



FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER 2009

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

May this year bring you an interest in caring for our environment.

In December Lyn Vaughan had a well deserved vacation. During this time, Nicki O'Connell served in the Visitors' Centre with yours truly. Nicki has training as a chef as well as a teacher and so brought many new ideas with her. She continued to help for the first two weeks in January during our reduced hours of 10.00am to 2.00pm. Nicki, many thanks for your caring and thoughtful service.

On the 19th of January **we welcomed Lesley Stovell** who has taken on the position of the Café Manager, while Lyn will work in the afternoon and have responsibility for the shop. Like Nicki, Lesley has come with many new ideas. She has served in the hospitality industry at Henry VIII, the Pickled Onion and lately of the Swizzle Inn South Shore. Lesley is married to a Bermudian and is keen to try her hand at something a little different. We hope she will enjoy serving our customers and working alongside our volunteers; finding it sufficiently challenging and rewarding for years to come.

Lyn is still with us and is working behind the scenes and on Saturdays. She helped prepare for Lesley's arrival, continues to administer and prepare us for our audit. In March, when we return to regular hours, Lesley will work in the

mornings and Lyn in the afternoons. The addition of another staff member is a big step for our organization. It will mean extra support to cover vacations as well as be able to serve the public better with longer hours. **We are open on Saturdays from 10.00am to 2.00pm.** While this may appear to be a second person, they are actually sharing the day so we still need and value our many volunteers.

Please continue to support our events. You may have noticed a large write-up in the Royal Gazette on herbal remedies on January 14th. Nell Johnson was interviewed in preparation for her talk on Sunday 18th January. Every one of the 104 people who attended listened attentively as she told of many remedies and teas that kept people healthy before the drugs of today. Aunt Nell was ably assisted by Lisa Greene who had some spectacular photographs to enhance the talk and help people identify the plants.

We have some more talks lined up, see inside. Remember, extra help would be most appreciated at the Annual Exhibition.

Once again, a very big thank you to our café, shop and tour guide volunteers who give many hours of their time to enable the Visitors' Centre to be a success.

Bill Ingham
President

THREE HOTHOUSES

by Tour Guide

In October of 2008, I had the opportunity to visit the Adelaide Botanic Garden. This garden was started in 1855 and has served generations of South Australians. There are numerous collections: a palm collection, a bamboo collection, succulent and cacti collections, different habitat exhibits, the most extensive economic collection that I have ever seen, and a lotus pond, to name just a few. There are beautiful shady areas and a lot of sunny open space just next to the city centre, in short: it is grandiose!

It is impossible to give a full description of this garden in this column, so I would like to mention only a few highlights, namely the fantastic hothouses .

The oldest hothouse in the garden dates from 1875 and it is called the Palm House, because originally palms were kept in it. That this building has survived so long is mainly because the climate in South Australia is quite dry. However, in 1986 time had taken its toll, namely metal parts had corroded, and a general reconstruction was necessary. The building was completely taken apart and rebuilt. It was shockingly expensive and took a number of years, but the result is a building as beautiful as the original. It was reopened in 1995 and it is ready for the next 100 years. Today this hothouse is filled with a collection of plants from the arid areas of Madagascar, a smart move, as there is less corrosion than when it housed the palms and the environment was rather humid.

In 1988 the Bicentennial Conservatory was constructed (to commemorate Australia's bicentenary). This spectacular building, a huge arch that is 27 metres high, stands on an elliptical base, measuring 100 by 47 metres. Inside, one walks through a recreation of a tropical rainforest, even complete with ground dwelling birds, and above that is another walkway where one is closer to the tree canopy. Here mist and rain are released to maintain the

necessary humidity while the daytime temperature is kept between 23 and 33 degrees Celsius. There were many unknown trees and surprising flowers. We truly felt as if we were exploring a tropical forest.

The third hothouse is the new Amazon Waterlily Pavilion, inaugurated in 2007 at the 150 year anniversary of the Garden. This is also a strikingly modern construction that from a distance looks as if only glass was used to construct it. This building replaced the original building, the Victoria House, from 1886, that was created to house the famous Amazon Waterlily, *Victoria amazonica*.



I could not believe my luck, when I entered this hothouse: the Giant Waterlily was in bloom! I had seen the enormous floating leaves both in Rotterdam in a tropical hothouse and in Brazil in the Botanic gardens of Rio de Janeiro. The flower was at least 25 cm across and of the purest imaginable white. Next to it, as if to stress the relative size was a Blue Nile Waterlily, not more than 10 centimetres across, *Nymphaea caerulea*. (I love that name!)

A picture is worth more than a thousand words, so I will supply a few pictures to hang in the Visitors' Centre.

AROUND THE ISLAND

by Lisa Greene

Bamboo, a giant grass with hollow, jointed, woody stems, can be seen growing in several locations in the Botanical Gardens: the southwest corner of the Camden lawn, near the Kapok tree, and several other bamboos planted throughout the Gardens.

Bamboo, masting and rats.

Masting is a phenomenon that is defined as “synchronous production of seed at long intervals by a population of plants”* and it is something that bamboo does. For botanists, the simultaneous sprouting of bamboo’s tiny flowers is one of the wonders of the natural world, but for farmers in the area where this happens, it means only one thing – famine.**

In areas like Mizoram, India, where forests of bamboo grow, the mass flowering (prior to mass production of seed) attracts hordes of rats. The rats eat and thrive on the bamboo flowers and their population explodes because of all the food. They then go on to destroy the farmers’ crops causing famine, because the rats are unstoppable.

According to a BBC News article*** Mizo oral tradition suggests this deadly ecological cycle is repeated every 48 years. “The rats would wipe out three to four hectares of paddy cropland in one night. We would see our crop standing the night before, but the next day it would all be gone, eaten away by the rats” said one farmer of the 1958-59 famine in the Mizo Hills, then part of Assam.

Bamboo grows wild in 6,000 sq km of Mizoram’s total geographical area of 21,000 sq km. The state, bordering Bangladesh and Myanmar, harvests 40 percent of India’s 80-million-tonne annual bamboo crop.****

*Janzen (1976) *Annu. Rev. Ecol. Syst.*, 7, 347-391.

** Jeremy Page, *The Times*, Sept. 9, 2006.

***Subir Bhaumik, *BBC News*, 24 April 2007 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6585073.stm)

****Syed Zarir Hussain, *Thaindian News*, August 2, 2008 (<http://www.thaindian.com/newspost>)

Some bamboo trivia:

- Bamboo is one of the “Three Friends of Winter” in China, along with the plum and pine.
- In China, the bamboo, renowned for the fact that it does not break in the wind, was believed to be the symbol of the upright man, steadfast in the face of temptation.
- Bamboo, a symbol of pliability, grace and strength because it bends in the wind but does not break, is central to the cultures of the Far East. As its shoots are always green, it symbolizes the path and the steps towards enlightenment in Chinese philosophy; it is often depicted in paintings.
- According to National Geographic’s Green Guide website, bamboo fabric is considered one of the most pure, chemical-free fabrics you can find. It takes much fewer resources to raise bamboo than cotton – even organic cotton. Bamboo grows quickly, is naturally pest resistant and, when grown properly, requires few pesticides.
- Fabric made from bamboo has a silky texture, is naturally anti-bacterial, and naturally wicks perspiration.

Lisa Greene is the author of the Bermuda’s Flora (Vols. 1 & 2). Both volumes are available at the Visitors’ Centre Gift Shop.

A RARE BOTANICAL FIND

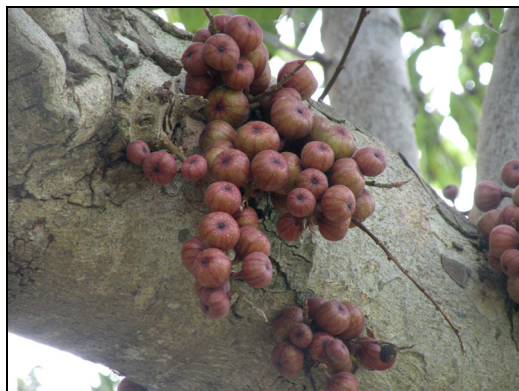
by Helle Patterson

The week before Christmas, you may remember, we had gloriously warm and sunny weather. I was subbing at Saltus Grammar School and accompanied my class to the field, to watch the House football matches. Shade was required, and we headed for the magnificent shade tree on the other side of the field.



Looking up idly, I was stunned to find what seemed to be bunches of grapes hanging from the trunk, although there was no vine entwined round the tree. Closer inspection showed that what had looked like grapes were actually figs, some green, some turning red, and they were hanging on short stems growing out of the trunk and lower branches of the tree. Fantastic!

I was thrilled. I'd never seen anything like this before: the tree was obviously a ficus, but the leaves were unlike the leaves of other kinds of ficus, and the bunches of figs were fascinating to me.



My first reference was to *Tropical and Subtropical Trees – An Encyclopedia* (a wonderful Timber Press book I bought some time ago from the Visitors' Centre Gift Shop), and this gave me a possible I.D. for the tree – *Ficus racemosa*, or Cluster Fig. Once I had a name, I found much interesting information on the Internet.

According to <http://www.motherherbs.com>, *Ficus racemosa* has many medicinal uses. The fruits are astringent to bowels, useful in the treatment of blood disorders, fatigue, urinary discharges, intestinal worms, dry cough, laryngitis, kidney and spleen diseases. The bark is useful in treating asthma and haemorrhoids, and the latex can promote healing. Certainly a tree to be treated with respect!

I have recently been told that there are two more specimens on the Island – one at the Botanical Gardens, and one at Southlands. Please let me know if you know of any other unusual specimen trees in Bermuda. I am building up a database of plants in Bermuda, and am grateful for any additional information.

Helle Patterson is the editor of the newsletter and can be reached by e-mailing helle@northrock.bm

GROW BIOINTENSIVE

Recently you may remember Frances Eddy had an article on gardening in our newsletter. In her five week course she touches on various aspects of GROW BIOINTENSIVE. As noted in John Jeavons' book, *How to Grow More Vegetables than you ever thought possible on less land than you can imagine*, this system is an "alive art of organic gardening that relinks people with the whole universe". I am presently doing the Saturday morning course. Another course will soon start on Sunday mornings. What I find amazing is that not only is it organic, it is sustainable and so productive. On one 100sq ft bed one

could grow all the vegetables they need, that's only 4' X 25'.

The key is building the soil. With the plants close together, they create a natural environment that covers the bed and prevents water loss. Companion planting is discussed where different plants, which enhance each other, are grown side by side, while antagonistic plants are kept away from each other. For more information please contact Frances by email at franceseddy@logic.bm.

Happy gardening.

Regards,

Bill Ingham

DOUBLE FANTASY MERCHANDISE

The Double Fantasy freesias made famous by John Lennon's final album have now been located by the staff of the Botanical Gardens, and have been planted outside the Visitors' Centre and round the ship sign leading to Masterworks. Watch for the opening of their gorgeous blossoms! Then visit the Gift Shop for commemorative sets consisting of Cutting Board, Tea Towel, Magnet and Key Ring, for a special price of \$25.00

BERMUDA BOTANICAL SOCIETY


THE STORY OF DOUBLE FANTASY...

Beatles' fans will instantly recognize this as the name of John Lennon's last album before his death in December 1980. John composed it while vacationing in Bermuda.

He enjoyed visiting the Bermuda Botanical Gardens and saw the label 'Double Fantasy' on the cream yellow double freesias in our bulb border.

Seeing this name gave John the inspiration for the title of his final album. Visitors frequently ask about this flower and John's stay in Bermuda in the Spring of 1980.

All funds raised by the Society are used towards projects designed to further botanical knowledge of Bermuda.



Exclusive to the Bermuda Botanical Society

The Bermuda Botanical Society has introduced a line of exclusive gift items with the Double Fantasy theme.

For more details of our Double Fantasy range, please call us:
Tel: 441 236 5291
Fax: 441 236 8970

VIEWS & NEWS FROM THE VISITORS' CENTRE

by Lyn Vaughan, Visitors' Centre Manager

I am thrilled to have a new Café Manager at last! Finally having someone to share the workload, especially the paperwork, is great. Visit our Centre soon so that you can welcome Leslie Stovell to our team. Bring your membership card and qualify for discounts in the shop. GREAT Coffee! FREE Parking!

BOOK CORNER

“Organic Abstractions” by R Judah
Beautiful Photographs of the heart of plants. We have a few left at \$50.00.

“Bermuda’s Botanical Wonderland”
by Christine Watlington, \$40.00
Currently in stock only at our Centre.

Timber Press books – 25% off to members and Parks Dept staff.

Many of the popular Bermuda books for adults and children are in stock.

Calendars & diaries at 20% off for members only as long as stocks last.

THE ANNUAL EXHIBITION 8AM-6PM, 16, 17, 18 APRIL 2009.

We really need volunteers to help for 2 hours at a time. Centre volunteers will get a Free Pass. New volunteers will put in at least 4 hours prior to the show to qualify for the Free Pass. Call 236-5291 or email bdabotanical@logic.bm. Leave contact information & preferred day and time so that we can slot you in. We WILL call you!

DOUBLE FANTASY SHOP

Valentine’s or any other day
can be celebrated by buying a gift from the Centre. We do have gift wrap for sale & free tissue.

For Children

Buy \$25 worth of Platte River Trading or House of Marbles items, and get a Butterfly, Bee or Ladybug bean bag FREE.

For Mums, Dads & Kids, there are many Badger Balms here, now certified organic. Select items adding up to \$50 and get the Badger Buddy at no charge

For the Table

Lovely Placemats, coasters & Trays in elegant designs.

For Spring Parties & Birthdays With Bunnies & Butterflies.

We have very reasonably priced tableware & gifts. \$3.00-\$15.00

EMMA BRIDGEWATER

Check the catalogue in the shop or online, bring your order list in. Orders will be placed with the company in mid-March with Bermuda delivery expected in May 2009. **PRE-PAID ONLY.**

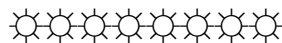
Double Fantasy Gifts to match the freesias in the Gardens!

\$25 for Linen Tea Towel, Cutting Board, magnet and key ring with leaflet of the Story of Double Fantasy. Can swap Tea towels and Cutting Boards.

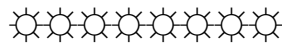
Tee Shirts too! Small to XXXL

If you wish to receive your newsletter by e-mail, please send an e-mail to helle@northrock.bm, putting Bot.Soc. in the subject line.

PICTURES TAKEN DURING NELL'S TALK:



The Bermuda Botanical Society is in urgent need of at least one more person willing to serve on the Executive Committee. The present Executive is busy and productive, and is looking to increase the Society's activities. If you are interested in joining a group of enthusiastic and energetic people, please contact Bill Ingham, bi57@northrock.bm





CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

- Feb. 22** *Yunnan plant life*: presentation by George & Marijke Peterich.
Doors open 3:00 pm, talk begins 3:30 pm.
Visitors' Centre, Botanical Gardens.
- March 29** *Composting*: talk and demonstration with Frances Eddy
3:00 pm, Visitors' Centre, Botanical Gardens.
- April 16, 17, 18** **Annual Exhibition**, Botanical Gardens.
- April 19** *Spittal Pond Walk*, guided by Dr David Wingate.
9:00 am start. Meet in the eastern end car park, Spittal Pond.
- April 22 Earth Day** *Colours and Shapes of Plants*: Walk and Story Time for 2-4-year-olds, with Sarah Vallis Pietila.
2:00 pm., meet in front of Visitors' Centre, Botanical Gardens.
Unusual Plants: walk for 5-8-year-olds, with Sarah Vallis Pietila.
4:00 pm, meet in front of Visitors' Centre, Botanical Gardens.
- May 27** **Bermuda Botanical Society A.G.M.**
6:30 pm, Visitors' Centre, Botanical Gardens.

