



EDISON  
and  
FORD  
winter  
ESTATES

HOMES · GARDENS · MUSEUM  
LABORATORY

MEMBER  
MAGAZINE

DECEMBER  
2021

EDISON  
and  
FORD  
winter  
ESTATES

2350 McGregor Boulevard  
Fort Myers, FL 33901  
239.334.7419  
[edisonford.org](http://edisonford.org)

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To become a member of Edison Ford,  
apply at [edisonford.org/membership](http://edisonford.org/membership)

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## THANK YOU

As we near the end of 2021, and celebrate the start of a new year, we want to say thank you to all of our members, sponsors and donors who have supported us over the years. Edison and Ford Winter Estates would not be what it is today without you.

While we ask for the community's support throughout the year, we also give back when we can. Some of the ways that we have helped the community include:

- Joined Museums for All, which enables underprivileged families to visit for free.
- Partnered with Lee Health's Blood Mobile as a monthly blood donation site.
- Our employees have participated in the Salvation Army Angel Giving Tree for three years.
- With sponsorships and donations, we were able to offer 41 Summer Camp scholarships in 2021 to children who would otherwise not have been able to attend.
- We've donated tickets to other non-profits to support their causes.
- We provide a stipend to local teachers to purchase art supplies for children to make ornaments for the annual Children's Tree Trail and Art in the Gardens.
- We've invited local artists to display their artwork in some of our exhibits.
- Active Military are admitted free all year, and we've honored veterans with music and free admission on Veterans Day.

As you prepare for your end-of-year contributions, we ask that you consider donating to Edison and Ford Winter Estates. As a non-profit 501(c)3, we rely on financial support for restoration, program development and ongoing maintenance. Donate today at [EdisonFord.org](http://EdisonFord.org) or give Nancy Achter a call at 239-335-3678 to find out more about how you can help continue the legacies of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford.



## 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 homes and gardens at Edison and Ford Winter Estates are decorated with thousands of lights. The mistletoe is a popular spot for couples.



# HOLIDAY NIGHTS



## Don't miss the 46th annual Holiday Nights celebration!

Thousands of lights, hundreds of historic decorations, and one unique holiday experience await you nightly from 5:30-9 p.m. Musical performances, Santa, carolers, and Wild Wizard science shows will delight you on select nights. Plus, refreshments will be available on weekends and the last week before Christmas.

**Guided tours are offered nightly at 6 and 7 p.m. (tickets are \$30 for adults, \$25 for teens, \$18 for children and \$10 for members).**

**Specialty Inside-the-Homes tours will run on 12/1, 12/8, and 12/15 for \$50 per person (must be reserved in advance).**

**Self-guided tours are \$20 for adults, teens (13-19) \$10, children (6-12) \$2, and members can see the lights for free!**



# 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](http://www.EdisonFord.org)

Or call: (239) 334 – 7419

## THANK YOU TO OUR HOLIDAY NIGHTS SPONSORS!

*Your support makes this event possible!*



# WREATH AUCTION

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16 • 6-8 P.M.

Edison Ford members are invited to join us for a wreath auction to benefit site preservation. We are partnering with the Fort Myers Women's Community Club for a fundraiser with proceeds going toward restoration and preservation efforts at the Estates. Members will get to see the Holiday Nights lights, listen to music, enjoy some appetizers and bid on a wreath to take home!

**Registration is required. Please RSVP by December 10.  
Look for an invite coming in email soon!**



# GIFT IDEAS

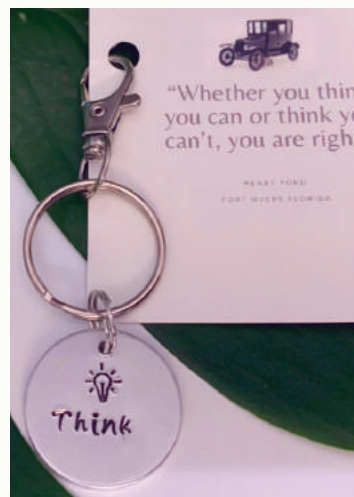
The Museum Store, Ford Cottage Shoppe and the Edison Ford Shoppe at the Edison Mall are all stocked with unique gift items for that hard-to-buy-for loved one on your list.

A local jewelry designer, Anita Singh, makes hand-crafted designs that would make a great holiday gift (available in the Museum Store). If you decide to give yourself a present, we won't tell anyone.

The stores also have books, t-shirts, Edison and Ford collector's items, kid's games, artwork from local artists, and much more! If you can't decide what to buy, just get a gift card. We can also custom design a gift basket and ship it to someone for you.

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## HOLIDAY SHOPPING AT EDISON & FORD WINTER ESTATES



## HAND STAMPED JEWELRY

*By local artist Anita Singh*



## 2021-2022 VIP Tour Season

**DECEMBER 11, 2021**

**LARGO**

**Heritage Village, dinner and holiday tour of Florida Botanical Gardens • Noon – 11 p.m.**

Call to see if space is still available.

**JANUARY 15, 2022**

**EVERGLADES CITY**

**Tour to Collier County Museum, Lunch, Smallwood Museum and Everglades Airboat Ride • 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

This is a great tour to learn about the history of the Everglades. Guests will learn about Florida's first big-game hunters and the sharks that once swam in the waters that covered Southwest Florida. Guests will also get to see the ancient tools and ceremonial masks from the Calusa Indians and how they flourished in the swampy wilderness. Information about the wars in South Florida and the journey of the Seminole people will also be covered, along with how early settlers arrived on the frontier, plus cattlemen, clam diggers, trailblazers and crackers that wrote the history of Collier County. A 90-minute private tour of the museum and walking tour of Everglades City will be presented by the Collier County Museum of the Everglades' Manager, Thomas Lockyear.

Lunch will be included at a local Everglades restaurant and favorite menu items will be chosen in advance. After lunch, we will take a short bus trip to the Smallwood Store in Chokoloskee. This small historic site was established in 1906, by Ted Smallwood and was the original Trading Post that served this remote and isolated area. This small wooden building was the Indian trading post, post office and general store to the community. The store is still owned and loved by the descendants of the family that founded it. If you like antiques, you will enjoy this tiny piece of history.

Our final experience of the day will be an airboat and swamp buggy tour. The adventure will start out with a 30-minute grassland airboat tour. After that, we will take a swamp buggy tour through the beautiful Cypress Forest. We will ride in the safety of experienced captains who know the area and the history. We will get to experience mother nature in this area of more than 259 acres of grasslands, including wild alligators, manatees, birds and many other animals that call



the Everglades home. This will truly be a look back at what the pioneers encountered in this vast swampland. You will not want to miss this tour!

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. Please note all tours include a lot of walking, bus stairs and sometimes maneuvering in tight spaces. Please plan accordingly.

**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](mailto:smuske@edisonford.org). Tours fill up quickly, so reserve your space early.**

**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:

### Holiday Traditions During the Civil War Era

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14 • 10:30 a.m.

Discover the holiday traditions and celebrations that were popular when Thomas Edison was a teenager in the 1860s. Get into the holiday spirit with Program Manager, Holly Shaffer for this free virtual lecture. Registration is required.

Visit [EdisonFord.org](http://EdisonFord.org) to register.

## Silk Scarf Painting Class

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18 • 9 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



## Boondoggle Palm Crafting Class

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5 • 10 A.M. - 2 P.M.

Local artist, Megan Kissinger will teach the basics of making a boondoggle, starting with a small ornament and then will make a wreath from a single palm frond. Crafts can be used as holiday decorations or given away as gifts. All the materials and tools will be provided but students may bring their own ribbons and scissors. Participants are also encouraged to bring snacks or a bag lunch. The class will take place outdoors in the river pavilion, along the Caloosahatchee River. Masks are recommended, but not required.

Class size is limited to 14. To ensure adequate supplies, **registration is required before 5 p.m. on Friday, December 3.** Register online at [edisonford.org](http://edisonford.org) or call **239-334-7419**. E-tickets should be redeemed at the ticket counter for a wristband (on the day of the class).

**Cost:** Edison Ford members: \$40; non-members: \$60.  
Materials are included in the fee.





# JAMES NEWTON

By Alexandria Edwards

James Newton was a very close acquaintance of Thomas and Mina Edison who made lasting developments in the City of Fort Myers that can still be seen today. He was born on March 30, 1905, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and moved to Fort Myers in 1924. Shortly after he arrived, he founded the James D. Newton Realty company, which planned and developed Edison Park – the historic neighborhood adjacent to Edison and Ford Winter Estates.

St. Petersburg Developer, C. Perry Snell and his brother, local attorney, G.E. Snell, had begun developing the property and sold the northern portion of the land to Newton's company. Newton and the Snells prepared a plan of lots and curved roads, naming the subdivision "Edison Park" in honor of their world-famous neighbor, Thomas Edison. The Snells' portion of the development remained vacant; however, Newton implemented deed restrictions and parameters for the construction of homes on his section. He required that the architecture of all the homes be Moorish, Spanish, Italian or American. In addition, he promised every homeowner that the neighborhood would include curbing, sidewalks, landscaping, ornamental street lighting and street signs. By the end of 1926, the young developer even arranged to have a telephone service in place.

According to Newton, when Edison visited Fort Myers, the world-famous inventor noticed Newton helping his crew

dig trenches for the new development and was humbled to see him working so closely with his staff. He later gave Newton an autographed picture that stated, "All things come to him who hustles while he waits." When they planned to unveil the entrance to the neighborhood on April 2, 1926, Edison had the flu; however, when Newton went to check on him, he found Edison preparing for the ceremony. Fred Ott, Edison's chauffeur, had the Ford waiting at the steps and the inventor looked at Newton and said "Let's go Jimmie." Newton recalled in an interview to the press that he will never forget Edison's integrity.

Following the opening of the neighborhood, the Edison family invited Newton to dinners at Seminole Lodge, which often occurred in the middle of the day. He would also visit Edison after the famous inventor returned from his laboratory to rest. He usually found Edison in his living room, reading the New York papers, or sometimes they would sit in the yard and discuss major life events. Other activities they enjoyed doing together included going to the local arcade theatre to watch silent western films and fishing. According to a Fort Myers News-Press interview with Newton, he recalled taking the Edisons fishing on a boat near Hendry Creek, south of Fort Myers. They traveled down the beautiful creek and fished all the way to the

*continued on next page* ▶

Gulf. After catching fish, they pulled up to Black Island and enjoyed their fresh catch under the palms.

Through his friendship with the Edisons, James Newton was introduced to Henry and Clara Ford. Some of his early memories of Ford included watching him go through a barrel of early lightbulbs that Edison had stored in Fort Myers. After they became close acquaintances, the Fords introduced Newton to Harvey Firestone, who presented the young man with a job offer in 1928. Firestone observed how well the real-estate developer had executed Edison's birthday press conference and asked if he would be willing to move away from development to assist him until conditions improved. Newton stated that he could not abandon the project since he made commitments to the lot owners; however, Firestone sent him an application for employment anyway. Newton assumed it would be in real estate, so he agreed to meet with him. At Firestone's office, he learned that the job description included accompanying the tire manufacturer to meetings, making arrangements for him, and serving as an aid. Newton later took the job and worked for Firestone until 1936. During this time period, the Edison Park development was halted because of the Great Depression. From 1929 to 1936, the only structure built within Edison Park was the Community Congregational Church, which Thomas and Mina Edison contributed to.

During World War II, Mr. Newton served in the U.S. Army; he left in 1946. While in the army, he instructed more than 10,000 soldiers on how to properly use infantry weapons. He later traveled to the Philippines where he was part of a task force that planned the invasion of Japan. After the war, major growth took place in Edison Park, particularly on the Snell portion of the property.

James Newton spent the last few decades of his life in Fort Myers Beach and got involved in many community volunteer activities. In 1992, the Southwest Florida Council and Boy Scouts of America awarded Mr. Newton its Distinguished Citizen Award to recognize his outstanding service to the community. Over the years, Newton and his wife, Eleanor "Ellie" Forde Newton supported Hope Hospice, Edison Community College, the Boy Scouts of America, and assisted in the restoration of Edison and Ford Winter Estates.

In 1995, the News-Press named the couple "People of the Year" for their service to Lee County and the Fort Myers community. Edison Park was designated as the first Historic District in Fort Myers in November of 1995. Today, it remains one of the most historic and loved neighborhoods in Fort Myers and has continued to retain the charm and character that make Southwest Florida a very special place to live.



## Emerging Inventors

**DECEMBER 7 • 9 A.M. SOLD OUT**

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.

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



## School Break Camp: Creative Chemistry

**DECEMBER 20-23 • 9 A.M. – 4 P.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. Students will learn how to use everyday items to conduct amazing experiments and will learn through daily chemical experiments during this four-day camp.

**Edison Ford members: \$160; non-members: \$185.**

## School Break Camp: Design & Innovation

**DECEMBER 27-30 • 9 A.M. – 4 P.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. In this camp, students will design, build, improve and repeat! Campers will walk in the footsteps of Edison and Ford as they tackle a range of projects from light systems to marble roller coasters as they are guided along the path of innovation in this four-day camp.

**Edison Ford members: \$160; non-members: \$185.**

## Homeschool Science Scholars: Waves, Vibrations and Oscillations

**GRADES 1-3: DECEMBER 8 • 10 A.M. SOLD OUT**

**GRADES 4-6: DECEMBER 9 • 10 A.M. SOLD OUT**

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 sound energy, light energy, and mechanical motion. They will discover the enchanting behavior of repeating patterns hidden in the motion of objects.

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

# Tis the Season to Twinkle!

By Matt Andres, Curatorial Registrar

Season's Greetings everyone! The 2021 Christmas season is upon us, which means an annual tradition known as Holiday Nights has officially begun at the Estates. Featuring thousands of lights, Victorian style decorations, and occasional visits from Father Christmas (Santa Claus) himself, visitors far and wide make it an annual pilgrimage to witness the Edison and Ford properties gleaming in all their glory. This year's event is titled "Holidays under the stars," which is a subtle tribute to Edison and Ford's famous Vagabond camping trips that also included industrialist Harvey Firestone and naturalist John Burroughs.

The holidays were always a festive and joyful time for Mina Edison. Out of 26 visits from 1886-1931, only once did Thomas and Mina Edison spend Christmas in Fort Myers (1929). Although at their main residence (Glenmont) in Orange, New Jersey, elaborate decorations and large gatherings of 20-30 guests were commonplace. Their yuletide experience at Seminole Lodge was much different, subdued with minimal decorations and a rather small gathering for Christmas dinner. Many years, Mina selected a theme and decorated the Glenmont with appropriate embellishments and trimmings, thus providing every holiday season with a distinctive character and unique ambiance. In 1925 for example, Mina dressed up as the "Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe" from an old-fashion children's nursery rhyme and decided to build a gigantic faux shoe replete with wrapped gifts and various decorations.

In various letters and interviews, Madeleine, Charles, and Theodore Edison reminisced about their holiday traditions, which in earlier years consisted of staying up until midnight on Christmas Eve, waking early the next morning, checking for snow first thing, singing Christmas carols at their parents' bedroom door, waking the "old man" and wishing everyone a hearty Merry Christmas! Afterward, stockings were retrieved from their private sitting room, contents emptied and opened

for all to see, and then breakfast. Only after mealtime were they allowed to gaze upon the family Christmas tree, when dining room doors leading toward the formal den area were opened, revealing the tree in all its majestic splendor! Hanging from its branches were several feet of gold and silver balls and yards and yards of tinsel. Colored electric lamps were nestled throughout, creating a dazzling display of lights and considered by them to be much safer and prettier than candles. Later, dinner guests were treated to a multi-course meal and afterward escorted to the den to listen to music, as well as sift through and distribute copious amounts of gifts. The Edisons were also inveterate pranksters and on one such occasion according to Theodore:

*"One incident was my mother was giving my sister some very fine set of china. My sister knew she was getting it, too. So my cousin, I think it was, Lewis Miller, and Uncle John Miller, they were distributing the presents around. A lot of people sat around the edge of the room, you see, and then certain ones would go and pick them up and bring them to the people around the edge. And so my cousin was just getting this box of china, he'd found under the tree, and he was down here, and he had had it in his hand, and my uncle was getting some other present for somebody else, and he was down here, and he straightened up, knocked this box right out of my cousin's hand, and it fell on the floor and broke in a thousand pieces. Well, my sister was fit to be tied over this beautiful china that was coming to her. ... And then it turned out that this was a lot of old broken dishes that they'd gotten in the five and ten cent store some place, the discards, and they had it all there, and was all [an act] But they carried it off, you know. It looked just as if it had happened."*

A good time was had by all, and invaluable memories made and cherished for several generations to come. Rachel Miller shared her thoughts with Aunt Mina in 1922:

Mina's private den at Glenmont on Christmas Eve 1938



*"Before I go to bed I want you to know what a perfect Christmas I had with you all at Glenmont. It seems to me it was never more beautiful and somehow the whole place and everyone just radiated love. What a lovely idea those tableaux were! It made an unusual Christmas and one that will stand out in everyone's minds ... I don't believe Teddy and Jack will ever forget this one. They were certainly dear little fellows and awfully patient when they were so keen to see what they had. Jack was so proud of his umbrella. He took it to bed with him. Did you know that? And thank Thomas, I never forget that he makes it all possible. He seemed to enjoy it all so much this time."*

Thomas and Mina Edison arrived earlier than normal for their winter stay of 1930, traveling to Fort Myers in December 1929. The last few months of that year had been a distressing end to an indomitable decade, one filled with unbridled business prosperity, economic expansion, and a pop-culture revolution characterized by jazz music, care-free living, and excessive consumerism. Mina was quite active in the city's civic and social affairs and as President of the Fort Myers Roundtable – a group made up of prominent citizens and business leaders – collaborated with The Welfare Board to solicit financial funds, procure groceries, and retain the services of someone to assume the role of Santa in order to distribute food baskets to needy residents. Officially known as the Santa Claus Fund, Mina's goal was to raise \$300. Mr. and Mrs. Edison, themselves, donated twenty dollars, which is equivalent

Edison at the Glenmont around 1922



to \$321 dollars in today's monetary conversion. According to the Fort Myers Press, Santa's campaign was a success with several dozen baskets being assembled, packed, and given away to those in need.

On Christmas Eve, Mina served as master of ceremony for the lighting of the town's communal tree, attended a special service at St. Luke's Episcopal Church and spent a quiet evening at Seminole Lodge. December 25 came with little commotion as Edison spent his morning reading a book, then attending a movie at the Arcade theater, where according to local newspaper accounts, 650 rambunctious kids nearly tore its roof off over the amalgamation of free movies, ice cream, candy, and a visit from Santa. Around 4 p.m., Mina and Thomas entertained a small circle of friends for dinner, with the inventor forgoing a larger meal for his customary glass of milk. Gifts poured in from all over the United States: books from publishers, clothing from various makers, a hat that was a tad large for his head, shoes, and cards from hundreds of well-wishers. Even on Christmas, Edison could not stay away from his laboratory as the great inventor took a stroll through his rubber research gardens, examining different plants, and making notes as he went along. He retired early and was up before dawn the following day to resume his assiduous work schedule. As fast as it came, the holiday was over.

To learn more, join us for one of our nightly Holiday Guided Tours at 6 and 7 p.m. through January 2 (closed Christmas Day). **We wish everyone a happy holiday season!**



## TOURS AND 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.

Guided Tours in German are available on Wednesdays at 11 a.m., starting December 8. **Cost:** \$30 per person



## 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.



## BROMELIAD SHOW & SALE

**SATURDAY & SUNDAY  
DECEMBER 4-5 • 9 A.M. - 4 P.M.**

The Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society is back for the annual Bromeliad Show and Sale. The event will take place outdoors, under the oak trees and in the Garden Shoppe area. The judged show will be held on the museum porch, next to the Garden Shoppe. Bromeliad growers will offer hundreds of different species, including exotic and rare plants, plus several experts will be on hand from the Society to answer questions about Bromeliads.

The Bromeliad Society was formed more than 30 years ago and has held an annual sale since 1984. This event is the largest of its kind in Florida. Growers from other areas, including Miami, Sarasota and Venice will be participating. A limited number of garden carts will be available, so guests are encouraged to bring their own. Food trucks will have refreshments available for purchase, and parking and admission to the sale is free (does not include tours or admission to the museum, lab or riverside of the property). Masks are recommended, but not required.

## HOLIDAY CENTERPIECE TERRARIUM CLASS

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11  
10 A.M.**

Gather with Edison Ford Horticulturists behind the Banyan tree for a class to make a beautiful holiday terrarium. You'll be able to display your creation as a centerpiece, give as a gift, or just enjoy for yourself! Share this event with a friend or give this class as a gift to someone special on your list. All materials will be included, such as live plants and the vessel to use as a terrarium. We'll teach the principals of both dry and wet terrariums in various themes: "Underwater," "Florida Beach," and "Winter Wonderland," plus you'll learn how to make a beautiful bow to finish it off. Participants may bring their own small holiday embellishments. Light holiday refreshments will be provided. Registration is required by December 4. Limited to 25 participants.

**Cost:** members \$60; non-members \$75





## INTRODUCTION TO FLORIDA GARDENING – PART I

TUESDAY, JANUARY 18 • 1:30-3:30 P.M. OR

SATURDAY, JANUARY 22 • 10 A.M. – NOON

New to Florida gardening? Part I of this two-part class provides a foundation of how plants work, their nomenclature, and understanding of unique weather patterns and unusual soils found only in Florida, zone 10. This class will educate participants with identification of both Florida native and non-native plants, and how to recognize invasive plants. We will also discuss palm trees and spend the last 20 minutes in our Palmetum. Please bring a notebook, pencil and drinking water. Hats, sunscreen and good walking shoes are recommended for the outdoor portion. Each class includes handouts, a recommended reading list, and additional resources to help the Florida gardener succeed. Advance registration is required and limited to 25 participants. The class will be held at the Garden Council building, located across the street from the Edison Ford parking lot (on Larchmont). At the conclusion of class, each participant will receive a 20% discount coupon for plant purchases in the Garden Shoppe.

**Cost:** members: \$35, non-members \$50

## INTRODUCTION TO FLORIDA GARDENING – PART II

TUESDAY, JANUARY 25 • 1:30-3:30 P.M. OR

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29 • 10 A.M. – NOON

In Part II, we will introduce participants to the concepts of “Florida Friendly Gardening,” understanding Florida soil and learning the proper use of fertilizers and soil amendments. Plants have unique pests and their identification will be covered as well as when to use chemical versus biological controls as recommended by the Green Industries Best Management Practices concepts. We will also cover common weed identification and diseases, then wrap up with a discussion on selecting plants for your Florida landscape, followed by a question-and-answer session. The last 20 minutes of class will be held in the Butterfly Garden. At the conclusion of class, each participant will receive a 20% discount coupon for plant purchases in the Garden Shoppe. Advance registration is required. Limited to 25 participants. Class will be held at the Garden Council building, located across the street from the Edison Ford parking lot (on Larchmont). Note: Though not required, taking Part I will be beneficial to understanding the content covered in Part II.

**Cost:** members \$35; non-members \$50

# NEW BROMELIAD GARDEN AT THE ESTATES

By Karen Maxwell, Horticultural Specialist

In two years' time, Edison and Ford Winter Estates will have the single largest collection of bromeliads anywhere in South Florida ... that is if Tom Cowell, orchid and bromeliad specialist at the Estates realizes his dream. I recently found him in the new Bromeliad Garden staking a three-foot-tall flower bloom for the bromeliad that inspired his mission – a rare specimen with a striking red flower, *Hohenbergia stellata* “Marie Valentine,” which was donated by local nursery legend, Betty Ann (Kinzie) Prevatt in 2019. Fast forward two years, and nearly 95% of the bromeliads our visitors see have been donated by Cowell – or he has cajoled friends and growers to donate plants. Today, the Bromeliad Garden now makes up a substantial part of what used to be Edison’s research garden area, located just inside the entrance from Marlyn Road. This area is perfect for bromeliads because the ficus trees provide protective shade for the plants.



*Hohenbergia stellata*, Marie Valentine

The plant family of bromeliads (Bromeliaceae) contains thousands of species and all are native to the tropical and sub-tropical regions of the New World, such as Central America and South America, of which the best-known bromeliad is commercial pineapple (*Ananas comosus*).\* When explorers first found pineapple cultivated in the Caribbean on the island of Guadeloupe, they wasted no time distributing the delicious fruit around the world. By the late 1500s, large pineapple plantations could be found in India, China, the Philippines and all tropical zones of the Old or Western World. Pineapple has been so widely

cultivated for centuries around the globe, botanists are no longer able to identify a wild or un-cultivated pineapple, and today they are considered a cultigen, a plant with no known wild parent.

In the late 1800s, there was something of a pineapple fever happening along the East Coast of the U.S. Prior to Edison’s purchase of his land in Fort Myers, an article by Sherman Adams for the Fort Myers News Press in 1885 documented coconut and pineapple plantations along the banks of the Caloosahatchee River. By 1885, coinciding with the year Edison purchased his initial 13 acres, almost every one of the families in Fort Myers (pop. 369) were growing pineapples and shipments from Florida were going for 60 cents per pineapple in New York! Upon their purchase of the riverfront acreage, Thomas Edison along with friend and business partner, Ezra Gilliland decided to get in on the action and planted 1,500 pineapples. Whether they grew the pineapples for shipping and profit, or for the fibers the plants produced is not certain, but along with planting cassava\* for its latex (also used to make tapioca), these two plants gave rise to the largest experimental garden in the western hemisphere. By 1908, Cuba was out-pacing Florida in volume and pricing of pineapples and in 1910, a disease called Red Wilt decimated the Florida pineapple market, followed by two killing freezes in the winters of 1917 and 1918 and the Florida commercial pineapple industry never recovered.

It appears that Edison, with the help of his caretaker, wished to continue to grow pineapples to feed his family and staff but suffered erratic success. In 1907-1908, Edison brought in large quantities of dried clay and his property caretaker, Ewald Stulpner, tilled the muck into the sandy soil in the very spot where the Bromeliad Garden is now featured. Stulpner also built a shade house for nearly 400 Smooth Cayenne Pineapples, but lost them all in one year. Given how easy it is to grow pineapples in our loose soil, it is not known if they succumbed to root rot (pineapples should be started in early Autumn to be well established before the rainy season) or to soil borne plant

parasitic nematodes. Now, most of the Smooth Cayenne Pineapples are grown in Hawaii and known as Hawaiian pineapple – these will soon re-appear in the Estates' gardens.

Surpassing the pineapple in Florida, ornamental bromeliads have taken an important place in South Florida gardens for the wide assortment of colors, shapes, ease of care, and the versatility for use in a landscape or container. Bromeliads are tropical or sub-tropical plants, and most are epiphytic (growing in trees); although, there are several species that are terrestrial, where their roots anchor them to soil instead of trees. Almost all bromeliads reproduce vegetatively by pups or stolons, a type of stem that grows from the main plant. When you visit the Bromeliad Garden, look for many varieties that appear to be climbing up a host tree. If you mount them to a tree in your garden, take care to avoid using any copper wire, as bromeliads are highly sensitive to copper. An important key in succeeding with bromeliads, is to be sure to match the species or variety of bromeliad to its natural light requirements – this is the only way to ensure emergence of the best colors and leaf patterns.



The Estates' Bromeliad collection is home to varieties that represent the three major sub-families that collectively are Bromeliaceae.

• Pitcairnioideae – These are generally terrestrial and the oldest family of bromeliads, and are frequently spiny but some have grass-like foliage. They do not have a center leaf rosette for trapping water and produce winged

seeds. They are grown for interesting foliage. Dyckias\* which are somewhat cold-hardy and Pitcairnia\* in this sub-family do well in full-sun situations.

• Tillandsioideae – This is the largest group, is primarily epiphytic, and has smooth edged leaves with fuzzy or hairy seeds dispersed by wind. Air plants\* (tillandsias), Spanish Moss\* (which isn't Spanish or a moss and is one of eighteen bromeliads native to Florida) and soft leaved Vriesea\* and the popular Guzmania\* are found in this grouping.



• Bromelioideae – Home to the widest range of bromeliad plant forms, these strong plants are the most frequently cultivated, sporting serrated or spiny leaf edges and the seeds and berries distributed by birds. This family includes the pineapple, which in nature, is pollinated by hummingbirds; Billbergias\*, Bromelias\*, Neoregelias\*, compact Cryptanthus\* and Aechmeas\* which alone, account for 25 percent of the species in this sub-family.



*continued on next page*



Tom Cowell with *Aechmea rubens*

Given the vast number of species available, it is understandable why collectors become so passionate about these colorful and easy-care plants. As primarily epiphytic, the roots of bromeliads – as in orchids – only serve to anchor the plant, and water and nutrition is collected in the center of tank-type bromeliads. To some gardeners, there is concern that these tanks provide a breeding ground for mosquitos. While mosquitos are a fact of life in Florida, an understanding of the type of mosquito and some preventative maintenance tips for bromeliad collectors should allay most fears. The mosquito larvae found in 98.8% of *Billbergia pyramidalis*,\* a so-called tank-type bromeliad, was part of a study conducted by the University of Florida in Daytona, Tampa, Vero Beach and Miami, and determined to be the larvae of “Wyeomyia” a species of mosquito that does not transmit disease to humans. According to world-renowned entomologist, Dr. J. Howard Frank, Professor Emeritus at the University of Florida, there are three ecological steps one can take to minimize mosquito breeding if concerned: 1.) Do not allow grass clippings to get into the water reservoirs of planted bromeliads where it can collect and stagnate; 2.)



Debbie Hughes with Venus and Flirting Neoregelias at Bromeliad Christmas Tree

Avoid tight, compact colonies of Neoregelia bromeliads where the rotting flowers will also stagnate and attract larvae; and 3.) Flush the reservoirs weekly with fresh water which will interrupt the mosquito larvae cycle. A couple of drops of vegetable oil every few weeks in the water reservoir will also smother any larvae, but do this sparingly to avoid hurting the plant itself. For further information on this subject, visit [www.fcbs.org](http://www.fcbs.org), the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

We hope you will soon find an opportunity to stroll the meandering paths through the enchanting Bromeliad Garden in the shade of a historic canopy and learn more about this popular tropical plant group. On December 4 and 5 we will host the annual Bromeliad Show and Sale of the Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society. Experts and growers will be available to answer questions and offer plants for sale. If you would like information for landscaping with bromeliads, please contact me at [kmaxwell@edisonford.org](mailto:kmaxwell@edisonford.org) and I will be happy to email you the sheet.

**If you wish to donate any unusual bromeliads to the Estates’ gardens, please contact the Horticulture Department directly at [dhughes@edisonford.org](mailto:dhughes@edisonford.org). To learn more, enthusiasts can join the Bromeliad VIP Collectors, and the Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society on Facebook.**

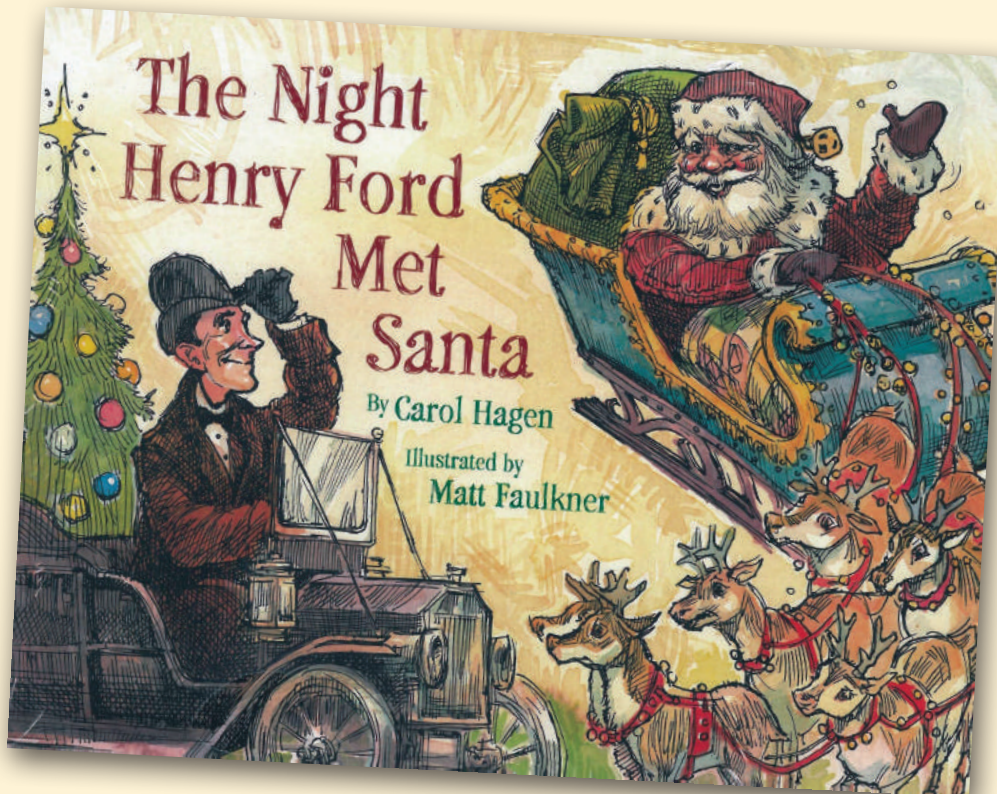
*\*Indicates plants in the Edison and Ford Winter Estates gardens.*



Bromeliad Garden at EFWE

# Book of the Month: The Night Henry Ford Met Santa

By Carol Hagen



Could Henry Ford have gotten the idea for an automobile assembly line from the elves at the North Pole? The setting for this picture book is during Christmas 1908, with Henry Ford pondering ways to make his Model T affordable for the average family. His son, Edsel suggests that he write to Santa for advice. Since Santa makes millions of toys, Edsel thinks Santa must know a better way. Henry writes the letter to make his son happy, but Santa answers by taking Henry to visit the North Pole. When Henry sees the elves working in a line, completing only one task on each toy made, Henry Ford imagines an automobile assembly line.

This charming book is 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. You might decide to make reading this story each year a new family tradition.



# HOLIDAY HOURS

Holiday Nights will be open Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. Come start a new family tradition with us and bring your family to see the lights. January 2 will be the last night of Holiday Nights. Whether you close out 2021 or start 2022 with us, **we hope you come enjoy the amazing light display!**

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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