



Bermuda Botanical Society

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MAY NEWSLETTER 2011

From the President's Patch

I greet you from a Visitors' Centre that has a new look. Works and Engineering painted the facility at the beginning of April and we believe that the choice of warm colours is complementary to our theme. Enjoy!

The past three months have been an interesting time for us botanically. We are in dire need of some substantial precipitation to nourish our land and to replenish our highly prized water lenses.

We have had a Royal Visit to the gardens and would like to honor any such occasion by the planting of an indigenous tree. With the Curator's assistance we will make this a reality soon.

We had a fantastic turn out for the Annual Exhibition "AG SHOW" and there were some very creative entries displayed within our own space the Garden Room. The Jack King building and others held some wonderful plant specimens and I thought the roses were of particular magnificence this year.

Good Friday was a wonderful family activity which saw healthy use of the southern lawns. I was even able to launch my Eagle Birdie kite for at least 30 minutes while the rest of my 'posse' played a Swedish game of survival between bouts of codfish cake 'mashing'.

We have had a super crop of Loquats this year and there is a wave of ripening Surinam Cherries sweeping the island at this time...

Everybody think Rain!

With the down turn in the economy we have scaled back on the amount of merchandise being sold in our retail space and the café hours.

The Board sees the frequent use of our rental space as a more sustainable means of generating monies to maintain our scholarship fund and cover operating costs.

Across our island community, many established societies are looking at their relevance and the Botanical Society, 25 years young, is no different. I am asking the membership to very seriously consider the role of the Bermuda Botanical Society in today's community.

WE NEED YOUR HELP -The executive are wondering if it is time to either wind up the society or to completely role out a new mission / vision. I am asking that you please take a serious look at your own commitment to the society, its mission and purpose. Can you be more involved? {SEE SEPARATE NOTE}

PLEASE ATTEND this AGM.

If we do not have a quorum then we will assume that the membership is no longer interested and the executive will consider the next step.

However we are very hopeful that together we can draw up a successful plan that will be sustainable for the society and for future generations. We are open to all suggestions; please bring your positive suggestions.

Paul L.S. Harney

President

POLLINATION IN THE VEGETABLE GARDEN



Bee pollinating flower of cucumber

Last year's decline in local bee populations rightly received wide publicity. Falling bee numbers is a lose-lose situation for everyone (except, of course, for those allergic to bee stings!). The honeybee not only produces honey and beeswax but, even more important, it is the pollinating agent of many flowering plants.

Last year farmers reported their pumpkin crop decimated for want of bee pollination. All the squash and cucumber family of plants are likely to be affected as well as certain fruit trees. I noticed such a marked drop off in productivity of my cucumber plants that I stopped growing them.

The good news is that the bee populations now seem to be recovering. Hopefully, this is not just a seasonal blip. The apiary near to us had declined from fourteen hives to just two and, briefly, to zero. Fortunately, the beekeeper was recently able to start re-installing newly active hives and he tells me he is now up to nine with another nearby swarm yet to be collected! There has been such a dramatic increase in bee activity in

the garden that I was moved to plant cucumber and zucchini once again!

There are three types of pollination among vegetable crops:

Insect pollination. In these vegetables, such as squash, melon and cucumber, the plants each have separate male and female flowers and mostly depend upon bees and other insects to transfer pollen from male flower to female.

Self-pollination. In these plants, each flower contains both male and female parts, so pollination can occur wholly within the flower, though this may be inhibited by climatic & moisture factors. Plants in this category include beans, peas, tomatoes, eggplant, lettuce and peppers.

Wind pollination. Included here are sweet corn, chard, spinach and beets. Of these, the only one that needs pollination to produce the part we eat is corn. In all the others we eat either the foliage or the root, not the fruit or seed.

Pollination of sweet corn occurs by pollen being blown from the tassel to the silks. Each strand of silk is attached to one embryo kernel (seed), so any silk not getting pollinated will not produce a mature kernel, thus producing an imperfectly filled cob.

To get good pollination of sweet corn it is essential to plant in blocks rather than single rows – say four adjacent rows of four plants rather than one long row of sixteen. As we know all too well, wind is not in short supply in Bermuda, but essentially you will get pollination in a row mostly when the wind blows down the row. But with a block of plants you can expect pollination no matter the wind direction. Even if you only have three plants, you will do better to have them in a triangle than in a line.

By the way, do not plant more than one variety of corn close together, if they are likely to be pollinating at the same time. This would lead to “mixed up” cobs.

We do not depend upon pollination to grow leaf, stem or root vegetables in our gardens though, of course, pollination was required to produce the seed to grow the vegetables in the first place. Once such plants are growing, pollination is only needed if one wishes to save seed for growing the next generation.

For those wishing for more information about bees and beekeeping, noted local beekeepers Randolph Furbert and Quincy Burgess will be speaking at the Garden Club Open House at Palm Grove on Saturday 14 May from 10.00am to 4.00pm.

Nigel Chudleigh



GARDENING FOR BUTTERFLIES

In March, Lisa Greene partnered with Somersfield school parent Dorte Horsfield to present a lecture Gardening for Butterflies. The talk began with the evolution of butterflies, what butterflies we have in Bermuda and what plants attract and sustain them. The design and installation of the garden was discussed, followed by a visit to the school’s garden for a quick discussion, demonstration and questions. 35 people attended.

FROM LISA GREENE

Excerpt from Smithsonian: March 2011

“Decline and Fall – A new analysis of tree rings from more than 9,000 European pines, larches and oaks provides a climate record going back 2,500 years. Scientists in Switzerland and elsewhere linked the data to history. For instance, the Roman Empire thrived during a period of above average rainfall and steady temperatures, which ended around A.D. 250, followed by 300 years of extreme variability – and the fall of the empire.”

Repeat request:

I’m still looking for these two plants? I want them for the landscape at Somersfield School New Zealand Flax, *Phormium tenax* (not to be confused with another plant popular now in Bermuda called flax lily: *Dianella tasmanica*) and flax, *Linum usitatissimum*. Flax apparently comes up in outdoor bird cages occasionally and New Zealand flax is popular with flower arrangers. Please give me a call at 299 2329 x2123 or email me at elgreene@ibl.bm

Blue scarlet pimpernel

Scarlet pimpernel, *Anagallis arvensis*, is a delicate-looking little weed whose flowers close when the weather threatens to rain, so it is also known as shepherd’s barometer, shepherd’s clock and poor man’s weatherglass. It is flowering now and can be seen growing in sandy, uncultivated areas (like Spittal Pond Nature Reserve) throughout the island.

As one would expect the flowers are orange/red BUT they can also be white or blue!

N.L.Britton, in his “Flora of Bermuda” (1918) says the that “the blue-flowered race is frequent on St. David’s Island.” I have seen lots with orange-red flowers but never any with blue - until a few weeks ago when someone brought a sample to me – collected in St. David’s. That sample is now a herbarium specimen in the Natural History Museum at the Aquarium.

Lisa Greene’s delightful plant notecards are now available in the Visitors’ Centre Gift Shop, as well as at BAMZ.

President’s Farewell....

...And so, I have come to the end of my term as President of the Bermuda Botanical Society.

During my term I have learned so much about myself, about valuing all relationships, about my capabilities and how not to commit to something without having an extra hour on either side of it. I am very grateful for the opportunity with the Society

and to have been a part of such a dynamic team of talented people and hope to continue in a different capacity. If I had a regret it would be that I could not have been at ‘the sight’ full time ☺ ~ It is a beautiful piece of Bermuda!

At this point I want to pause and say a huge thank you to all of the volunteers (including Board Members) for the part that each one

has played in the success of the Bermuda Botanical Society through the years.

Special thanks to Samantha Bromfield who has done a really good job of bring up the financials and revamping the whole system to a more modern and friendly system. She has worked hard to train staff to a good standard in the operations. Sam is stepping down as Treasurer due to her work commitments. Samantha has taken on Rentals these past few months and is doing a good job.

After 25 years of amazing commitment and dedication Lisa Greene is now handing over the membership chair as she turns more focus to her maturing family. We are so grateful to Lisa and her service to the community through the Bermuda Botanical Society. We wish you the best in life & hope you might present to us once in a while...please.

I would like to make mention of Dr. Nigel Chudleigh and his dedication to the Society during his time as a board member. He has done brilliant work with the Annual Plant Sale and he very graciously said yes when I asked him last year if he would manage the Annual Scholarship portion of our work. He is currently involved in trying to secure successful candidates for this year's award. Nigel also assists with opening the Garden Room for Rentals and has also learned the Cash machine in order to offer technical support. Nigel you inspire me.

I am very grateful to our dear Marijke Peterich for her stoicism these past 18 months. She has served as a good Secretary and Rentals Chair (later supported by

Samantha, Nigel & me). Marijke has had some health challenges these past several months and we have missed her. We wish her the best of health and happiness.

I would like to thank Myles Darrell for his commitment to the Bermuda Botanical Society. His standard of work is excellent and his knowledge and experience of the plant kingdom is inspiring. We have valued your input as a board member.

I would like to thank Neville Richardson and Lisa-Dawn Johnston for their gentle executive presence and their dedication to the sustainable botanical development of the Botanical Gardens. Neville, thanks for the pep talks in the grounds.

I would like to thank Dr. Tracey-Lyn Harney, who has been hard at work under the direction of Myles Darrell in activating an herb garden project for the Society; they are a powerful, intelligent & charismatic duo.

I wish to thank Barry Gibbons for his invaluable support of me during my term as President.

I wish to say thank you to our volunteer Mrs. Madeline Ray for being consistently bright and cheerful and so actively welcoming to all who enter the Visitors' Centre.

I would like to thank our very dear Helle Patterson for faithfully producing our Newsletter and rounding up all of its contributors several times per year ☺

Paul L.S. Harney
President



THE BERMUDA BOTANICAL SOCIETY WOULD LIKE TO THANK
ALL ITS VOLUNTEERS PAST AND PRESENT

Mimi Ball
Monica Berry
Samantha Bromfield
Jim Brown
Ianthia Carmichael
Diana Chudleigh & Nigel Chudleigh
Doreen Clarke
Irene Cook
Eileen Darrell
Myles Darrell
Elizabeth Downing
Martha Ferguson
Jennifer Flood
Barry Gibbons
Paul Harney
Dr T Harney
Andre Hayward
Bill Ingham & Margaret Ingham
Nell Johnston
Betsey Mowbray

Nancy Murphy
Lyn O'Neill
Helle Patterson
George Peterich & Marijke Peterich
Madeline Ray
Alexis Richens
Gill Rossiter
Pauline Scott
Pearl Smith
Hiroko Takizawa
Daphne Taylor
Lovett Trott
Sharon Vesey
Jean Wakefield
Ivy Woods
Students & numerous friends
The employees of the Botanical Gardens





BBS ANNUAL NONSUCH ISLAND/CAHOW VISIT TRIP



Our Nonsuch visits have proved so popular that after last year's we immediately booked island, boat, Jeremy and David for **May 29, 2011**. As there are newly hatched cahow chicks on Nonsuch, and several should be there until mid-June, we are allowing an extra hour this year so that we meet the chicks with Jeremy Madeiros and see all of the island with David Wingate. We'll again be using the BZS boat, the *Endurance*, departing from Ordinance Island, St George's at **1 pm**, and returning at **6 pm**.

The cost of the 5-hour trip is \$40 per person. The boat can only take 24 persons and demand is going to be high, so please book by emailing Helle Patterson: helle@northrock.bm, or calling her at 747-0163/203-0163.



CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

May 29 **Nonsuch Island Trip**, see above.

June 19 **3:30 pm AGM**, Visitors' Centre, Botanical Gardens
Quincy Burgess will give a talk on Bees in Bermuda.

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcomed. If you have interesting gardening stories, information and/or photos, please direct them to the Editor, Helle Patterson at helle@northrock.bm