



EDISON  
and  
FORD  
winter  
ESTATES

HOMES · GARDENS · MUSEUM  
LABORATORY



MEMBER  
MAGAZINE

JULY  
2021

# EDISON and FORD winter ESTATES

2350 McGregor Boulevard  
Fort Myers, FL 33901  
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[edisonford.org](http://edisonford.org)

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To become a member of Edison Ford,  
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## CONNECT WITH US



# MEMBERSHIP

## BENEFITS

Members join for many reasons. For those who like to travel, free admission to museums and gardens across the country is a big perk. Some members like the discounts on garden and gift purchases. Still others like to take classes and attend concerts at a discounted rate.

Mina Edison deeded the property to the city to leave a legacy to her husband. Today, memberships help to support our mission *to educate the public and inspire an inventive spirit by interpreting and preserving the innovations, legacies, artifacts, gardens, homes, laboratory, and other structures of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford, emphasizing Florida history, science, horticulture, and the arts.*

If your membership has expired, call 239-335-3674 today to find out how you can help continue the legacy of Thomas Edison.

### What we're doing to keep you safe:

Following CDC guidelines, masks are **recommended** on guided tours, when indoors or when 6' social distancing cannot be achieved.

- Sanitizer stations are placed throughout the site.
- Counters and door handles are being disinfected daily.
- Plastic shields are installed at the ticket counter.
- 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:  
New calliope on display in the museum.

# JUNGLE CACTUS

By Karen Maxwell

When you think about cactus, what generally comes to mind? Xeric gardening? Prickly desert plants? The iconic giant Saguaro? At Edison and Ford Winter Estates, we are fortunate to grow a few desert cacti, but our weather, which can be so challenging in the summer, turns out to be perfect for growing several rainforest cacti, more commonly known as jungle cacti.

In this collection, we primarily find epiphytic or lithophytic cacti and a few terrestrial species. All but one species of jungle cacti are native to the Central American rainforest where epiphytic cacti live alongside bromeliads and orchids – other examples of epiphytes of the rainforest meaning plants that live in or on trees without harming them. It is interesting to note that all desert cacti or jungle cacti, are endemic to the New World, with a single noted exception. Mistletoe cactus (*Rhipsalis baccifera*) is thought to have originated in Madagascar.

Epiphytic cacti, similar to their lithophytic cousins that live on rocks, collect their nutrients from the air and rotting plant material around them and thrive in the very high humidity of the rainforest. The roots of epiphytes serve to anchor the plants to their host but never harm it; there has never been a parasitic cactus.

For most of the year at Edison Ford, some of our jungle cactus plants probably go unnoticed, though the interested observer may be intrigued by a name such as “night blooming cactus;” however, they are left unimpressed by the broad, flat and untamed mass of “leaves” and simply meander away.

Now through mid-summer, early morning visitors to our gardens may be fortunate to catch the Night Blooming Cactus, *Epiphyllum hookeri*, in all its glory and enjoy the fragrance and water-lily-like floral display near the pool and tea-house complex. Epiphyllum is from the Greek word for “bloom on the leaf.” Like most cacti, Epiphyllums do not have leaves (the exception is *Pereskia* or Rose Cactus, as it is the only cactus with leaves). The segmented and succulent



portion of the plant is actually the stem, and it is through this stem that the plant photosynthesizes sunlight, and the stunning flowers originate from the stem.

In desert cactus, the spines are modified leaves but only very young Epiphyllums may exhibit these spines. There are 19 known species of Epiphyllums, and all bloom at night, with white flowers and could probably win “Best in Show” of jungle cacti for their outstanding floral display. But there is a catch! *Epiphyllum oxypetalum*, the best known of the cacti called “night blooming” has several common names including “Dutchman’s Pipe” because of the shape of its flower bud; “Queen of the Night,” by the enthusiasts that host a bloom party to celebrate their exquisite fragrance and beauty; and “Tan Hua” in China, where this imported cactus is so celebrated it was highlighted in the film Crazy Rich Asians. They certainly are worthy of these celebrations because the spectacular blooms of *E. oxypetalum* appear infrequently, only at night, last just a few hours and are completely wilted by dawn.

But fear not, dear gardener if you are not of the night owl set, consider *Epiphyllum hookeri*. This one blooms annually, from late spring to mid-summer and the projectile-like buds open in the evening and several of the glorious 8” blooms



will last a few hours past dawn. For members unable to visit now, watch the website calendar for a Jungle Cactus Garden Talk scheduled for the spring.

While Epiphyllum is the genus name, there are hundreds of hybrids as the flowers of most of the cacti in the Hylocereeae tribe, which includes the Dragon Fruit or Pitahaya (*Selenicereus undatus*) are easily cross pollinated, yielding countless color combinations; these epi hybrids are always spelled with a lowercase e, and oddly are rarely hybridized with the species Epiphyllums. At one point the Epiphyllum Society of America tried to coin a phrase “epi-cactus,” for the hybrids, however it has never caught on.

Growing cacti – beyond prickly pear – takes on an entirely new dimension once one views their first Epiphyllum bloom! Epiphyllums can be easily grown as a houseplant, or better yet, as a companion to a frangipani or other supporting shrub in a Southwest Florida garden. They bloom at the same time of the year and the lanky, flat stems of the Epiphyllum thrive with a structure to encourage their upward growth to 6’ and to support their weight and disguise their gangly appearance. While morning sun is fine, afternoon shade

is required for these plants. They also love rich, but very quick-draining soil and are quite trouble free.

Native to the rainforest, they are happiest when the temperature is between 40 and 100 degrees and should be protected from sunburn or extreme cold. They do well in a 10” pot with a loose, quick-draining medium, and should be fed a 10-10-10 fertilizer, except in the Spring, when the longer days will induce blooms, then the fertilizer should be changed to a 2-10-10 product and never should nitrogen (the first number in the fertilizer) exceed 10. It will take about 3-5 years from propagation for a new plant to bloom, but letting it become pot bound as you wait should yield good results. Once the plant begins to bud, don’t let it dry out. Planting Epiphyllums in ground soil is not recommended as it may be too compacted for these plants.

Night blooming jungle cacti are surely exotic, but not all jungle cacti are night bloomers; many of our members are surely familiar with one of the most popular jungle cactus plants, the *Schlumbergera* and *Hatiora* group but we’ll save our discussion of the Christmas and Easter cacti for a future holiday plant article!



## GARDEN TALK: Growing Summer Tropicals

**SATURDAY, JULY 10 • 10 A.M.**

Plants grow all year long in Florida because of our mild weather; however, there are some that do not appreciate the summer heat and humidity. There are lots of plants that thrive and look their best during this particularly tropical time. Since Lee County is at the bottom of the Florida peninsula (Zone 10), plants from Costa Rica, Brazil, Thailand, India, and other parts of the world do well here.

To learn more about tropical plants, come to the Garden Talk and you just might find something in our garden shoppe to take home to your Florida garden. 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.

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

EDISON  
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# 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](http://EdisonFord.org)** is required for all programs

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

Sponsored by:



The school is neither endorsing nor sponsoring this event, product, or service, nor endorsing the views of the sponsoring organization.

2350 McGregor Boulevard • Fort Myers, FL 33901



# SAVE THE DATE

## National Honey Bee Day

SATURDAY, AUGUST 21 • 9 A.M. – 2 P.M.



### The Latest Buzz is about the Bees!

Celebrate National Honey Bee Day with lectures, demonstrations, and presentations. Plus, learn about Florida native wildflowers and how to attract honeybees, native bees and other pollinators to your garden.

- Hands-on honeybee presentation
- Honey extraction demonstration
- Information tables and pollinator plants available for sale



**Additional information  
will be available soon!**

# HAPPY 158TH BIRTHDAY MR. FORD!

By Matt Andres

Henry Ford's story is one with humble origins. Born on July 30, 1863 in Greenfield Township near Dearborn, Michigan, he was the son of William and Mary Litogot-Ford, prosperous and respected farmers who had carved out a place for themselves in the rural Midwest. Growing up on his father's farm, Henry learned the values of hard work and organization as well as the lessons of being fiscally responsible.

His mother instilled in him an appreciation for reading as he spent much of his youth studying McGuffey's Readers, which greatly influenced his understanding of the outside world. Ford showed an interest in mechanical things at an early age, and by his adolescent years was disassembling and repairing pocket watches for friends and neighbors.



In July 1876, young Henry witnessed and operated a moving steam engine for the first time. This formative experience left a lasting impression, one that eventually led to his vision for a self-contained, self-propelled horseless carriage that could ease the workload of ordinary people. His passion for mechanical subjects, combined with his dislike for farming, compelled Henry to move to Detroit where he could further develop his skills as an apprentice in one of the cities many machine shops in 1879.

At the age of sixteen he began working on streetcars for the Michigan Car Company Works in the big city. Although his first job did not last long, Ford never gave up wanting to learn more about machinery. Later his father arranged for him to work at the James Flower & Brothers Machine Shop where he was employed as an apprentice machinist. His newly acquired skills proved to be quite useful, and by 1881 Ford began working on steam engines for the Detroit Dry Dock Company, a leading shipbuilding firm located along the city's waterfront.

Over the next year he studied the methods of heavy industry and gained extensive knowledge about power plants. Yet in 1882, Henry returned to the farm, but instead of working the land, began operating and repairing portable steam engines. The following year he was hired by the Westinghouse Company to demonstrate and repair its machines throughout Michigan. Ford's mechanical knowledge and passion for this type of work made him a very successful young man.

Mid-decade he enrolled at Goldsmith, Bryant & Stratton Business University where he was able to learn the fundamentals of mechanical drawing, accounting, and contemporary business procedures. During the latter part of the 1880s however, Ford slowly transitioned away from his agricultural background and began embracing new opportunities rooted in industry. In 1891, Henry received a job as an apprentice at the Detroit Edison Illuminating Company and by the young age of 30 was its Chief Engineer.

In 1896, while attending a convention of Edison Illuminating Company executives Ford had an opportunity to meet Thomas Edison. It was at this meeting that Ford unveiled his design for his Quadricycle, a simple gasoline-powered horseless carriage, and was encouraged by Edison to





continue his work. Edison and Ford would not meet again until 1912, but their friendship would grow exponentially over the next few decades.

Henry Ford became one of the Ford Motor Company's principal founders in 1903. Unveiling his iconic Model T in 1908, it would become one of the best-selling vehicles in automotive history. The automotive assembly line was essentially born out of techniques he learned from both the meatpacking and watch-repair industries. A combination of practical ideas that allowed Ford to increase production in 1913 from 25 cars a day to around 1,000. Over the next two decades, he substantially lowered the price of this popular vehicle by utilizing the moving assembly line to improve efficiency in his factories and eliminating what he considered to be non-essential components of the Model T. Around this same period, Ford improved conditions for his factory workers, introducing the \$5 workday in 1914 and creating shorter work shifts. With all this success Ford quickly became one of the wealthiest individuals in the country—a living example of the American dream.

Henry Ford's connection with the city of Fort Myers began in 1914 as well. Thomas Edison extended an invitation to the famous industrialist and his family to visit him in Florida. On this trip Edison and Ford would go camping in the Everglades. Unknown to many, this camping trip would be the first of many between the men over the next decade.

Ford returned to Fort Myers three years later after he purchased the estate adjacent to Edison's winter home.

The purchase price was \$20,000 for approximately four acres of riverfront property with a lovely Craftsman style bungalow. Henry Ford would spend many winters here with his mentor and friend as their adjacent Florida estates would provide great getaways for the friends to relax, explore the surrounding area, and of course, talk business and innovation.

In his later years, Henry reflected on the changes he had witnessed during his lifetime, many of which he himself had helped bring about. Ford publicly endorsed a return to “old time” music and dance, and at the encouragement of his wife, became increasingly interested in bird watching, as well as camping and other nature-oriented activities. Ford also engaged in efforts to preserve history and in 1929 established the Edison Institute and Greenfield Village, which became an outdoor museum for historically significant structures. Edison's 1886 Fort Myers laboratory was disassembled and moved to Greenfield Village in 1928 and is an integral part of its collection today.

Over the course of his lifetime, Ford would receive 161 United States patents, including many related to the internal combustion engine, transmission, automobile, and even aviation. Henry Ford died on April 7, 1947 at the age of 83, but he left a powerful legacy, one that profoundly impacted society by transforming America's landscape, the way people travel, and industrial mass production in the early 20th century.

**DIGITAL DISCUSSION:****The Amish and Amish-Mennonites of Sarasota, Florida****TUESDAY, JULY 20 • 10:30 a.m.**

By the 1920s, the Edison family was spending more time than ever in Fort Myers, and the Amish were first arriving in Pinecraft, a campground and neighborhood in nearby Sarasota.

The earliest Amish and Mennonite visitors to this area were attracted by the weather and by the opportunities for winter farming. Though the farming did not work out as planned, the area became a major vacation destination for Amish and Mennonites throughout the United States and Canada. Today, some 5,000 people visit each year, primarily in the winter.

**Learn about the history of the Amish and Amish-Mennonites in Pinecraft and why the Amish still visit there today during this free virtual lecture with Program Manager, Holly Shaffer.**

**Visit [EdisonFord.org](http://EdisonFord.org) 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](mailto:tkakes@edisonford.org)**



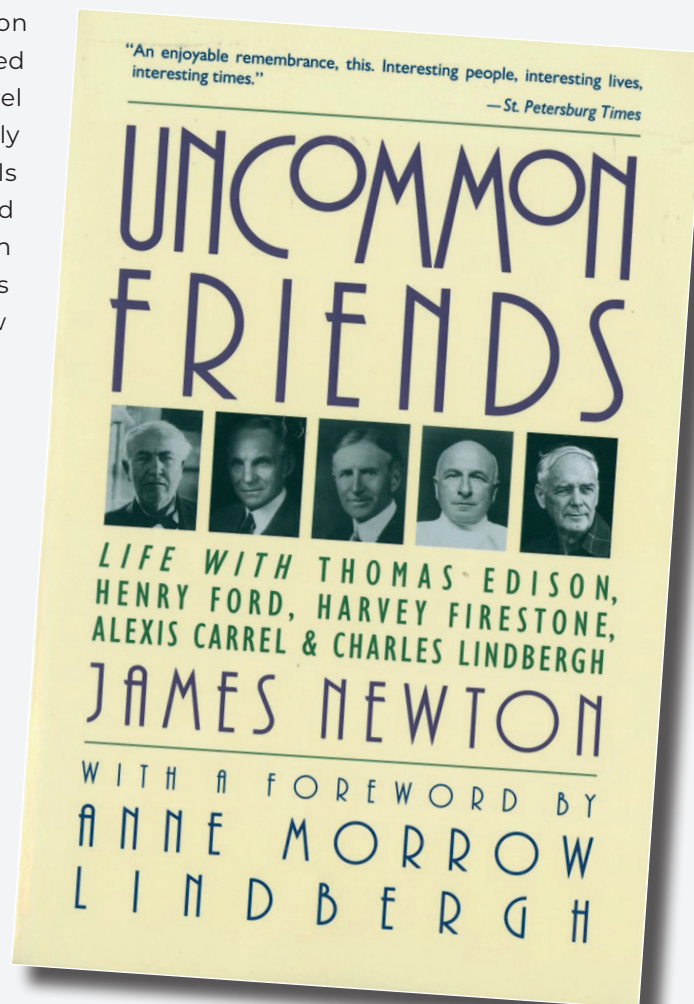
# July Book of the Month:

## Uncommon Friends: Life with Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, Alexis Carrel, and Charles Lindbergh

By James Newton

As a young man, James Newton became friends with and worked for Edison, Ford, Firestone, Carrel and Lindbergh. Newton engagingly looks back at his life and recalls his friends and lessons he learned from these giants of the twentieth century. The book also features an introduction by Anne Morrow Lindbergh.

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.

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



# MK ARCHITECTURE

## Tell us about your company and its history in Southwest Florida.

MK Architecture specializes in commercial architecture with a focus on the design of sustainable and eco-efficient projects including multi-family developments, office, retail, medical, and high-rise projects. Partners Michael Sheeley, AIA and Kenleigh Buckingham are long-time residents of Fort Myers. Mike's career as an architect spans 37 years and his passion for art and design can be seen reflected in his projects built throughout Southwest Florida. Kenleigh's 35-year background in construction and finance enhances her role in the management of the Firm.

## Tell us what you like about partnering/working with Edison Ford.

MK Architecture mirrors the values of Edison Ford in offering professional services to create energy-efficient designs to compliment the fabric of Southwest Florida's built environment.

## Is there something special you would like to share about your company?

MK Architecture is the only Veteran- and woman-owned architectural firm in the state of Florida. The partners believe in giving back to the community in ways such as partnering with Habitat for Humanity and public service on local planning and zoning boards.



MK-ARCH.com 239.482.2121





# Dr. Walter M. Buswell

By Alexandria Edwards

A close acquaintance of Thomas and Mina Edison was botanist, Dr. Walter M. Buswell. He was from New Hampshire and received a bachelor of science degree from the state university. After he graduated, he worked at numerous greenhouses. He traveled to Florida and decided to remain in the state, where he joined the faculty at the University of Miami. He made trips into the Florida Everglades, wandering for weeks at a time through the wilderness in search of rare tropical plants.

Buswell delved deep into the evolution of plant life in Miami and in 1934 he formed the University of Miami Buswell Herbarium, where he served as the curator. Today, there are roughly 30,000 different plant species on file at the herbarium, including pressed specimens and seeds of tropical and semi-tropical plants.

The botanist worked with Thomas Edison at his Fort Myers estate where he studied Goldenrod, a plant that Edison researched for its latex content. Edison and his botanic partners tested more than 17,000 different plants while trying to find a natural source of rubber. They found that the *Solidago Leavenworthii* species of Goldenrod possessed the highest percentage of latex.

He also explored the Big Cypress swamp in search of new plants and discovered some rare orchids. As Mina grew her orchid collection, she began working with Dr. Buswell. When he came to inventory the plants at the Fort Myers estate, he concluded that the Edison botanical gardens contained the most representative collection of tropical foliage of any in the community. He declared "the public has no idea of the extent of the tropical plantings." Mina and Buswell intended to create a museum dedicated to the plants in Florida; however, that did not come to fruition.



**Today, the estates continues to pay tribute to the Edison's love of botany by taking dedicated care of the botanical gardens.**



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## GIFTS & SOUVENIRS

### Edison Ford Shoppe July Celebration Drawing

If you're looking for a unique gift for that hard-to-buy-for loved one, the Museum Store, Ford Cottage Shoppe or the Edison Ford Shoppe at Edison Mall are all stocked with books, clothing, games, artwork, and more!

**Stop in the Edison Forde Shoppe at Edison Mall for a chance to win tickets to visit Edison and Ford Winter Estates!** Two prizes will be awarded (each for two admission tickets). Each prize has a value of \$50.

The July celebration contest will begin on July 3 and continue until the drawing on July 31. No purchase necessary. Visitors to the Edison Ford Shoppe at the mall may register one time per day starting July 3. The drawing will be made at the close of business on July 31. Winners will be contacted per information supplied on the raffle ticket.

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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