

THE GARDEN

MCKEE BOTANICAL GARDEN | SPRING 2024



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*“Let no one be discouraged by the thought of how much there is to learn. Looking back upon nearly thirty years of gardening, I can remember no part of it that was not full of pleasure and encouragement. For the first steps are steps into **a delightful Unknown.**”*

Gertrude Jekyll, Horticulturist and Garden Designer (excerpt from *On Gardening: Gardening Credo*)



THE DELIGHTFUL UNKNOWN

A Message from Rochelle Wolberg, Executive Director

Dear Garden Friends and Supporters,

It truly has been an honor to meet and engage with the McKee Botanical community and the broader Vero Beach community. The warm welcome and shared excitement over the Garden has contributed to a very happy transition into my appointment as McKee's new Executive Director. Though it has been only two months, at the time of this writing, I feel as though I have known (and loved) McKee my whole life. Its rich history, resiliency, and living collections offer that increasingly rare phenomenon of genuine awe and wonder. The Garden intent prides itself on keeping to landscape architect William Lyman Phillips' vision of creating a sanctuary in which one feels removed from the digitization and commotion of the world outside our "Jungle Eden."



It is exciting to announce the completion of two major horticultural projects that were part of the Garden's 20th Anniversary Revitalization initiative. This February saw major work taking place at The Folly and Morse Waterfall areas. According to landscape architect David Sacks, "The Revitalization Project presented the opportunities to re-work major trails, along the former Banyan Trail and Live Oak Path, and create an inviting open space that centered on a waterfall built by Garden staff from salvaged McKee Jungle Gardens' rockwork."

This integration of our history is still felt in the living collections the Garden supports: orchids and waterlilies. McKee is a living museum comprised of living collections that are displayed, preserved, and protected. First established in the early years before McKee Jungle Gardens formally opened as a roadside tourist

THE GARDEN



destination, these collections give the Garden its educational authority. Our talented team of horticulturists and specialized gardeners are working incredibly hard behind the scenes to accession our plants for updated, accurate recordkeeping.

These separate, but related endeavors shine a light on the Garden's horticulture program, which was so important to our founders Arthur McKee and Waldo Sexton. As we move toward exploring the next 25 years of the Garden, our values remain firmly rooted in environmental responsibility. McKee is truly *The Florida Garden*, showcasing what is possible for plant health and sustainable programming.

I am eager to see more unfold into a delightful unknown, filled with great promise and soaring success. ■

Sincerely,

Rochelle Wolberg
Executive Director



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15TH ANNUAL MOTOR CAR EXHIBITION

RODS AND CUSTOMS

ONE DAY ONLY! SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2024



RODS & CUSTOMS

The 15th Annual Motor Car Exhibition, titled “Rods & Customs,” drew over three thousand car enthusiasts who came to admire forty-two exceptional hot rods and custom automobiles, as well as an outstanding display of motorcycles. The cars and motorcycles featured in this event were by invitation only and were chosen by the Car Show Committee members.

The exhibition showcased a variety of cars and motorcycles, including a 1923 Ford T-Bucket, a 1929 and 1946 Studebaker, 1936 Ford Custom Coupe Resto Mod, 1963 Chevy Nova Hot Rod, 1931 Ford Street Rod, and a 1955 Chevy Bel-Air, among others. The motorcycle display included models such as a 1939 and 1969 Harley Davidson, a 1964 Harley Davidson Panhead, a 2007 Soft Tail, and a 2001 Bourget's.



One unique aspect of the exhibition was that all the cars and cycles were displayed inside the Garden, adding to the event's appeal. Participants and visitors had the opportunity to interact with car and motorcycle owners, learning about the imaginative body styling, paintwork, engines, and interiors of these custom automobiles.

Show participants were treated to exclusive access to the car and motorcycle owner Hospitality Room, where they enjoyed a continental breakfast and lunch sponsored by Einstein Brothers Bagels. Each owner was provided with a custom sign listing the features of their car or motorcycle as a gift to take home.

The success of the event was made possible by the support of sponsors such as Cypress Bank & Trust, CW Willis Family Farms, Kmetz, Elwell, Graham & Associates, PLLC., Treasure and Space Coast Radio, as well as government support from the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture, the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, and The National Endowment for the Arts. ■

THE GARDEN



SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 16TH ANNUAL MOTOR CAR EXHIBITION
"RED CAR SHOW" | SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2025

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

SPARKLING SPLENDOR

Recounting the Enchanting Festival of Lights 2023

McKee Botanical Garden transformed into a luminous wonderland during its annual Festival of Lights this past December, casting a radiant glow despite Mother Nature's occasional rainy interludes. Drawing over 14,500 members and visitors, the Garden blossomed into a spectacle of brilliance for ten magical nights.

The Garden's verdant foliage became a canvas for thousands of LED lights and enchanting uplighting by Elite Christmas Lighting, weaving a tapestry of vibrant hues throughout the landscape. As guests entered beneath the resplendent pergola, they were greeted by the towering twenty-foot golden bow tree, a striking addition sponsored by Florida Power & Light. The Garden's pathways and waterways were adorned with over forty new holiday lanterns, featuring whimsical creatures like monkeys, alligators, and even a sloth, meticulously placed by McKee's dedicated Horticulture Team.

Guests were transported into a world of dual holiday themes as they explored the historic Hall of Giants. Amy, Cazz, and the team of volunteers, meticulously curated a festive display contrasting "a chilly holiday in the north vs. a tropical holiday in the south." Laughter and excitement filled the air as guests of all ages frolicked in the "snow" of the Spanish Kitchen, creating cherished memories amid the magical ambiance.

The Holiday Train captivated attendees with its intricate layout and imaginative scenes, meticulously crafted by the devoted "Train Guys." Featuring new additions like an oil refinery, expanded farm scenes, and an array of miniature figures and vehicles, the train layout enchanted both young and old alike, with five complete trains running on three levels to the delight of all.

continued page 7





Nightly entertainment by The First Presbyterian Church, Imagine School Tangerines, and other talented vocalists filled the air with melodious cheer. Santa and Mrs. Claus delighted guests with warm greetings and countless photo opportunities, while the Garden Café offered delectable holiday treats to satisfy every craving.

During a special McKee member-only night, WPTV News Channel 5 broadcasted live from the Spanish Kitchen as part of its “Season of Hope” promotion, further spreading the holiday spirit. Amidst swirling snow, news anchors Michael Williams and Ashley Glass encouraged viewers to experience the enchantment of McKee’s Festival of Lights.

As guests bid farewell with smiles on their faces and hearts aglow, it was unanimously declared that this year’s Festival of Lights was the “best one ever!” Such a magical experience wouldn’t have been possible without the generous support of sponsors, whose commitment to McKee’s mission is deeply appreciated.



When the lights dimmed on another unforgettable Festival of Lights, the spirit of joy and generosity continued to illuminate the hearts of all who experienced its enchanting magic at McKee Botanical Garden. ■



THE GARDEN



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GARDEN CAFÉ IS THRIVING

Under the leadership of Executive Chef Dan Overstreet, the Garden Café is thriving and evolving. Reflecting on his first year in the position, Chef Dan highlights successes such as the popular Summer Menu and various catering events held at the Garden's Education Building.

Chef Dan is excited to introduce the 2024 Spring Menu, which will offer fresh and innovative dishes to accompany the changing season. He is also excited to look forward to upcoming events like the Waterlily Festival, and has hinted at special treat offerings for visitors.

Acknowledging the support of his team, including Chef Nancy and Cathy Sachs, as well as the guidance of individuals like Julia Keenan and Executive Director Rochelle Wolberg, Chef Dan emphasizes the collaborative effort that has contributed to the Garden Café's success.

As the current season winds down, the Café team is also gearing up for the next season with enthusiasm, with plans to continue providing exceptional dining experiences for visitors to enjoy alongside the beauty of the Garden. ■



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ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

We are delighted to share highlights from our Annual Membership Meeting held on Tuesday, February 27. It was a joyous occasion with over 80 members, volunteers, and staff in attendance.

The meeting commenced with warm welcomes from Julia Keenan, our Sr. Development Director, expressing gratitude to all attendees for their presence. Board President Peter Benedict took a moment to honor Christine Hobart, our former Executive Director, for her remarkable twenty-five years of dedication to the Garden, eighteen of which she served as Executive Director. Christine was presented with a plaque and a lifetime membership in recognition of her unwavering commitment.

Additionally, Julia was acknowledged for her invaluable service as Interim Executive Director from September 2023 to January 2024. She was presented with a plaque in appreciation of her willingness to step in during our transitional period.

We were thrilled to introduce Rochelle Wolberg as our new Executive Director. Rochelle comes to us with a wealth of experience, previously serving as the Curator and Director of Mounts Botanical Garden in West Palm Beach.

Rochelle shared her vision for the Garden's future over the next three to five years, including exciting plans for our upcoming exhibitions and celebrations. In 2025,



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we will mark the 5th Anniversary of the opening of our beloved Children's Garden. To commemorate this milestone, we will host Sean Kenney's Nature Pop! Made with LEGO® Bricks exhibition. Furthermore, we look forward to celebrating several milestones in 2026, including the 25th Anniversary of the Garden's re-opening, our Living Collections Anniversary, and the launch of a commemorative publication highlighting McKee's story and that of our botanical collections.

During the meeting, Rochelle presented the importance of McKee's role as a museum for plants and explained how our orchids and waterlily living collections are the basis for our educational authority. Nikki Wojtowicz, a member of our Horticulture staff, highlighted some of our most remarkable waterlilies, which were currently blooming across the Garden's ponds and streams.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who attended and contributed to the success of the meeting. We are excited about the future of McKee Botanical Garden and look forward to continuing our journey together. ■



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- MRS. MARY LOU H. YOUNG

*DECEASED
AS OF MARCH 2024

MCKEE LEGACY SOCIETY

We thank the members of the McKee Legacy Society for their generosity, vision, and commitment to ensuring the Garden thrives for generations to come.

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DECEASED*

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to our mission.

To discuss making a planned gift to McKee that is aligned with your individual estate planning goals, or to register for our Estate Planning Seminar, please contact Julia Keenan, Interim Executive Director, at 772.794.0601. or development@mckee garden.org

MCKEE LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBERS RECEIVE RECOGNITION ON THE MCKEE LEGACY DONOR WALL, MCKEE'S WEBSITE, THE GARDEN BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER, AND IN OUR ANNUAL REPORT.



ESTATE PLANNING LUNCH & LEARN

Navigating the Future with Gould Cooksey Fennell Attorneys

By Julia Keenan, Sr. Development Director

Gould Cooksey Fennell hosted a comprehensive Estate Planning Lunch & Learn on Tuesday, January 16 for forty members and volunteers of the Garden. The event featured distinguished speakers Todd W. Fennell, LLM, Dillon L. Roberts, LLM, and Justin K. Larson, LLM, all accomplished attorneys from the prestigious Gould Cooksey Fennell law firm.

The educational session delved into crucial topics shaping the landscape of estate planning in 2024.

Among the key highlights were discussions on the 2024 Federal Tax Updates, the Secure Act, and the recently introduced Secure Act 2.0. These updates provided invaluable insights for individuals seeking to navigate the complexities of estate planning in light of the ever-evolving legal landscape.

The speakers also provided a comprehensive overview of charitable structures, ranging from the common to the complex, shedding light on nuances that individuals should consider when incorporating charitable elements into their estate plans. Additionally, they explored the concept of the charitable limited liability company, offering a deeper understanding of this innovative approach to charitable giving.

Attendees had the opportunity during a Q&A session to engage directly with the speakers and seek clarification on specific estate planning queries. This interactive



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format fostered a dynamic and engaging learning environment, ensuring that participants left with a clearer understanding of the presented topics.

McKee Botanical Garden remains dedicated to offering enriching educational programs to its members, including those affiliated with the esteemed McKee Legacy Society. Currently, thirty-five members have become a part of the Legacy Society, demonstrating a shared commitment to the Garden's enduring mission.

For those interested in delving into the realm of charitable giving or aspiring to join the Legacy Society, we invite you to reach out to Julia Keenan, Sr. Director of Development. Your involvement in the Legacy Society not only ensures your continued support for McKee Botanical Garden, but also grants you access to exclusive benefits and opportunities. Elevate your connection with McKee Botanical Garden by exploring the possibilities of charitable giving and securing your place in the McKee Legacy Society. Embark on a journey of philanthropy and legacy building. ■

LEGACY GIFTS MAY ALSO ALLOW YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO:

- Generate income now and into the future
-
- Reduce taxes
-
- Avoid capital gains taxes
-
- Preserve wealth for your family
-
- Honor a family member or friend by making a tribute gift

CORPORATE SPONSOR OPPORTUNITIES

Demonstrate your company's commitment to the environment as you achieve high visibility with Vero Beach's most sought-after audience. McKee Botanical Garden offers a wide array of Corporate Sponsorship Opportunities year-round, including our *Annual Exhibit*, *Annual Motor Car Exhibition*, *Festival of Lights*, *Pirate and Fairy Celebration Saturdays*, and *Annual Waterlily Celebration*.

Become a Corporate Partner TODAY! Contact Julia T. Keenan, Senior Director of Development at: development@mckeearden.org or call 772.794.0601, ext. 109. Sponsorship and Underwriting levels vary to meet your marketing needs! ■

THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS

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- JOHN'S ISLAND REAL ESTATE

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- CW WILLIS FAMILY FARM
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- GARDEN CLUB OF INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, INC.
- SPECTRUM INTERIOR DESIGN

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WILMINGTON TRUST: A LEGACY OF SUPPORT

By Marion de Vogel

Long before Arthur McKee and Waldo Sexton preserved the native landscape that would become McKee Jungle Gardens, T. Coleman du Pont began a banking, trust and safe deposit company to manage the growing fortune of the du Pont family. One hundred and twenty years later, that bank is called Wilmington Trust, now owned by M & T Bank, renowned for providing high-value services to affluent individual and institutional clients worldwide.

Central to the du Pont story, and a major element of the du Pont heritage, is the magnificent Longwood Garden in Pennsylvania and the Winterthur Garden in Delaware. It is therefore not hard to imagine a connection between Wilmington Trust in Vero Beach and McKee Botanical Garden, two historic and iconic pillars of the community.



The long, enduring partnership between McKee and Wilmington Trust is now nurtured through Kate Freeman, Wilmington Trust's Managing Director and Senior Wealth Advisor in Vero Beach. With a national strategy that seeks to strengthen the communities in which they have businesses, Wilmington Trust's support is evident through a diverse range of civic, cultural, and health and human service organizations. Wilmington Trust's support of McKee is largely focused on McKee's biggest donors, whose patronage makes the Garden and all of its year-round educational programs accessible to the entire community. Kate considers this a "win-win" opportunity in which Wilmington Trust's support is very directed, but ends up touching thousands of McKee's members and visitors.

Last November, as it has for the past several years, Wilmington Trust underwrote the Annual Gatekeepers of the Garden Celebration, an evening that recognizes

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and honors the most dedicated, generous and visionary supporters of McKee Botanical Garden. This type of cross-pollination of business objectives is impactful, yet understated, and it enables both institutions to align their respective legacies in a way that is mutually beneficial.

In addition to being a trusted wealth advisor to many, Kate has a green thumb and has relished the opportunity to dig in McKee's tropical dirt. Her personal interest in gardening led to a seat on McKee's board, and her professional expertise led to her role as chairman of McKee's Legacy Society. Kate's passions and talents, combined with Wilmington Trust's history of support, have helped to make McKee Botanical Garden the venerable historic Garden that it is in our community. ■

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

DR. AND MRS. GLENN AND EMILY REEVES TREMML



When did you first become involved with McKee Botanical Garden?

Emily: McKee Jungle Gardens, as it was known then, entered my life when my grandparents, parents and I moved to Vero Beach in 1964. My grandmother was an avid gardener, and I spent lots of time with her and my family in the Gardens, and with the parrots. McKee Jungle Gardens was a magical place where the winding paths led to flowers, plants and animals.

What attracted you to the Garden?

Emily: McKee Jungle Gardens is one of the first memories of my life. I remember a sense of freedom and wildness and safety all at the same time. For a child this is an empowering thing.

What motivates you to stay involved in McKee Botanical Garden?

Emily: Glenn and I are both avid gardeners who have collected orchids, bromeliads, tillandsias and Florida native plants in our over thirty years of marriage. Our son, Will, grew up in nature and even created a community garden on the island that the entire community loved. I have the philosophy that a child raised in nature and in a garden is literally worldlier, which leads to a more contented and joyous life.

What is the most important work that McKee Botanical Gardens does?

Emily: McKee is a treasure in our community, with the purpose of not only preserving and protecting the nature we hold dear in Indian River County, but also showing visitors and the community at large the mental, physical and spiritual benefits to society of being outside and enjoying nature.

We were just at an event where the keynote speaker proudly said, "Every tree you see is a placeholder for a home to be built." The comment was so shocking that it made me personally double down on trying to save our beautiful

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community by supporting McKee Botanical Garden, along with the Indian River Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy.

What do you hope McKee will achieve in the future?

Emily: When McKee Jungle Gardens closed its gates in the late 1970s, it felt like our community had lost a piece of its heart and one of our greatest treasures on the Treasure Coast. How inspiring is it that the original Gatekeepers cared enough to purchase, restore, preserve, protect, and share the Garden again with the community. When the news spread that McKee Jungle Gardens was being reenvisioned, the acts of these people made me so proud of Vero Beach and the people that affect change in large and small ways.

My hope for McKee is that the Garden can grow even more, fill out the envelope with more programs, and stay a sanctuary for every age and demographic for generations to come.

Of what contribution or achievement are you most proud?

Emily: For years, I served on the Quail Valley Charities Committee, and loved McKee's annual grant proposals, where the committee heard about McKee's new strides, strategies and community needs.

My favorite request was for the Children's Back Pack Program, to supply a backpack to each child as they enter the Garden. The pack would include a map, magnifying glass, and tools to understand what they discover in the Garden. What a pleasure it is to see this concept realized and to see children running through the Garden with McKee Botanical Garden Explorer backpacks on, magnifying glass and map in hand, leading their parents around the Garden. This one program helps kids orient themselves on a map, take the time to look at things closely, and empowers them with leadership and confidence.

My favorite personal contribution has been the opportunity to paint in the Garden, and being welcomed by administration and guests. Through the years I have painted in the Garden during the Waterlily Festival, with other artists during plein art paint outs, during workshops with John's Island and Quail Valley, and simply by myself painting to my heart's content.

Who in your life plays a role in supporting your involvement? In providing inspiration? Do you have an anecdote about McKee that inspired a memory?

Emily: Here are two favorite memories...

Long time community leader and original Gatekeeper Alma Lee Loy helped me paint McKee's historic stone bridge (see painting). I will always keep this painting because it combined the experience of painting a favorite scene at the Garden with one of my all time favorite inspirational people. Alma Lee was one of the first people I remember as a child, and McKee was one of the first places I remember being as a child.



One day while painting in the Garden, I lost track of time only to find I was locked in. As a true adventurer, I jumped over the stone fence with easel, canvas and backpack, and thanked my lucky stars that the main gate had not been locked. I love that former executive director Christine Hobart and the administration of McKee have historically supported the arts as well the Garden.

What other organizations or causes do you support?

Emily: Glenn and I support the following charities: McKee Botanical Garden, Indian River Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Quail Valley Charities, John's Island Community Service League, John's Island Foundation, Vero Beach Museum of Art, Saint Edward's School, The Learning Alliance and Healthy Start Coalition. ■



ANNUAL GCA DAY

By Kitty Kirby

On Thursday, March 13, McKee Botanical Garden hosted the 19th Annual GCA Day, a gathering of ninety current and former members of forty-two Garden Club of America clubs from across the country. As a fundraiser for McKee, GCA Day included an inspiring lecture in the Richardson Education Building, and delicious luncheon in the Hall of Giants. Guests were encouraged to stroll through the Garden after lunch to enjoy our current exhibit, *Avian Avatars by The Myth Makers*.

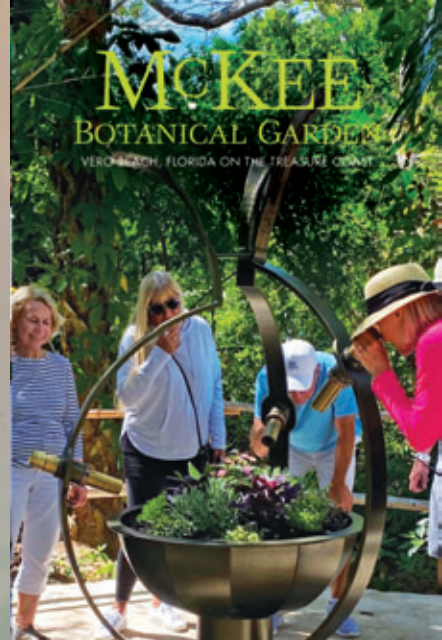
Fred Spicer, executive vice president and director of Chicago Botanic Garden, spoke on "Masters of Modernism," with focus on the unique relationship between structures and their surrounding landscapes. Among those featured were Koichi Kawana's Elizabeth Malott Japanese Garden, John Brookes' English Walled Garden, MikYoung Kim's Learning Campus, Dan Kiley's Esplanade and Belgian Peter Wirtz' Shida Evaluation Garden. Fred also presented an overview of the founding and development of the Chicago Botanic Garden with its three hundred eighty-five acres, twenty-seven display gardens and five natural habitats.

The Luncheon was catered by Elizabeth D. Kennedy & Co and served at the historic Hall of Giants, the former home of the McKee family's exotic animal collection.

The GCA Day Committee included Ilona Benham, Lyn Callen, Barrie Fahey, Connie Ferguson, Lorill Haynes, Katie Heins, Stephanie Hurtt, Lee La Pointe, Susan Levy, Ellie Lloyd, Susan Markert, Cress Meier, Karen Meyer, Mary Ellen Partel, Marcia Poutiatine, Kate Schmidt, Pam Terp, Liza Weihman, and Mary Lou Young. Chairing the committee was Kitty Kirby and co-chair was Dawn Morton. ■

THE GARDEN





EXCITING NEW MERCHANDISE

By Michele Carvell, Gift Shop Manager

It's always a pleasure to connect with each of our members and guests, whether you stop by occasionally or make frequent visits to our beloved Garden. We've had the joy of watching many of your little ones grow up right before our eyes, from their early days as babies to now embarking on their journey through grade school. It's moments like these that remind us of the special role our Garden plays in your lives and the community.

As we gear up for another exciting year, we're thrilled to share some updates from our gift shop. We've been hard at work curating a diverse selection of products, while keeping prices affordable for everyone. This year, we're excited to announce an expansion of our "made in house" items, all crafted with love right here in our Garden.

Did you know that many of the items in our shop are made in-house? From beautiful cutting boards and coasters, to charming mugs and bags adorned with waterlily designs, each piece is not only a unique find, but also contributes to supporting our Garden. We've also created special items for our events, such as bottle openers and key chains, perfect for commemorating your visit.

Keep an eye out for our limited-edition glass ornaments featuring the year 2024 and our logo—a wonderful keepsake to cherish for years to come. Additionally, we're proud to support local artisans by featuring products from vendors like Nix Luv, Atriture Handmade, and Cheryl's Skin Care, all based right here in Vero Beach.

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GIVE THE GIFT OF A GARDEN MEMBERSHIP

A McKee membership makes a wonderful and unique gift for any occasion—Holidays, Birthday, Anniversary, or even a special thank you.

MEMBERS OF ALL LEVELS RECEIVE:

FREE daily admission to the Garden and Children's Garden

FREE access to ongoing attractions, including our exhibits and popular special events

Discounts and priority registrations to our dynamic roster of classes and seminars

10% off at the Garden Café and Garden Gift & Book Shop

FREE admission and/or additional benefits at 340+ gardens throughout North America and the Cayman Islands through the American Horticultural Society Reciprocal Garden Network.

To purchase a gift membership, visit mckee garden.org/membership or call 772.794.0601.

We appreciate your help in bringing new friends to McKee!



We're incredibly grateful for the generosity of our supporters, like Margie Hampton of Ponderosa Leather Works and Fred and Roberta Thorne Family, who have graciously donated items to our gift shop, with one hundred percent of the proceeds benefiting the Garden.

In an effort to streamline your shopping experience, we kindly ask that you have your membership card or e-membership app ready when visiting our gift shop. This helps us serve you more efficiently, especially during peak times. Remember, you can renew your membership directly at the gift shop to skip the line at admissions.

During the busy season, we strive to make your visit as seamless as possible by offering a dedicated member check-in line on weekends for those with their cards and IDs ready. This line is exclusively for members and their guests with guest passes, ensuring a hassle-free entry process.

Thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm for our Garden. We look forward to welcoming you to our gift shop and helping you find the perfect treasures to take home. ■

DAPPLED LIGHT: THE GARDEN PHOTOGRAPHY OF NGOC MINH NGO

By Marion de Vogel

Internationally renowned garden photographer, Ngoc Minh Ngo, will return to McKee Botanical Garden in June to capture McKee's world-famous waterlilies and native orchids for a commemorative book to be published by McKee in 2026. Ngoc previously photographed the Garden last August.

Considered one of the most poetic landscape and botanical photographers in the world, Ngoc's work has appeared in such magazines as *The World of Interiors*, *T Magazine*, *Vogue*, *Architectural Digest*, *Cabana* and *House & Garden UK*. She is the author of five books: *New York Green*, *The House of a Lifetime*, *Eden Revisited*, *In Bloom* and *Bringing Nature Home*, all published by Rizzoli Books.



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Born in Vietnam, Ngoc moved to California with her parents at the age of twelve. She attended the University of California, Berkley, where she studied economics. After graduating, she traveled to Japan and Paris, finally landing in New York with the dream of being a fine art restorer. Later she studied landscape design at Columbia University.

A chance encounter on a set where black and white photography was required aroused Ngoc's interest in the medium. Shortly thereafter she purchased a camera, and taught herself how to use composition and light to create emotional content.

Ngoc has a deep abiding connection with nature, and is passionate about connecting people with the natural world through her photographs. She has said, "When I photograph gardens, I do it early morning and late in the afternoon so the light is not directly overhead and the color is warm. I like to have layers of colors, not all one tone. Light creates different moods and quality photography is all about light and how it sculpts what you are photographing. I personally like a little bit of light dappling through."

Matteo Poli of *Abitare Magazine* said of Ngoc's photography, "Ngoc Minh Ngo's photographs are...objective representations of a subjective intuition conceived at a particular moment of day or the year, composed to inform and at the same time move the viewer."

Ngoc's photographs of McKee last August place the viewer in a timeless observation of the natural wonder of the historic jungle paradise. Purchased over one hundred years ago, founders Arthur McKee and Waldo Sexton preserved an example of a native Florida hammock for the enjoyment and education of all who visit. McKee's upcoming commemorative book will celebrate the founder's vision, which was saved by community activists twenty-three years ago. ■





Species Mexicana



Hardy Cliff Tiffany



FNA Bull's Eye



Craig Presnell Midnight Serenade



UNLOCKING EXCELLENCE

Understanding the Significance of Certifying McKee's Waterlily Collection with the International Waterlily & Water Gardening Society (IWGS)

By Nikki Wojtowicz, Horticulture Staff Member

Waterlilies have graced McKee Botanical Garden since its inception. We are grateful for the opportunity to have Florida's most celebrated Nymphaea collection recognized by the International Waterlily and Water Gardening Society. Of the one hundred plus varieties that McKee grows, fifty were chosen for the 'Certified Collection of Distinction'. We have committed to the preservation of ten species, nine hardy, two intersubgeneric and twenty-nine tropical waterlilies.

Why is this important? With only sixty to eighty species of waterlilies in the world, and hybrids only able to reproduce through tuber production, our mission was to identify those plants in the collection that best represented McKee and Florida. As the list grew, so did our knowledge of growing, propagating, and storing those varieties that set themselves apart in McKee's unique waterways. Fifteen of the tropical hybrid varieties chosen were created in Florida, quite at home in the warm, slightly alkaline, silty waterways. We looked for abundant blooms, on attractive, healthy plants.

It became apparent that anything created by Craig Presnell of Zolfo Springs thrived here at McKee, and we sought to increase our collection of his hybrids. These varieties are best viewed from the Stone Bridge, vibrantly mottled leaves with a meditative selection of flowers.

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Our collection of Florida Aquatic Nursery's hybrids are planted in the south end of the Main Pond, many of them are viviparous, which means they are capable of creating new plants from the center of their leaves. Brightly colored flowers are visible from a great distance, close ups of the same flowers detailed with flecks and nuances the human eye bends while looking at.

The most complicated and rewarding part of the process has been in accessing how to share the collection with our members and guests. Species are primarily grown in the Children's Garden pond, or in display pots where we can offer them the most protection. Tropical waterlilies are organized by hybridizer, so that you may see the life work of aquatic family businesses. Hardy waterlilies are best seen within the bridges and trails of the watery maze where the mood is quite calm compared to their tropical cousins.

Most of all, it is my personal hope that the certification process will give McKee Botanical Garden additional opportunities to inspire, enchant, and educate. ■



BLOOMING BEAUTIES

The Journey of McKee's Waterlilies

By Nikki Wojtowicz, Horticulture Staff Member

This story unfolds in the enchanting northwest corner of McKee's orchid house, where a water tank brims with promise, housing an array of Dixie cups. Each cup cradles red clay and a solitary Victoria waterlily seed, sown with care back in February and slated for their garden debut come May. With

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Victoria seeds sown in Dixie cups

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Tubers on a rainy day



Richard and the Victorias

meticulous attention, we regulate the water's temperature and alkalinity, striving to recreate the ideal conditions of their native habitat.

Victoria waterlilies, akin to oversized dinner platters or deep dish pizzas, boast an impressive capacity to support weight, provided it's evenly distributed across their expansive lily pads. Yet, upon closer inspection, they reveal a delicate intricacy, their surfaces adorned with thorns. Come evening, their blooms unfurl, generating heat upwards of 100 degrees Fahrenheit, a clever tactic to entice beetles into aiding their pollination.

Harvesting and preserving seeds from these botanical marvels is a delicate art. Standard refrigeration proves too harsh for their sensitive constitution, necessitating a milder climate akin to that of a wine fridge, set at a gentle 64 degrees. Under these conditions, waterlily seeds and tubers can remain in a state of dormancy for several years, awaiting their moment to flourish.

But what of tubers? Many waterlily species propagate by producing tubers beneath their roots. These fleshy, underground structures, once harvested, cleaned, and carefully stored, represent the future of McKee's waterlily collection. Last fall, over 300 tubers found sanctuary in the same wine fridge that cradles the Victoria seeds. With the arrival of spring, volunteers lent their hands to coax these dormant treasures back to life. Small pots were readied, each bearing tags to identify the latent potential within. Tubers, indistinguishable until they stir with life, now bask in the sun's warmth, unfurling rosettes of leaves that herald the promise of imminent blooms.

In just a few short months, these tender shoots will transform into resplendent blossoms. And as they mature, new tubers will form, securing the legacy of McKee's waterlily collection for generations to come. With each careful cultivation and preservation effort, this botanical haven continues to thrive, a testament to the enduring beauty and resilience of nature's wonders. ■

THE GARDEN



19TH ANNUAL WATERLILY CELEBRATION

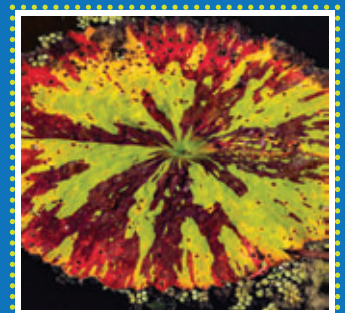
Saturday, June 15 | 8:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

The 19th Annual Waterlily Celebration at McKee Botanical Garden promises to be a day filled with natural beauty, artistry, and educational opportunities for visitors of all ages. This stunning display of nature's beauty and artistic talent features one of the state's largest collections of waterlilies, showcasing both hardy and tropical varieties in a breathtaking array of colors, textures, and fragrances.

With over eighty varieties and more than three hundred potted and one hundred free-range plants, McKee Botanical Garden offers visitors a rare opportunity to admire these aquatic beauties up close. The Garden will open early at 8:30 a.m. on this special day, allowing guests to witness the mesmerizing night-blooming varieties before they retreat, as well as enjoy the blooms of the day-blooming varieties.

In addition to the waterlilies, the event will feature local artists creating original works of art "en plein air" throughout the Garden. Visitors will also have the chance to purchase a variety of aquatic plants, bromeliads, orchids, wire art, and woodcrafts. Hands-on repotting demonstrations will be available, and guests can speak with plant experts to learn about the vital role these unique aquatic plants play in protecting our ecosystem.

A highlight of the annual celebration is the waterlily photo contest, which attracts photographers, artists, horticultural enthusiasts, McKee members, and visitors from across the region. Guidelines for submitting photos for the 19th Annual Waterlily Celebration can be found on McKee's website: www.mckee garden.org. Submissions will be on display in the historic Hall of Giants, where visitors can vote for the "People's Choice" photo. ■



THE GARDEN



PLANTS WITH A STORY

Mule Palm, Redbay Tree, Red Silk Cotton Tree, Borassus Palm, Black Sapote Tree, Live Oak Character Tree

By Andreas Daehnick, Director of Horticulture

We are always on the search for interesting plants that will grow at McKee Botanical Garden, yet sometimes just the story and history of the plant itself makes it worthy of acceptance into our collection. Enjoy the following history of some of our notable McKee trees.



Mule Palm

Mule Palm

Located by the Koi pond, our Mule Palm was donated early in the restoration of the Garden in 2000. This palm is a hybrid of a Queen palm and Pindo palm. Before these hybrids were readily available commercially, Bill Alexander—artist, potter, nurseryman, and owner of Que Linda nursery in Vero Beach—was already making this hybrid cross in his back yard nursery.

Redbay Tree

In the mid 2000s, avocado wilt disease was introduced into the southeastern United States by a beetle that infested shipping containers. Because Bay trees are related to avocados, the disease spread to our native Redbays, decimating the local populations. As a certified arborist, during that time, I was working in a preserve area and was able to collect seeds before the fungus killed the mature Bay trees there. I started the seeds with the hopes of reintroducing the trees in the future. One tree was planted close to the administration building at McKee and this tree has survived and is now producing seed. It turns out that for the fungus to be able to infect the beetles that would in turn infect a tree, the tree has to be of sufficient size (greater than four inches in diameter) to house the beetles. Because the trees

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RedBay Tree

I started were just seedlings and too small to house the pest at that time, my seedling Redbay trees survived.

Red Silk Cotton Tree

The Florida state *Bombax ceiba* tree of significance is located on the grounds of historic Vinoy Resort in St. Petersburg, Florida. The owners of a small nursery near Treasure Island, Florida collected seed from this historic tree and grew a tree at their nursery in Pasadena, Florida. In 2006, I discovered the second-generation tree at their nursery and was given seeds and seedlings. Three trees were planted at McKee, and interestingly, each tree produces completely different flowers.

Borassus Palm

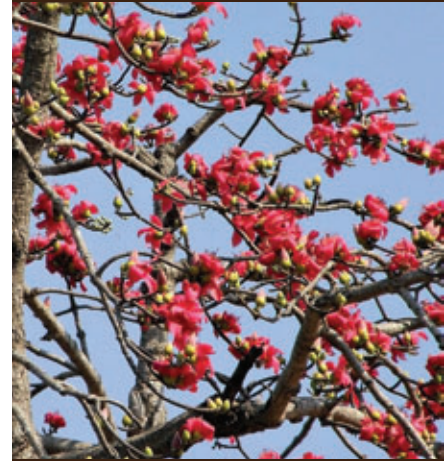
The Borassus palm is a huge palm with leaves that can reach nine to twelve feet in diameter. Its fruit can be eaten and fermented to create alcoholic beverages. McKee has five juvenile *Borassus aethiopum* palms, and most of the starter seeds came from palms located on the Michael residence in Orchid Island. The seeds for the Michael's palms were originally collected at Fairchild Garden in 1957.

Black Sapote Tree

The Black Sapote tree produces a tropical fruit also known as chocolate pudding fruit. The fruit is ripe for eating when the flesh is as soft as pudding and it tastes like chocolate. McKee's tree started from a seed donated by Peter and Lynn Kraus (McKee Volunteers) who live in the Moorings and selected the tree as a specimen street tree because of its uniform green glossy leaves.

Live Oak Tree

Our Live Oak character tree is located east of the education building. During a construction site visit for a tree health and vigor study, I found a beautiful character Live Oak on the site currently occupied by Springhill Hotel. While the oak was an awesome example of a character Live Oak, its location in a proposed parking lot would require it to be removed due to conflicts with vehicles. It was during this time that during the reconstruction of the Garden and the hurricanes of 2003, some of the original oak trees at McKee were lost. With the blessing of the site owner and an anonymous donor, the Live Oak was root pruned and irrigated for six months in place to prepare it in advance to be relocated to McKee. Finally, at four a.m. one morning, the tree was loaded onto a flatbed trailer and driven to the Garden. It was so large that the truck required multiple lanes and occasionally hanging traffic lights had to be lifted as we moved the tree down the road. Once at the Garden, two cranes were required—one to move the tree from the parking lot and lift it over the education building, and the second crane to move the tree from behind the education building to its permanent location across the gator pond stream. ■



Red Silk Cotton Tree



Black Sapote Tree



VOLUNTEER NEWS

By Cazz Castle, Volunteer Coordinator

As we step into the vibrant spring season, it's time to reflect on the incredible contributions of our dedicated volunteers who continue to make McKee Botanical Garden a thriving haven for nature lovers and enthusiasts alike.



First, it is with mixed emotions that we bid farewell to Anne McCormick, our esteemed Volunteer Coordinator, who recently decided to embark on the journey of retirement after two years of devoted service to the Garden. Anne's passion and dedication have left an indelible mark on our community, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude for her invaluable contributions.

February brought with it the much-anticipated Annual Motor Car Exhibition, a highlight in our event calendar. Our remarkable team of volunteers played a pivotal role in ensuring the success of the event. From extending warm welcomes to guests and facilitating wristbands, to efficiently managing parking logistics with golf carts and directing incoming vehicles, our volunteers' unwavering commitment was instrumental in ensuring a seamless experience for all attendees. We extend our sincerest thanks for their dedication and hard work.



Garden Fest, another delightful event, captivated a large audience, particularly on Saturday when we were graced with perfect weather. Our volunteers shone brightly as they engaged with visitors, sharing their passion for the Garden and garnering an overwhelming number of compliments and positive feedback.

In celebration of our incredible volunteer team, the annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon was held on March 5, 2024. Catered by Carrabba's, this event provided a well-deserved opportunity for volunteers, who contributed at least twenty hours in 2023, to enjoy a delectable lunch and receive a small token of appreciation. Special recognition was reserved for those who dedicated over one hundred hours, with two exceptional volunteers applauded for their remarkable more than four hundred hours of service in the past year.



Highlighting the immense impact of our volunteers across various departments, the horticulture department led with an impressive total of 2,565 hours, closely followed by the Education department with 2,051 hours. Special Events witnessed an astounding 1,396 hours, while our dedicated tour guides spent an impressive 437 hours showcasing the beauty of the Garden to our guests.

As we embark on the new season, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every volunteer who continues to play a pivotal role in nurturing and enhancing the McKee Botanical Garden experience. Your dedication and passion are truly appreciated, and we look forward to an exciting and fulfilling spring season ahead! ■

A FULL SEASON OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

By Amy Shoemaker, Education Coordinator

I can hardly believe the season is already coming to an end! Educational programming was offered every day except Sunday, and saw amazing turnouts all week long. The education department staff and children's program volunteers truly enjoyed getting to know the families who returned every week.



In fact, we even saw some families every single day! I am delighted that our members and visitors are enjoying the programs offered here at McKee and I hope to continue to plan even more magical opportunities for every guest.

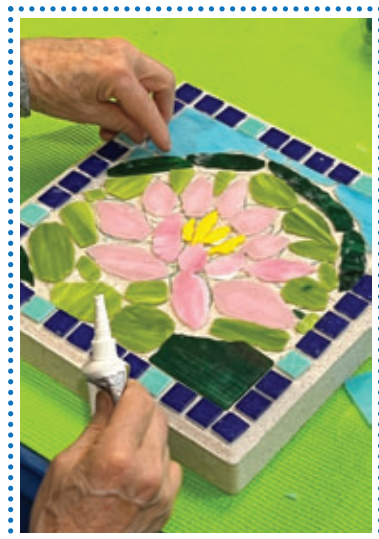


This past season we offered forty workshops, which included art classes, lectures, exercise programs, jewelry making, painting, book club meetings, a cooking demonstration, and flower arranging. Young guests enjoyed music time, nature playgroup and weekly science and craft activities. We also offered three mini camps for children in kindergarten through second grade.



Still to come in May are four *Pirate and Fairy Celebration Saturdays*, and in June and July, six weeks of our *Camp McKee* summer camps. For more information on our educational programming, please visit our website under "Classes and Programs" or "Camp McKee."

Thank you all for your support! I will see you around the Garden. ■



THE GARDEN

19TH ANNUAL

WATERLILY CELEBRATION

ONE DAY ONLY! SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 2024



PLANT SALES

REPOTTING DEMONSTRATIONS

PLEIN AIR ARTISTS

WATERLILY PHOTO CONTEST

HOURS: 8:30 AM-2 PM

GENERAL ADMISSION RATES APPLY
(MCKEE MEMBERS AND CHILDREN UNDER 2 FREE)

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MCKEE BOTANICAL GARDEN

350 US HIGHWAY 1 | VERO BEACH, FLORIDA 32962 | 772-794-0601

ADMISSION: \$15 ADULTS | \$13 SENIORS (65+)/YOUTH (13-17) | \$10 CHILDREN (2-12) | MCKEE MEMBERS AND CHILDREN UNDER 2 FREE

HOURS: TUE-SAT 10 AM-5 PM | SUN NOON-5 PM | LAST ADMISSION TICKET SOLD AT 4 PM

CHILDREN'S GARDEN CLOSES 4:30 PM | CLOSED MONDAYS AND MAJOR HOLIDAYS

www.mckee garden.org

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