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ESTATES

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LEARN ABOUT MANGOES AT THE GARDEN TALK ON AUGUST 13.

MEMBER MAGAZINE
AUGUST **2022**

EDISON and FORD winter ESTATES

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CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER!



Edison and Ford Winter Estates is a popular spot for private events, ceremonies and photo opportunities. Individuals and groups visit from many different states, and some come from other countries.

Recently, a group of law enforcement graduates visited. Join us in congratulating the 90th graduating class of Command Officers from the Southern Police Institute at the University of Louisville! The Command Officers educational program is for mid to upper-level law enforcement managers, providing a solid foundation for law enforcement administration and management practices. We wish all of the officers continued success in their careers!



CONGRATULATIONS TO MAISEN CLARK!

Maisen, the Event Coordinator at Edison Ford, is now a Certified Wedding Planner through The Bridal Society, "the world's leading wedding planner certification program." Maisen makes sure that couples getting married at the Estates have an extra special day!

AUGUST

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

August 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

Through August 5

August 9

August 13

Yoga by the River

Summer Camp

Digital Discussion

Garden Talk

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:

One of the many mango trees at Edison and Ford Winter Estates. This time of year, the trees are bursting with juicy mangoes!

THE RELIANCE

By Matt Andres, Collections Registrar

As Thomas Edison raced from upriver toward his son Charles, shouts of, “We got a tarpon! We got a tarpon!” pierced the air. America’s favorite inventor was all smiles and began laughing wildly as he revealed his prize, a 40-pound tarpon captured from the depths of the Caloosahatchee River. Charles, who had stayed



behind, unveiled another surprise, a 100-pound silver king (tarpon). Vanquished, Edison’s smile quickly turned to deflated disgust as he told his most trusted “mucker,” Freddie Ott, to throw his back overboard. Against Edison’s wishes, Ott refused and kept it – 118 years later, it hangs inside the Edison Ford museum. This all took place in 1904; Edison was a youthful 67 and Charles a mature 14 when the latter bested his father during their aquatic adventure. As if pouring salt water onto Mr. Edison’s wound, the Wizard’s son teased him for many years after this, reminding him on several occasions of his ultimate triumph.

It comes as no surprise that one of Edison’s favorite hobbies was fishing, where he made frequent bets with family members on the number and variety of fish caught during his excursions around Fort Myers. Initially fishing from his pier, Edison eventually spent some of his hard-earned money on a new toy – an electric launch. It gave Southwest Florida’s most famous resident unfettered access to new and even more remote waterways, which allowed him to explore its lush and pristine landscape, rich in wildlife and vegetation. As a result, boating quickly became another cherished pastime, with many hours spent out on the Caloosahatchee and beyond.

At a cost of \$2,250.05, which was equivalent to four years pay for Edison’s caretaker, the Reliance, as it was named, was an impressive 36-foot electric vessel complete with

wooden roof, canvas storm curtains, red, green, and white sailing lights, flag poles, and brass, brass, and more brass. Brass features included chocks, cleats, rowlocks, deck rails, and an air pump. The boat’s name could be seen glistening from afar as even this was spelled using brass lettering. Plush interior

furnishings consisted of a divan seat, eight wicker chairs and table, brussels carpet, mahogany ladder, folding anchor, and a water closet with privacy curtains. A large whistle was installed and could be heard by all passersby. Yacht ensign and bow flag added an extra layer of respectability for the “Caloosahatchee’s Potamoi.”

Purchased from the Electric Launch Company based out of Bayonne City, New Jersey, it was initially shipped by truck to New York and later transported via the Clyde Steamship Line toward Jacksonville, Florida where it was placed on an Atlantic Coast Line Railway train bound for Punta Gorda. Upon its arrival, it was taken by steamer to Fort Myers, becoming the second vessel of Edison’s two-boat flotilla in 1904. It’s power source derived from rechargeable nickel iron alkaline batteries manufactured by the astute inventor and brought southward. Early on, Ott charged each battery using an old generator inside Edison’s original Fort Myers laboratory. Later, a newer onshore generator was installed that converted ac electricity from the city power grid to dc on Edison’s property. Staying true to his persona as master promoter, Edison would later boast of traveling over 100 miles on a fully charged series.

With a quick push of a button, many a good time were had navigating through Southwest Florida’s “boggy thoroughfares.” When not in use, it was housed inside



a large boathouse (17'3" x 42'6") situated alongside the pier's pavilion. It was nearly destroyed in October 1910, when a horrendous hurricane made landfall near Fort Myers. It was described by Edison's employee, Harvie Heitman, as "the most disastrous storm ever known to hit the city." Approximately 200 feet of dock, as well as the boathouse storing Edison's launch were swept away, pushing his vessel to parts unknown. It was eventually rescued by staff but sustained damage to its canopy, which was a total loss.

Another close call occurred in 1921 when stormy weather caused high tides, flooding, and rough seas. Ben Tinstman, Edison's caretaker at the time, informed Mina Edison that the Reliance had broken loose and was set adrift. He later added that it nearly struck the city's railroad dock downtown, but according to Tinstman, a Mr. Capling "at risk of his own life" saved it from complete destruction.

A couple of decades later, written evidence reveals that Henry Ford inquired about procuring the Reliance in hopes of displaying it inside his museum in Dearborn, Michigan. Unfortunately, the hurricane of 1944 obliterated Edison's pier and with it his beloved launch. A letter sent to Ford in October 1944 mentioned, "Mr. Edison's electric launch that you planned to take to Detroit was washed away and is down the beach about a mile a total wreck."



Unsalvageable, it met an early demise amidst a watery grave. Today, a small replica model of Edison's launch that embarked on a thousand fishing trips is on display within the "Fun in the Sun – Family & Friends" exhibit gallery inside the Edison Ford museum.

DIGITAL DISCUSSION: CHARLES AND ANNE MORROW LINDBERG IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

AUGUST 16 • 10:30 a.m.

In this discussion, guests will learn about the Lindbergs and their connection to Southwest Florida, why the couple came here and how they spent their time. Join Program Manager, Holly Shaffer, for this free digital discussion.

Registration is required at EdisonFord.org
(go to the August calendar).



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.



PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

For children ages 18 months to five years, the Emerging Inventors program includes socializing with other children, educational activities, science experiments, and exploration of the Edison and Ford Winter Estates. The program runs September through May and is based out of the new Wizard's Workshop gallery space. Become a family member of Edison Ford and receive discounted registration! Programs take place the first Tuesday of every month from 9-10 a.m.

COST: members: \$10 each class or \$70 for the series; non-members: \$15 each class or \$105 for the series. Cost includes one adult and one child. Space is limited

K-8 PROGRAMS

In addition to monthly classes for preschoolers and homeschoolers, Edison Ford offers a variety of special-interest programs for children in grades K-8. Check the website in September for upcoming programs.

THANK YOU TO OUR INVENTOR'S SUMMER CAMP SPONSORS



HELEN HENDRY

By Alexandria Edwards, Marketing & Public Relations Coordinator



Helen Hendry (Johnson) was a prominent landscape architect who left a lasting legacy in Southwest Florida through her beautification projects and commercial developments, which included garden installations at Edison and Ford Winter Estates. This pioneer

gardener was a titan of horticulture whose passion and dedication to improving the lives of those around her carried her through a 61-year career. She paved the way for many future generations of people that are passionate about horticulture, botany, plant science, and landscape architecture.

Helen was born on November 12, 1930, in Wigham, Georgia, near Thomasville and moved to Fort Myers with her family in 1937. The family lived on McGregor Boulevard, adjacent to the Everglades Nursery, which was incorporated in 1909 and owned by Jim Hendry, Jr., Helen's future father-in-law. As a child, Helen attended Edison Park School and spent her free time running around barefoot between her home and the nursery. When she was just 12 years old, she asked Mr. Hendry about job opportunities. She shared with him that she would be willing to pull weeds, pot plants, or do any task in the nursery in return for a few dollars to buy Christmas presents. Jim agreed to the offer and decided to pay her \$1.50 per day to maintain the weeds and plant shrubs and other plants throughout his garden.

The young landscape architect continued to work at the nursery until she graduated from Fort Myers High School in 1949. After graduation, she was promoted to a full-time employee at the nursery and studied horticulture with Jim Hendry and Vincent Honc, a German immigrant who

taught her planting techniques, such as air-layering and grafting. Helen shared a deep admiration for improving gardens and expanding the community's knowledge on plants with her employer and mentor. Under Mr. Hendry's leadership, the nursery planted 6,000 trees in Fort Myers – the most significant public beautification project ever undertaken in the city.

The garden center was known for cultivating bougainvilleas, a passion that originated from Captain A. Hendry – Jim Hendry's grandfather, who received one of the first bougainvilleas in Florida. Helen recalled that Hendry propagated a red thornless bougainvillea for her, that he named "Helen Johnson" because "he said that I had no thorns. I think that was a great compliment for anybody." Helen in turn propagated a yellow hibiscus for Hendry.

The nursery also grew a multitude of plants, including palms from seed that were shipped to Arizona, California, Texas and Canada. As a teenager and through her adult years, Helen volunteered at Lee Memorial Hospital when she was not working in the garden.

Many local residents admired Helen's hard work and contributions to the nursery, which gave her the opportunity to design the gardens of many influential individuals, including Mina Edison. When Mrs. Edison deeded her estate to the City of Fort Myers in 1947, Helen helped design the landscape throughout the site. This included the rosy-pink bougainvillea hedge by the entrance to the Garden Shoppe on Larchmont Avenue that shows off its bright colors throughout the winter months. Planted in the 1950s, it is a notable feature of gardens in Southwest Florida, and many people consider this to be one of her finest designs.

The landscape artist met Mina Edison when she was exploring the botanical gardens along the Edison's 13.5-acre estate as a young girl. The two women formed a fast friendship, and Mina often consulted with Helen on gardening and landscape design during her frequent trips to Everglades Nursery. Helen reported to the press

that Mrs. Edison was “an elegant lady who had been very kind to me and I was always in awe of her.”

As Helen branched out into the field of landscape architecture, she worked with many prominent clients in Naples, Fort Myers, Sanibel and Captiva to beautify private residences as well as on municipal and government projects. She drove to Gainesville to attend classes on landscape architecture and was awarded her license in 1965, making her the first woman and third person to earn her architecture license in Florida. She went on to serve on the Florida Board of Landscape Architects for 14 years, where she helped design the standards for those seeking their professional licensure.

She was chosen to be a director of the Florida Nursery and Growers Association (FNGA) for her extensive horticultural knowledge and contributions to the landscaping community, serving as the first female president of the Royal Palm Chapter of FNGA in 1965-1966. One of the main projects she was involved in on behalf of the organization was lobbying for the Florida State Legislature to pass a bill requiring the registration and examination of landscape architects.

In 1969, Helen married James E. Hendry III, a graduate of Princeton University and an expert on tropical fruit crops. James helped her manage the Everglades Nursery that he, his former wife, and daughters inherited after James Hendry II passed away in 1955. After Helen assumed more responsibility, she maintained a rigid work schedule, often arriving at the nursery around 7:30 a.m. and working until roughly 6 p.m. in a little office just a few yards from McGregor. As she continued caring for the property, she followed her former boss’s advice “to play with the earth, sort of grow with the plants so you understand their needs.” In 1987, the nursery closed down and was sold to land developers.

Helen later became a trustee of Edison and Ford Winter Estates, providing staff with historical tidbits and knowledge on plant science. Her expertise was invaluable to the estates, and she spent countless hours helping to manicure and secure the future of the thousands of plants grown at Seminole Lodge. She rode around in a cart with staff, pointing out the largest and rarest species of bougainvillea, palms, and philodendron. The designer also discussed different blends of fertilizer and recommended moving orchids strapped to tree trunks that she felt were overexposed to high winds.



Her legacy at Edison Ford included the development of a long-range plan for garden restoration and conservation.

Over the years, several organizations recognized Helen. She was a member of the Jim Hendry Chapter of the Hibiscus Society and volunteered with the Fort Myers-Lee County Garden Council; for her efforts, she was awarded the organization’s horticultural award from the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs. In addition, FNGLA recognized her as a member of the Hall of Fame; she was chosen as a “Grande Dame” by PACE Center for the Girls; and was nominated to be Florida’s Agricultural Woman of the Year, which was previously awarded to her good friend, Ginnie Zipperer.

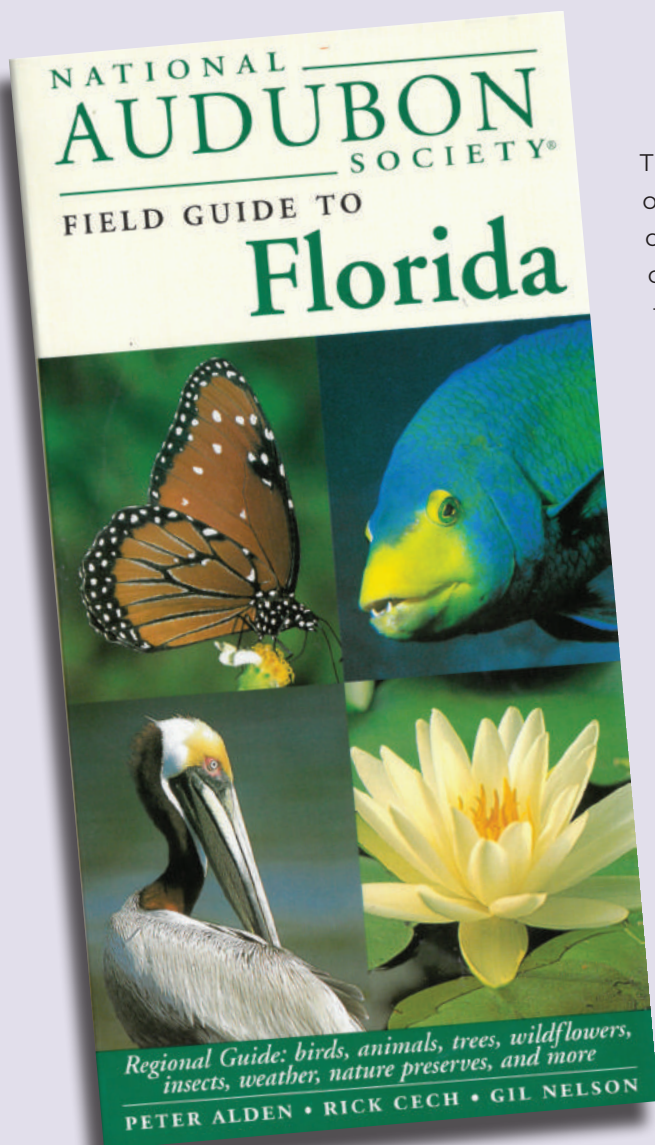
In 2011, the Lee County Commissioners brought Helen, her family, and friends to the courthouse, where she was thanked for her service to Lee Country during the previous 70 years. Following this special occasion, June 22 was declared to be “Helen Hendry Day.” The beautification of Southwest Florida owes much to Helen Hendry (1930-2016).

As you stroll the gardens at Edison Ford or throughout the city, take a minute to recognize the members of the community that worked tirelessly to make Fort Myers a unique place to live and visit. **Part of the mission at Edison and Ford Winter Estates is to preserve history for future generations to enjoy. Visit us soon and learn how you can become more involved with the site!**

August Book of the Month:

THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY FIELD GUIDE TO FLORIDA

By Peter Alden, Rick Cech, and Gil Nelson



This book belongs in the backpack or back pocket of every resident or visitor to Florida. The book contains an easy-to-use field guide for identifying 1,000 of the state's wildflowers, trees, mushrooms, mosses, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, butterflies, and mammals. Additionally, it shares where the best parks and preserves are located. Every Floridian needs this book in their collection.

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

PERIWINKLE GARDEN CLUB DONATES ARTIST'S RAIN BARREL AND BUTTERFLY SIGN

Edison and Ford Winter Estates recently received a donated rain barrel and a butterfly sign from the Periwinkle Garden Club. The rain barrel was painted by artist Marie Dyer, who teaches painting classes at the Estates, and the butterfly sign was designed by Nick Bodvin, a long-time, local butterfly gardener.

When Thomas Edison arrived to Fort Myers in 1885, he purchased 13 acres along the Caloosahatchee River from Samuel Summerlin, a prominent cattle rancher. The property included a "cracker" (the nickname for Florida cowboys) house, which became Edison's caretaker's home. Today, it is one of the oldest standing structures in Lee County. The barrel is installed outside that same house; collected rain will be used to water plants in the nearby garden beds.

The Edisons would have similarly collected rain to water their crops and gardens. The artist's painting on the barrel depicts "crackers" herding cattle in Southwest Florida. The scene is one that Edison himself may have witnessed -- back when Fort Myers' population was only about 350 and the largest industry was cattle ranching.

The butterfly sign was installed in the new butterfly garden between the side of the museum and Larchmont Avenue, near the Garden Shoppe. It represents the many butterflies that visitors are likely to see at the Estates. The butterfly garden includes a shaded path for visitors to stroll, or they may sit on a bench and observe butterflies. For locals wanting to create a butterfly garden of their own, many of the plants featured in the garden are sold in the Garden Shoppe.

Mina Edison enjoyed gardening at her Fort Myers estate and became involved in many community projects, including efforts to beautify the city. In 1928, the Periwinkle Garden Club was founded and Mina Edison was one of the initial members. Today, many gardening events and classes are hosted in Mina's honor at the Estates.





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 Ford home.

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.



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.



IT'S MANGO SEASON!

If you're looking for that sweet, juicy taste of Florida, we have mangoes for sale in the Garden Shoppe! And, if you'd like to grow your own mangoes, we have the trees for sale too!

GARDEN TALK: MANGOLICIOUS!

SATURDAY, AUGUST 13 • 10 A.M.

This Garden Talk is all about mangoes and we think you'll agree that they are MANGOLICIOUS! Learn about the different species of mango trees and how to grow and care for them in a home landscape. Horticulturists will also demonstrate how cut these delicious morsels.

COST:

\$10 for Edison Ford members;

\$15 for non-members



Published by Fairchild Tropical Garden in 1992, "A Guide to Mangos in Florida" is a great resource for anyone wanting to grow this amazing fruit. The book is out of print; however, there are some used copies circulating online.

SABAL PALMETTO “LISA”

The Silver Anniversary of a Love Story

By Karen Maxwell, Horticultural Specialist

Did you know that cabbage palms (*Sabal palmetto*) grow in the South Pacific? Until about 10 years ago, neither did I. Then one lazy afternoon, I was watching the 1948 musical “On an Island With You,” featuring swimmer Esther Williams who portrays a movie star filming on location on a South Pacific island. Now with my horticultural experience focused on Southwest Florida, I should have been suspicious when Esther was shown swimming amongst bald cypress trees dripping with Spanish moss. Perhaps I was too scared for her, imagining the other things that naturally swim in bald cypress swamps to recognize that these are only native to the southeastern United States. It didn’t dawn on me to doubt my eyes until I caught a glimpse of our state tree, the cabbage palm, growing in the background scenes. This made me wonder. Always curious about plant origins, I decided to read up on our cabbage palm to see if it actually grows on any Pacific islands.

Of course, it can grow. But the important question that I was unconsciously asking myself, was the extent of its native origins. Cabbage palms, like many plants and trees do grow well outside of their native origins as I discovered in my research, but they are only endemic or naturally occurring to the Southeastern U.S.



Cabbage Palm Frond

Researching from the comfort of my couch, computer on my lap, movie running, the first article to pop up regarding *Sabal Palmetto* was on Wikipedia. (Okay, groan, but it’s an easy place to start). Skimming most of the article, I perused the footnotes where “A new cultivar of *Sabal palmetto* in Fort Myers” prompted an immediate click through. And as for that film? It was shot on location alright – at Cypress Gardens in Florida!

During the spring of 1998, in the location we now know as I-75, exit 139 or Lockett Road in Fort Myers, a curious grouping of palms prompted a call to Robert Riefer. There, among the feral palms, stood some unusual looking specimens. Were they deformed? Or perhaps they were some sort of mutation. Either way, they were about to be bull-dozed by work crews. Some of you may recall that Robert of the University of Florida/IFAS is currently working with Edison Ford as we establish a collection of endangered native Florida orchids.



Robert Riefer



Lisa Riefer

continued on next page

Robert rushed to the site to see a palm that looked a lot like a cabbage palm, only different! There, three palms stood – each probably close to 50 years old, two with “boots” as many cabbage palms have, and one without boots, but all three had fronds that appeared as if the leaves had not quite fully opened, and were quite stiff, unlike the way a cabbage palm frond freely falls. Robert was able to convince officials to save two of the palms, one with and one without boots and sadly, the third fell victim to the bulldozer.

The year prior, Robert’s wife of five years, Lisa who is legally blind, had obtained her Florida horticulture certificate from The Center for Visually Impaired, in Daytona. A requirement of earning her certificate included demonstrating her ability to transplant cactus! Armed with her new certificate, she accepted a position at a Big Box Store; however, it turned out to be short lived and as she stayed home, contemplating her future, she fell into a deep depression as her husband Robert sadly watched.

Realizing he needed to act, Robert thought back to that unusual palm tree – maybe, with Lisa’s help and



Lisa frond



Young Lisa

horticultural training, they could try to propagate this unusual palm and re-populate it throughout Florida! In addition to the original three trees discovered at Lockett, there was one other tree, located on private property, nearly 100 miles away in Tampa. As luck would have it, that lone tree was seeding and Robert collected fistfuls of *Sabal palmetto* seeds from this unusual specimen.

In their tidy backyard, located on a ½ acre lot, Robert along with Lisa, set about planting 400 nursery pots of the newly acquired seeds along with maintaining detailed records of their growth progress. Over the course of several years, Lisa personally moved 40 cubic yards of potting material and together they raised more than 6,000 seedlings, selling or donating every last one. Cabbage palm seeds germinate easily, but they are very, very slow to grow; only growing approximately six inches per year. Because of the slow growth, it took the Riefers a number of years before they were able to definitively identify 68% of the seedlings; ones that were indeed exhibiting the unusual morphology of the rare *Sable palmetto*.



Riefer Yard

With the assistance of Dr. Scott Zona, former Palm Biologist at Fairchild Tropical Gardens in Coral Gables and Co-Editor of the International Society of Palms newsletter “PALMS,” as well as the distinguished co-author of at least two encyclopedias on palms, the pair of palms isolated by Riefer were officially identified (Vol. 49-1 – IPS PALMS – March 2005) as a cultivar of the *Sabal palmetto* and furthermore, indigenous to Fort Myers! It was not a mutation, such as the double-crowned cabbage palms that result from a predatory action on the apical meristem of a young tree; nor was it a distinct species. As of this writing, to the best of our knowledge, DNA testing has never been done on *S. palmetto* Lisa.

Raise your hand if you took Biology in high school – if so, you may recall something called “Mendelian Genetics.” In my most elementary effort to explain: offspring inherit the complete gene set from both parents – which may include a mixture of dominant genes and recessive genes – such as brown (dominant) and blue (recessive) genes which determine eye color in humans. With only one brown eye gene, which is dominant, the offspring will have brown eyes. However, since the gene for blue eyes is recessive, the offspring must have *both* recessive genes of blue in order to have blue eyes. This is the case with this sabal palm – it is a recessive gene, and so all seeds from it do not result in offspring exhibiting the same characteristics of a stiff, not quite open frond known as a shallow sinus, as seen in the comparison photos.

For recognizing this new plant, Robert received the honor of naming it, and today, *Sabal palmetto* Lisa is no longer simply a footnote on the Wikipedia *Sabal palmetto* page. As of March 2005, it is now an accepted cultivar of *Sabal palmetto*.

The two trees originally researched by Robert and Dr. Zona can be seen today, standing side by side within the palm collection owned by the City of Fort Myers, known as Bennett-Hart Park at 2330 Martin Luther King Boulevard. *Sabal palmetto* Lisa has been saved thanks to Robert and Lisa’s extraordinary efforts and next spring marks the 25th anniversary of its discovery. It is now in healthy distribution around Florida and Edison Ford is fortunate to have two young *Sabal palmetto* Lisa’s in cultivation.

True to the characteristics of all *Sabal palmettos*, these palms transplant much easier when they are mature, than when they are young. This is important to know because mature *S. palmetto* Lisa’s are still not readily available to the public. Fortunately, many palm growers have now procured seed and are propagating this collectible palm. As a purchaser, be sure to only buy a *S. palmetto* Lisa that is at least four to five years old and exhibiting the tell-tale fronds and take great care when planting.

As far as we know, the Riefers conducted the only documented large scale trial of *Sabal palmetto* Lisa in an effort to determine the incident rate of the new cultivar from seed. While that trial produced a 68%

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success rate, year over year, that rate may change based on pollinator activity and weather factors. Despite all their efforts and personal expense to identify, save and propagate *Sabal palmetto* Lisa, today the Riefers do not have one of their own!

We have heard reports of young seedlings going into shock and sudden death. The most probable explanation for this is two-fold, according to Robert: a.) failure to provide adequate water with the newly transplanted palm known as transplant shock and b.) possible absence of compatible mycorrhizae from its indigenous location. Joyfully, if successfully acclimated to a new location, an owner can expect this palm to survive between 50 and 100 years, because as hearty native palms they naturally do extremely well in hurricanes.

Like all palms, (unlike the rings of hardwood trees) dating *Sabal palmettos* is a best guess based on its optimal growth rate of approximately 6" per year. The next time you stroll the grounds at Edison Ford, take a closer look at some of those really tall *Sabal palmettos* and do a rough calculation of their potential age!

In celebration of 25 years since it's discovery, and in honor of the exhaustive work done by the Riefers, they would welcome a donation of a *Sabal palmetto* Lisa to be planted in Lehigh Acres at the welcome sign located at the Homestead Road and Lee Boulevard

intersection as a permanent gift to the people of their hometown. Please contact me for further information at kmaxwell@edisonford.org if you are interested in helping.

This month, be on the Lookout as the hot humid and rainy days of August bring forth exotic blooms of our ginger collection! Don't miss them!





WHO DOESN'T NEED MORE PLANTS?

For anyone wanting to learn more about plants, or buy more plants for the garden, there is a full line up of classes, talks and events this season! More information will be available soon on the website.

PLANT SALES AND GARDEN FESTIVALS *(9 a.m. to 4 p.m.)*

Orchid Sale & Symposium - OCTOBER 1-2, 2022

Fall Garden Festival - NOVEMBER 19-20, 2022

Bromeliad Sale - DECEMBER 3-4, 2022

Spring Garden Festival - FEBRUARY 11-12, 2023

Grow Fort Myers Workshops & Plant Sale - APRIL 8, 2023



GARDEN TALKS *(Start at 10 a.m.)*

AUGUST 13, 2022 - Mangolicious!

SEPTEMBER 10, 2022 - Butterfly Gardening

NOVEMBER 12, 2022 - Designing a Cool Season Color Garden

DECEMBER 10, 2022 - Make a Holiday Wreath (registration required)

JANUARY 14, 2023 - Staghorns and Jungle Cactus

MARCH 11, 2023 - Beguiling Begonias

MAY 13, 2023 - Growing Garden Treasures and Curiosities



GARDENING CLASSES

(In-depth, two-hour programs include classroom and garden time. Space is limited and registration is required. Choose from Tuesday afternoon at 1:30 p.m. or the Saturday morning session at 10 a.m.)

OCTOBER 18 or OCTOBER 22, 2022 - Vegetable Gardening for SW Florida

JANUARY 24 or JANUARY 28, 2023 - Introduction to Florida Gardening Part I

JANUARY 31 or FEBRUARY 4, 2023 - Introduction to Florida Gardening Part II

FEBRUARY 21 or FEBRUARY 25, 2023 - Grow Fabulous Roses

MARCH 21 or MARCH 25, 2023 - Growing Tropical Fruit

APRIL 18 or APRIL 22, 2023 - Introduction to Plant Propagation Techniques

THE GARDEN SHOPPE IS OPEN DAILY 9 A.M. - 5:30 P.M.

DONATE BLOOD

YOU HAVE GREATER
POWERS THAN
YOU KNOW.



Edison and Ford Winter Estates
Wednesday, August 3, 2022
10:00 AM - 3:00 PM



PLUS



PLUS



**DONORS
RECEIVE***

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- OneBlood Towel
- **Wellness Checkup** including blood pressure, pulse, temperature, iron count, and cholesterol screening.

Appointments are encouraged, please visit
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Online appointments are encouraged.

TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT, VISIT:

https://donor.oneblood.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/1253913

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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