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MEMBER MAGAZINE
JULY 2022

EDISON and FORD winter ESTATES

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THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT

The Edison Ford FIRST LEGO league division robotics team, "**ASSEMBLY REQUIRED**," recently competed at the World Festival in Houston, Texas. They had previously won the Innovative Project Award at the state competition. On June 6, Mayor, Kevin Anderson recognized the team for their accomplishments.



THANK YOU to our major sponsors for making
the trip to Texas possible:

**Entech, Graveyard Shift Screen Printing,
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Also, thank you to all the private donors!

JULY

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

July 6, 13, 20, 27

Yoga by the River

July 1 – August 5

Summer Camp

July 9

Garden Talk

July 12

Digital Discussion

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 patriotic Thomas Edison marches with the Naval Consulting Board in a New York City Preparedness Parade, May 13, 1916
(Photo Credit: National Park Service).

THE BLUEBIRD OF HAPPINESS

By Matt Andres, Collections Registrar

Most people know about Henry Ford's work within the automobile industry. Even today, many consider Ford to be one of the most prominent and influential industrialists in American history. His iconic Model T made him an international celebrity, and his moving automotive assembly line transformed him into the master of mass production.

Far less is known about Ford's love for birds and boating, however. Young Ford's first vivid memory was his father, William Ford, taking him and his little brother, John, to see a bird's nest hidden under a large oak log near their family's farm. According to Ford, it had four eggs and a mother bird was chirping and singing loudly. The memories of that birdsong stayed with him long after that day, and later in life he developed a love for birds, which was undoubtedly, and unconsciously, connected to this experience with his father.

His affection for birds extended to his boating endeavors as well, when in 1917, Ford purchased a large, beautiful steam yacht called *Sialia*, the scientific name for Eastern Bluebird. Built around 1913 in Wilmington, Delaware, it was designed and constructed by preeminent shipbuilders, the Pusey and Jones Company, for John K. Stewart, one of the partners at Stewart-Warner Speedometer Company. Ford was drawn to the vessel's name and retained it during his ownership. At a cost of \$250,000, it was a 202-foot ocean-going, twin screw steel schooner, weighing an impressive 552 gross tons, equipped with triple expansion oil-fired steam turbines generating 1,250 horsepower, had a fuel capacity of 150 tons, and a top speed of 16 knots. (18.4 mph). Reportedly, Henry Ford flew a House Flag on his yacht called the "Bluebird Of Happiness." It was flown every time Ford was aboard and was later transferred to another ship called the *M/S Henry Ford II*.

The *Sialia* was technologically advanced for its time as it included a state-of-the-art Telefunken wireless communication system as well. Ford initially intended to use the *Sialia* for business purposes as his preferred mode

of transportation during trips investigating possible industrial resources for his manufacturing plant. One such occasion occurred in 1917, when he traveled to Cuba to inspect the island's source of coal and iron ore. No transactions resulted from this expedition, however.

It quickly became a recreational watercraft as Henry began using his enormous yacht as a means of conveyance for family and friends during various excursions, including those to southwest Florida. The *Sialia* would eventually make the first of two voyages to Fort Myers in 1917, anchoring near Punta Rassa, next to the Sanibel Lighthouse, which was considered a deep-water port. Ford arrived at his winter home, "The Mangoes," via a motor launch up the Caloosahatchee, as the river was too shallow to allow safe passage of this large vessel.

Upon its journey home to Dearborn, Michigan, Ford received word by wireless communication that his vessel had been enrolled, or "commandeered," for Naval Coast Guard Defense as part of America's ongoing war effort against Germany's sink-all-ships policy. The United States Navy Special Board for Patrol Vessels offered only \$220,000 as compensation, but Henry did not object and accepted their modest proposal for what he considered a service to his nation.

Henry's yacht reported for World War I service and was commissioned in June of 1917 as the USS *Sialia* (SP-543). It was employed as a patrol vessel near Philadelphia, but in April of 1918 was transferred to Hampton Roads, Virginia, thus performing flagship duties for Cruiser and Transport Forces. After World War I, the *Sialia* was loaned to the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey from June 10, 1919, until March 15, 1920. A month later, Ford repurchased the yacht back from the United States Navy for \$168,500, subsequently spending an extra \$150,000 to refurbish it. During the 1920s, it was used to travel in and around the Great Lakes area, including Henry's 1924 "Vagabond" trip with Thomas Edison and Harvey Firestone to the



Henry Ford disembarking; Edsel Ford in the background.

upper peninsula of Michigan where it ferried the three famous friends across Lake Michigan and later returned them to Dearborn.

For years, Ford was dissatisfied with its speed, so in 1925 he spent more than 1.5 million dollars to have the American Shipbuilding Company rebuild its frame, install twin piston diesel engines, and enlarge its size to 223 feet. Much to his chagrin, it ran slower afterward than before. Ford again brought his yacht to Florida in 1926, first stopping in St. Augustine, then to Boca Grande, where his ship was quarantined for two days before being able to proceed to Punta Rassa on March 8. Mrs. Ford again took the motor launch to Fort Myers, while Henry decided to walk into town, but upon her arrival ordered a car to retrieve her husband. He made it a total of seven miles before rescue showed up.

The Sialia remained in use for a few more years and usually docked at its home port, Ford Motor Company's Rouge plant. Although a little murky, it appears that by 1929 the Sialia was linked to Edsel Ford, and photographic evidence further indicates the yacht almost sank upon hitting a reef near Boston. It was towed to Atlantic Works, East Boston, Massachusetts, by salvage vessel Resolute, pumped out and kept afloat.

Evidence reveals that in 1935, a company called A.N. Andrews Investment Corp. sold the Sialia to Evan Jones. It was later sold in 1939 to Milton Jackson, Clipper Lines, Inc., and renamed the Yankee Clipper. Reacquired by the United States Navy on November 25, 1940, it was recommissioned as patrol yacht USS Coral (PY 15) in February 1941 and initially commanded by Lt. Commander W.H. Meyer. USS Coral served inshore patrol duty near Philadelphia and New Port, Rhode Island before being reassigned to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for training exercises.

Records indicate that in 1943 it was part of Service Squadron 9, based in Key West, Florida, but in August was sent to Norfolk, Virginia to participate in an escort convoy. The USS Coral was decommissioned on September 10, 1943, under command of Lt. Commander John H. Church, Jr. It appears the vessel was never used again during World War II. Sold by the Navy on July 15, 1947, no records were found documenting its journey from there, but believed to have been scrapped for its metal at that point. An undistinguished ending for a remarkable ship that once soared through blue waters with many singing the praises of a yacht called Sialia.

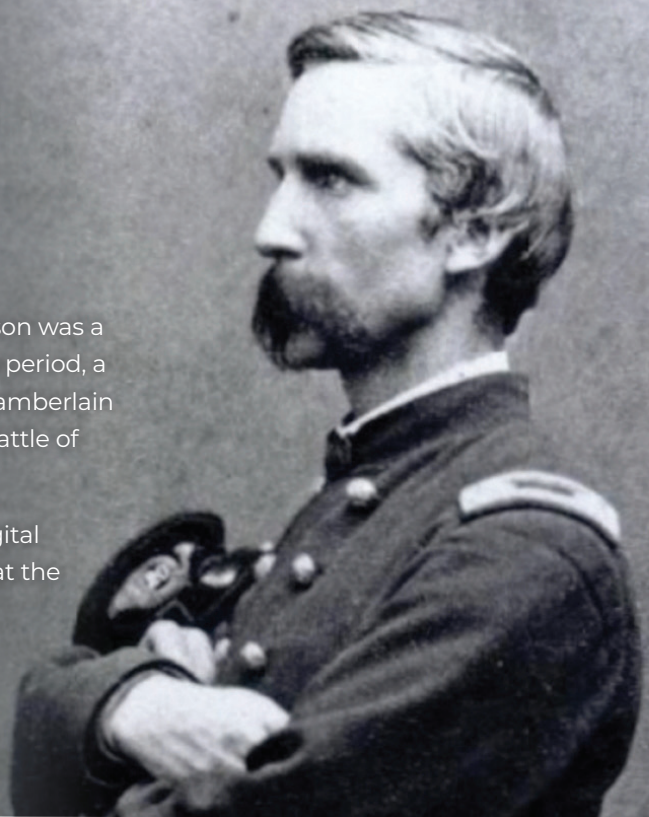
DIGITAL DISCUSSION: JOSHUA CHAMBERLAIN AND THE CIVIL WAR

JULY 12 • 10:30 a.m.

Did you know that during the Civil War, Thomas Edison was a teenage telegraph operator? During that same time period, a college professor in Pennsylvania named Joshua Chamberlain led his troops into battle at Little Round Top at the Battle of Gettysburg.

Join Program Manager, Holly Shaffer, for this free digital discussion. Previously, Holly was a volunteer docent at the Joshua Chamberlain Museum in Brunswick, Maine, so she is very knowledgeable about the Civil War.

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 in 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.



THANK YOU TO OUR INVENTOR'S SUMMER CAMP SPONSORS

ALL OF THE SUMMER CAMPS ARE SOLD OUT.

Check the website for other programs throughout the year.

EdisonFord.org



MINA EDISON

By Alexandria Edwards, Marketing & Public Relations Coordinator



Mina Miller Edison

On July 6, Edison and Ford Winter Estates will remember Thomas Edison's second wife, Mina Miller, a remarkable pioneer woman who dedicated numerous hours to improving communities throughout the United States. Born in Akron, Ohio, in 1865, Mina was the seventh of eleven

children and the daughter of Lewis Miller and Mary Valinda Alexander. Her parents ensured that all their children were exposed to and appreciated the values of education and culture, which influenced Mina's career and how she raised her children. Mina was very inspired by her father's efforts to improve education in both public and church schools while developing a reaper with a moveable cutting bar that revolutionized agriculture.

In 1883, Mina graduated with distinction from Akron High School. At the graduation ceremony, she delivered an essay titled "Among the Foundations," a reference to the fundamentals of a good life. After high school, Mina took a grand tour of Europe where she gained a worldly education that benefited her immensely. She completed the remainder of her schooling at Miss Abby H. Johnson's Home and Day School for Young Ladies in Boston and excelled in musical studies and classics.

Around the same time, Thomas Edison was a world-famous inventor with 500 United States patents to his name. The inventor decided to travel to Florida to help regain his health and explored Fort Myers with his best friend and business partner, Ezra Gilliland. After a few days, Edison visited the town's first realtor and found a 13-acre property for sale by cattleman, Samuel Summerlin, which he bought

for \$2,750. In the summer of 1885, Edison and Gilliland fine-tuned their plans while Edison stayed at Woodland Villa – Gilliland's cottage in Winthrop, Massachusetts.

When they were not working, Gilliland and his wife, Lillian acted as matchmakers for Thomas Edison, who had become a recent widow. The family hosted weekend dinners and Edison was often the guest of honor. They introduced him to several suitable young women and one of them was 19-year-old Mina Miller. Edison was immediately smitten, noting her beautiful olive complexion, dark flowing hair, and deep, dreamy eyes. When asked about how she felt about Mr. Edison at the time, Mina replied that he was "just a genial, lovely man."

After Mina went back to Boston with her family, Edison and Gilliland continued to order supplies for their Fort Myers estate; however, Edison continued to write about Mina in his diary and commented one day, "Saw a lady who looked like Mina. Got thinking about Mina and came near being run over by a street car. If Mina interferes much more will have to take out an accident policy." Edison and his daughter, Marion, arranged a visit to see Mina at Chautauqua, a Methodist retreat and educational center founded by Lewis Miller. Shortly after, Edison invited Mina to go for a trip to Alexandria Bay in upstate New York, followed by the White Mountains of New Hampshire, chaperoned by Marion and the Gilliland family.

Edison was mostly deaf, so he taught Mina Morse Code, which also allowed them to communicate privately. During the trip, he tapped out a proposal of marriage on Mina's palm, and she tapped back "yes" – with the provision that her father approved. Edison wrote to Mr. Miller and won his approval. They set a date for the wedding on February 24, 1886, just a year after they met. The wedding took place at Oak Place – the Miller home in Akron, Ohio. There were approximately 80 guests in



Thomas and Mina stroll through the botanical gardens at Seminole Lodge circa 1912

attendance, including the immediate family and friends of the bride and the groom.

Four days after their wedding, Thomas and Mina Edison traveled to Jacksonville and spent part of their honeymoon at the St. James Hotel. They continued to travel further south toward Fort Myers and stayed at the Keystone Hotel since Edison's Fort Myers estate was not yet complete. Once they settled, they went off to inspect their new home. The 60-foot path suggested by the local press was not completed, and Mina remembered traveling down the rough path with her feet dangling from a donkey cart. The homes were complete in 1886, and Mina named the estate "Seminole Lodge" to honor the native Seminole people.

Once they moved in, Mina assumed the role of stepmother to Edison's children: Marion, William, and Thomas, Jr.; and later raising three more children she had with Thomas: Charles, Madeleine and Theodore. She took on the responsibility of managing the two large homes that were each well-staffed with caretakers while Edison focused on his research, earning herself the title of "home executive."

While managing the homes, Mina also associated herself with many activities outside of the home, dedicating lots of time to a variety of organizations and causes in West Orange, New Jersey; Chautauqua, New York; and Fort Myers, Florida. Chautauqua was one of her first loves since

she spent almost every summer there since childhood and served as the president of the institution's Bird and Tree Club. The club's activities provided an important forum for conservationists throughout the United States. Mina often worked tirelessly to arrange the best speakers for the Chautauqua forum, including Jay "Ding" Darling, a renowned cartoonist and conservationist. Mina invited "Ding" Darling to speak before club audiences, but he was also instrumental in helping her find other experts in the field. Mina personally paid for all or part of the expenses of visiting speakers rather than deplete the club's treasury. Until her death, Mina was a trustee of the Chautauqua Institution. Today, an important wildlife preserve on Sanibel Island is named for "Ding" Darling.

Additionally, she was instrumental in organizing the West Orange Community League, which still serves the recreational and cultural needs of West Orange. Mina served as the institution's second president from 1912 to 1919. During the great depression in the 1930s, the philanthropist was a "Committee of One" for the Welfare League to study how unemployment affected the League's twenty-seven hospitals and allied agencies. At the same time, her healthful habits and activities prompted her to become an active participant and financial contributor to the National Recreation Association. Other organizations that Mina became an ardent supporter of and spokesperson for are the American Red Cross, the National Audubon Society, the John Burroughs Association, the Daughters

Mina Edison poses in front of the pier at Seminole Lodge circa 1930



of the American Revolution (where she served as its national chaplain for a year), and the School Garden Association of America.

In Fort Myers, Mina Edison founded the organization known as the Roundtable, composed of members of the combined civic clubs of the town and served as the first President. The first meeting occurred at Seminole Lodge, and Mina urged that the group concentrate on specific beautification projects that involved improving roads and gardens throughout the city. Through the efforts of the Round Table, replacement palms were planted along First Street and McGregor Boulevard. In 1929, Mina participated in the delivery of gift baskets to the needy during the only Christmas that Thomas and Mina spent in Fort Myers. Of particular interest to Mina was cooperation from community members of all backgrounds, including members of the population that beautified the school grounds and other areas in Dunbar. To support the Dunbar community, Mina also became president of the Safety Hill Garden Group and took part in a ceremony to plant trees at Dunbar High School in May of 1933.

Mina Edison hands the keys for Seminole Lodge to Mayor David Sheppard in 1947

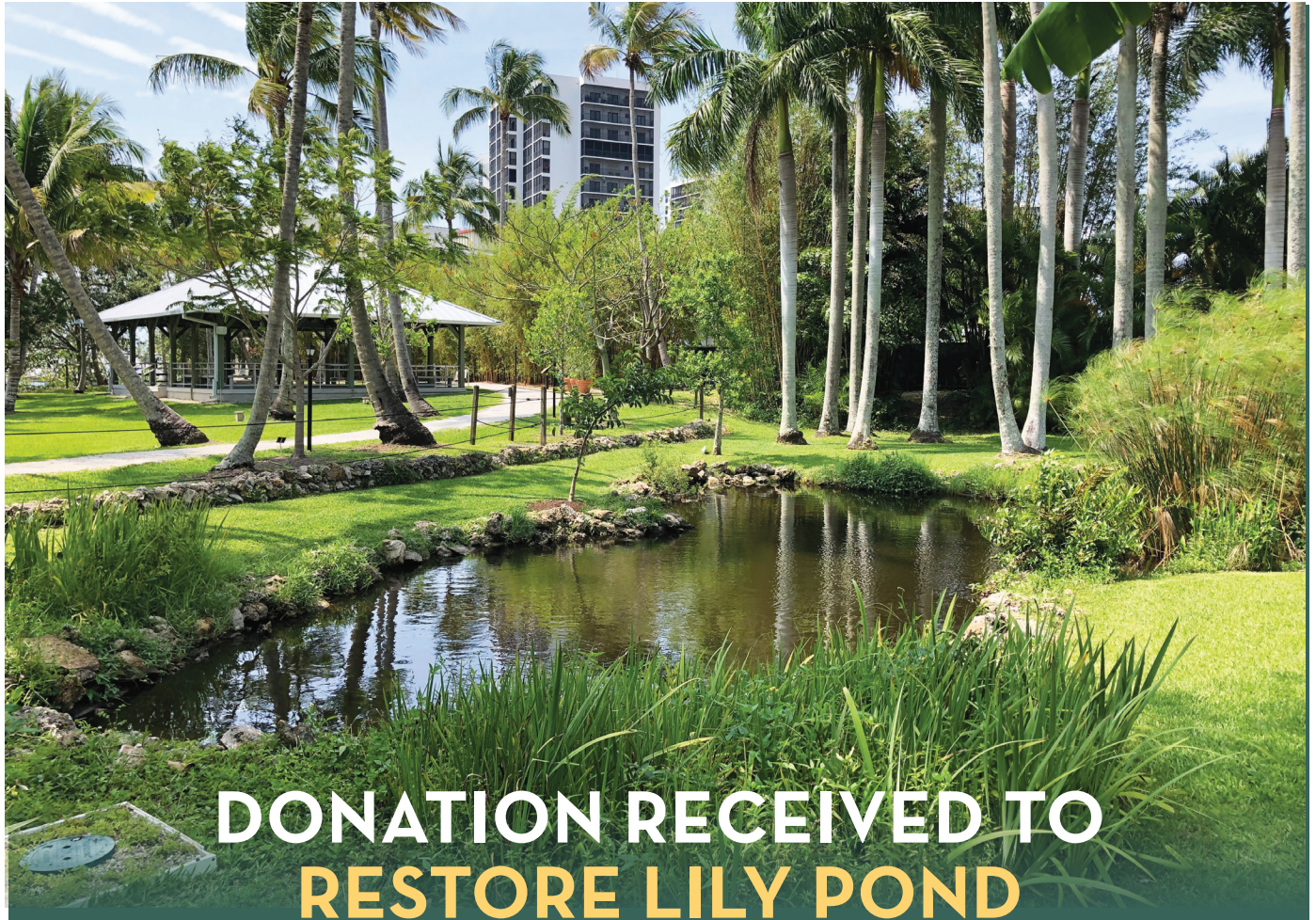


Mina's passion for gardening did not end with beautification projects; however, she wanted to teach those around her proper gardening techniques and introduced a wide variety of gorgeous botanicals to her Fort Myers' estate. In 1928, she founded Fort Myers' first community garden group, the Periwinkle Garden Club. This Garden club was a branch of the Women's Community Club, which contained several sub-organizations that focused on music, fine art, house and garden. The garden branches of the Women's Community Club were formed according to streets and districts, so the ladies who lived along First Street decided to call themselves the "Periwinkles," inspiring the club's name. As a part of this organization, Mina produced several flower shows in locations such as Mrs. A.G. Rhea's garage and the American Legion Home – formerly the Elk's Club. Today, Edison and Ford Winter Estates is a member of the Periwinkle Garden Club and hosts many gardening events in Mina's honor.

Throughout the 1930s, Mina maintained a hefty schedule during the winters she spent in Fort Myers, serving as a leader in the National Plant, Flower and Fruit Guild; the Valinda Literary Circle; and the local music club. She was also the class mother for the Young Men's Wesley Bible Class and recruited Harvey Firestone to attend a session with her. Her work spread throughout the community, and she was invited to speak on beautification and education by other organizations as well, including the Girl Scouts, Rotary Club, Fort Myers Women's Club, and the local Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

After Thomas Edison passed away, Mina Edison was looking for ways to honor her husband's legacy in the City of Fort Myers. In 1946, Mina served as honorary chairperson of the Thomas Alva Edison Foundation which may have prompted her to begin thinking of a proper way to memorialize her husband. She considered a university or library but decided to deed their winter home to the city for \$1 in February of 1947, with the promise that the city would continue to develop educational programs for future generations. Three months after she deeded Seminole Lodge to Fort Myers, Mina passed away, leaving a legacy of community activism, kindness and generosity.

Today, visitors will learn more about Mina Edison during tours of Edison and Ford Winter Estates, gardening classes, and programs held throughout the year. We hope that Mina Edison's work will inspire you to make a positive change in your community!



DONATION RECEIVED TO RESTORE LILY POND

One of our members was visiting recently and struck up a conversation with Debbie Hughes, the Horticulture Director. Debbie mentioned how the historic lily pond was in need of some restoration, but that we were going to need some money before that work could begin. After walking around the site, the member came back and pledged to donate the \$10,000 to restore the pond. This is an example of the impact our members have on the site and how they help to continue the legacy of Thomas Edison.

The Edisons added the pond in 1929 as a means to collect excess water from the swimming pool; it sits between the pool and the Caloosahatchee River. Historic documents indicate that Mina Edison had planted iris, water lilies and papyrus around the pond.

The restoration plan includes draining the pond, cleaning the cement bottom of plant debris, creating a littoral zone and planting Florida native wetland species, and repairing the rock edge. The coral rock waterfall behind the papyrus will also be repaired.

The pond is in an area of high visibility, as it's near the river pavilion, which is available to rent for private events, and visitors pass the pond when walking to Pinchers restaurant. Work is slated to begin this summer and will not impact daily tours. **For additional information about how you can make a difference, contact Nancy Achter at 239-335-3678.**



Bill Howard, Site Historian, giving a guided tour.

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 near the 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 Edison house.

Inside-the-Homes Tours

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

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

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

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

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



Carly Pfalz, Horticulturist, 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.

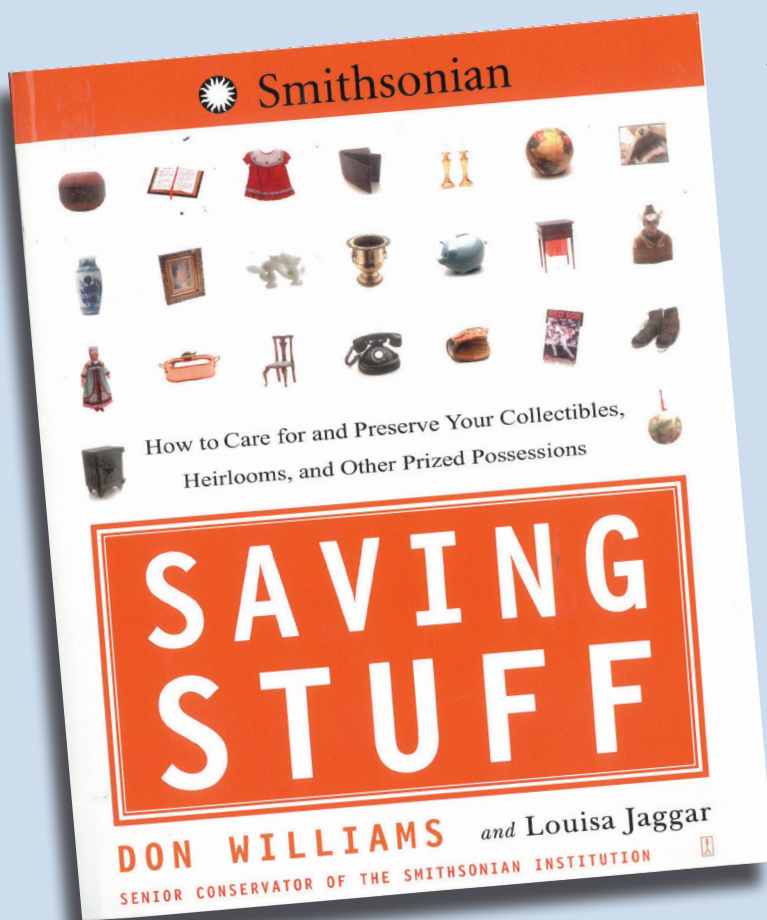
Cost: \$375 per group.

July Book of the Month:

SAVING STUFF:

How to Care for and Preserve Your Collectibles, Heirlooms, and Other Prized Possessions

By Don Williams and Louisa Jaggar



This is the most comprehensive book on preserving every type of collectible from the Smithsonian's Senior Conservator. For the serious collector and the sentimentalist, *Saving Stuff* explains – in everyday terms – how you can use museum-professional techniques to keep your prized possessions in mint condition.

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

GARDEN TALK: VINES & TRELLISES

SATURDAY, JULY 9 • 10 A.M.

Learn about the different species of vines and how to grow and care for them in a home landscape.

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



JUNGLE GERANIUM: A BUTTERFLY DELIGHT

By Karen Maxwell, Horticultural Specialist

If I say, “Ixora,” what are you picturing? Today, we’ll explore how much more there is to this genus of a garden workhorse.



Ixora Coccinea, Super King

Rarely found outside of South Florida in the continental United States – except for in a cozy greenhouse – historical ledgers and correspondence indicate that in the early 1930s, Mina Edison planted “Flame of the Woods” on her property, here in Fort Myers. Other common names for *Ixora coccinea** include Jungle Geranium, West Indian Jasmine, or Iron Tree but today it is popularly known by its genus *Ixora* and there are some additional species beyond *I. coccinea* worthy of consideration for your garden – especially if you want to attract butterflies.

Ixora is a single genus with more than 500 species. As with gardenias (last month’s article), *Ixora* is in the family of Rubiaceae which includes firebush, pentas, and mussenda and produces several economically important products such as coffee and something familiar to most new parents – ipecac. Most plants in this family are of a tropical or sub-tropical origin and all species of *Ixora* are native to the subtropical and tropical regions of the world, with the largest diversity found in Asia.

continued on next page ▶

Honestly, Ixoras never excited me as a garden specimen until the day the *Ixora pavetta** was swarming with every kind of butterfly one typically sees in South Florida – there were zebra longwings, giant swallowtails, gulf fritillaries, and monarchs. The frenetic activity was impossible to photograph with my cellphone, so I just watched. Until that day in April, this small tree had gone largely unnoticed by me, as it grows in the shade of the large Fiddleleaf ficus on the outskirts of our Contra Garden. Intensely fragrant, the large shrub or small tree produces small white

cuttings. Walking through our nursery recently, a beautiful small butterfly caught my eye, hovering above a row of plants – landing on a new *I. pavetta* cutting bursting with a fresh bloom to source its next meal – the rare and endangered Atala Hairstreak



Ixora Pavetta



Ixora Pavetta with Atala Hairstreak butterfly

flower clusters which appear insignificant compared to the brilliant red *I. coccinea*, “Super King” often seen in landscapes.

Perhaps you’ve missed it as well; its common name is “Torch Tree” or “Torchwood Tree.” Propagating *I. pavetta* from seed is a slow and arduous process, true for all Ixoras, so our horticultural department has started to produce new shrubs from hardwood

butterfly landed and nectared for nearly ten minutes, which is an eternity for those who enjoy photographing butterflies.

I. pavetta is native to India and is very important in Ayurvedic medicine – a 3,000-year-old practice of homeopathic healing in India. Its leaves are said to have antiseptic properties and the flowers, roots and bark provide relief, so it is written, for many ailments. It

is such an important tree in Bangladesh, that a piece of its hardwood is traditionally placed on a foundation stone when constructing a new home. A very slow-growing shrub, we don't really know how old our specimen is, but unlike most other *Ixora* species, it has done well in its shaded space and has a single bloom cycle, in the Spring. Listed as growing to 16' tall, this largest of *Ixora* species is probably fully grown.

Historically, *Ixora coccinea** was introduced as a filler plant on the outside of the original Moonlight Garden



***Ixora Coccinea*, Snowball with pink sport**

trellis, sometime between 1930-1936 as it bridged the connection of the native plants restricted to outside the walled garden with the collection of sub-tropical flowering plants prescribed inside the enclosure and surrounding the reflecting pool. The aggressive bougainvillea vines on the outside of the 10' trellis left gaping holes at their bases, so it was recommended to Mrs. Mina Edison, that filling in these holes with *Ixora coccinea* would once again provide the privacy

so enjoyed by her and her husband.

Today, only *Ixora coccinea* (Snowball*), a rare white hybrid that commands a beautiful piece of ground just outside the Northwest entrance grows at the Moonlight Garden. In addition to its bountiful white blossom heads, occasionally, one will catch a red sport from one of its parents.

Ixora coccinea typically grows to 12' feet and flower colors include orange as in Maui; hot pink, Nora Grant,



***Ixora Coccinea*, Snowball**

scarlet red Super King, yellow Sunset* and white Snowball. There are also many compact varieties which are hybrids of *Ixora chinensis* or *Ixora taiwanensis* and these remain under two feet.

With one exception, all ixoras require similar growing conditions. They are sun-lovers, and as natives of the tropical regions, they do not tolerate cold weather. A freeze will generally kill most ixoras, but I have

continued on next page ▶



Ixora coccinea, Sunset in Bromeliad Garden

experienced a total leaf drop with a freeze, and through ignorance or luck, left my mature hedge of Super King alone and the following spring, the hedge of bare sticks re-foliated.

Compact ixoras do well as container plants with the proper conditions. Just like their in-ground counterparts, they need a minimum of six hours of sun a day with the earlier sun preferred over the late, hot afternoon soon. Ixoras love water but should be allowed to dry out for the first couple of inches of soil before re-watering and always water well before and after feeding. Augment our lacking garden soil

with regular feedings, and the *Ixora coccinea* or *Ixora chinensis** will bloom almost year-round. These acid-loving plants companion well with gardenias and hibiscus. Should sooty mold appear on the leaves, the telltale sign of aphids or other sucking insects, give the plants a good washing with horticultural soap. This typically happens if plants are water stressed in the winter.

If you only have a shady garden space, there is an *Ixora* that prefers to be grown in those conditions, as it does in the Moonlight Garden and is a perfect addition for those wishing to have fragrant, white plants – the



Plumeria Pompano Pink



Ixora Odorata

*Ixora odorata** or Fragrant Ixora. This one is also a good specimen Ixora for a large container (grows to 4') for those less than sunny corners, it will provide drama and fragrance, especially during the summer. It will also be happy with a little morning sun.

Throughout southern Florida, *Ixora coccinea* is frequently used as a hedge plant because they are generally evergreen, flower abundantly and take to pruning quite well if one desires a structured look to their hedge. Ixoras planted in zones 10a-9b should probably not be pruned in late fall or early winter to avoid exposing new growth to potential cold damage. Like many flowering shrubs, Ixoras that bloom only once a year, should only be shaped for structure after the bloom cycle is complete.

Summer is also a good time to see the rich jewel colors of our Plumeria Collection, located behind the research beds.

If you'd like to have some Ixoras for your landscape, stop by our Garden Shoppe for a nice selection.

**Indicates plants on site at Edison and Ford Winter Estates.*

Photographs included in this article are courtesy of K.M. Maxwell.



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THE JAVA THE HUTS ROBOTICS TEAM recently visited the Edison Robotics team.

JOIN US in congratulating the Java the Huts Robotics Team! This team was the first robotics team in the First Tech Challenge League and serves as a mentor to our robotics team. Java the Huts is a high school team and won the recent World Championship. The metal robot they demonstrated was completed in September of 2021; the team spent four hours a day preparing it for the world competition. Members of the team include: Kyle Keene, Cayden Keene, Robert Stewart, Dhruva Sharma, and Advait Menon.

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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