knick-knacks and refinish and repaint ceramic and clay pots! They also donated the cheerful giant metal sun-face hanging inside of the gift shop, among other things! Both of them were there for the grand opening and numerous events afterward. The Garden wouldn't be the Garden without them!

*THE GARDEN NEEDS MORE VOLUNTEERS like John and Ann.* There is so much to do! If you love nature, you qualify, join our family. Come on a regular basis and make new friends! We need everything from weed pullers to engineers to content creators! Or you are a carpenter, plumber, electrician, or a mason? Do you like painting, crafts, or are handy with content creation? Maybe you like to trail blaze or explore the wilderness? We need volunteers to join our "expedition" to scout out the large area the Garden owns on the other side of the creek! Bring a machete! You will have to ford the creek as well, so prepare to get wet! Perhaps you have a special skill or knowledge that might help YOUR Garden... ***If you think you might be interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact us at: (904) 553-7563.***

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Couples Day** is approaching rapidly! On Sunday, February 18th, the SJBGNP will hold a day for couples to just come out and relax and reconnect by sharing a day in the peace and quiet of the Garden. It's in honor of Valentine's Day, but that falls on Wednesday, and we know that many of you are working on that day. The weekend before is the Superbowl, so we decided the following weekend would be better. **SUE TICE**, will be playing the harp and the violin/fiddle, with a variety of styles, and knows music, don't miss her! She plays from 11 to 1. And there will be vendors on site for good food and drink, as always!

The Sunday, March 3rd event will feature a real knee slapping, foot stomping, bluegrass band that have blessed the Garden with their music before, a group called **SKIN AND BONZ!** And if you want to learn, they will teach you how to square dance! These guys are great, and kids love them, so come and check them out! They will be playing from 1 to 3! And if that wasn't enough, **WILD WONDERS** will be back, doing their famous animal show that's always a hit with kids, and will probably start at noon! Furthermore, **CATHLEEN AND COMPANY** will be there to get the kids involved in various fun activities! And there are rumors that our official FACE PAINTER WILL BE THERE! As usual for special events, food vendors will be on site.

## DONATIONS

We'd like to give a BIG THANKS! to **WILD WONDERS** for their generous donation, and for believing in our vision very early on, to today! They do a super job for events, so give Mike a call at: (904) 710-5995 to schedule your animal party! It's such donations that make a big impact on us!

And right now is a VERY critical time for our Garden. While we have certainly gotten off to a great start, we haven't (yet) received any help from the county or state, and the first year is critical for eligibility with grants and/or funding. The Garden need resources to help us build permanent bathrooms, add signage, create an education center, acquire additional land, hire full time botanists, etc...

***If you would like to make a donation, please call us at: (904) 553-7563 to talk to one of our staff, in person when you visit the Garden, or make a donation online at our website at: <https://www.stjohnsbotanicalgarden.org/donate/>***

TO MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT OR CONTRIBUTE AN ARTICLE, SEND IT TO: [palmcabinman@gmail.com](mailto:palmcabinman@gmail.com)

*(Please keep your articles concise, since space is limited.)*

**AND REMEMBER, YOU HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE!**