

EDISON
and
FORD
winter
ESTATES

HOMES · GARDENS · MUSEUM
LABORATORY



Veterans Admitted Free on Veterans Day

MEMBER MAGAZINE
NOVEMBER 2021

EDISON and FORD winter ESTATES

2350 McGregor Boulevard
Fort Myers, FL 33901
239.334.7419
edisonford.org

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To become a member of Edison Ford,
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HONORING VETERANS

Veterans Day, November 11

Each year, Edison and Ford Winter Estates pays tribute to veterans. This year, veterans will be treated to a five-piece brass band performance at the Banyan tree, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. It's our way of saying "thank you" to those who have served our country. Veterans will also be able to take a complimentary self-guided tour around the site (just show your veteran ID card at the ticket counter).

Also in this edition is a tribute to Capt. David LaCroix who retired earlier this year, after 23 years of employment at Edison Ford.

We hope you'll be able to bring your favorite veteran with you to listen to the band this Veterans Day.

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: The Thomas Edison and Henry Ford homes are donned with bunting for Veterans Day.



IN SERVICE

A tribute to Captain David LaCroix

By Holly Shaffer

Captain David LaCroix's life has revolved around service. The Fort Myers native and Fort Myers High School graduate (class of 1968) joined the U. S. Navy after high school and served a four-year tour of duty. His title was Quartermaster and his rank was Petty Officer Third Class, but there is much more to his story.

He grew up around boats and developed a further interest in them as part of the Sea Explorers Boy Scouts. He also developed an interest in horses and enjoyed being around them as he was growing up. He served in Naval Intelligence, both in country and offshore while aboard the USS Epperson DD-719. Additionally, he served in Naval Intelligence in the Fleet Operation Control Center Pacific in Oahu, Hawaii and as Commander, Anti-Submarine Warfare Force, Pacific Fleet on Ford Island, Oahu Hawaii.

Captain David is a Vietnam Veteran. He served a total of 14 months in Vietnam in country, with six months of that time on the destroyer. He was in several zones of Vietnam including the demilitarized zone.

After leaving the Navy, he returned to Fort Myers where he graduated from Edison Community College with an Associate of Arts Degree. He later attended The University of South Florida in Tampa, graduating with a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and a minor in Psychology. After college, he moved to Colorado and worked for NCR in the microelectronics division, and while there, he discovered his passion for the rodeo. In 1988, he returned to Fort Myers when his father passed away and worked for the City of Fort Myers at the City Yacht Basin. While there, he received his boat captain's license through the Coast Guard and he lived on a sailboat in the Yacht Basin for six years – until the mountains called him, and he left for Montana and Wyoming.

He returned to Fort Myers in 1998 to work as the lead boat captain on the electric boats at Edison and Ford Winter Estates (until 2006). When that program ended, he became the head of security until he retired after 23 years. When more RVs are on the market, he plans to purchase one and travel the country – particularly out west.

This Veterans Day, the staff at Edison and Ford Winter Estates wish to thank and acknowledge Captain David for his military service. We are also grateful for his devoted service as an employee at the Estates.

VETERANS DAY SALUTE TO HENRY FORD

By Matt Andres

On November 11, America will celebrate Veterans Day. It's a day we salute our military veterans whose service to our country has helped protect and preserve our many cherished freedoms and constitutional rights over the years. Although many communities around this great nation commemorate Veterans Day with ceremonies, parades, and memorial services; some may not even know the significance of November 11 and why this date serves as a national holiday.

World War I officially ended on June 28, 1919 with the signing of a peace agreement known as the Treaty of Versailles, named after the town where it was signed, between main Central Power Germany and principal western Allied & Associated powers (France, Great Britain, Italy, and United States). The cessation of battlefield hostilities occurred at a much earlier date; however, with the signing of an armistice with Germany on November 11, 1918 at 11 a.m. Military historians sometimes refer to this event simply as "11-11-11," essentially meaning the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. In November 1919, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11 as "Armistice Day" to commemorate the end of the "Great War" in Europe by stating: *"To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations."*

The original idea was a day of celebration to be observed by parades, public meetings, and suspension of business at 11 a.m. By an act of United States Congress, Armistice Day became a national holiday on May 13, 1938, dedicated to world peace. Early on, November 11 was primarily set aside to honor veterans of World War I, but on June 1, 1954 congress approved legislation to honor veterans of all wars, especially those that had served in World War II and Korea, and substituted the word "Veteran" for "Armistice." November 11, 1954 was the first celebration of the newly named "Veterans Day."



Many people are unfamiliar with Henry Ford's contribution during World War I and his company's role in helping bring about an armistice that ultimately led to the creation of Veterans Day decades later. Prior to America's entry into World War I on April 6, 1917, Henry Ford was a devout pacifist and highly critical of those who were advocating for the United States to become involved in the European conflict, especially ones he thought would profit immensely from its involvement.

By 1917, things had changed and the international situation threatened to envelope America as "the war to end all wars" had morphed into a stalemate, with distinctive battlelines that saw entire armies in trenches and thousands more strewn across an increasingly bloody landscape. Unrestricted submarine warfare preyed on merchant shipping thus disrupting America's precarious supply lines and export industry, including those sending munitions and equipment to various warring nation-states. International diplomatic relations began to rise and fall as the war steadily produced a web

continued on next page ▶

of alliances and innumerable promises between nations on the spoils of war (rewards) in exchange for assistance in advancing their particular cause.

Ford's first real significant contribution to the war effort was not military related, but focused on a major domestic issue created by the war itself. Severe food shortages plagued England and as the situation grew even more desperate by the summer of 1917, farming equipment was badly needed. Help came in the form of the Fordson tractor, which featured cleated tires and a 12-inch double-bottomed plow that Ford sold at cost (\$750) thus forgoing profits in an effort to ease England's humanitarian crisis. Beyond the nearly 7,000 sent abroad, another 27,167 were sold to American farmers as a way to deal with any food shortages that might arise on the home front.

Although morally conflicted about America's formal entry into the war, Henry Ford pledged to work as hard as ever to help the Allies achieve final victory in Europe. From the summer of 1917 through autumn of 1918, the Ford Motor Company employed thousands of factory workers, many of them women, to build and produce 39,000 military cars, trucks, and ambulances, more than 1 million steel army helmets, nearly 4,000 Liberty engines for America's nascent Army Air Service, more than 415,000 cylinders, tank armor, submarine detectors, and a prototype bomb (a precursor to Germany's V-1 rocket of WWII, which was simply referred to as a robot airplane bomb).

In addition to this, Ford built a massive 1,700-foot-long by 350-foot-wide shipbuilding plant with the assistance of the United States government. Inside this building, Ford manufactured 615-ton watercraft known as "Eagle" submarine patrol-boat chasers. These were to be used against Germany's first iteration of wolfpack submarines. Sixty of these vessels had been completed and commissioned by war's end, with hundreds more to be built if the conflict continued. Ford's two-man "flivver tanks" project was abandoned during the latter stages of World War I; but the Ford Motor Company found other ways to contribute by enthusiastically hosting Liberty Loan and Red Cross drives as well as making military training and promotional films publicizing activities conducted by different branches of service. In the end, Ford served as architect and engineer for one of America's factories of democracy, building a bridge to victory, and ultimately leading to an armistice that would be the foundation for a national holiday called Veterans Day.

Today, guests visiting the Edison and Ford Winter Estates museum have a wonderful opportunity to view a variety of military related artifacts, as well as learn about the numerous contributions made by Henry Ford and Thomas Edison during our world wars. The museum, laboratory, and historic houses are open daily (except Thanksgiving and Christmas) from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.



THANK YOU to Darlene for 14 Years!

When members called in, they typically talked with Darlene. She was the cheerful voice and smiling face that many members got to know. Last month, Darlene retired. She left some big shoes to fill and will be greatly missed!

We wish Darlene a very happy retirement!

Welcome New Edison Ford Board Members!

The Edison and Ford Winter Estates Board of Trustees has three new members: Randall (Randy) P. Henderson, Jr; Richard Moulton; and Brian Rist.

Randy Henderson is the former Mayor of the City of Fort Myers and has been a resident of Fort Myers for 42 years.



Brian Rist, Randy Henderson, Richard Moulton

He is the CEO of Corbin Henderson Company, a local real estate firm. He has been actively involved with the Estates for many years.

Richard Moulton has more than 33 years of industrial and municipal governmental management experience with a career history of leading and managing organizational change. He is currently the Director of Public Works for the City of Fort Myers.

Brian Rist is the Executive Chairman and founder of Storm Smart Industries. He is the inventor of the innovative Storm Catcher Wind Abatement Screens, as well as the electronic wind pressure calculator program. He is also the Chairman for the Rist Family Foundation.

We are excited for the contributions these new board members will make to the future of Edison and Ford Winter Estates!

Meet the New Membership Team



Whitney, Jennifer, Andrea

With Darlene's retirement, we have a few new faces in the membership department. Jennifer has taken Darlene's position and will be the primary contact for members. We've also hired two team members to help members at the ticket counter: Whitney and Andrea.

Jennifer moved to Florida twenty years ago from Detroit. She loves following the Detroit Tigers baseball team and reading in her spare time.

Andrea enjoys reading, exercising, walking, and above all, spending time with her family.

Whitney enjoys working in the yard, antiques and helping people learn more about the history of our most famous winter residents, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford.

The next time you're here, stop by the ticket counter and say "hello" to our new team!

For membership questions, call Jennifer at 239-335-3674 or email her at JWalker@EdisonFord.org

Garden Festival

Saturday & Sunday • November 20 & 21
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Members Only Preview on Saturday, 8-9 a.m.

(enter at the corner of McGregor and Larchmont; membership ID required).



Don't miss the largest garden festival in the area!

More than 40 vendors will have rare and exotic plants and trees, butterfly plants, orchids, fruit trees, herbs, Florida natives and more available. There will be food trucks and live music too, so come out and spend the day with us! A limited number of garden carts will be available, so if you have one, bring it along. This is a free event (does not include admission to the museum, lab or riverside of the property).



MEMBERS ONLY HOLIDAY PARTY

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1 • 6-8 P.M.



Come listen to the Fort Myers Symphonic Mastersingers, see the holiday lights and enjoy refreshments!

Prepayment and advance registration required by November 24 at noon.

CALL 239-335-3674 TO REGISTER.

\$25 Per Member

TICKET INCLUDES:

Admission to Holiday Nights
 1 drink ticket

Italian appetizer assortment of:

Caprese Skewers • Cocktail Meatballs • Penne Pasta • Tortellini Alfredo
 Coffee & Hot Chocolate • Beer & Wine • Fresh Baked Cookies

Tickets are non-refundable



2350 McGregor Boulevard • Fort Myers, FL 33901 • EdisonFord.org

AT EDISON
FORD FOR
THE FIRST
TIME EVER



EDISON
and
FORD
winter
ESTATES

HOMES · GARDENS · MUSEUM
LABORATORY

42nd Annual TURKEY TROT 5K



November 25, 2021 • 7:30am

Join us for a 5K run and walk to benefit preservation at the Edison and Ford Winter Estates and the Fort Myers Track Club scholarship fund.

Advance registration is required.

2350 McGregor Boulevard • Fort Myers, FL 33901

Register at www.ftmyerstrackclub.com

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA'S 46TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

EDISON
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FORD
winter
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HOLIDAY NIGHTS

NOVEMBER 26 - JANUARY 2



Thousands of lights, hundreds of historic decorations, and one unique holiday experience await you nightly from 5:30 - 9 p.m.

See Santa, Carolers, and Wild Wizard Science Shows on select nights!

Refreshments will be available for purchase.



ADMISSION:

- Adults \$20
- Teens (13-19) \$10
- Children (6-12) \$2
- Members FREE

GUIDED TOURS:

- 6 and 7 p.m. nightly
- Adults \$30
 - Teens (13-19) \$25
 - Children (6-12) \$18
 - Members \$10

**DON'T WAIT IN LINE,
BUY TICKETS ONLINE!**

Thanks to generous support provided by:



Lee County residents receive
\$5 OFF ADMISSION
Monday nights

2350 McGregor Boulevard • Fort Myers, FL 33901
EdisonFord.org

HOLIDAY NIGHTS 2021 CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					11/26 🎵 🍷 🎅	11/27 🍷
11/28 ✦	11/29 🎁	11/30	12/1 🍷 🏠	12/2	12/3 🍷	12/4 🍷
12/5 🎅 ✦ 🍷	12/6 🎁	12/7	12/8 🎵 🏠	12/9	12/10 🍷	12/11 🍷
12/12 🎅 ✦ 🍷	12/13 🎁	12/14	12/15 🍷 🎵 🏠	12/16 🎵	12/17 🎵 🍷	12/18 🎵 🍷
12/19 🎅 ✦ 🍷	12/20 🎵 🍷 🎁	12/21 🎵 🍷	12/22 🎵 🍷	12/23 🎅 🍷	12/24 Open	12/25 Closed
12/26 ✦ 🍷	12/27 🎁	12/28	12/29	12/30	12/31	1/1
1/2 ✦						

- 🎵 Musical Performance
 🍷 Refreshments For Sale
 🎁 \$5 Off Adult Admission (Lee County Residents)

- 🏠 Inside the Homes Tour (Call for reservations)
 ✦ Family Science Show (6:30 & 7:30 p.m.)
 🎅 Visit with Santa (6 to 8 p.m.)

For more information, please visit:

www.EdisonFord.org

Or call: (239) 334 – 7419

THANK YOU

TO OUR HOLIDAY NIGHTS SPONSORS!

Your support makes this event possible!



2021-2022 VIP Tour Season

NOVEMBER 13, 2021

NAPLES

**Naples Botanical Gardens, lunch, visit to Tin City,
and Eco Boat Tour of Dollar Bay**

Call to see if space is still available.



Naples Botanical Garden

DECEMBER 11, 2021

LARGO

Heritage Village, dinner and holiday tour of Florida Botanical Gardens

Noon – 11 p.m.

Don your best holiday apparel and join us for a festive tour to Largo, Florida! We will depart at noon from Edison Ford by bus (provided by Dolphin Transportation). Our first stop will be a step back in time at Heritage Village, where we will have a 90-minute private docent-led tour. This 21-acre living history museum with 33 historic structures offers a firsthand look at Pinellas County's history. We will explore coastal living, agricultural and community life and how it shaped this area.

Florida Botanical



Next, we will enjoy an early dinner near the beautiful Largo coast before the evening finale: the Holiday Lights in the Gardens at the Florida Botanical Gardens. This 100-acre garden will be decorated with an amazing holiday light display of 1 million twinkling and LED lights in a variety of colors. There will also be laser lights and lighted figures to give us lots of holiday cheer! The gardens are managed by the Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources Department to inspire and educate visitors on flora, fauna and natural resources in motivational surroundings that promote environmentally friendly techniques. The park-setting is segmented into many demonstration gardens, including a cottage garden, herbs, native plants, butterfly, succulents, palms, roses, vines, tropical fruit, and a wetlands area. At approximately 8 p.m., we will depart from Largo and head back to Edison Ford.

All tours are subject to change and are based on availability. Spaces are limited. Pre-paid, advance registration is required. Join the Membership program and take advantage of the discounted price.

Tour Cost for members is \$135, non-members \$150.

For questions or to make a reservation for this or any tour, please contact Sherri Muske at 239-335-3677 or smuske@edisonford.org. Tours fill up quickly, so reserve your space early.

JANUARY 15, 2022

EVERGLADES CITY

Historic Everglades Museum and walking tour, lunch at local establishment, Smallwood Museum and Airboat ride through the Everglades.

FEBRUARY 19, 2022

SARASOTA

Private tour of the **Ringling Art Museum**, Ca' d'Zan, lunch at the Ringling Grillroom and tour of the circus museum.

MARCH 12, 2022

SAINT PETERSBURG

Dali Museum, lunch, glass blowing demonstration at the Morean Art Center and Chihuly Museum tour.

Cancellation Policy – Cancellations must be made 14 days prior to the tour date to receive a full refund, unless the vacancy can be filled. Cancellations made by Edison and Ford due to unforeseen circumstances will warrant a full refund or credit for another tour in the same season.



DIGITAL DISCUSSION:

Roberto Clemente, the Pittsburgh Pirates, and Thomas Edison's Connection with Baseball in Fort Myers

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16 • 10:30 a.m.

From 1955 to 1968, the Pittsburgh Pirates conducted spring training in Fort Myers. Learn about the team and their greatest player, hall of fame outfielder Roberto Clemente, who experienced Fort Myers during the time of Jim Crow.

Join Program Manager Holly Shaffer for this free virtual lecture. Registration is required.

Visit EdisonFord.org to register.



Silk Scarf Painting Class

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 14 • 10 A.M.

Marie Dyer will teach participants how to paint a 14" X 72" scarf that can be worn or used as a piece of artwork. All materials are included in the fee.

Advance registration is required at EdisonFord.org.
Edison Ford members: \$90; non-members: \$100

EDISON
and
FORD
winter
ESTATES

PRESENTS

SUSTAINABLE CONCEPTIONS

AN EXHIBIT FROM

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**

Emerging Inventors

NOVEMBER 2 • 9 A.M.

Edison and Ford Winter Estates Emerging Inventors programs are designed for children ages 18 months to 5 years old, and include opportunities to socialize with other children, educational activities, science experiments, and exploration of the property. These sessions will take place in our new Wizard's Workshop gallery space, and children will learn how electricity is generated, using kid friendly materials such as conductive clay, how sound works, and so much more. Classes will run from September through May. Includes one adult and one child.

Space is limited.

Edison Ford members: \$10; non-members: \$15.



School Break Code Camp

NOVEMBER 22-24 • 9 A.M.

School Break camps are designed for students ages 6 to 12 when school is out. Campers explore Edison's living "living laboratory" while our educators, called "Wild Wizards," teach topics in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math), history and the natural world. For children who enjoy computers and coding, this popular three-day camp is sure to be a hit!

Edison Ford members: \$120; non-members: \$145.



Homeschool Science Scholars: Hydraulics & the Mechanics of Motion

GRADES 1-3: NOVEMBER 17 • 10 A.M.

GRADES 4-6: NOVEMBER 18 • 10 A.M.

Homeschool Science scholar programs are designed for children in grades 1-6 and are typically held in an outdoor classroom environment (weather permitting). Our education staff, called "Wild Wizards" will challenge student's minds and foster collaboration in this science and engineering series. Classes are a combination of instruction and hands-on activities that are designed to facilitate homeschool or virtual science education. In this session, students will learn about physics, mechanics, and engineering – from simple machines to hydraulic systems.

Space is limited.

Edison Ford members: \$15 each or \$105 for series; non-members: \$25 each or \$185 for series





TOURS & PROGRAMS

Throughout the month, presentations are offered for visitors to learn about music, sound and the phonograph, how a motor works on Henry Ford's Model T and making movies with animated images. Historian-led guided tours and self-guided tours of the site are offered daily. Through the new app, narration is available in English, French, German, and Spanish. Site maps are available in English, French, German, Spanish and Chinese.



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 • 11:00 A.M. (first come, first served)

THURSDAYS • 11:00 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.



Guided Garden Tour

Available by appointment for groups of five or more.

The Edison and Ford Winter Estates botanical gardens contain more than 1,700 plants from six continents including flowering plants and trees, fruit trees, palms, bamboo, cycads, vines, roses, orchids, and Florida natives. On this tour, an experienced horticulturist leads visitors through the 20-acre site and highlights the different types of plants and their importance to the Edison and Ford families. Visitors will see the Moonlight Garden, many rare plants and get to go behind-the-scenes in the propagating nursery. Some of the plants in the gardens are available for sale in the on-site Garden Shoppe. Call today to book your tour 239-334-7419.

Cost: \$40 per person.

Private Guided Tour

Available By Appointment for groups with a maximum of nine people.

To accommodate families or small business groups, private guided tours are now available. These tours are for small groups and ensure that families will not be on a tour with other tourists. Masks are recommended on guided tours. Private tours should be reserved at least 48 hours in advance. During a private tour, visitors will see the historic winter homes of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford, the caretaker's houses, swimming pool complex, Edison's study, the Moonlight Garden, and more than 20 acres of botanical gardens. After the tour, visitors may take extra time to stroll the gardens, museum and botanic research laboratory at their own pace.

Cost: \$345 per group.

HYPERTUFA WALL POT CLASS

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6 • 9 A.M. – NOON

This is the second part of a two-part class. Participants will learn to create their own one-of-a-kind garden wall pot. Wall pots require less space in the garden and may also be attached directly to a wall. In this class, participants will de-mold the pot and apply a surface treatment to complete the project. Participants should bring a pair of rubber or latex kitchen gloves. All other supplies will be provided. Retired art instructor and Edison and Ford volunteer, Jim Hopton, will be teaching the class.

Cost: members \$50; non-members \$75 (all material costs are included).

GARDEN TALK: BUILD AN HERB MOUND

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13 • 10 A.M.

There is always something new to learn about growing and using herbs. Herbs can be grown for use in cooking, medicinal purposes, beverages (cocktails), dyeing, and can be used either dry or fresh. November is a great time to begin the process of finding what works well in Florida and during this month's Garden Talk we will be making an herb mound. If you don't know what an herb mound is, come find out and see how easy this technique of layering soil, mulch and compost in a raised bed WITHOUT the wooden structure is! An herb mound can be assembled just about anywhere. We will be demonstrating this procedure and provide some new ideas on how to use one in a home garden. The talk will last approximately 1.5 hours. Wear sunscreen, comfortable shoes and a hat, and bring drinking water.

Cost: members \$10; non-members \$15

THE QUEEN OF THE TROPICS: EXOTIC HIBISCUS

By Karen Maxwell, Horticultural Specialist

The McGregor Boulevard landscape that borders the Edison and Ford Winter Estates is well known for its historic rows of royal palms. In the late 1920s, that landscape was far more colorful as it included hibiscus shrubs which were planted in between the palms as part of Mina Edison's contribution to her roadway and park beautification efforts. While her husband, Thomas, procured plants primarily for his rubber research and tropical tree collection, Mina Edison called upon her extensive travels and knowledge of trends to surround their Fort Myers home with beauty and style.

In 1901, when the Edisons returned to Fort Myers and Mina began creating her tropical gardens in earnest along the

banks of the Caloosahatchee River, she received the input of nationally acclaimed landscape architects John Nolan, Hale Walker and Ellen Biddle Shipman. As the gardens evolved, she implemented the suggestions of these designers with the guidance of local growers that Thomas Edison insisted be used, but she imparted her own experience, good sense, and horticulture education to create her vision of a modern tropical oasis.

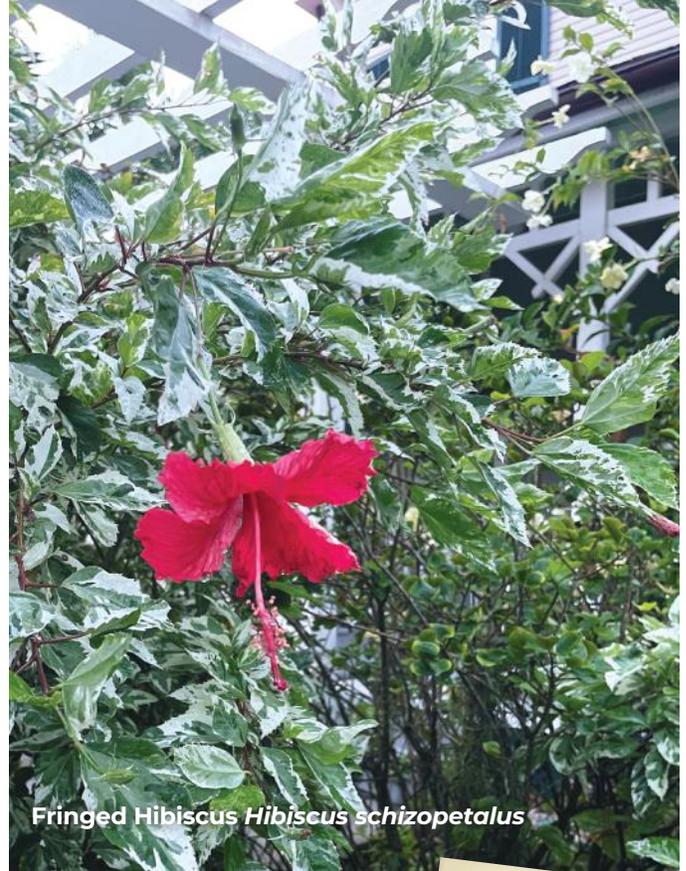
The Arts and Crafts period in the U.S. (1890s-1920s) imprinted its style on American gardens as well as architecture and pottery just as women were assuming the primary care of home gardens, though in the upper class, this was often

done behind hedges or with hired help. Mina Miller Edison, an astute horticulturist in her own right, spent most of her summers at the Miller Home in Chautauqua, NY which was surrounded by epicenters of the Arts and Crafts movement and she sought to include the design in her gardens in Fort Myers.

One garden trend in Arts and Crafts gardens was the inclusion of standards—shrubs that were grown and pruned to remove lower branches, thereby creating a small tree. Heliotrope standards, one of the most popular, were included by Mina in her Fort Myers garden as she loved the vanilla scented, lavender plants. Unfortunately, the harsh wet and humid summers of Southwest Florida doomed the future of her heliotropes, along with many other initial perennials, and Mina sought alternatives, better suited to the local climate.

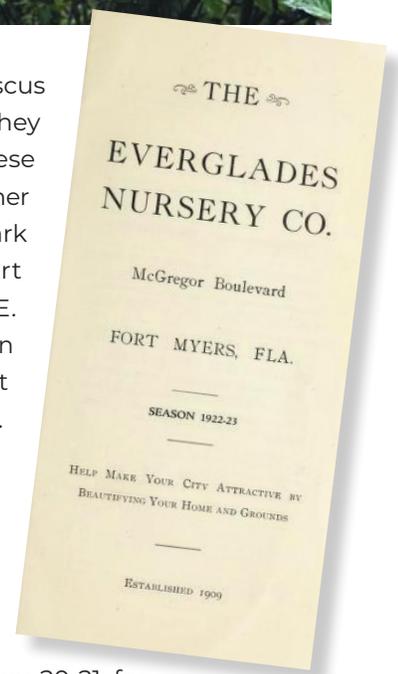
As early as 1908, according to the meticulous record keeping of Edison's caretaker Ewald Stulpner, the Fringed Hibiscus, also called Chinese Lantern (*Hibiscus schizopetalus**) was purchased for the grounds. This species hibiscus, native to East Africa, is not quite as well-known as its tropical cousin—Chinese Hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis**) but is a wonderful specimen for South Florida gardens that can provide lots of space for the long arching stems full of small and lighter green leaves, often variegated that produce deeply lobed and fringed flowers which hang down like a chandelier as opposed to the Chinese hibiscus flowers which open face up. Also, unlike the Chinese hibiscus, this hibiscus does not like to be pruned as flowers appear on the previous year's wood. This is a thirsty hibiscus and will perform well with regular, deep irrigation, no additional fertilization, and a sparse pruning once every 3-5 years.

At the suggestion of family friend and local grower, James E. Hendry, Jr., who had opened The Everglades Nursery Company also on McGregor Boulevard in Fort Myers, Mina Edison replaced her failed heliotrope standards with Chinese Hibiscus standards (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis**) which is the popular hibiscus that most people associate with Florida and Hawaii and the most hybridized of the hibiscus family. Credited with developing many hybrids of bougainvillea, James E. Hendry, Jr. created hundreds of these hybrids and he often named them after friends and family—including a variety named "Mrs. Thomas A. Edison" which the company catalog described as "Yellow with a peach center in the morning, fading to clear yellow in the afternoon." (Note: We do not have this hibiscus presently in our gardens and would love to receive a cutting if one of our readers should have one.)



Fringed Hibiscus *Hibiscus schizopetalus*

Mina purchased many hibiscus hybrids from Hendry, and they worked together to add these tropical flowering shrubs to her street beautification and park improvements around Fort Myers. Today, the James E. Hendry Chapter of the American Hibiscus Society based in Fort Myers is nearly 70 years old. This group was so important to Mina, that even though her husband was gravely ill in 1931, she made the time to meet with the Society. The club will be at the Edison Ford fall Garden Festival, November 20-21; for hibiscus fanciers, this is a wonderful chance to obtain rare and unusual plants and get expert advice on the care and growing of *Hibiscus sinensis-rosa*.



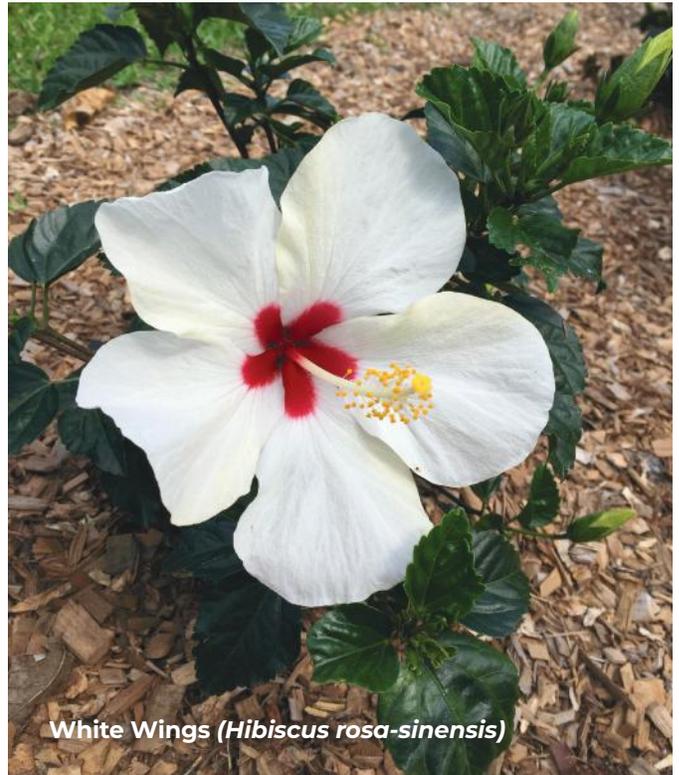
Today, Mina's hibiscus standards Double Peach and Double Red greet visitors as they enter the grounds on the river side of the property. White Wings, a desirable white cultivar, is in the adjacent Croton Garden.

Hibiscus is part of the enormous Malvaceae or Hibiscus family of which the Edisons grew many species, including

continued on next page ▶



Double Red



White Wings (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*)

the Chinese Hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis**), Fringed Hibiscus (*Hibiscus schizopetalus**), Turks Cap Hibiscus (*Malvaviscus arboreus**), and Okra (*Hibiscus esculentus**). This family of plants also includes Cacao (source of cocoa beans), Cotton, Dombeya* and Ceiba (*the Kapok**).

Florida is also home to several native species. The Scarlet Hibiscus (*Hibiscus coccineus*), which like all hibiscus species is not salt tolerant. A great hummingbird and butterfly attractant, this is an excellent addition to a garden that can sustain a sunny and constantly damp or bog-like environment, though it is dormant in the winter.

The ideal site for hibiscus is where they can receive up to 12 hours of sunlight a day and will happily tolerate some dappled shade in the late afternoon. All hibiscus discussed in this article are shallow-rooted plants that require good water, but they won't tolerate soggy conditions, except for the Florida native. Stake newly planted hibiscus plants, especially standards to compensate for the shallow root structure until they are well established. Adding good compost to our sandy soils will provide the nitrogen needed for good growth and to provide the slightly acidic soils that yield optimum performance and a thick layer of mulch will protect the temperature of the soil on those shallow roots and help retain moisture. This is especially true if one is planting close to a concrete foundation or walkway where lime leaches into the soil and raises the

pH above the preferred level of 6.5 or so. As anyone who has grown hibiscus will tell you, they are easy to grow, but they do have some issues – some we can control and others we cannot.

Our southwest soils tend to be low on potassium (K) and too high on phosphorous (P) so providing a regular feeding of a slow-release granular product, such as Sure-Gro (the same product we use and recommend for palm trees) has the best formula of 8-2-12, which includes ample nitrogen for excellent growth. The variegated variety of the Fringed Hibiscus produces an attractive white and light green foliage. For a mass of beautiful foliage, Tricolor Variegated Hibiscus sometimes sold as Red Hot (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis cooperi**) prunes well and offers a stunning dark green with shades of hot pink foliage in addition to its singular red flowers.

Keep your standard Chinese Hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa sinensis**) pinched to maintain a compact plant with good form and shape but remember not to prune or pinch the Fringed hibiscus (*Hibiscus schizopetalus**) as discussed earlier. When pruning is in order, try to avoid doing so in mid-winter. Pruning encourages new growth, and should a winter frost occur, the tender new growth will be injured and possibly cause more severe damage to your plant(s).

A possible hybrid of the Hawaiian white Hibiscus (*Hibiscus arnottianus*) and the Fringed Hibiscus, is the Weeping Hibiscus, or Dainty Pink Hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) and the white variety known as Dainty White (both also are called La France*) which, is believed to be a normal mutation of the Dainty Pink, both of which grow throughout our gardens, including the Moonlight Garden. As the name suggests, this cultivar sports weeping stems and will grow to nearly 10 feet. Covered with 3" blooms, growers will enjoy the multitude of butterflies, hummingbirds and pollinators that cannot resist it. Hybridized or imported in the late 1950s, the Dainty Pink is credited to Norman Reasoner and L.K. Thompson. Reasoner owned and operated Reasoner's Tropical Nursery outside of Bradenton and consulted Mina and Thomas Edison in the late 1920s.

All hibiscus are prone to a variety of insects including aphids, scale, mealybugs, etc. Should you discover these pests, apply a wash of horticultural soap or oil two times a week until they are extinguished. Severe cases of pests may require a drench, but keep in mind that products with imidacloprid, a neonicotinoid will harm pollinators. When in doubt, please don't hesitate to contact a staff member of the Edison Ford Horticulture Department.

Despite providing the best care to hibiscus plants, there are times that yellowing or leaf drop is unavoidable. Hibiscus are known for not appreciating rapid changes in their environment, including temperature and humidity, and



Dainty Pink (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*)

this is often the case when acclimatized or potted plants are suddenly moved inside to protect them from a frost, or extended periods of drought. Keep in mind that none of the hibiscus are salt tolerant and whenever possible, avoid using water that goes through a water softener system which employs salt. If all other conditions are met, hibiscus is actually a pretty rugged tropical plant, and it will come back when the temperature and humidity are more to their liking. Today, the number 1 selling hibiscus is Fiesta (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) and is often available in our Garden Shoppe along with most of the varieties discussed.

In this article, we hope to impart the importance of the hibiscus to our Fort Myers history; it is impossible to cover all of the varieties, types and information about growing this beautiful plant here, but feel free to explore further the American Hibiscus Society and our local, James E. Hendry Chapter.

**Indicates plants in the Edison and Ford Winter Estates gardens.*



Red Hot (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis cooperi*)

TOOTIE MCGREGOR TERRY

By Alexandria Edwards

Tootie McGregor Terry was an influential woman who left a major mark on Lee County, making Fort Myers a top tourist destination in Florida and the United States. She was born in 1843 to a middle-class judge, Epaphras Barber, in Cleveland, Ohio. After high school, she married Ambrose McGregor, an ambitious young salesman and barrel maker that she admired for his hard work. To support Ambrose during his early career, Tootie made efforts to save money and sewed clothes for her new husband in their apartment, which was located above a local grocery store.

Life soon changed for the McGregor family when Ambrose got a job working for two oil refineries owned by John Rockefeller and his partner Sam Andrews. By age 32, the young man served as the superintendent of all six of Standard Oil's refineries and manufacturing operations in Cleveland. A few years later, he was promoted to President of Standard Oil.

In 1868, Tootie gave birth to their only child, Bradford, who became sick as he was growing up. Doctors advised the couple to winter in Florida in hopes that the warm temperatures and fresh air would help Bradford regain his health.

They were lured to Fort Myers for the region's excellent tarpon fishing opportunities and purchased the former Gilliland home in 1892, located next to the Edison main house, for \$4,000. They repainted the home with a warm yellow exterior and white trim and hired Nick Armeta, a 16-year-old captain and tour guide the Edison's had met on their journey to Fort Myers, as their caretaker. The family enjoyed exploring the beautiful waters along the Caloosahatchee River and caught a plethora of tarpon, breaking the region's records for the largest ones that year. They also made large investments to aid the region, including buying more than \$150,000 worth of businesses and agricultural land. On what became known as the McGregor plantation, they planted citrus trees and experimented with rice, coffee, and tobacco crops.

The oil tycoon later died of cancer in 1900 at age 58. After the death of her husband, Tootie remained faithful to Fort Myers and got involved in many projects throughout the city, taking an active role in its development. In 1904, she collaborated with one of Ambrose's business partners,

Harvie Heitman, to build a hotel at the corner of First and Henry streets named "The Bradford," in honor of her son who had also passed away. A couple of years later, she rescued the city's financially-troubled landmark, the Royal Palm Hotel, and also purchased the Riverside Hotel. This trio of hotels attracted numerous celebrities and well-known industrialists to the area.

While supporting Fort Myers, Tootie did not forget about her hometown. She partnered with her sister, Sophia Barber McCrosky, to establish one of Cleveland's first private nursing homes. They called it a place for "gentlewomen who could no longer care for themselves." This establishment, called the A.M. McGregor Home, was incorporated in 1904, and opened in 1908 with 25 residents. This home still serves Ohio's elderly today.

By 1905, Tootie became reacquainted with one of her high school sweethearts, Dr. Marshall Terry, and they were married on December 12, 1905. Although she remarried, Tootie still sought ways to honor her former husband. She went to the city with a proposal, stating that if they agreed to pave Riverside Drive (an old dirt cattle trail) from Whiskey Creek to downtown Fort Myers, she would pay to have the portion from Whiskey Creek to Punta Rassa paved. She agreed to use any materials the City and the County chose, putting in all the necessary bridges and culverts along the way. Tootie also offered to pay a \$500 annual fee to maintain the road for five years after it was constructed. Her only requirement was that this road be named McGregor Boulevard in memory of Ambrose McGregor. The city later agreed; however, Tootie did not live long enough to see the roadway completed. According to the Fort Myers Press, Dr. Terry purchased a barge and several three-ton trucks to haul the materials needed to construct the paved road. This project was completed on July 15, 2014, and the road was named McGregor Boulevard.

During the years they spent together, Tootie and Dr. Terry attempted to use several acres of privately owned land that was formerly a cow pasture to establish the Fort Myers Yacht and Country Club; however, that project never came to fruition. In 1921, they donated the land to the county with the stipulation that "all property shall be used as a park and public property." It was used to construct a ball field and was named Terry Park in 1923.



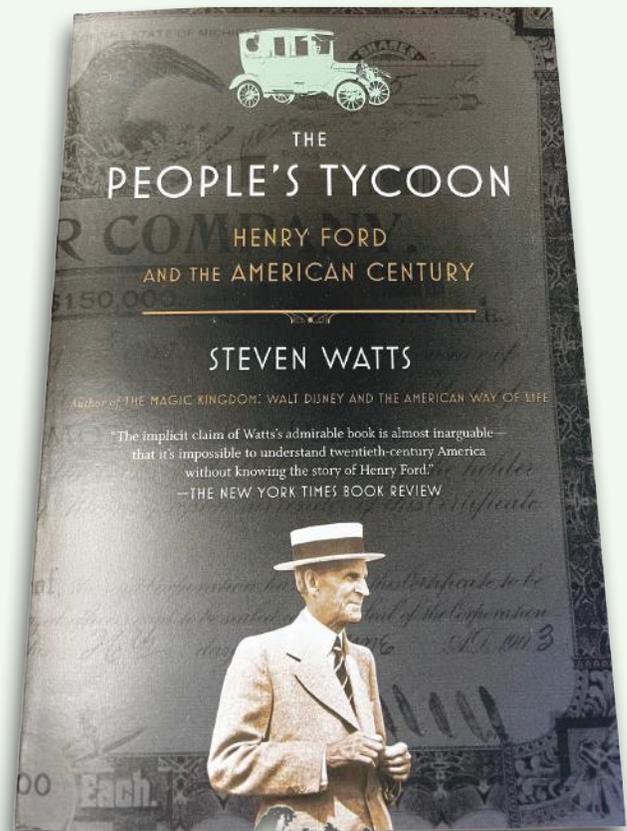
From 1926 to 1987, it served as a Spring Training Home to several major league baseball teams, including the Philadelphia Athletics (1925-1936), the Cleveland Indians (1940-1941), the Pittsburgh Pirates (1955-1968), and the Kansas City Royals (1969-1987). Hall of famers such as Jimmy Foxx, Roberto Clemente, and Babe Ruth are just a few of the stars that played on this field who helped bring exposure to the “City of Palms.”

After Tootie passed away, Dr. Terry proposed installing a fountain in Fort Myers as a tribute to her legacy. Under the direction of its president, Olive Stout, the Civic League choose five points for the location of the fountain. It was installed at the intersection of Cleveland Avenue, McGregor Boulevard, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard during the summer of 1913. In the 1950s, it was moved to the Fort Myers Country Club to make room for the construction of the Caloosahatchee Bridge. This fountain features a palm tree rising from a rocky base that originally served as a horse trough; the inscription on the base features a quote from Tootie, stating “I only hope the little I have done may be an incentive.” Since its restoration, the fountain has provided an added layer of beauty to the front of the Edison restaurant.

When you visit Fort Myers, be sure to take a drive along McGregor Boulevard to see this inspiring piece of history!

Book of the Month: The People’s Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century

By Steven Watts



Discover how a Michigan farm boy became the richest man in America. Read about the stories that lead him to become the wealthiest automobile manufacturer in the country and discover how he got there. This Edison Ford Book of the Month will open your eyes to the story of Henry Ford and the mass of contradictions that encompass his life. It's available in our Museum Store, or you may call 239-334-7419 and we can have it shipped to you. Members receive 10 % off the purchase price.



HOLIDAY SHOPPING

It's that time of year to shop for those who are important in your life. Experts are predicting stores will run out of items, so everyone is advised to shop early this year. The Museum Store, Ford Cottage Shoppe and the Edison Ford Shoppe at the Edison Mall are stocked with many unique and fun collectibles, clothing, books, games for kids, kitchen items and more! And, if your loved ones like to garden, we have a large selection of plants to choose from. If you just can't decide what to buy, we also have gift cards (must be redeemed in the Museum Store), or we can put together a custom-made gift basket and ship it for you.

We hope to see you soon!

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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