THE SANCTUARY

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 3 · MAY–AUGUST 2024

THE FLORIDA HIGHWAYMEN

INTERSTATE CONNECTIONS

JULY 20 – SEPTEMBER 15

Downtown Sarasota Campus

MARIE SELBY BOTANICAL GARDENS

DOWNTOWN SARASOTA | HISTORIC SPANISH POINT

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

"The transformative power of nature is around us every day, and it's important for us to harness that energy by getting outside and soaking it in."

We talk a lot about transformation at Selby Gardens, whether it relates to the evolution of our botanical research, or to how we impact members' and visitors' lives through thought-provoking exhibits.

This year, the word keeps coming up as we see the impact of our Phase One implementation of the Master Plan for our Downtown Sarasota campus. We created a better home for our research. We built world-class welcome facilities and visitor amenities. And we are using more than 50,000 square feet of solar panels to power the world's first net positive energy botanical garden complex.

It's important to remember who made all of this possible: our Board of Trustees, Advisory Committee, staff, donors, hundreds of volunteers, thousands of members – and you of course! We remain deeply grateful. In addition, we want to thank the City of Sarasota's municipal leaders who embraced our vision – such as Mayor Liz Alpert, City Commissioner Erik Arroyo, City Commissioner Kyle Battie, former Mayor Hagen Brody, as well as City Manager Marlon Brown and Deputy City Manager Pat Robinson.

We've heard so many rave reviews about the new facilities, and *The Green Orchid* – our new garden to plate restaurant – has proven to be a big hit for visitors, thanks to the inventive menu from Michael's on East. You can read about the new restaurant in this issue of *The Sanctuary*, along with stories on a wide range of other topics.

We tell the story behind our summer exhibit of iconic Florida landscape paintings by the Florida Highwaymen. Galleries were not displaying the works of these Black artists, so they sold their paintings from roadsides around the state.

We talk about our research botanist Dr. John Clark, known as the "Crocodile Dundee of Botany." We look inside the spectacular solar panel arrays that fuel Phase One. And we give some of the backstory behind our iconic artist in residence Patti Smith and the recent exhibition, *Yayoi Kusama: A Letter to Georgia O'Keeffe*. In addition, we remind you that there is still time to see our current exhibition *Clyde Butcher: Nature Through the Lens* at our Historic Spanish Point campus.

Soon, we will be talking about Phase Two of our ongoing Master Plan for the Downtown Sarasota campus, which will include new hurricane resilient, net positive energy greenhouse facilities and a Learning Pavilion – all state-of-the-art with technology and sustainable design. We are so indebted to our loyal supporters for their continuing generosity, and we know Phase Two will be as successful as Phase One has proven to be.

The transformative power of nature is around us every day, and it's important for us to harness that energy by getting outside and soaking it in. We are proud to offer the opportunity to do just that for our members and visitors. We don't take this responsibility lightly, and we always want to remember to thank those who make all of this possible. Thank YOU!

Cheers,

Jennifer O. Rominiecki
President & CEO

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Selby Gardens' programs are sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, and the National Endowment for the Arts; and are paid for in part by Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax revenues.

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DOWNTOWN SARASOTA CAMPUS

Cacao Tree

Theobroma cacao

Theobroma cacao, our beloved chocolate tree, has its roots anchored in Selby Gardens' Tropical Conservatory. It's diminutive but beautiful white to creamy flowers when pollinated produce the fruit that we all know and love, chocolate. This small but highly ornamental tree grows naturally in the rainforests of the tropical Americas. Our specimen has been at the Gardens since 1980 and was selected as a self-pollinating tree that can be used for display or educational purposes.

ABOUT

- *Theobroma* is Latin for "food of the Gods".
- The flowers are born on the trunk or on older branches, this is known in botany as cauliflory and provides support to the heavy cacao fruits.

WHAT'S IN BLOOM

HISTORIC SPANISH POINT CAMPUS

Butterfly Orchid

Encyclia tampensis

The butterfly orchid is the most common epiphytic orchid in Florida. This native species occurs throughout much of the Florida peninsula, and in Cuba and the Bahamas. At the Historic Spanish Point campus, it is found on the limbs of live oak and red cedar trees. These hardy natives thrive on the humidity near the coastline, in hardwood hammocks, and swamps. They often share the limbs with resurrection ferns, Spanish moss, ball moss, and other epiphytes. The small flowers are made noticeable by their large numbers, sometimes several dozen flowers on a single spike (inflorescence). Growing in clumps of pseudo-bulbs, several blooming spikes are typically visible. As the flowers are pollinated, seedpods develop, which release their seeds to the wind. While somewhat common, this orchid has been commercially exploited, and harvesting is restricted. The species was first recorded in the Tampa Bay area, inspiring the species name.

ABOUT

- Most common epiphytic orchid in Florida.
- Very showy due to large numbers of small flowers.
- The sweet scent of the bloom attracts pollinators during the day.

EXHIBITION—DOWNTOWN SARASOTA CAMPUS

THE FLORIDA HIGHWAYMEN: INTERSTATE CONNECTIONS

ON VIEW JULY 20 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 15 | MUSEUM OF BOTANY & THE ARTS

At a time in the state's history when opportunities were few and far between for them, a group of African American artists in Florida made history of their own.

They would become known as the Florida Highwaymen – a loose-knit group of talented artists who couldn't find art galleries to display their paintings, so they sold their evocative landscapes from the roadsides and the trunks of their cars, or peddled their works door to door.

Those days are long gone. And for several decades, the Florida Highwaymen have been celebrated for creating unique and lasting images of a long-ago Florida before increased urbanization forever changed the state's landscape. Selby Gardens showcased many significant works from a number of noted Highwaymen in a summer 2021 exhibition, a show that resonated with the greater Sarasota community as well as the historically Black area of Newtown.

Now, based on the success of that show, a new summer exhibition featuring works by key members of the fabled group is on display at the Gardens. "The first show was very well-received, and it was a great opportunity for us to connect with the broader Sarasota community, including the Newtown community," said David Berry, Selby Gardens' Vice President for Visitor Engagement and Chief Museum Curator. "For the new exhibition, we were interested in revisiting the subject but approaching it in a distinctly different way."

Two of the artists being featured, Harold Newton and Alfred Hair, are regarded as the founding figures of the movement. They served as catalysts for the whole community of Black artists who sought to earn a living through their paintings in Fort Pierce and other parts of Florida's east coast.

Alfred Hair, *Palms on the Florida Coast*, 1960
Courtesy of the Asselstine Collection

Harold Newton, *Early River Scene with Herons*, n.d.
Courtesy of the Asselstine Collection

Presented in collaboration with the

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Florida ARTS & CULTURE

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Sponsored in part by the State of Florida through the Division of Arts and Culture and the National Endowment for the Arts and paid for in part by Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax revenues

Harold Newton, *Backcountry Hammocks at Sunset*, n.d.
Courtesy of the Asselstine Collection

Berry worked again with Allan Asselstine, a primary lender of Highwaymen paintings who contributed to the 2021 show. "That lender has a wonderful collection, containing some of the best and earliest works," Berry said.

Today, 26 of the Highwaymen have been inducted into the Florida Artists Hall of Fame. That group includes the artists showcased this summer at Selby Gardens. Harold Newton is considered perhaps the most gifted of the group and has been dubbed "The original Highwayman."

Newton, born in an African-American enclave of Vero Beach in 1934, painted and drew portraits for churches and members of the community, but switched to landscape at the suggestion of an established white painter, A.E. "Beanie" Backus, who served as a mentor. Newton and Hair went on to inspire a wave of African American painters, as well as to pioneer the Highwaymen's roadside and door-to-door selling techniques.

Born in Fort Pierce in 1941, Hair was also encouraged by Backus, who gave him art lessons and advised him to paint landscapes. That started Hair on his path selling his works on roadsides and knocking on doors. He became a savvy salesman and prolific entrepreneur as well as a painter.

In preparation for the new exhibition, Berry has worked in collaboration with Walter Gilbert, Selby Gardens' Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion, and John McCarthy, Selby Gardens' Vice President for Regional History. The Selby Gardens team has also partnered with members of the Newtown community, with the aim of making historical connections between the story of the Highwaymen and the African American experience in Sarasota in the mid-1950s and early 1960s.

Harold Newton, *Royal Poinciana*, n.d.
Courtesy of the Asselstine Collection

THE GREEN ORCHID

FRESH & FANCIFUL SUMMERTIME FARE

The Green Orchid by Michael's on East, Selby Gardens' distinctive new restaurant, is a hit. And for good reason. The light, airy atmosphere coupled with a garden to plate menu that exudes the environment in which it's nestled instantly turns first-time diners into regulars.

The innovative garden-to-table eatery on Selby Gardens' Downtown Sarasota campus takes many ingredients from the onsite Drs. Andrew and Judith Economos Rooftop Edible Garden, managed by Operation EcoVets, a nonprofit that provides growth opportunities for military veterans. Diners easily imagine the pluck of a tomato or the snip of an herb transported directly onto the dish, appreciating a level of care that undoubtedly adds to the unmatched flavor of freshly harvested ingredients.

As we swiftly approach higher temperatures that are the hallmark of coastal Florida living, nothing screams summer more than a refreshing cocktail and energizing, rainbow-colored fare. Dishes like the Cape Malay Tacos and Jennifer's Rooftop Garden Salad have quickly become fan favorites. And don't forget about the botanical-inspired cocktails such as the Green Orchid, Thyme after Thyme, and Watermelon Cosmopolitan, with finishing touches straight from the rooftop garden, along with organic and biodynamic wines from around the world.

And then there's the recently launched new weekend brunch menu, that features a spin on classics like Eggs Benedict and Brioche French Toast, and new Selby-specific dishes like the *Palm Avenue Omelette* stuffed with produce sourced from the rooftop.

Summer is ultimately a time for gathering, and The Green Orchid is nothing short of welcoming. Hours for The Green Orchid match Selby Gardens' hours, with admission to Selby Gardens or a membership required for a visit.

But in the off chance you cannot make the scenic trek to Selby Gardens for a truly encapsulating experience, here are a few summertime recipes to wow your family and friends at home. No gardening experience required!

Recipes courtesy of Michael's on East.

Watermelon Cosmopolitan

Grey Goose Vodka, triple sec, garden basil syrup, fresh watermelon and lime with watermelon cubette and basil leaf.

INGREDIENTS

4–5 cubes of watermelon, muddled
2 oz Grey Goose Vodka
1 oz basil simple syrup
½ oz lime juice
¼ oz triple sec

Basil simple syrup:

1 cup water
1 cup white sugar
1 cup fresh basil leaves

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine water, sugar, and basil leaves in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Reduce heat and simmer for 1 minute. Remove from heat and let syrup steep for 30 minutes.

Drain syrup through a mesh strainer into a sterilized glass jar; discard basil leaves. Let cool and then measure out the 1 ounce needed for the cocktail.

Mix all ingredients into a cocktail shaker, strain into a coupe and garnish with a watermelon cube and basil leaf.

Cape Malay Street Tacos

Seared malay-spiced tiger prawns in a soft flour tortilla with avocado, shredded lettuce, charred corn pico de gallo and cilantro crema. Served with yuca fries and chipotle aioli. Serves 8 (3 tacos per person)

INGREDIENTS

(24) 6-inch tortilla wraps
tiger prawns (2 per taco), rough chopped
2 avocados, finely chopped into cubes
2 romaine hearts, cut into ¼ inch slices
1 watermelon radish, sliced thin and julienned into ¼ inch size
¼ bunch cilantro, pull leaves from stem
4 limes, cut into wedges

For the chipotle aioli:

3 cups vegan mayonnaise
½ can chipotle peppers, finely chopped
5 tablespoons sriracha
3 tablespoons lime juice
Mix all ingredients in a blender until mixture is smooth.

For the avocado cilantro crema:

3 avocados, dice into cubes
3 cups sour cream
4 tablespoons lime juice
½ bunch cilantro, diced
Mix all ingredients in a blender until mixture is smooth. Add salt and pepper to taste.

For the charred corn pico de gallo:

1 red onion, diced and fine cut
1 tomato, diced and fine cut
3 ears of sweet yellow corn, roast in the oven until a light brown on the kernels. Using a knife, scale downwards on the cobb to remove kernels into bowl (or 12 oz bag frozen fire roasted corn)
2 jalapeños, diced and fine cut
2 cucumbers, diced and fine cut
2 scallions, diced and fine cut
3 tablespoons lime juice
¼ cup apple cider vinegar
3 tablespoons olive oil
In a large mixing bowl, mix all ingredients together. Add salt and pepper to taste.

INSTRUCTIONS

Add ¼ cup of water into a pan along with prawns and charred corn pico de gallo. Cook on medium heat for 6 minutes or until shrimp is cooked thoroughly. Set aside.

Toast the tortillas lightly. Add the lettuce, radish and avocado cubes first then the prawns and pico mixture.

Add chipotle aioli, avocado cilantro crema, cilantro leaves and garnish with a lime wedge.

MASTER PLAN

HARNESSING THE SUN

Selby Gardens' **Solar Panels**

The power of Selby Gardens' new cutting-edge look lies not only in its stunning Master Plan architecture and design, but in the nature of the power that Phase One of Selby Gardens generates, directly from the sun. Employing the latest green technology, Phase One is powered by Barancik Foundation and has produced a botanical garden complex that will generate net positive energy, the first facility of its type in the world. Sourced from a 50,000 square foot solar array atop the Morganroth Family Living Energy Access Facility, also known as the LEAF, and from the 7,000 square foot Elizabeth Moore Rooftop Garden & Solar Array, Selby Gardens' Phase One expansion will generate more energy than it consumes.

In fact, it is a key aspect of Selby Gardens' new restaurant, The Green Orchid, which is the world's first net positive energy restaurant, entirely utilizing solar power. The restaurant, operated by Michael's On East features the Drs. Andrew and Judith Economos Rooftop Edible Garden, which provides fresh produce for the menu. The restaurant also features an all-electric and induction kitchen and will generate more energy than it consumes.

We recently discussed the state-of-the-art system with One80 Solar Chief Executive Officer Patrick Attwater, whose San Antonio, Texas-based company oversaw the installation of the solar panel system at Selby Gardens. Here are the highlights:

Was there a specific challenge in creating an all-solar-powered restaurant?

What's tough is that typically restaurants use a lot of power, but they don't have a lot of space to put solar panels. The roofs often aren't very big, and there are walk-in coolers and elements that make a restaurant very energy-intensive. So it's difficult typically to produce more than 100 percent of the power for any restaurant. But The Green Orchid is one corner of the first floor of a very large building, the LEAF building, which made it easier than for a standalone restaurant.

How many panels are there on the roof of the buildings to provide this power?

The precise number is 2,158. It's safe to say this is the largest installation of solar panels in Sarasota. And I know of several big ones in the Tampa Bay area but they're not as big as this. By comparison, the Clearwater Marine Aquarium generates 600 kilowatts of power, but this one is 950.

What appeals to you most about the design?

From my standpoint, the reason I am so in love with this project is not the size but the architectural nature of it. On the LEAF building, which is the parking structure, we have a fully custom canopy structure that covers the entire top of the building, and the interior there is in the shape of a wave—in other words, we fabricated the steel in a way that creates a wave on the interior. The outside band is designed aerodynamically to break wind gusts and create beautiful overhangs.

What are some of the other projects you've done?

There is a lot we're working on, but the project most inspired by this one is located in San Antonio—the largest solar project high-rise building in America. We learned a lot of things from that experience that helped us with Selby Gardens, utilizing the same type of engineering skills. We've also built the world's largest, solar-powered BMW dealership, and many other projects. We think of ourselves as a national firm that develops, designs, engineers, constructs and operates commercial and industrial-scale solar projects. We're somewhat unique, in that we're a real estate developer, architect, engineer and general contractor all rolled up into one—specifically for solar power.

EXHIBITION—DOWNTOWN SARASOTA CAMPUS

THE JEAN & ALFRED GOLDSTEIN EXHIBITION SERIES

ROOTED IN NATURE

YAYOI KUSAMA

A LETTER TO GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

The Goldstein Exhibition—showing the work of a young, aspiring artist from Japan who made a life-changing connection with a legendary painter in the United States—captivated visitors to Selby Gardens.

The exhibition, rooted in the correspondence between up-and-coming artist Yayoi Kusama and the acclaimed Georgia O'Keeffe, started with a personal letter written by Kusama to O'Keeffe in the mid-1950s. That letter would ultimately change the course of modern art history, encapsulated in a show fittingly titled *A Letter to Georgia O'Keeffe*.

The show not only focused on the impactful letter; it also explored the ways in which the work of both artists is rooted in nature.

"The exhibition was remarkable in the way it connects these two world-renowned female artists," Selby Gardens President and CEO Jennifer Rominiecki said. "Nobody typically associates one with the other, yet that adds an element of surprise to the exhibition. Kusama was truly inspired by O'Keeffe, who in turn served as a mentor and helped her at a very challenging time when she was deciding what her path forward as an artist would be."

Kusama had found it difficult to make strides in Japan's male-dominated society. And when she mailed her letter, she didn't expect a response.

So she was overjoyed when she received a reply from the painter known as "The Mother of American Modernism." O'Keeffe encouraged her to move to the then center of the art world, New York City. And the rest is modern art history.

This show, the eighth in the series of the Jean & Alfred Goldstein Exhibitions at Selby Gardens, had been two years in the making, said Vice President for Visitor Engagement and Chief Museum Curator David Berry. He believes it is special in two distinct ways.

Horticultural displays, such as Moments of Levity (above) and Shear Repetition (below), were inspired by the exhibition.

"The story itself is very interesting – the unexpected connection between two major artists, and the impact it had on the lives of both and the career of Kusama," he said. "The other element of the story we're telling is the connection of both artists to nature, which provided a rich source of artistic inspiration."

The recent completion of Phase One of Selby Gardens' Master Plan gave the horticulture team an opportunity with this show to activate more of the campus than ever before. According to Berry, a plant display was incorporated into the new Welcome Center, immersing visitors in an art and horticultural experience from their point of arrival. Visitors could then see additional plant displays in the Tropical Conservatory and around the gardens, and also experienced original works by Kusama and O'Keeffe that inspired the Selby Gardens team in the Museum of Botany & the Arts.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

PATTI SMITH: A PRELUDE AND AN ENCORE

Named one of the most influential people in the world in TIME Magazine's TIME 100, Patti Smith is a poet, singer, songwriter, photographer, and fine artist. She has produced a body of work whose influence branches out through generations, across disciplines, and around the world. Now, Smith's unique artistry is deeply entwined in the landscape of Selby Gardens, with her distinctive voice, creative vision, and presence, providing an exciting and enriching addition to the organization as Selby Gardens' "Artist in Residence."

Tony Shanahan, Selby Gardens' Artist in Residence Patti Smith, President and CEO of Selby Gardens Jennifer Rominiecki, and Jesse Paris Smith, before Smith's February performance

Smith's acclaimed vocals and lyricism were showcased this past November and February, making it her third and fourth performances at Selby Gardens over the past two years—an hour-long engagement in *An Evening with Patti Smith Dedicated to Georgia O'Keeffe*, served as a prelude to the eighth iteration of the Jean & Alfred Goldstein Exhibition followed by a show in February *An Encore with Patti Smith Dedicated to Georgia O'Keeffe*.

Smith's growing relationship with the Gardens and its President and CEO Jennifer Rominiecki grew out of a 2022 Goldstein exhibit, *Robert Mapplethorpe and Patti Smith: Flowers, Poetry and Light*—exploring Mapplethorpe's flower photography and Smith's lyrics and poetry about flowers and nature.

Smith first visited Selby Gardens in February 2022 to tour *Flowers, Poetry, and Light* and perform songs and readings she selected to complement the exhibition. She called the interdisciplinary show "a beguiling exhibition" and said she "was very moved to be asked to be a part of it." She returned in April 2022 for a second live performance, at which the new residency was announced.

"It is an honor for Selby Gardens to have Patti Smith as our very first Artist in Residence," Rominiecki said. "Patti's revolutionary mergence of artistic mediums resonates with our organization on many levels as we continue to develop interdisciplinary programming."

Smith wowed the audience with her captivating vocals, stories, poems, and playing acoustic guitar. She also spoke of her admiration of O'Keeffe during the show, sharing a story involving O'Keeffe's husband, photographer, and art dealer Alfred Stieglitz.

"I always loved Georgia O'Keeffe, and around 1970 or 1971, Robert Mapplethorpe had started taking photographs and I was his first model," she told the crowd. "And after a while I wanted to do photographs like Stieglitz took of Georgia. We had a friend at the Metropolitan Museum of Art… he was a beautiful man, John McKendry, and he was the head of photography. He liked us and one night he let us stay late, and he did a forbidden thing."

McKendry, she explained, opened private files and let his friends view Stieglitz's photographs of Georgia O'Keeffe, which were not to be shown publicly.

"We looked at them a very long time," Smith continued. "And they had a great effect on Robert. They were life changing. He really saw the trust and intimacy and what it meant between the photographer and his subject. And also, the beauty, the hues, the light and the paper—everything. It was so influential. And of course, I was trying to copy what she did with her hands. It was a beautiful thing."

The same could be said for Patti Smith's performance—and her blossoming relationship with Selby Gardens. As a treat for visitors, "Artist in Residence" Smith can now be heard narrating a welcome video at the Ernie Kretzmer & Family Theater located in the Jean Goldstein Welcome Center.

Smith's visits and performances to date have been presented and underwritten by Selby Gardens Trustee Marianne McComb and her husband, William.

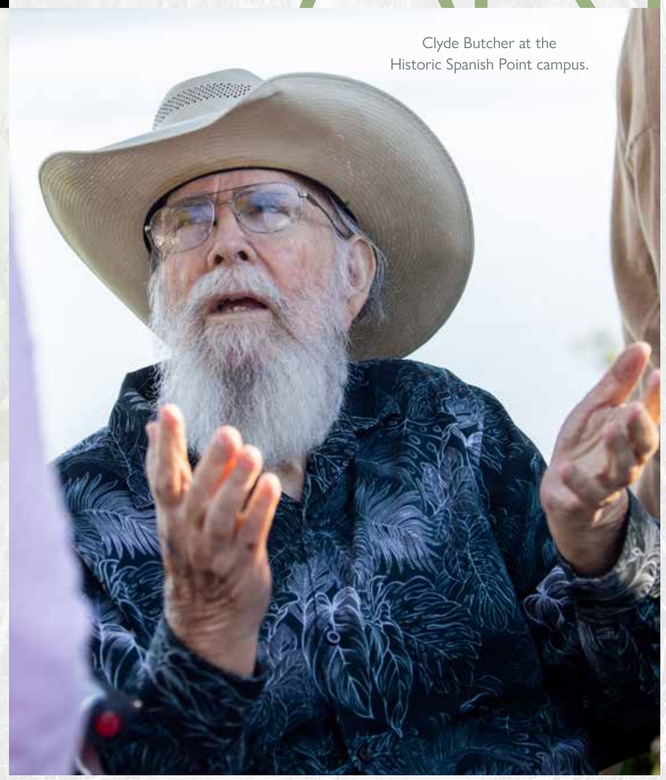
EXHIBITION—HISTORIC SPANISH POINT CAMPUS

CONSERVATION AS ART

CLYDE BUTCHER:
NATURE THROUGH THE LENS
Through August 31, 2024
Historic Spanish Point campus
Learn more about this exhibition at selby.org

In March, Selby Gardens hosted an Evening with Clyde Butcher at The Historic Spanish Point campus. Guests enjoyed the opportunity to tour the exhibition *Clyde Butcher: Nature Through the Lens*, featuring the iconic artist's large-scale landscape prints on aluminum set amid the native nature of this beautiful and beloved campus.

While watching the sunset overlooking Little Sarasota Bay, guests enjoyed a cocktail reception from Michael's on East at the White Cottage Lawn. Each guest received a signed copy of Clyde Butcher's book, *National Parks Preserves & Monuments*, donated by Clyde Butcher's gallery.



Clyde Butcher at the Historic Spanish Point campus.

Clyde Butcher's renowned black and white photos of nature's beauty have captivated viewers for more than half a century. And they continue to do so at Selby Gardens in the *Clyde Butcher: Nature Through the Lens* exhibit, with aluminum prints of his stunning work displayed outdoors amid the breathtaking flora of the Historic Spanish Point campus to create a unique viewing experience.

"His website and publications do a wonderful job of displaying the subject matter of his work, but there's no substitute for seeing it at scale in a gallery or outside," says David Berry, Vice President for Visitor Engagement and Chief Museum Curator of Selby Gardens. "The beauty of seeing it outside is that the interaction of what is between the frame and what's *around* it blurs the line a little bit. And that extends the viewing experience."

Berry explains that ample thought was given to placing the work creatively on the grounds, designed to give a sense of Butcher's images expanding outward into the environment.

"That can be as simple as some of the views of water and mangroves we have with Little Sarasota Bay in the background," he says. "There's no question you see the outer edge of the black and white image, but the effect is that the image continues on."

His evocative portraits in shades of black, white, and gray have brought to the forefront a powerful message of conservation—particularly in preserving the Everglades—and have led to numerous accolades and honors over his career.

The awards include the Florida Hall of Fame Award, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the North American Nature Photography Association, and the Ansel Adams Conservation Award from the Sierra Club for excellence in photography and promoting public awareness of the environment.

The concept of displaying Butcher's photos outside on aluminum plates—in essence, creating an outdoor gallery—has proved to be extremely popular with visitors since the exhibit made its debut earlier this year.

"The feedback has been very good," Berry says. "I don't think Clyde ever printed on aluminum, because he generally creates his own prints in his studio. People are enjoying it because Clyde's work is fantastic and seeing it at a large scale and in a natural environment truly makes it special."

Selby Gardens is all about conservation, on many levels, and the Butcher exhibition fits this focus nicely.

"Ultimately, our goal as an institution is for appreciation to lead to an understanding of the importance of conservation," Berry says. "I know that point is important to Clyde as well."

If you have not yet visited this beautiful, one-of-a-kind exhibition, do not miss the opportunity. *Clyde Butcher: Nature Through the Lens* closes on August 31.

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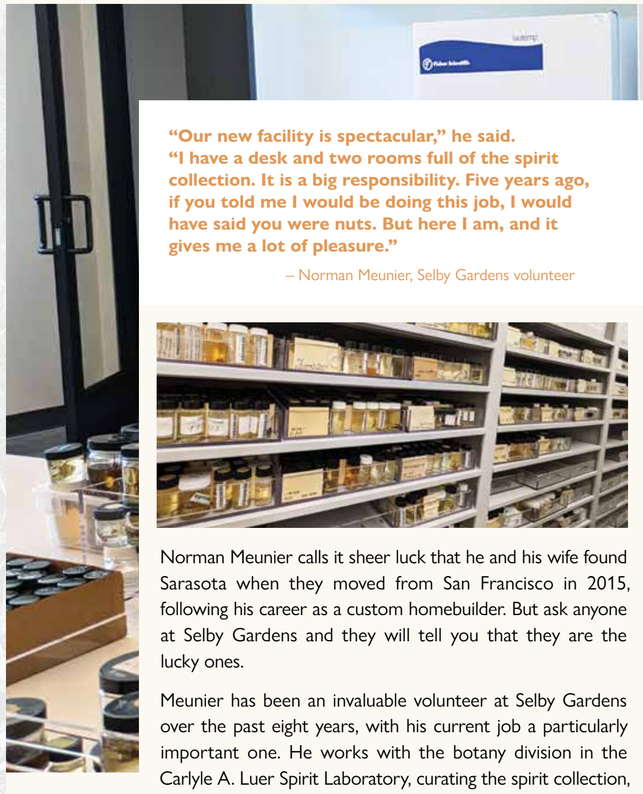
VOLUNTEER

PROTECTING SELBY GARDENS' SPIRITS



"Our new facility is spectacular," he said. "I have a desk and two rooms full of the spirit collection. It is a big responsibility. Five years ago, if you told me I would be doing this job, I would have said you were nuts. But here I am, and it gives me a lot of pleasure."

– Norman Meunier, Selby Gardens volunteer

Norman Meunier calls it sheer luck that he and his wife found Sarasota when they moved from San Francisco in 2015, following his career as a custom homebuilder. But ask anyone at Selby Gardens and they will tell you that they are the lucky ones.

Meunier has been an invaluable volunteer at Selby Gardens over the past eight years, with his current job a particularly important one. He works with the botany division in the Carlyle A. Luer Spirit Laboratory, curating the spirit collection, which includes a vast assortment of specimens in fluids that preserve flowers in a three-dimensional, close-to-nature form. Selby Gardens' fabled assortment of spirits ranks as the second largest in the world with some 35,000 specimens preserved in alcohol. Only Royal Botanic Garden Kew, UK, has more.

"Spirits are made from 70 percent denatured alcohol, with 27 percent water and 3 percent glycerin," he explained. "The glycerin allows the flower or plant material to be measured and used for all different scientific purposes later. It is exciting stuff. And this collection has been Selby Gardens' property for more than 25 years."

For many years, before the recent move to a modern new facility, the specimens were kept in storage containers. "But some years ago, other volunteers started to clean the bottles and make sure that the numerical codes were in the bottles and written on them as well," he said. "They filled each bottle with this solution and put them in boxes, where they were placed in deep storage."

Eventually, the collection was moved to several rooms, where Meunier says they were available if requested but difficult to access. But now the collection has a state-of-the-art new home in the Steinwachs Family Plant Research Center, and Meunier takes immense pride in attending to each bottle of the prized collection, sharing the meticulous workload—labeling and mixing solutions—six to seven hours a day with another volunteer.

"I can process about 100 bottles a day now," he said. "And that also means entering them onto a spreadsheet and entering all information I can glean from the labels. And all those bottles have to be topped off so that the flower doesn't dry up – if it does, we've lost a piece of the collection."

Meunier estimates he has logged some 3,000 volunteer hours in the botany division alone, averaging about 35 hours per week. And that does not count several other roles he has had over his eight years. He might never have made it to Selby Gardens had he not flown to Sarasota in 2010 to attend the wedding of a friend's son. Five years later, when he retired, he and his wife decided to relocate to Sarasota.

"I wanted to find somewhere to volunteer, and Selby Gardens was one of the first places I looked," he said. "I knew I couldn't just stay home and do nothing, so I was thrilled to join Selby Gardens. When I started out, it was all about plants in the horticultural division in the greenhouse." But after breaking a wrist on a vacation in Italy, Meunier could not do any lifting so, tapping his artistic skills, he volunteered to paint walls and produce art pieces for several shows. Then came the move to spirits three years ago.

"Our new facility is spectacular," he said. "I have a desk and two rooms full of the spirit collection. It is a big responsibility. Five years ago, if you told me I would be doing this job, I would have said you were nuts. But here I am, and it gives me a lot of pleasure."

BOTANY BRIEF

DISCOVERY AND ADVENTURE

with Selby Gardens' "Crocodile Dundee of Botany" Dr. John L. Clark

Selby Gardens Vice President for Botanical Horticulture Angel Lara with Botanist Dr. John L. Clark, PhD on recent trip to Ecuador.

To understand why Selby Gardens research botanist John L. Clark has been playfully called the "Crocodile Dundee of Botany," you need only watch one of his Instagram posts from a January expedition to Ecuador with some 15 New College students.

"*Wooooooo!!!*" yells the biology PhD at the start of a short video, surrounded by students and a fellow guide and dressed in a khaki shirt and pants like a proper safari leader. "Oh *wowww*! We found Monopyle Paniculata!" Then he turns to the group and bellows with an arm raised, "*YEAH!!*" as the students respond with cheers and applause.

His colleague, Lou Jost, then prepares to explain the significance of the find during this Andes Mountains jungle excursion. In a nutshell, during exploratory research in 1857, botanist Richard Spruce discovered the plant, among many other species. Monopyle Paniculata was not documented until more than 150 years later in 2003. "Did you hear that?!" Clark exclaims. "*One-hundred and fifty years!*"

Clark and Jost encountered the plant themselves in 2005 and are elated to share it now with the students, leading them into one more hearty cheer. Clark describes the tubular flower with myriad purple spots with a big leaf and little leaf. He is fully in his element, exuding infectious enthusiasm for his work that students clearly enjoy.

Though Clark officially joined the Selby Gardens staff in January 2023, he has contributed significantly to science at the Gardens for more than two decades. Since 2009, he has been affiliated with the organization as a research associate, collaborating with staff scientists, adding to the collections, and helping to expand the publication base. His work is concentrated on the family Gesneriaceae, flowering plants distributed throughout the world's tropical forests. Nearly one third of gesneriads are epiphytic, representing a major focus of the Gardens' research mission.

The mission that led Clark to Selby Gardens last year began as a distinguished teaching chair at New Jersey's Lawrenceville School, a coeducational preparatory boarding school. And his path to the Gardens was paved by the pandemic.

A New Jersey native, he often guided his students in an array of research projects and led them on annual educational trips to as far away as Scotland and Cuba. But during the summer of 2021, planning an overseas trip was out of the question with COVID still a danger. Instead, Clark decided to take his Lawrenceville students to Selby Gardens.

"I had a long history of coming to Selby Gardens, through several generations of scientists, and I knew this was a very special place," he says. "It turned out to be a good opportunity for Selby Gardens to see the kind of work I did with students, and I could clearly see this place had a vision. I was visiting at such an exciting time, with important growth on a daily basis."

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– Dr. John L. Clark

Follow Botanist Dr. John L. Clark on Instagram **@phinaea**

That trip ultimately opened the door to Selby Gardens and a new adventure for Clark. He left behind the teaching profession that previously included serving as a professor in the University of Alabama's Department of Biological Sciences. Today he remains a research associate with the Royal Botanical Garden Edinburgh and the Smithsonian National Museum of History. And though Clark no longer is affiliated with a school, he is still a teacher at heart, fueled by a boundless passion for discovery and adventure befitting the "Crocodile Dundee of Botany."

YOUTH PROGRAMS

CAMP LOOKOUT

Selby Gardens' Summer Camp

This is a busy time of year for Tracy Calla, Director of Education for Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. Her calendar is filled with coordinating the popular and enriching summer day camp program offered each year by Selby Gardens.

Dubbed "Camp Lookout," programming takes place for four weeks running through the month of June, with a different theme featured each week and some 30 children taking part in every session.

"We try to make it interesting and fun with things kids haven't done before," Calla says. "Experiencing nature is a real treat for the kids. It's nice to be able to offer them that antidote to screen time."

Here is a line-up of Camp Lookout programming; just a sampling of how the great outdoors can become a child's greatest classroom.

The first week, themed "Flowering Artists," has a focus on botanical art and using the Gardens as a canvas and inspiration, Calla explains. "We look at colors and shapes and patterns to get kids involved creating art. And we incorporate natural art materials with things like pine needle paintbrushes, and leaf rubbings."

Campers will also visit the exhibition, *Yayoi Kusama: A Letter to Georgia O'Keeffe*, and then discuss their interpretations of the works.

Week Two, called "Plant Detectives", built around plant adaptations and their ecological niches, trying to discover clues in nature to see how plants and animals are interrelated.

Week Three, named "Budding Naturalist," is geared to children who might aspire to do field science. "We have them put on their little botanist's hat and go into the field to see if they can identify and classify plants," Calla says. "We replicate herbarium specimens and spirit specimens and talk about how we can conserve plants."

Week Four explores ethnobotany—the relationship between people and plants—and how plants are part of our lives, from everyday items like T-shirts and vanilla ice cream, to medicines and building materials.

Calla worked at Selby Gardens from 2013 to 2020, first as a greenhouse horticulturist, and then as Senior Manager of School and Family Programs, and just returned this year in her new role. "I've been visiting Selby Gardens ever since I was a kid," she says. "The Gardens are like my spiritual home."

EDUCATION

EMPOWERING WOMEN

VIRGINIA B. TOULMIN LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP

Marie Selby Botanical Gardens is delighted to announce **Zuleima Martinez** of Sarasota as the award recipient of the inaugural Virginia B. Toulmin Leadership Scholarship. Zuleima graduated on May 3 with an associate's degree from the State College of Florida with a 3.72 GPA and will be pursuing her bachelor's degree in communications at the University of South Florida in Tampa this fall.

The Virginia B. Toulmin Leadership Scholarship, awarded in honor of and in partnership with Selby Gardens President and CEO Jennifer O. Rominiecki as the scholarship's first mentor, is a merit-based scholarship aimed at recognizing and encouraging female students who demonstrate exceptional academic achievements and leadership qualities. The scholarship includes a $15,000 award provided by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation. Through this program, the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation and Marie Selby Botanical Gardens seek to contribute to the development of future leaders and professionals who will make meaningful contributions to the non-profit sector and our community. The scholarship will provide a pathway for successful female leadership in the business and nonprofit world by providing mentorship, opportunities to observe leadership in action, and financial support to high-achieving juniors or seniors pursuing bachelor's degrees and holding a minimum GPA of 3.5.

Zuleima was identified by a scholarship selection committee comprised of several Selby Gardens' Trustees and major supporters. She emerged as the leading choice of three finalists selected from a pool of 17 highly qualified applicants. The criteria was based on outstanding academic records, leadership, and a demonstrated commitment to positive community impact. The 17 candidates represented New College of Florida, Ringling College of Art and Design, University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, and State College of Florida.

In addition to receiving mentoring sessions from Rominiecki, Martinez will be appointed to Selby Gardens' Advisory Committee to observe Rominiecki in action—participating with local community, scientific and business leaders—and also receive a one-year membership to Selby Gardens.

Zuleima Martinez
Virginia B. Toulmin Leadership Scholarship recipient

The Viginia B. Toulmin Foundation envisions a world in which all people have equal opportunity to fulfill their potential and succeed in life. "Through Virginia's legacy, we hope to provide a pathway to inspire and support the dreams of young women today. This scholarship exemplifies the Toulmin Foundation's unwavering commitment to fostering education and supporting outstanding individuals in their pursuit of academic excellence. We congratulate Zuleima Martinez on this tremendous accomplishment."

– William S. Villafranco, Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation Trustee

ONWARD & UPWARD

Selby Gardens President and CEO, Jennifer Rominiecki, Named 2024 "Voice of Sarasota"

Richard Russell, Visit Sarasota County Board Chair
Jennifer Rominiecki, President & CEO of Marie Selby Botanical Gardens
Erin Duggan, President of Visit Sarasota County

Congratulations to Selby Gardens' President & CEO Jennifer Rominiecki who was honored with the "Voice of Sarasota" Award at Visit Sarasota County's National Travel and Tourism Week Celebration! National Travel and Tourism Week is an annual hospitality and tourism industry tradition that celebrates the immense value travel brings to the nation. Each year as part of the celebration, the Visit Sarasota County Board bestows the "Voice of Sarasota" award, which is presented to an individual whose exceptional efforts have significantly promoted and enhanced Sarasota County as a tourism destination.

Since February 2015, when Rominiecki arrived at Selby Gardens, she repositioned the institution as The Living Museum®, securing a trademark from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Enacting this new operating model has yielded increases of 170% in membership and 141% in overall earned revenues. Rominiecki has also overseen the creation and execution of a five-year Strategic Plan, a new three-year Strategic Plan, as well as an innovative Master Site Plan which includes the creation of the world's first net-positive energy botanical garden complex.

MARIE SELBY BOTANICAL GARDENS

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Investments made in Selby Gardens by community partners help us accomplish our mission to provide bayfront sanctuaries connecting people with air plants of the world, native nature, and our regional history.

To become involved, or for more information, contact Ashley Jimenez at ajimenez@selby.org.

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IN THIS ISSUE

John Pirman, *Lily Pond Garden*, 2024

2 **MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO**
Transformation and Gratitude

3 **WHAT'S IN BLOOM**
Cacao Tree, Butterfly Orchid

4 **SUMMER EXHIBITION**
The Florida Highwaymen

6 **THE GREEN ORCHID**
Summertime recipes

7 **SUSTAINABILITY**
Generating net positive energy

8 **GOLDSTEIN EXHIBITION**
Rooted in nature

9 **PATTI SMITH**
Selby Gardens' artist-in-residence

10 **CLYDE BUTCHER**
Conservation as art

11 **VOLUNTEER**
Protecting Selby Gardens' spirits

12 **BOTANY BRIEF**
Discovery and adventure

13 **YOUTH PROGRAMS**
Camp Lookout

14 **ONWARD & UPWARD**
Virginia B. Toulmin Leadership Scholarship; The Voice of Sarasota

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MARIE SELBY BOTANICAL GARDENS | 50 YEARS

1534 Mound St., Sarasota, FL 34236

DOWNTOWN SARASOTA CAMPUS—FEATURED EVENTS

Fourth of July All-American BBQ
Thursday, July 4 • 5:30–9:30 p.m.

Savor All-American favorites from the Michael's on East Grill, enjoy a variety of family-friendly activities, and watch the fireworks show over Sarasota Bay.

Information and tickets online at *selby.org*.

The Highwaymen: Interstate Connections
July 20–September 15, 2024

The Highwaymen were a group of African American painters that emerged in the 1950s and created unique, vivid landscapes of the Sunshine State, sold door-to-door along the main thoroughfares of Florida's east coast.

44th Annual Juried Photo Exhibition
August 26–September 15, 2024

Enter your best shots from our bayfront sanctuaries in our popular virtual photo show. Visit selby.org for submission dates and requirements.

2023 Best in Show, "Afternoon Repose" by Gary McNulty

EDUCATION & PROGRAMS CALENDAR

Selby Gardens offers education and enrichment programs throughout the year for people of all ages and backgrounds. Visit our website for up-to-date details and join the fun!

For a complete lisiting of events, go to *selby.org/events*.

SCAN QR CODE TO LEARN MORE

HISTORIC SPANISH POINT CAMPUS—FEATURED EVENTS

Clyde Butcher: Nature Through the Lens
Through August 31, 2024

Selby Gardens is excited to present the extraordinary imagery of legendary photographer and conservationist Clyde Butcher outside throughout the grounds of the Historic Spanish Point campus.

Lights at Spooky Point
October 10–October 31, 2024

Our Halloween-inspired light show returns to the Historic Spanish Point campus, with even spookier *BOO*tanical-themed surprises around every bend!

Tickets go on sale in late August at *selby.org*.

MARIE SELBY BOTANICAL GARDENS | 50 YEARS

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