



Bermuda Botanical Society

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MAY NEWSLETTER 2010 PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear fellow members,

I would like to wish everyone a delightful Spring & Summer.

It is such a wonderful time of year and despite all of the high winds and cooler temperatures the gardens seem to be faring well. I am thrilled to see new growth sprouting forth from what appear to be barren limbs of some shrubs and trees. The birds seem to have found their song again and the mornings are punctuated with their celestial choruses. This Spring we have seen a bumper crop of Freesias, Snow Drops, Narcissus and the like these past few months. Now the sunny Bermudiana are in full regalia.

Our Executive Committee is a team of innovative and dedicated people committed to the society. Please look on the notice board in the Visitors' Centre at nominations for the Executive Committee. Kindly leave us a 'closed' comment saying, 'yea' or 'nay'.

Earlier this year a note went out to you as we were looking for a member who would be willing to come on board as an Assistant Treasurer. We are also looking for a weekend sales person; who will be paid to run the shop on Saturdays through the summer season.

The Earth Day celebration at Victoria Park was a good experience as we joined forces with Greenrock, the National Trust, and a host of other environmental, plant and natural sciences based agencies.

I mentioned in our previous Newsletter that this year I would like to host many more activities for the membership. Well, these hopes are being actualized. Lisa Greene held a Plant Fibre walk and talk at the end of April which went very well indeed and drummed up a lot of interest.

We have a walk at Orange Valley on Sunday May 9th, commencing at 2:45pm. We have a cruise to Nonsuch Island with a tour by David Wingate, and several other Garden tours are planned for the summer months as well.

To complement our wonderfully dedicated volunteers we could use a little more able bodied support in the form of weekday volunteers. If you are interested in committing some time on a weekly or daily basis at the Visitors' Centre, that would be appreciated. Please call Lyn Vaughan to arrange times etc or email bdabotanical@logic.bm

To all those ladies involved in parenting I would like to wish you a blessed Mother's Day.

We have a great mandate:

"To promote botanical sciences through various community activities and act as a support group for the Botanical Gardens & Arboretum".

Yours in 'green' Service,

Paul Harney
President

GOODBYE WINTER

BY GEORGE PETERICH

It is just before the Annual Exhibition as I sit down to write.

Spring is finally in the air. The Freesias are gone already and the Bermudianas are looking at me. But, that is not what I want to write about. This winter has been the worst that I have experienced in more than 25 years, and it still shows. Never have I seen so many trees and shrubs without foliage, except after hurricanes. Many evergreens now belie that name. I know even of an Olivewood Bark that has lost almost all its leaves. In this case it was the pounding of one storm after another, month after month.

Luckily we are already seeing a recovery; some of the badly hit Ficus species are already showing new buds and leaves. The Mahogany trees are starting to show their fresh pink leaflets. On the other hand, the Mangoes and Tamarinds that lost their leaves will take much longer. Here and there we see Fiddlewoods with fresh green leaves and I wonder: will these turn orange in May again as usual? I think not, but others that stood in a more sheltered place will keep to that schedule. There will be a succession of trees that turn orange until the end of the summer. We have seen that before.

Let's now turn to some of the exotic species around us in the Botanical Gardens. Quite a few of them are normally deciduous. For example: the Royal Poinciana, the Kapok tree, the Black Ebony, the Golden Shower, and the West Indian Almond. It will take some time before we see them in full foliage. There is one tree now that is showing both fresh leaves and flowers. It is the lovely Pride of India. (Here is one of my usual pieces of advice: take a sniff. It reminds of Lilac, a perfume that is used a lot in soaps and colognes, not my personal favourite!)

Another one in the Gardens is the Bald Cypress. It is a native of the southern USA, especially Florida. Guess why it is called bald? You can find it on the South Lawn. It is already covered in the freshest green.

Then there are of course other exotics that seem to have been programmed in an entirely different

way. These are the ones that are bald now, but will show flowers even before the slightest show of leaves. I do not mean the Avocadoes that are now blooming profusely without leaves. Without the storms many would now have both flowers and leaves. I do refer instead to what one could call the "naturally naked bloomers"! They normally show their flowers before any leaves appear. We can now see the lovely cardinal red flowers on the Carib Wood. (*Sabinia cardinalis!*) There is one opposite the Environmental Protection Building. The leaves will come later.

To round this off, I must name the Shaving Brush Tree (*Pseudobombax ellipticus*). You will find this tree close to the Cactus House. Bald as it is, the flower buds are starting to show now. Soon they will take the shape of big acorns and when they open you'll know why the tree has that name. Rush out to the Gardens, when you read this.... You may be just in time!



Photo © Laurie Walker

<http://usbotanicalgardens.blogspot.com/2007/02/shaving-brush-tree.html>

MALABAR SPINACH

Basella Rubra

BY NIGEL CHUDLEIGH

Do you miss growing your own vegetable greens during our hot summer months? Then try this plant which I have been growing in Bermuda for over 20 years.



Unrelated to true spinach, Malabar spinach is a vining plant characterized by dark green leaves and red-purple stems and veining. The leaves are heart-shaped and reach 2-3 inches in length. In optimum growing conditions, the vines, which branch readily, can grow up to 12 inches in a day and can reach 10 feet in length.

Malabar spinach is native to India and Indonesia and is widely grown in Asia, Africa and Central and South America. I believe it is grown at the Epcot Center in Florida and I have seen it in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and at the Eden Project in England.

The leaves and young shoots are used in salads or can be cooked by boiling, steaming, stir-frying etc.. The leaves are similar in taste to, but more 'meaty' than, regular spinach. Like other leafy vegetables, the plant has high values for vitamins

A and C and also iron and calcium. It is said to have a relatively high protein to calorie ratio. When cooking, do not over-cook, otherwise it may become somewhat slimy on account of a high mucilage content - incidentally a source of beneficial soluble fiber.

The great beauty of Malabar spinach is that it is a hot weather crop and performs best in the summer, when other leafy vegetables are out of season. It is very easy to grow - indeed, once you have it, it readily regenerates itself from seed.

Plant seeds in late spring or early summer either directly in the ground or in seed trays. A good humus-containing, friable soil is preferred and support for the vines by means of stakes, trellising, teepees etc., is required. Locate in full sun. The plant is drought-resistant but, to keep it producing young foliage, it is necessary to water and fertilize, as needed. It is remarkably pest and disease-resistant.

In the fall, as the days shorten, Malabar spinach starts to produce more and more flower panicles which give rise to the single-seeded berries which are dark purple when ripe. The juice of these berries is an intense purple. The juice will stain your fingers beautifully and indeed can be used as a natural stain or food colorant.

To propagate Malabar spinach, transplant self-sown seedlings or collect the fruit, allow to dry out thoroughly for a few weeks and then sow or store. To germinate, it may help to soak seed (actually the dried fruit) in water overnight.

For members who would like to try this vegetable, I am leaving some packets of seeds, at the Visitors' Center, in care of Lyn, to be collected - please only one packet per member. I will also provide seedlings for sale at the **St. George's Historical Society plant sale on Saturday 8 May 10am to 2.00pm on Ordnance Island, St. George's.**

Or, if anyone misses that sale, contact Claudine Wilson at 293-4688 or e-mail Claudine@logic.bm.

FROM LISA GREENE'S NOTEBOOK

An excerpt from *Air Pollution "silences" fragrant plants.*

By Beth Hanson

In "Fragrant Designs – A Brooklyn Botanic Garden All-region Guides."

Plants can communicate in ways we are just beginning to understand, but these days plants in heavily populated areas are struggling to get their message out. A study by the University of Virginia has shown that common pollutants from power plants and cars, including ozone, hydroxyl, and nitrate radicals, rapidly bind with flower scent molecules. Once these molecules are bound together, the flower aroma is diminished or destroyed.

Before the industrial revolution, scent molecules produced by a flower could travel as far as 3,300 to 4,000 feet. In today's degraded environments near major cities [sic], these molecules may travel only 660 to 985 feet before they bind to a pollutant and become scentless...

The dire conclusion of the study: Pollution has made it increasingly difficult for flowers to lure their pollinators, which may lead to decreased pollination rates.

Landscape fragmentation may aggravate the situation further for flowering plants and their pollinators, which rely on scent to locate isolated flower patches beyond their line of sight.

For the full article, see: Fragrant Designs – A Brooklyn Botanic Garden All-region Guide Series, in the Botanical Gardens Library (by appointment). Call 236 4201.

Or visit:

<http://www.virginia.edu/uvatoday/newsRelease.php?id=4814>

Some other articles in the book –
Fragrance: A Sensual Science
Making Sense of Scents
Scent Seeker
Capturing Scent
Perfume for Pollinators
Mixed Messages
What's that smell?
Scented Gardens

Fragrant Front Yard Gardens
Scented Evening Gardens
Aromatic Container Gardens
Fragrant Gardens for Children
Scented Paths
Fragrant Rose Gardens
Fragrant Annual and Perennial Vines

If you're interested in finding wild food, read on. Both the species of sow thistle mentioned in the following excerpted BBC Wildlife Magazine (March 2010) are common weeds in Bermuda.

Smooth sow-thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*) is a member of the daisy family. When young, it forms a basal rosette, signaling its most useful edible stage. It resembles true thistles but its leaves lack real spines. It often grows alongside prickly sow-thistle (*S. asper*), the young leaves of which are darker with soft spines, while the leaves of the perennial sow-thistle are longer, flatter and more upright. All three sow thistles are edible when young, but the spines of older prickly sows are too tough and spiky to eat, even cooked.

Sow thistles are closely related to both dandelion and chicory, their flavour rich, earthy and slightly bitter.

Either briefly boil sow-thistle and serve it with melted butter, or fry it for about five minutes, add two parts cream and one part white wine-vinegar (enough to amply coat the leaves) and warm through before serving.



©<http://www.wildmanstevebrill.com/>

AN UPDATE ON THE BARBADIAN GOOSEBERRY

BY LISA GREENE

As I mentioned in the February newsletter, several people responded to my request for locations of Barbados gooseberry plants and I have since had a few more reports. I thought members might be interested to see a. (Please email me at: elgreene@ibl.bm) if you know of more to add.

Thanks, Lisa Greene

Locations of Barbados gooseberry:

Fraction Street – near the southern end, east side of road.

Whitney Institute – at the bus stop on the south side of the road, just west of the school. A large patch.

Darrell residence, Spanish Point, Pembroke – thought to be a volunteer by the property owners.

Store Hill, Smiths, private garden on east side of road.

North Shore Rd., Smith – on the water side, a small patch that is probably (?) a volunteer

Spanish Point Road, on the north side near the bus stop west of Admiralty House stables - in and among some trees overhanging the bus stop.

Pembroke, Langton Hill, in bushes near the entrance to St. John's Rectory.

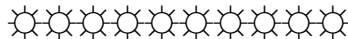
Fort Hamilton – once (still?)

Warwick, South Shore Rd. – just west of the western entrance to Southlands – growing in and among a low “hedge”.

Somerset, across from Aberfeldy Nursery (still?)

West Side Road, just south of where the road becomes Greenfield Lane (may be the same as the plant listed above (need to check – don't know Somerset well enough)

Dockyard, Cradock Rd. (near Lodge Point Lane, I think – need to check).



MONICA BERRY'S FAREWELL

Longtime Visitors' Centre volunteer Monica Berry recently bid adieu to us and to Bermuda. She will be sorely missed. Below are pictures from her farewell party:

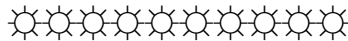


TREASURER'S REPORT

BY SAMANTHA BROMFIELD

It has been a fairly quiet time over the last few months in finance, but we are pleased to announce that we have begun awarding Scholarships, and this year we have awarded the scholarship between three deserving individuals. Look out for more information and some pictures over the coming months.

On another note, I would like to thank Lyn (Vaughan) for all the volunteer hours she has put in over the winter months, and for continuing to be dedicated to our charity and for working with me towards the continual improvement of the accounting and finance functions



PLANT SALE SATURDAY 30 OCTOBER 2010

WE NEED YOU TO PROPAGATE!

Our popular annual plant sale is one of our major fund raisers and we need as many members as possible to help out by providing plants to be sold (and by coming to buy, of course!).

Now is the time to think about starting your favourite plants, be they from seeds, slips, division, layering or whatever. One of the easiest resources is to simply dig up and pot young seedlings, suckers etc. that have self-propagated around your garden. Pot them up now and by the

autumn they should be of good size for the sale.

We do like to have a good variety of plants so anything you can produce which is unusual would be particularly welcome. Remember that if producing multi-cultivated plants such as roses, keep them labelled as named specimens always sell best. Similarly, with plants such as hibiscus, having the flower colour on the label is a big plus, since, chances are, they won't be in bloom at time of sale.

WANTED: SALES PERSON

The Bermuda Botanical Society needs a part-time sales person to work at the Visitors' Centre on Saturday, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, commencing May 2010 through October.

Previous sales experience preferred. This position would suit a self-motivator who enjoys serving people and providing information.

Please contact **Lyn Vaughan** at **236-5291** for more information.

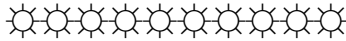
NONSUCH ISLAND CRUISE AND TOUR

Following last year's very successful July visit to Nonsuch Island, we have scheduled another one for May 30, 2010. The advantage of going earlier in the year is that we have a very good chance of seeing a live cahow chick (the second, after last year's Somers, to be actually hatched on Nonsuch). We are using the BZS boat, Endurance, and will leave Ordnance Island, St George's, at 1:00 pm, returning for 5:00 pm. We will be privileged to have the inimitable and renowned Dr David Wingate, the creator of the Nonsuch Project and saviour of the cahows, as our guide.

There are still a couple of seats available. If you wish to take part, please email Helle Patterson at helle@northrock.bm. The cost is \$40.00 per person.



Cahow chick
© Jennifer Gray



MAY 9 GARDEN WALK AT ORANGE VALLEY



Lisa Greene and John Cox interact with some of the 18 participants. John gave a brief historical introduction to the house, and Lisa gave a superbly informative botanical tour of the lovely grounds.

From the President's "Garden Chair"

Dear members,

I came up with an exciting idea at a recent Operations Meeting.

I have decided that we should have a member's calendar for 2011-2012.

That said we need some photos and we would like you to submit your photos to the VC or you can email me directly at bdabotanicals@gmail.com.

Lots of local flora – get happy photo taking now as we need all pictures submitted by September 30th.

There may be a prize for the best two entries.

Paul

- May 29** **5.30 pm. AGM followed by a talk.**
Visitors' Centre, Botanical Gardens.
- May 30** **1:00 pm. Nonsuch Island Cruise.**
Departs Ordnance Island.
- June 6** **6:00 pm. Garden Walk with Wine and Cheese: Woodlands.**
Middle Rd., Paget – 2nd house west of Manse Rd (just east of Fourways).
Members \$5.00, general public \$10.00.
Reservations required: please call 236-4578, or email
peterich@northrock.bm
- June 20** **Afternoon. Garden Walk: Somers Cove.**
Somers Hill Rd., Shelly Bay. More details to come – please see Bermuda
Calendar in The Royal Gazette.
- October 30** **Plant Sale. 8:30 am members, 9:00 am general public.**
Botanical Gardens.

PHOTO CREDITS:

P. 3 NIGEL CHUDLEIGH

P.5 GEORGE & MARIJKE PETERICH

P. 7 PAUL HARNEY

