



EDISON
and
FORD
winter
ESTATES

HOMES · GARDENS · MUSEUM
LABORATORY

MEMBER
MAGAZINE

JUNE
2021

EDISON and FORD winter ESTATES

2350 McGregor Boulevard
Fort Myers, FL 33901
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edisonford.org

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To become a member of Edison Ford,
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GARDENING PERSPECTIVE

If you're a serious gardener, you work in the garden all year long – even if the temperature is above 90 degrees, or below 40, which of course is a rarity in Southwest Florida. As the days get longer, the sun gets brighter and hotter. While the heat can be brutal for us humans, the plants are loving it. This is the time for most plants to do some serious growing. Shrubs and trees are covered in new bright green foliage, and some are also getting ready to bloom. At times, it seems as though the plants grow overnight. If you go on vacation, or miss a few days in the garden, the growth spurt will be quite noticeable when you return.

The rainy season is just around the corner, and Mother Nature will be able to help with the watering. If you haven't been to the Garden Shoppe in a while, stop in and see what's new. The next plant sale will be June 19. Stop by and pick out something new for your garden. We hope to see you there!

What we're doing to keep you safe:

- All employees are required to wear masks indoors and outdoors when 6' social distancing cannot be achieved.
- Visitors are required to wear masks on guided tours; otherwise, masks are recommended when 6' social distancing cannot be achieved.
- Visitors arriving in groups or with family are not required to social distance from each other.
- Sanitizer stations are placed throughout the site.
- Counters and door handles are being disinfected daily.
- Plastic shields are installed at the ticket counter.
- Signs are posted, alerting visitors to practice social distancing.
- Masks are available in the Museum Store.

As always, members get in free. We hope to see you soon!



GENERAL HOURS

Open Daily
9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

ADMISSION

Guided Tour:

Edison Ford Members: \$5

Adults: \$30

Teens: (ages 13-19) \$25

Children: (ages 6-12) \$18

Children: (ages 5 and under) FREE

Self-Guided Tour:

Edison Ford Members: FREE

Adults: \$25

Teens: (ages 13-19) \$20

Children: (ages 6-12) \$15

Children: (ages 5 and under) FREE

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On the cover:

Visitors tour the gardens and houses on a sunny afternoon.

GARDEN TALK: Good Pruning Techniques

SATURDAY, JUNE 12 • 10 A.M.

Have you ever wondered how to trim your shrubs, such as Hibiscus or Bougainvillea? Many shrubs and trees have very different growth habits and knowing how to prune them correctly is important for establishing a healthy plant with a good form. In this talk, participants will learn a few biological terms and how to prune just about anything that grows in the garden. Be sure to wear comfortable shoes because you will also walk through the gardens and see how the horticulturists at Edison and Ford Winter Estates tackle pruning and the tools that are necessary for the task. Participants will receive a 20% off coupon for use toward plants in the Garden Shoppe.

Cost: members \$10, non-members \$15.

Advance registration not required.

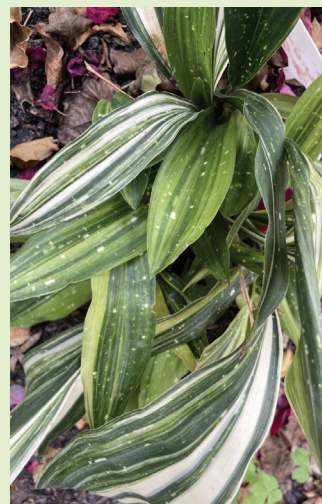
JUNE PLANT SALE

SATURDAY, JUNE 19 • 9 A.M. - 5 P.M.

If you're looking for a unique flowering tree, herbs, butterfly plants, or even Florida natives, don't miss this event! The Garden Shoppe will be stocked and several other vendors will also have plants available for sale. Plus, we'll have food trucks and live music!

Edison Ford members receive a discount on Garden Shoppe purchases; guests may purchase a membership during the event to receive the discount. Members also receive free, unlimited general admission throughout the year, plus free admission to many other museums and gardens across the country through the reciprocal program.

A limited number of carts will be available, so guests are encouraged to bring a cart or wagon for transporting plants. Parking and admission to the plant sale is free (tours of the homes, museum and lab are not included). Masks are recommended when visitors are not adequately able to social distance.



A NEW COLLECTION Re-establishes Link to the Past

By Karen Maxwell

As the only historic botanical garden in Southwest Florida, the Edison and Ford Winter Estates is the home of many unique collections, some better known than others.

Recently, the Estates was the beneficiary of a superb collection of *Aspidistra*, commonly known as the Cast Iron Plant. This unassuming plant earned its common name from the Victorian era when it was the only houseplant that could withstand the low light, cold, and often dreary environs of Victorian homes. They were so popular, in fact, that owners would often pose for a portrait next to their *Aspidistra*. Today, they would take a selfie.

This tough foliage plant originates from Japan and many of the cultivars today have Japanese names, such as “Ichi Mon Ji,” “Asahi,” “Suisho” and “Ashahi” – meaning sunrise. *Aspidistra* is very slow growing, and flowers quite close to the ground. There is disputed evidence as to whether it is pollinated by snails or gnats, but either way, we look forward to cultivating our new *Aspidistra* gardens – one located in the Research Gardens where the full size plants should thrive under the shade of the Zulu Fig (*Ficus lutea*) and dwarf varieties which we planted with companion azaleas (*Azalea* “White Ruffles”) in a shady bed north of the Moonlight Garden to re-establish the Japanese horticultural link to Mina Edison.

The generous donation of nearly 30 cultivars of this Japanese native is a natural addition to the Estates and serves to highlight that in the 1930s, Mina Edison was renowned, among other things, for her unparalleled collection of Japanese plants at her winter home here in Fort Myers.

No doubt she was swept up in the excitement of Japanese culture to which she was exposed at the 1888 and 1893 World Fairs, where the country of Japan showcased their art, architecture and horticulture to Europeans at the Exposition Universelle – the Paris World’s Fair, and then to Americans at its largest fair ever, the Columbia Exposition in Chicago.

Contrasting the noise and energy of America’s Industrial Age exhibits such as those of her husband and her father at the Chicago Fair, the peaceful and pleasant atmosphere at the Japanese pavilion, situated in a lagoon surrounded by water lilies surely offered visitors, including Mina Edison, a serene and beautiful landscape. It impressed her so much that she brought many Japanese plants to her winter home, most of them purchased from S.M. Japanese Nursery in West Orange, NJ – close to the Edison’s estate known as Glenmont.

We know from early garden design plans for the Moonlight Garden, that white azaleas were included in the first established plantings and were incorporated into Ellen Biddle Shipman’s 1929 design, along with *Funkia* and Snapdragons (*Antirrhina*).

Mina was particularly proud of her Japanese Flowering Almond, (*Prunus triloba*) which produced beautiful pink flowers, but soon discovered it was not suited to the raging summer humidity of Florida. Japanese iris and *Funkia* (today commonly referred to as *Hosta*) also did not thrive in our Zone 10 climate and sandy soil.

There were some successes; plants that adapted well and have become part of our permanent and historic installation. The floating freshwater lilies clearly made a big impression on her, as she installed two lily ponds – one in Fort Myers and one in Glenmont. Today, we enjoy the lilies that flourish in the original pond as well as in the pool of the Moonlight Garden.

Another success story, on view today at the Moonlight Garden is the *Podocarpus* or Japanese Yew (*Podocarpus macrophyllus*), which was installed in the 1930s to replicate the look of her ill-suited Italian cypress trees, and today’s hybrid white snapdragons that line the garden’s borders during the winter months, recall another Japanese favorite of Mina’s.

We hope you’ll come see the new collection of *Aspidistra* soon!



Calliope DONATED

Thanks to Michelle and Dale Day, there is a new car on display in the museum! Their antique Calliope – a 1914 Model T with a working pipe organ – is now part of the car collection at the Estates.

Over the years, the Day family brought the Calliope to car shows and they previously donated a 1923 Model T. It was important to Michelle and her father that the car would be enjoyed by the public, and not just sit in a garage. Now, the Calliope will be viewed by thousands of visitors every month.

These vehicles were originally designed for use in a circus and were referred to as a "circus truck." Many were steam powered and used to bring up the rear of the circus parade. They were generally homemade or converted and it is unknown how many were made; however, there are currently about 2,000 calliopes in existence.

With the addition of the Calliope, the site will have 10 antique cars. General admission includes the museum, where visitors can see five other vehicles: a 1937 Ford Coupe, 1914 Model T, 1907 Model G Cadillac, 1918 Chuckwagon, and a 1916 Model T that belonged to Thomas Edison. Across the street, there are four other vehicles on the Ford property: a 1923 Model T, 1929 Model A, 1917 Model TT, and a 1921 Square Cab.

Visitors can learn more about antique cars during the specialty Automotive Tour, offered on Monday mornings at 10:30 a.m. Led by Automotive Curator, James Moss, the tour covers the different types of Ford models on site, how the cars were produced and how to operate and start a vehicle.

Tickets for Automotive Tours are \$40 for non-members or \$15 for Edison Ford members.

Senator Marco Rubio Visit

On April 7, U.S. Senator Marco Rubio visited our site for a meeting with the Edison Ford executive staff to discuss the success of the Paycheck Protection Plan and how it helped the Estates survive the pandemic. After the meeting and press interview, the Senator walked through our outdoor Garden Shoppe area. He was immediately impressed with the variety of plants available and noticed a few specimens that he had been looking for in Miami. He quickly purchased the hard-to-find plants and was excited to take home his new-found treasures!

Edison Ford Horticulture Director, Debbie Hughes helps U. S. Senator Marco Rubio select plants for his garden.



SUMMER 2021 • **GRADES 4 - 6** • June 21 - August 6, 2021

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HOMES • GARDENS • MUSEUM
LABORATORY

INVENTOR'S SUMMER CAMP

Join us as science and history come alive in the "living laboratory" of the Edison and Ford Winter Estates from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily!



JUNE 21 - 25 • KITCHEN CHEMISTRY

Fast-paced chemistry experiments that fizz, bang, and pop will inspire curiosity in young scientists. *Members: \$200 • non-members: \$230*

JUNE 28 - JULY 2 • CODE CAMP

Explore the world of code and computer science, coding Minecraft on the Raspberry Pi, making video games on Scratch, and coding a LEGO robot. No experience necessary. *Members: \$200 • non-members: \$230*

JULY 6 - 9 • EAGER ENGINEERS

Tackle daily engineering design challenges in this fast-paced camp exploring simple machines and physics. *Members: \$160 • non-members: \$185*

JULY 12 - 16 and 19 - 23 • MOVIE MAKING

Lights! Camera! Action! Join the wild wizard and learn the secrets and process to making movie magic. Each camper participates in all aspects of movie production from story boarding, directing, acting, working with camera's, lights, and sound. *Members: \$400 • non-members: \$460*

JULY 26 - 30 • RADICAL ROBOTS

Robots big and small are featured in this high-tech camp-- including a functional LEGO Mindstorm robot. *Members: \$200 • non-members: \$230*

AUGUST 2 - 6 • ART SMARTS

Campers fuse imagination with science and design as they expand their tool-belt of creative expression. *Members: \$200 • non-members: \$230*

• Pre-registration at **EdisonFord.org** is required for all programs

• For information regarding safety and health protocols, view our website

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2350 McGregor Boulevard • Fort Myers, FL 33901

FLORIDA HURRICANES

By Brent Newman

After a record-breaking Atlantic hurricane season last year, the hurricane season this year will begin even sooner. Due to the increasingly earlier appearance of storms (at least one named tropical system has formed in the Atlantic before June 1 every year for the past six years), forecasters are promoting May 15 as the new unofficial start date of the Atlantic hurricane season.

The consensus among forecasting agencies is that 2021 will be another active season for the Atlantic Basin. Total named storms, hurricanes, and major hurricanes are forecasted to be above average this coming season with 17 named storms, eight of which are expected to be hurricanes.

“Prepare now; that’s all that I can tell you – because hurricane season is coming. In fact, you should treat it as it’s here now,” said Athena Masson, a meteorologist at the Florida Public Radio Emergency Network.

In addition to the Coronavirus pandemic, 2020 also brought a huge amount of severe weather: 31 storms, 30 of which were named. 13 of these became hurricanes, with six developing into major hurricanes of Category 3 (119-129 mph sustained winds) or stronger. Last year’s hurricane season made history in another way, as watches and warnings from the National Hurricane Center were issued for every single coastal county in Florida except for Wakulla and Jefferson counties.

Today, we have the advantage of satellites, radar, and “hurricane hunter” airplane missions. A century ago, the Edison and Ford families did not have the advantage of all this technology. Residents usually had little warning or time to prepare before a devastating hurricane swept through. While affected by several storms, both the Edison and Ford estates have been extremely fortunate and have suffered few major losses.

The first hurricane to affect the Edison Estates was the Miami-Louisiana Hurricane of 1888, striking only three years after the home’s construction (Atlantic basin hurricanes did not begin to receive names until 1979). Only six years later, a hurricane with 105 MPH sustained winds landed near Punta Rassa and felled several trees on Edison’s property.

One of the most damaging storms to the Estates during Edison’s lifetime was the Great Miami Hurricane of 1926. The eye of the hurricane passed over Punta Rassa and Sanibel Island. Edison’s staff reported nearly every rare

tropical plant was damaged or uprooted by the storm. Our local newspaper reported that a palm tree crashed into the Edison Main House. A six-foot storm surge caused damage throughout Fort Myers.

The Great Labor Day Hurricane of 1935 impacted Southwest Florida four years after Thomas Edison’s death. It is one of only four documented storms to strike the United States as a Category 5 hurricane. This storm devastated Florida’s west coast, causing hundreds of deaths in the Florida Keys. It also significantly damaged rubber plants that were a part of the ongoing rubber research at the Edison Botanic Research Corporation. It affected the project to the extent that this storm’s destruction was one of the reasons the entire project was shut down the next year.

Hurricanes have continued to affect the Edison and Ford Winter Estates in the decades since it has become a historic site, including Hurricane Charlie in 2004 and Hurricane Wilma in 2005. The most recent hurricane to strike the Estates was Hurricane Irma in 2017. On the morning of September 10, Hurricane Irma made landfall just south of us in Marco Island as a Category 4 hurricane with 130 MPH winds. That afternoon, Irma reached Fort Myers with 115 MPH winds. It left a path of destruction in its wake and heavily damaged the property. Hurricane Irma caused an estimated \$50 billion in damage, making it one of the costliest hurricanes to ever hit the United States. In addition to its monetary impact, the loss of life was devastating, with 129 direct and indirect deaths attributed to the storm.

Like many other businesses and families, the employees at the Estates quickly began the arduous process of cleaning and restoring the site. We were extremely fortunate there was little structural damage to the buildings. However, our botanical collection was heavily damaged, with over 100 large trees, bushes, and palms lost, including trees planted during Edison and Ford’s lifetimes. Wood from these trees was sold to the public and turned into delightful and functional pieces of art and craftsmanship, several of which are currently on display in our “Beauty from Disaster” exhibit.

“Beauty from Disaster” is on display in the Edison Caretakers Cottage until June 6. We encourage you to come see the display of art and crafts as well as additional information on hurricanes that affected Southwest Florida. Access to the exhibit is included as part of regular admission to the Estates and is free for members.

DIGITAL DISCUSSION: Florida in the Civil War

TUESDAY, JUNE 8 • 10:30 a.m.

JOIN US FOR A ZOOM PRESENTATION
about Florida's role in The Civil War.

While an estimated 16,000 Floridians fought in the war, most supported the confederacy, and about 2,000 joined the Union army. The major battles in Florida, life on the home front, and Florida's role in supplying the confederacy will be discussed.

This is a free virtual lecture. Registration is required. Visit the website to register.



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SUSTAINABLE CONCEPTIONS

JANUARY 14 to MAY 29, 2022

ARTISTS ARE INVITED
TO SUBMIT 2-D AND 3-D
WORKS OF ART
Deadline for submission
is November 7, 2021



CALL TO ARTISTS!

Did you know, Henry Ford repurposed wooden crates used to transport material as floorboards for his automobiles? Or that Thomas Edison purified chemical solvents to be reused while working on his rubber project in his Fort Myers Laboratory? While the Green Movement was not popular during their lifetimes, Edison and Ford both recognized the importance of recycling and reusing materials.

This year we would like to showcase art inspired by Edison and Ford's efforts to reuse products and their abilities to work towards a sustainable future.

**For Information or to apply,
Please Contact Tayelor Kakes at**
tkakes@edisonford.org

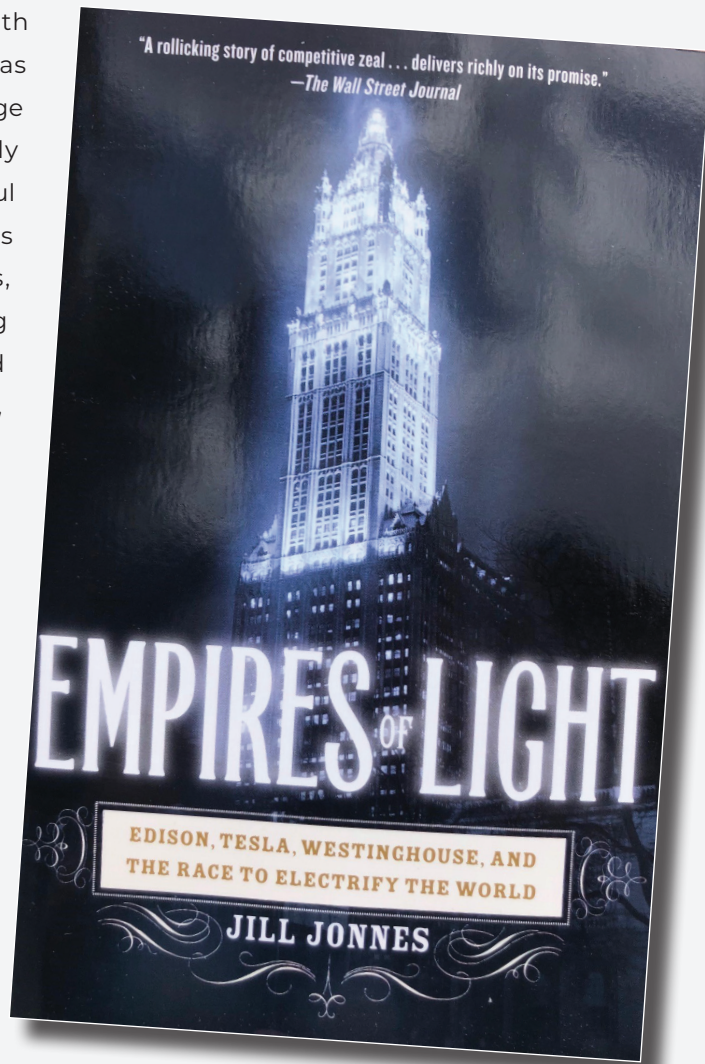
June Book of the Month:

Empires of Light: Edison, Tesla, Westinghouse, and the Race to Electrify the World

By Jill Jonnes

At the end of the nineteenth century, three geniuses: Thomas Edison, Nikola Tesla, and George Westinghouse, battled fiercely to create a large and powerful electrical empire. In "Empires of Light," historian, Jill Jonnes, shares the story of this amazing trio and the enthralling and ruthless world of science, invention, intrigue, money, and Wall Street millionaires.

This book is available in the museum store and members get 10% off each purchase. If you're not in the area, give us a call at 239-334-7419 and we can ship a copy to you.





TOURS & PROGRAMS

Daily Programs in the Museum

Throughout the day, join in hands-on presentations to learn about music, sound and the phonograph, how a motor works on Henry Ford's Model T and making movies with animated images. Every day of the week Edison Ford offers visitors historian-led guided tours and self-guided tours in English, German, Spanish, and French as well as museum demonstrations and hands-on science activities.



Automotive Tour

MONDAYS • 10:30 A.M.

Join Automotive Curator James Moss, for a new perspective on the evolution of the automobile. Learn about production and how to operate a vehicle. From the Model T to the Model A, gasoline to electric, the Ford Motor Company and beyond, the Automotive Tour promises to offer a new way to connect with one of our most popular collections. Reservations are not required for this tour.

Cost: Edison Ford Members: \$15; non-members: Adults \$40, Teens (13-19) \$30, Children (6-12) \$16.



Inside-the-Homes Tours

TUESDAYS • 10:00 A.M. (first come, first served)

THURSDAYS • 10:00 A.M. (pre-registration required)

This tour is a unique opportunity to take a sneak peek inside normally-closed areas of Thomas Edison's "Seminole Lodge" and Henry Ford's "The Mangoes." Approximate tour time is 90 minutes to two hours. (Allow additional time to view the museum, laboratory, and gardens.)

Limited reservations available for this tour, pre-registration required by calling **239-335-3674**. Tours on Tuesdays offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

Cost: Edison Ford members: free (one time); non-members: Adults \$50, Teens (13-19) \$35, Children (6-12) \$20.



PRIVATE GUIDED TOURS Available By Reservation

To accommodate families or small business groups, private guided tours are now available. These tours are for small groups of nine people or less and ensure that families will not be on a tour with other tourists. Two tour focus options are available, including the Historian-led Private Guided Tour, or the Private Garden Tour with a Horticulturist. Masks are required on guided tours. Private tours should be reserved at least 48 hours in advance.

During the private tours, visitors will see the historic winter homes of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford, the caretaker's houses, swimming pool complex, Edison's study and the Moonlight Garden, and more than 20 acres of botanical gardens. The Garden Tour provides an in-depth exploration of the hundreds of plants and trees on the property. After the tour, visitors may take extra time to stroll the gardens, museum and botanic research laboratory at their own pace. Call 239-334-7419 to check availability and to schedule a tour.

Cost: Private Guided Tour is \$345, and the Private Garden Tour is \$360.



CAPTAIN DAVID LACROIX RETIRES

Join us in wishing Captain David LaCroix a happy retirement.

Capt. Dave (2nd row, center) was our Director of Security and a part of the Edison Ford family for 23 years!

THANK YOU

to our Summer Camp Sponsors!

Because of their generous support, we were able to offer 38 scholarships to children that would not have been able to attend camp without the donations!



• Fred & Giny Quinn •

John Burroughs Meets Henry Ford and Thomas Edison

By Alexandria Edwards

Naturalist, John Burroughs was born in Roxbury, New York, near the east branch of the Delaware River. He grew up on a farm with nine siblings, where he spent time taking care of cows and collecting maple syrup. Burroughs tried his hand at many things including botany, medicine, teaching and office work at the Treasury. After spending some time in D.C., he moved to the Catskill Mountains in New York, where for decades he maintained a successful writing career. He eventually published 27 books and articles on birds, flowers, and nature – some of which was inspired from his childhood, growing up on the family farm.



Henry Ford was intrigued by Burroughs' writing because it echoed the voices of Emerson and Whitman. His writing reminded Ford of the times that he had spent on solitary woodland pilgrimages, listening to bird calls.

Although Burroughs and Ford shared a love of nature, Burroughs did not share Ford's enthusiasm for the Tin Lizzie (Model T) and his progress on the assembly line. To help change his mind, Ford arranged to have a Model T shipped to Burroughs' Catskills fruit farm in West Park. Within months, Burroughs explored areas around the Hudson river in his new Model T with his granddaughters squealing in the backseat. In June of 1913, Ford brought Burroughs to the Fairlane estate in Detroit for the unveiling of a bird fountain made of stones from the Burroughs' Farm. During their first meeting, they shared thoughts about birds, books, and poems.

The following winter, Burroughs visited Fort Myers. Ford introduced Burroughs to Thomas Edison and the three men decided to take a camping trip into the Everglades. Over the next 10 years, they took annual trips throughout the United States. Burroughs was considered the guest of honor during these trips and was sometimes reluctant to participate in some of the camping activities; however, he provided expert knowledge that helped guide them throughout their journey. He often used his naturalist skills to identify flowers and bird calls for Edison and Ford.

Today, visitors can learn about those camping expeditions in the "Into the Wild" exhibit, located inside the 15,000-square-foot museum.



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If you're looking for a unique gift for that hard-to-buy-for loved one, stop in our Museum Store, Ford Cottage Shoppe, or the Edison Ford Shoppe at Edison Mall. We carry books on a wide variety of subjects, clothing, games and science kits for kids, and artwork from local artists, plus many other items.

Some new items include t-shirts with matching mugs that feature one of Edison's most iconic quotes, "genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration." There are also numerous home and garden décor items to choose from, including bumble bee welcome signs and ornaments, metal flamingos, chimes, wooden serving platters and new tropical glass cutting boards that feature Florida wildlife.

The Edison and Ford Winter Estates is a National Register Historic Site and a Save America's Treasures site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Edison laboratory is a National Historic Chemical Landmark. It is governed by a private, non-profit organization with a Board of Trustees.

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