May 2025

NEWSLETTER

VillageWalk Garden Club of Bonita Springs

CHANGES IN THE GARDEN CLUB MEETING EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Club's Executive Board for 2024-2025 was composed of the following members.

- President: Jackie Fegan
- 1st Vice President/Programs Chair: J.B. Schuetz
- 2nd Vice President/Communications Chair: Ed and Bernice Anzures
- Treasurer/Finance Chair: Don Blackwell
- Secretary: Pat Krusac

Thanks to the outgoing board members, Jackie, J.B., and Pat, who have served more than one-year terms in their positions and made tremendous contributions to our Garden Club. Jackie will continue on the new Board working with Leslie Bischoff on Programs. Ed and Bernice will be leaving the Board, but they will still be working on the Club newsletter as part of the Communications Committee.

2024-2025 Executive Board: Bernice and Ed, J.B., Jackie, Don, and Pat

Please welcome your new Executive Board members for 2025-2026.

- President: Cheryl Gedris
- 1st Vice President/Programs Co-Chairs: Leslie Bischoff and Jackie Fegan
- 2nd Vice President/Communications Chair: Val Shaha
- Treasurer/Finance Chair: Don Blackwell
- Secretary: LeeAnn Podruch

2025-2026 Executive Board: Val, Don, Cheryl, LeeAnn, Jackie, and Leslie

Cheryl is coming out of retirement to become the President for the second time! Val has held many positions of leadership in the Club, including being a past President for two terms. Don has been the long-time Treasurer and is too valuable to the Club to let go! Lee Ann is a newcomer to the Club leadership and it's great that she is stepping up.

We encourage all members to give it some thought when leadership positions come available in the future. It's a rewarding experience in so many ways.

This newsletter is by the VillageWalk Garden Club of Bonita Springs Communications Committee:
Contact at villagewalkgardenclub@gmail.com

Newsletter Team
Bernice and Ed Anzures, Cathy Japuntich, Toni McGlynn, Ralph Brinley, David McBride

NATURE FUN FACT – MANGROVE SALT TOLERANCE

Most plants do not tolerate highly salty environments like salt water and brackish water (a mixture of salt water and fresh water), but mangroves do. These plants have interesting adaptations that allow them to use the fresh water in the saline water and exclude the salt (primarily sodium chloride or common table salt). In Florida, there are red, black, and white mangroves. Red mangroves are salt-excluding plants. Their root systems filter out the salt from the saline water and allow fresh water to enter. Black and white mangroves are secretors. They retain the fresh water content of the saline water and push out concentrated salt water through salt glands or pores in their leaves. As the water evaporates from the concentrated salt water, salt crystals appear on the leaves. White mangroves can also store salt in their leaves which eventually fall off. Thus, eliminating salt in another way. It is believed that indigenous peoples such as the Calusa collected the salt from mangrove leaves for food preservation, cooking, and medicinal purposes.

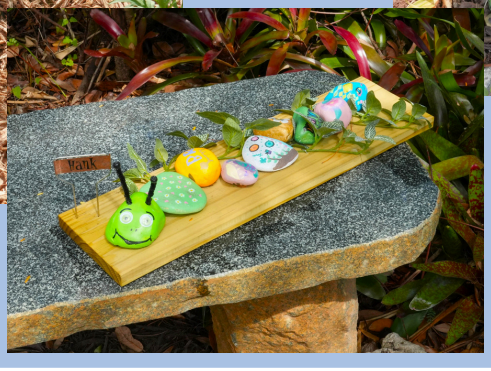
[Main Sources: Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, Florida Museum, University of Florida/IFAS]

Mangroves in Florida – Tampa Bay Times

Salt (NaCl) crystals on a mangrove leaf – Ulf Mehlig/Smithsonian Ocean

CATERPILLAR ARTWORK IN THE BUTTERFLY GARDEN

The eleven painted rock caterpillars that were created at the Butterfly Festival are now in the Butterfly Gardens. Some are closer to the sidewalk, and some are located along the walking paths inside the gardens.
Take a stroll through the gardens on a scavenger hunt and try to find them all!



WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY OF DAVID MCBRIDE

David is a photographer on the Communications Committee and an avid nature photographer. Here we feature a couple of his photos that were taken on his walks through VillageWalk. In addition, he tells the story behind these photographs. Look for more of his photos in the Welcome Back edition of the newsletter in the Fall.

Photographer David McBride on another nature adventure

Anhinga

At some time during most days, I go out for a walk with my camera. I'll often go from my house on Zamora to the Town Center to see if there is anything other than recycling in my mailbox. As I walk along the canals, I usually find fascinating creatures to photograph. I try to keep an eye out for anything unusual. One afternoon in early February, I spotted an Anhinga coming to the surface of the water after spearing a nice-sized fish. I regularly see them swimming. If they are staying near the shore, they are often looking for food. From time to time, I see them capture a small fish for a snack. This time it was a full meal. It brought its catch out of the water. After looking around for a suitable place to dine for a minute or so, it got back into the water with the fish still secure on its bill. Then it swam around the bend a ways to enjoy its lunch out of my sight.

At the end of the first week of February, I was taking my usual walk when I noticed some activity in a tree just ahead of me. I was apparently a little too close to them because a whole group of birds - probably at least a dozen - all left the tree together and flew to the next tree down the sidewalk. I slowly approached, but I kept my distance. As I focused on them with my camera, I could tell that a few of them were Yellow-Throated Warblers, which are lovely birds, and I got a few good photos. Then I realized that most of the birds in the group were Cedar Waxwings. I had never seen them around here. I got a couple of decent shots before they all took off. I have since seen another group of them at a greater distance. I learned that they are migratory and that they are usually in this area from late fall until around March.

Cedar Waxwing

BUTTERFLY FESTIVAL FOLLOW-UP

Here's some post-festival information.

- Donations from the festival totaled about $12,000. After subtracting expenses, the net profit from the festival was approximately $10,000. Both figures are substantially higher compared to last year! Overall, the bank account for the Butterfly Garden is in great financial shape for the future.
- It is estimated that there were at least 625 visitors including members of the Island Walk Garden Club. This figure is based on ice cream scoop data. 700 scoops of ice cream were served! Whatever the exact figure was, the festival was very well-attended.
- There were many positive comments, including ones from KW and the HOA Board. The education tents received many visitors, and there was a strong "feeling of community" at the event.

Next year, Terri Freiheit will be chairing the Festival with Linda Blaise's guidance. Thank you to Linda for her superhuman efforts in organizing the Butterfly Festivals.

TOUR OF ISLAND WALK LITTORAL LAKES PROJECT

Thanks to Linda Musick of the Trips and Tours Committee for submitting this article.

VillageWalk Garden Club tour group (at least most of them!)

On April 10, 2025, 30 members of the VillageWalk Garden Club met with several members of the Island Walk Garden Club for a discussion and tour of their progress with the littoral plantings around their lakes. Rosemary Hamtil, our contact person at the Island Walk Garden Club, had arranged a meeting room in their Community Center where we met Dick Norwood, their Lakes Chairperson, Betty Anne Davis, a former Board Member who was instrumental in starting the littoral program, and Becky Gibson Laemel, a former Board Member and Lakes Chair.

They presented the history of Island Walk's lakes and their attempts to solve the muck, pollution, aeration, snail, and erosion problems from 2005-2020. Installation of dredge socks, an aeration system, and marine paint on bridges all helped, but the cost of maintenance and constant erosion were on-going issues. In 2020, Island Walk's Lakes committee started looking into a new solution, which involved grading 30-40% of the lake banks and planting littorals. Once established in 2-3 years, these plants would hold down the soil, aerate the water, clean the water, and help prevent erosion at a significantly lower cost than before. These plants would also beautify the lakes and increase the wildlife population around them. Advance Aquatic took over the project in 2023 and continues to monitor the muck and maintain the plantings. The speakers did emphasize that it was a story of success and failure due to the cyclical process of dealing with the variables of climate change, sun vs. shade, seasons, water levels, availability, quality of plantings, and their cost.

The Island Walk speakers took questions from the VillageWalk Garden members for at least 20 minutes. Afterwards, we took an hour-long tour of several clear-looking lakes where we could see the graded lake banks and plantings of spike rush closer to the water and pickerelweed further back. Upon our return to the Community Center, we were treated to a wonderful lunch put on by Cindy Duk, President of the Island Walk Garden Club, and Ann Foppe, Island Walk Garden Club Meeting Program Coordinator.

The VillageWalk Garden Club greatly appreciates that the Island Walk Garden Club hosted this event. The meeting provided us with a better understanding of the process, which involved trials and successes with the littoral plantings around their lakes. To show our appreciation, the VillageWalk Garden Club gave a $250 donation to the Island Walk Garden Club. We hope that the two clubs can come together again in a joint effort/project.

Native Sabatia stellaris

Newly planted littoral zone area

"Yellow King Humbert" canna (Canna x generalis 'Yellow King Humbert')

TOUR OF ISLAND WALK LITTORAL LAKES PROJECT

Postscripts from the Newsletter Publishers

While exploring the Island Walk littoral plants, a beautiful plant with pink flowers was discovered. A picture of the flower was shown to the members of the Island Walk Garden Club, but they did not know its identity. They said it wasn't an intentional part of the littoral planting plan. Upon further investigation, the mystery plant was found to be Sabatia stellaris, which has common names of rose of Plymouth, marsh pink, salt-marsh pink, and sea-pink. It is a native plant that is found along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts from Massachusetts to Louisiana. This native plant is an interesting finding because it is an indication that native plants that were not intentionally planted are finding homes in the Island Walk littoral planting zones. Sabatia stellaris probably arrived in Island Walk as windborne seeds.

After the Island Walk tour in the morning, the newsletter publishers took a walk in VillageWalk to compare the ponds and shorelines of VillageWalk to Island Walk. It wasn't a controlled scientific study, but these general observations were made.

- The VillageWalk shorelines are barren-looking, especially since the low water level has exposed the littoral zone. Also, there are definite signs of erosion. The shorelines in IslandWalk are lusher and more attractive.
- There is less wildlife in and around the VillageWalk ponds compared to Island Walk.
- In VillageWalk, the water is only clear near the shoreline. It quickly becomes murky in deeper water. Whereas the water in Island Walk is clear even in deeper water.

Based on what the tour group saw at Island Walk, we will have beautiful shorelines and clearer water in the future, but it will take time and patience.

A discussion stop on the walking tour

Much clearer water than VillageWalk

Mature littoral planting area

Littoral plants make a nice foreground for the fountain

Common gallinule (Gallinula galeata)

Needham's skimmer dragonfly (Libellula needhami)

BROMELIAD PRESENTATION AT THE APRIL GARDEN CLUB MEETING

Worldwide distribution of bromeliads – Wiki Commons

Matt Bagley, owner of Bonita Bromeliads in Bonita Springs, gave a presentation on bromeliads at the April 15th Garden Club meeting. Bromeliads are described as "New World Plants" that are found in the tropical and subtropical regions of North and South America, the Caribbean, and western Africa. There are approximately 3000 species in the bromeliad family. Bromeliads are enjoyed for their colored/patterned leaves and spiked flowers.

Curled leaves of Quesnelia marmorata – Ian Hook

Terrestrial bromeliads grow on the ground in well-drained soil. Their nutrient uptake system is soil-root dependent. Epiphytic bromeliads grow on other plants or on other surfaces for support. Their nutrient uptake system is soil-root independent. They like indirect sunlight and do best under the shade of trees. The bright coloration may be enhanced by morning sunlight. Strong sun exposure is not recommended and can burn the leaves. Bromeliads primarily get their water through their leaves and center cup. In pots, they can be grown in pine bark mulch or other fast-draining media as their roots like air around them. They don't tolerate standing water which causes rotting. Some bromeliads are cold-hardy and can tolerate temperatures in the 30s. After blooming, the mother plant typically dies, but pups are produced. In a way, they live on forever!

Many varieties of bromeliads were described during the presentation. Listed below are a few of them.

- The smallest bromeliad is Spanish moss (Tillandsia usneoides).
- The largest one is Puya raimondii, whose flower stalk can grow up to tens of feet tall.
- Pineapples (Ananas comosus) are bromeliads.
- Quesnelia marmorata has unusual, curled leaves.
- Several bromeliads are native to Florida including the cardinal air plant, which is a Tillandsia. It is an epiphyte found in trees.
- Androlepis bromeliads are unique in that male and female flowers are found on separate plants.
- Dyckias look like succulents, but they are very different from one another.
- There is evidence that there are a few carnivorous bromeliads that can capture and digest insects.

Florida native cardinal air plant

More information about bromeliads can be found at:

- https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP337
- https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/UW205

Giant Puya raimondii in the Andes mountains – Waldemar Niclevicz

Pineapple is a bromeliad!

Some of the bromeliads on display at the meeting

IMPORTANT DATES FOR THE 2025-2026 SEASON

MEETING/EVENT	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
Garden Club Meeting	Nov. 11, 2025	1:00 -2:30 PM	Town Center
Holiday Party	Dec. 4, 2025	5:00 - 9:00 PM	Town Center
Garden Club Meeting	Dec. 9, 2025	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center
Garden Club Meeting	Jan. 20, 2026	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center
Plant/Bake Sale	Jan. 24, 2026	9:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Bocce Parking Lot
Garden Club Meeting	Feb. 17, 2026	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center
Butterfly Festival	Mar. 7, 2026	10:00 AM - 2:00 PM	Butterfly Gardens
Garden Club Meeting	Mar. 17, 2026	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center
Garden Club Meeting	Apr. 21, 2026	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center
Garden Club Meeting and Plant Exchange	May 19, 2026	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center

Last Garden Club Meeting for the 2024-2025 Season

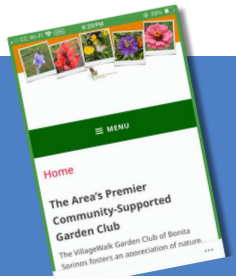
May 20 - ***Garden Club Meeting & Plant Exchange*** - 1:00 pm - VW Town Center

This meeting will be our annual Plant Exchange where you bring a plant, tell our club a little bit about it and how to care for it, then choose a different plant to take home for your garden. This is a highly informative meeting where you can learn about other new and exciting plants while adding to your collection. It's a lot of fun! Please plan to attend if you are still in VillageWalk.

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT THE BUTTERFLY GARDEN

"The gardens are such a highlight for Village Walk of Bonita Springs. Personally, I am so grateful for them and for each of **YOU** who make them possible."

Shar Rosser, VillageWalk Resident and Garden Club Member



CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE!

www.villagewalkgardenclub.com

Our website is full of information about the garden club, events and sustainability practices.