



EDISON
and
FORD
winter
ESTATES

HOMES · GARDENS · MUSEUM
LABORATORY

MEMBER
MAGAZINE

JUNE
2022

EDISON and FORD winter ESTATES

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

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RAIN, GLORIOUS RAIN

For anyone who likes to garden, the return of the summer downpours is a welcome sight and sound. Fort Myers hadn't received a substantial rainfall in several months, so the gardens were getting dry, and grass crunched underfoot. All of the plants and trees are happily soaking up the nutritious liquid.

Hurricane season officially starts on June 1. To protect the historic buildings, we place storm shutters over windows that are not normally used for viewing. Fragile, high-priority items are moved from the historic structures and placed in the museum when possible.

Care is also taken to protect the historic gardens. Throughout the year, horticulturists and landscaping specialists conduct stormscaping to minimize damage to all trees and shrubs. Detailed records are documented, including inventory and photographs of plants and trees prior to any storms.

Now that the daily thunderstorms are the seasonal norm again, we just want to remind everyone to be cautious when outdoors, especially in the afternoon. If you hear thunder, head indoors. Here at Edison Ford, we have a lightning detection system that alerts us when lightning is detected in the area. If the alarm sounds, we ask all of our visitors to seek shelter in our museum – or they can have lunch at Pinchers restaurant next door. After the storm passes, visitors are welcome to stroll around the property again.

JUNE

EVENTS AND PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE:

*More details on each event and
program are included in the
following pages and on the website*

EdisonFord.org

June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

Yoga by the River

June 6 – August 5

Summer Camp

June 11

Garden Talk

June 14

Digital Discussion (The Ringlings of Sarasota)

June 19

Juneteenth celebration at the Edison Mall

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:

A Jackfruit tree, *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, bursting with fruit
in front of the Edison Guest House.

SCAVENGER HUNT

If you haven't visited in a while, come try the new scavenger hunt! The main character in the game is Jerry the Pelican who is hidden in multiple places around the site. The goal of the scavenger hunt is to find Jerry in eight different places, including the Edison caretaker's house, the Moonlight Garden (back side of the study), main house, Thomas and Mina's master bedroom, guest house, the Ford car exhibit, the secretary's bedroom in the Ford house, and in the Ford house dining room. Children will receive a prize when they find all eight hidden pelicans.

Thomas and Mina Edison had many unusual pets, including alligators, monkeys, and a peacock. There was also a pelican that spent time on the property, and the Edison family named him Jerry. That pelican was the inspiration for the scavenger hunt. Families are invited to post their scavenger hunt success on Facebook @ EdisonFordFL.



The scavenger hunt is included with admission. Tickets for self-guided tours are \$25 for adults, \$20 for teens (ages 13-19), \$15 for children (ages 6-12), and children five and under are admitted free. The scavenger hunt is available through the app or visitors can ask for a printed version at the ticket counter. To purchase tickets online, visit edisonford.org.





INVENTOR'S SUMMER CAMP

JOIN US as science and history come alive in our living laboratory! For students in grades K-2 and 3-5. No experience is needed. Visit the website for health, safety and scholarship information. Registration is required; sign up on the website at EdisonFord.org. Many of the camps are full; however, there are some openings in the following camps (at the time of printing).

ELECTRIC EXPLORERS (grades 3-5) • **JUNE 13-17**

Campers will walk in the footsteps of Edison and Ford as they take a deep-dive into the world of electricity. They will learn the history of electricity, how to make circuits, and how to harness the power of the electron.

EAGER ENGINEERS • **JUNE 20-24**

Daily engineering challenges are presented in this fast-paced camp. Campers will learn and use the engineering design process to work through problems.

ART SMARTS • **JULY 5-8** **(GRADES K-2 SOLD OUT)**

Students will fuse imagination with science and design to create masterpieces in this four-day camp. They will learn about the fundamentals of art along with the science that makes it work.

LIVING LABORATORY • **JULY 11-15**

Campers will explore biology, ecology, and the great outdoors of our 21-acre site, as they uncover the scientific investigations of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford here in Southwest Florida.

COST

(5-day camp): members: \$200, non-members: \$230. (4-day camp): members \$160, non-members: \$185.

INVENTOR'S SUMMER CAMP SPONSORED BY:



LEWIS LATIMER

By Alexandria Edwards

June 19 is the date that we celebrate Juneteenth, also known as Emancipation Day, marking the end of slavery in the United States in 1865 (two and half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed). In June of 2021, the Senate voted to make Juneteenth a federal holiday – the first holiday signed into effect since Martin Luther King Jr. Day by President, Ronald Regan in 1983. To honor this momentous occasion, we are recognizing the accomplishments of Lewis Latimer who made significant lasting improvements in the United States. Latimer encouraged people to prosper and reach their full potential through his work and fought tirelessly for the rights of the American population.

Lewis Howard Latimer was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts, on September 4, 1848, shortly after his parents, Rebecca and George Latimer left Virginia to live and raise children on free soil. As a free man, George worked as a barber and wallpaper hanger to support his three sons, daughter, and wife. Lewis, the youngest child, attended grammar school, where he showed excellent ability in reading and drawing. When he was not in class, Latimer spent time working with his father as other children did in the 19th century. In 1857, with the recent discussions regarding land ownership in the Supreme Court, George moved away to protect the safety of his family since he did not have paperwork to prove that he was a free man.

Latimer's mother worked tirelessly to keep her family together but did not have the financial means to provide the children with all the resources they needed. She sent Lewis and his brothers to a state-run farm school that taught young teens vocational skills, while his sister lived with acquaintances. Lewis and his brother William wanted to grow intellectually and form their own career

paths, so they planned to return to Boston and find work after attending school. Once he returned to Boston, Latimer got a job working as an office boy at a legal firm when he was 13 and also helped his mother with housekeeping tasks.

In his father's absence, Lewis falsified his age and joined the U.S. Navy in 1864 when he was just 16 years old (this was during the Civil War). He was assigned to the U.S.S. Massasoit, a gunboat stationed off Confederate ports to prevent trading with foreign countries. After he was honorably discharged in July of 1865, Crosby, Halsted & Gould Solicitors of American and Foreign Patents, a company that specialized in helping inventors protect their patents, was looking for "a boy with a taste for drawing." Lewis was hired and mastered mechanical drawing by observing the draftsman at work, reading books on the subject, and practicing with second-hand T squares, triangles, compasses and rulers that he purchased. The hand drawings were done in ink, so it was important that a draftsman did not make mistakes. After spending months learning the trade, Lewis requested and was given an opportunity to showcase his skills. The company was so impressed with his work that he was promoted from an office boy position that paid \$3 a week to head draftsman, earning \$20 a week.

After the Civil War, many inventors and innovative individuals were designing new technologies that revolutionized America, securing many patents in growing industries. While working as a draftsman at the legal firm, Latimer met Alexander Graham Bell who wanted him to draft his plans for a new invention, the telephone. Many other individuals were working on very similar communication devices and Bell was in a



Lewis Latimer, circa 1882

race to receive the first patent. Latimer spent many late-night hours with Bell forming blueprints and submitting applications that allowed him to file his patent on February 14, 1876 – just hours within rival, Elisha Gray’s patent submission.

At the same time, Latimer was also working on his own innovations. In 1874, he received his first co-patent, along

with Charles M. Brown for a toilet that emptied through a trap door activated by the lid (Patent No. 147,363). The invention protected passengers from dust and debris that came up into the water closet from the exposed tracks, making it safer to use.

In 1879, Latimer decided to leave Boston and moved to Bridgeport, Connecticut where he got a job at the

Fallensbees Machine Shop. When Latimer was working at the shop, inventor Hiram Maxim – known for inventing the first portable, fully automatic machine gun and mouse trap – stopped by and observed Latimer's work, inquiring where he had developed such solid drafting skills. Latimer shared with the inventor that he was the previous head draftsman at Crosby and Gould, a firm that Maxim had once worked for. Upon hearing this, the inventor invited Latimer to work as a mechanical draftsman at his Electric Lighting Company in Brooklyn, New York in 1880. In this new role, Latimer had a chance to become familiar with the field of electric incandescent lighting, an area where there was fierce competition to secure patents.

While working on perfecting lightbulbs and lamps, the entrepreneur traveled to U.S. cities and abroad, supervising the installation and production of Maxim equipment. Maxim was the chief rival of world-famous inventor, Thomas Edison. Edison had tested various materials, such as cardboard, cotton, hair, paper, thread and bamboo for use as lightbulb filaments. By passing electricity through the bulb, Edison created a light that glowed throughout a room. Maxim's goal was to improve on Edison's bulb, so Latimer focused on creating a longer lasting electric lamp by covering the filament with a cardboard envelope that gave them a longer life. Not only did Latimer install a lighting system in the United States, but he designed systems in Montreal and London as well. While the systems were being installed in Montreal, Latimer learned French to help guide and teach his workers. In just nine months, Latimer's factory, the Maxim-Weston Electric Light Company was in full production.

By 1884, Latimer started working for Thomas Edison and guided him through the process of properly filing patent forms at the U.S. Patent Office. He dedicated time to the engineering and legal department of the Edison Electric Light Company. During his day-to-day work, Latimer drafted sketches and documents for Edison's inventions and looked over plans to determine if there were any patent infringements. He was also in charge of managing the company library and collected

information from around the world, translating data in French and German to protect the company from any international challenges. During his employment with Thomas Edison, the world-famous inventor encouraged Latimer to write a book, titled "Incandescent Electric Lighting: A Practical Description of the Edison System." This work was published in 1890 and explained how an incandescent lamp produced light in a simplified manner that was easy to understand. Throughout his career, he accumulated patents for an arc lamp; a cooling and disinfecting device; and a locking rack for coats, hats, and umbrellas.

In 1906, Latimer moved his family from Brooklyn to a 2.5 story house in Flushing, where he spent the next two decades. He worked for a patent consulting firm until 1922, when failing eyesight ended his career. He also taught mechanical engineering, drawing and English to immigrants at the Henry Street Settlement House, served as an officer of the famed Civil War Veterans' organization and Grand Army of the Republic. To honor his work, on February 11, 1918, Latimer became one of the 28 charter members of the Edison Pioneers and was the only black man in this prestigious organization. Throughout his career, he followed advice he had written as a young boy, "Good habits and good manners are powerful means of advancement that rarely fail to bring reward."

In his spare time, Latimer and his wife, Mary, entertained leaders of New York's black community and corresponded with Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington and other activists to improve the lives of those in surrounding communities. Mary passed away in 1924. The following year, his children had a book of his poems printed for his 77th birthday. In a Fort Myers Press interview with his granddaughter, Winifred Norman, she stated, "He was a renaissance man. He taught himself French and German so he could reach publications in those languages. He was a musician, an artist, a poet."

Today, visitors can learn more about Lewis Latimer in an exhibit dedicated to him inside the 15,000-square-foot museum.

DIGITAL DISCUSSION: THE RINGLINGS OF SARASOTA

JUNE 14 • 10:30 a.m.

In 1924, while Thomas and Mina Edison were visiting their winter home in Fort Myers, John and Mable Ringling began building their home, the Ca' d'Zan in Sarasota. In this discussion, listeners will learn about the history of the Ringlings in Sarasota and their connection to Thomas Edison. Join Program Manager, Holly Shaffer for this free Digital Discussion. **Registration is required at EdisonFord.org**



YOGA BY THE RIVER

EVERY WEDNESDAY • 10-11 A.M.



Yoga offers us a deeper connection to our inner self, nature and to the community. This one-hour yoga class allows you to step away from all the 21st century gadgets and focus on the moment. Yoga helps to recharge the body, mind, and spirit. Class will be held at the River Pavilion during the summer months. All skill levels welcome. The class is taught by Bonnie D'Angelo, a certified yoga instructor. Bonnie started her journey as a yoga teacher to further support her own spiritual growth. She is RYT200 certified with Yoga Alliance and working toward RYT300. She is certified in Reiki 1 and Reiki 2 and will continue the path toward Reiki Master & Energy Worker.

Cost: Edison Ford members: \$15; non-members: \$20 per class (Tickets may be purchased online or at the ticket counter). **Bring a yoga mat, water and towel.** Admission to the site is not included.

JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION AT EDISON MALL JUNE 19

Join us for a special tea at the Edison Mall with "Mina Edison" and "Dr. Ella Mae Piper." The two icons will talk about life in Fort Myers during the 1920s. Sponsored by the Edison Ford Shoppe in partnership with the Edison Mall.

For additional information, call (239) 931-5351.



Holly Shaffer, Program Manager, giving a presentation in the Edison Ford Museum.

Tours and Programs

Historian-led guided tours and self-guided tours of the site are offered daily. Through the app, narration is available in English, French, German, and Spanish. A web-based version is also available, which does not require downloading the app. Site maps are available in English, French, German, Spanish and Chinese.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11 a.m., special presentations are offered in the museum.

Guided tours in German are available on Wednesdays at 11 a.m.
Cost: \$30 per person



James Moss, Automotive Curator giving a tour in garage at Ford Home.

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.



Matt Andres, Registrar, giving a tour inside the Ford house.

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.



Karen Maxwell, Horticultural Specialist giving a garden tour.

Guided Garden Tour

Available by appointment for groups of 5 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 15 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.

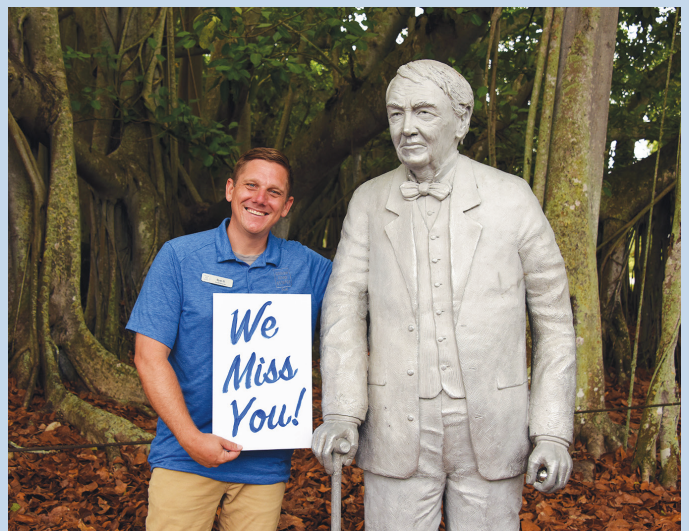
Cost: \$375 per group.



MEMBERSHIP at Edison and Ford Winter Estates has many benefits!

Being a member is the best way to experience the site, with unlimited general admission throughout the year. Supporting a national treasure will also give you great discounts, exclusive perks, and the satisfaction of knowing you are making an investment for future generations to enjoy!

For those who like to travel, membership also gives the added benefit of reciprocal admission to thousands of North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM), American Horticulture Society (AHS), and Time Travelers locations across the country. Links to these organizations can be found on our website under the membership tab. Discounts are also offered on retail and garden purchases, plus as a member, you'll receive a discount on events and educational programs! Give us a call at 239.335.3674 today to see how you can start saving now!



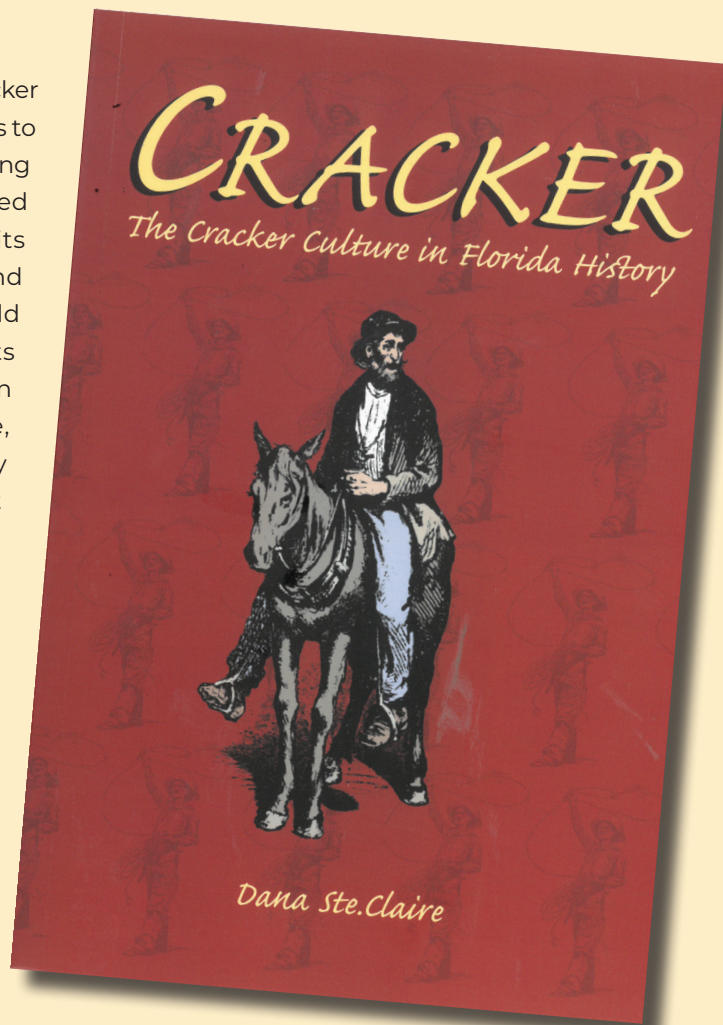
June Book of the Month:

Cracker The Cracker Culture in Florida History

By Dana Ste. Claire

There are very few books about Cracker heritage in Florida and this one rises to the top. It has a little bit of everything about the culture. It is an illustrated volume about Cracker heritage, its history, folklore, anthropology, and its disappearance as today's world reached into the most remote parts of Florida. Participants will learn about the language they spoke, the houses they built, the food they ate, moonshine, and discover part of the real Florida that is rapidly disappearing.

Buy a copy in the museum store or have one shipped by calling 239-335-3661. Members receive 10% off the purchase price.



“HEAVEN SCENT”

By Karen Maxwell, Horticultural Specialist



On a recent evening, just after sunset, as the crepuscular creatures were venturing out, I walked into the Moonlight Garden to turn off lights that had been left on for a special event. Strolling around, my mind was wandering, contemplating various subjects for this month’s article when I was seduced by an intoxicating fragrance that filled the soft dusky air.

In our Moonlight Garden, there are no less than six varieties of gardenias—one actually belongs to the Tribe Gardenia, meaning it is not a true gardenia by botanical definition, but more on that later. Gardenias are included in the plant family Rubiaceae, which also includes coffee, pentas and quinine.

Taxonomically speaking, the common gardenia is *Gardenia jasminoides* where the species epithet means jasmine like. In some literature, *Gardenia jasminoides* is synonymous with *Gardenia florida* (meaning many flowers) and *Gardenia augusta*. The genus name honors Alexander Garden (1730-1791) who was a Scottish physician, a naturalist, a resident of Charleston, South Carolina and



GARDEN TALK: BROMELIADS

SATURDAY, JUNE 11 • 10 A.M.

Learn about the many Bromeliads that can be grown here in Southwest Florida and how to add them to your garden.

Cost: \$10 for Edison Ford members; \$15 for non-members



Gardenia jasminoides Arbol

a correspondent of Linnaeus, the father of botanical classification. Commonly, gardenias are also referred to as Cape Jasmine in some parts of the world.

Most species of gardenias originated in the eastern hemisphere. As early as the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD), the Chinese were cultivating gardenias, which made their way to South Africa and on to England as early as 1760, and shortly thereafter arrived on the shores of the soon-to-be United States. Since then, nothing speaks of Southern charm and culture in flowers as does the gardenia.

My Florida horticulture hero, Henry Nehrling (who was employed by the Edisons in Fort Myers in 1928), wrote in 1925, “Camellia, rose and gardenia were the most fashionable flowers of the antebellum days ... the glorious

fragrance [of the gardenia] ... and pure white color—another point in its favor ...”

The architect who designed Edison’s Study and the Pool Complex, Hal Walker, also designed a Flower Garden for Mrs. Edison in 1928 for the areas between the houses and outside of the pergola that included gardenias. Historic inventories list *G. augusta*, specifically August Beauty on site during the years 1930-1936.

The fragrance is why most people want to grow gardenias. With more than 200 varieties ranging from dwarfs that grow only two feet tall, to gardenia standards (small trees) reaching to 12 feet, such as those that anchor both ends of the eastern path through the Moonlight Garden, we will share the formula for success in a Southwest Florida garden.

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Gardenia flowers are waxy and they all open as a white flower – some a bright white, while others have flowers that fade to off white or pale yellow or orange. Yes, orange. Gardenia flowers may be single or double, clustered or solitary. All are fragrant. These are slow-growing plants with a lifespan of approximately 20 years.

In Southwest Florida, the most popular variety is Miami Supreme, followed by Aimee, which offers larger, but later blooms. Gardenias are susceptible to the root-knot nematodes in our sandy soils, so the University of Florida recommends purchasing a gardenia that has been grafted onto *Gardenia thunbergia* rootstock, resulting in a more vigorous gardenia shrub. The limiting factor of these grafted gardenias is that they are not cold-hardy and will die if the temperature drops below 28 degrees. Un-grafted gardenias can grow as far north as zone 7b. Such is our lot as a Southwest Florida gardener – but when one considers that we have managed to survive without the ability to grow camellias, we should be happy we have the opportunity to grow lovely gardenias. (For those left wondering, *Gardenia thunbergia* is native to Zimbabwe, where it is known as the wild gardenia and it is used by the Karanga of Zimbabwe to ward off witchcraft. It has an intense, almost over-powering scent.)

A historical postscript: A noted colleague, friend and neighbor of the Edisons, James Hendry who owned and operated the Everglades Nursery, which was located just up the road on McGregor Boulevard, is credited with being the first nurseryman to graft *Gardenia veitchii* with *Gardenia thunbergia* and according to a News-Press article dated May 5, 1975, was the granddaddy of our grafted gardenias.

Gardenia lovers are encouraged to limit their garden to one or two plants as these shrubs are as attractive to insects as they are to humans. For this particular reason, while they do grow well in pots, we don't recommend them as houseplants. Gardenias attract scales, thrips, aphids, and whiteflies, which can be managed outside

with regular applications of horticultural oils or Neem as directed on the packaging. Should you observe sooty mold (a black powdery-like substance) on gardenia leaves, closer inspection will most likely reveal ants marching up and down its stems. They are after the honeydew of the insects and it is a call to action. During times of extended dry periods is when this would typically occur.

Gardenias thrive in well-drained organic, acidic soils, with a pH range of 5.0-6.5, similar to the preference of azaleas and camellias. Most of our Southwest Florida soils tend to be alkaline (higher than 7.0) so we must make a few adjustments to keep our gardenias in top form.

Begin by planting the gardenia in a mound, higher than the surrounding garden area, and be sure to keep the flare (where the bottom of the trunk meets the roots or graft) above the soil line. Keep an eye on this after the first year, as often they will sink as the disturbed soil settles during the rainy season. This is good advice for planting most trees, by the way. Most importantly, plant your gardenia where you will be able to enjoy its fragrance and, like roses, they appreciate very good air circulation. Gardenias will thrive with some afternoon shade during the heat of summer, but they can endure full sun with appropriate watering. They are not at all salt tolerant and will show their disdain if briny reclaimed water, or household softened water is applied. Be sure to keep them moist and apply a nice four-inch layer of good organic mulch over their roots.

Maintain a good feeding regime of a quality fertilizer with minors (the other trace elements of a complete fertilizer) formulated for acid-loving plants, two to three times a year – February and October and if the leaves are showing signs of deficiency, also feed in June and again in August. Our alkaline soils block acid loving plants from accessing iron, magnesium and nitrogen from the soil. The tell-tale signs of these deficiencies are as follows: If the leaves have yellowing between the veins, it is iron deficient; if the leaves are yellowing from the



Gardenia Nitida

outer margins inward, the plant is magnesium deficient; if all of the leaves are yellowing, it is nitrogen deficient. Purchase fertilizer for acid-loving plants – the fertilizer should be complete and include ammonium sulfate, ammonium nitrate, iron sulfate and sulphur-coated urea.

In the absence of the correct fertilizer, the gardener can add dry coffee grounds to the soil or one tablespoon of Epsom Salts mixed with one gallon of water, once a month; or apply one tablespoon of vinegar to one gallon of water, once every three months.

When to prune is a common question. Give only a minimal pruning to maintain desired shape and vigor

after the plant has completed its blooming cycle. If pruning is done after October 1, the number of blooms the following spring will be greatly diminished. Should bud drop start to occur, it could be from natural causes such as an extended dry and hot spell, or very cool weather. Inadequate drainage or too much fertilizer will also lead to the loss of buds.

In addition to *Gardenia jasminoides*, visitors to our Moonlight Garden can also view several other varieties, including *Gardenia nitida* native to West Central Africa. It is a shrub that can grow to twelve feet. The single flowers have long tubular throats for pollination by hawk moths. *G. nitida* is unusual in that it will develop lots of

continued on next page ▶



Gardenia taitensis

flowers in one day, and they are all gone the next. It will repeat this bloom pattern several times a year. *Gardenia nitida* was first identified by William J. Hooker, the first director of Kew Gardens in England.

As one enters the Moonlight Garden from the northwest (and original) entrance, there is *Gardenia taitensis*, Heaven Scent on the left (they also flank the riverside entrance to Ford's cottage.) Neither native to nor naturalized in Tahiti, the name is misleading. However, it is now the national flower of French Polynesia and the Cook Islands. It grows up to eight feet with glossy, deep green leaves. The flowers are used to make perfume oil by infusing them in coconut oil.

Speaking of misnomers, the Vietnamese Gardenia is neither from Vietnam, nor a true gardenia in that its seed pod has grooves, unlike true gardenias, but botanists do classify this *Kailarsenia* in the tribe gardenia. This closely related plant otherwise looks and smells like a single flower gardenia and it tolerates very moist soils, is highly resistant to root-knot nematodes and is free flowering all year. It is most fragrant in the early evening.

With a flower structure similar to *G. nitida*, don't miss *Gardenia tubifera*, or Golden Gardenia, which is



Vietnamese Gardenia



Gardenia tubifera



Cassia Fistula

located along the pathway to the Caretaker's Cottage along the eastern side of the Moonlight Garden – it is tucked in between the Tabernaemontanas – which are often mistaken for gardenias. An easy way to tell the difference is the lack of strong fragrance, and all of the Tabernaemontana have milky latex oozing from their stems. To add to the confusion, these gardenia look-alikes are often referred to as Crepe (or Crape) Jasmines, while Cape Jasmine is a common name for gardenias.

So, the next time you visit the Moonlight Garden, please stop to smell the gardenias!

Coming up in June, be on the lookout for one of my favorite trees, the stunningly beautiful Cassia fistula, the Golden Shower Tree. It's the national tree of Thailand and will be blooming this month here at Edison and Ford Winter Estates and on properties in and around Fort Myers!



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TIS THE SEASON FOR PINK THROUGHOUT THE GARDEN!

COME SEE WHAT'S BLOOMING!

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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