


 KANAPAHA BOTANICAL GARDENS

THE GARDEN GATE

...Message from the Director

You may notice something a little different about the Message from the Director in this newsletter, namely that it is written by me, Alexis Caffrey, instead of Kanapaha's founder Don Goodman. This past summer Don decided to enter into semi-retirement after 30+ years at the helm and has honored me with the directorship of Kanapaha Botanical Gardens. I know I can speak for Don in thanking everyone for their support throughout the years and I can only hope that I am the recipient of half the generosity that he has received from the community as I begin my endeavor as the new Director.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to tell you a bit about myself and the long history that I too have with Kanapaha Botanical Gardens. You see, I was first introduced to the gardens shortly after being born, a mere three years after the gardens was founded by my parents. That's right, I am Don's daughter and as such, have grown up with the gardens as a pivotal part of my life. I am told that as a baby I spent much of my time nestled into a carrier on my parents back while they carved out the infrastructure of the gardens.

During my early school years, my sister and I would get picked up from P. K. Yonge on a daily basis and taken to the gardens to play until my dad finished his day's work. Throughout elementary school and, I'll admit it, in middle school too, my friends and I spent the afternoons facing dangerous adventures as we imagined the

Garden's map hid clues to a secret treasure.

When it was time to go home I would run down the original limestone entrance road to the old Kanapaha sign (which can still be seen to this day) where my dad would pick me up in his car when he arrived. I was always proud of my superhuman racing skills that allowed me to reach the finish line first with only a small head start despite my Dad utilizing a car. Looking back now, I'm sure he let me win, as all good dads do. As I grew, so did the gardens. At first the entrance building was a donated trailer that eventually got upgraded to the old yellow building that currently sits as a backdrop to our recently added container garden. That too was eventually replaced by Summer House, the current gateway into Kanapaha. But the biggest changes came with the additional plantings throughout the gardens, and over the years, oh how I witnessed the gardens blossom!

The idea of a botanical garden in Gainesville began over dinner one night when my mother planted the idea in my father's mind. From there the North Florida Botanical Society was founded with Don as acting director as it remained until recently. Funding has always been limited and the staff small, so the majority of what you see at the gardens was personally put in and designed by Don. It is not an exaggeration to state that Kanapaha Botanical Gardens would not exist if it weren't for him and I can say with certainty that no else could have achieved what he did or made the sacrifices necessary to not only get this

garden off the ground but to turn it into what it is today. He has been my lifelong mentor and a daughter could not be prouder of her father than I am of him. He is proof that sometimes one person can really make a difference.

Before work began by the North Florida Botanical Society (NFBS), the not-for-profit organization behind Kanapaha, the land was an un-manicured cow pasture. Originally the NFBS managed roughly half the land that makes up the gardens today. Slowly but steadily, parts of the eastern portion (the older land parcel) where converted to landscaped displays, but they where few and far between. Over time, the gaps were closed and the eastern half of the gardens grew to its current number of 16 specialty gardens. In the early 80s the western portion was added to the lease, doubling Kanapaha's size. Once again pasture land was transformed into a Garden of Eden. Kanapaha Botanical Gardens is extremely young compared to most botanical gardens and to truly comprehend how much the land has changed over a relatively short time period, walk through the gardens sometime and try to imagine the land devoid of all plantings, sidewalks, ponds, buildings, and signs. A truly remarkable feat.

There is no doubt that I have some very large shoes to fill, something that I guess I have always known was going to be the case if I was presented with the opportunity to take the reins. For those who know me personally, it is no secret that I have always aspired to assume the directorship. As such, I spent my high school years volunteering at the gardens, studying the plant collection and learning about the infrastructure necessary to maintain a garden of such grand proportion. In my undergraduate studies and through graduate school, I always focused on ecological systems and taxonomy, and when the opportunity to take the assistant directorship at the gardens arose several years ago, I left my job as a field researcher for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. As the assistant director I not only oversaw the majority of the day to day activities at the gardens, coordinating projects with Don and directing employees on the work at hand, but I took over a large chunk of the administrative chores at the gardens. By now I can safely say I know the gardens inside and out; I can find my way through blindfolded. I have such a love and deep respect for Kanapaha and its history

that it too is a passion for me. While Don may no longer sit in the director's chair, he remains an extremely valuable resource, and continues to come in on a part time basis. In fact, Kanapaha is such a large part of Don's life that he will always be involved in it.

From here I plan to carry on Don's legacy, ever striving to make improvements for future generations to enjoy. My landscaping style is synonymous with Don's in that I prefer to incorporate ornamental plants into the native landscape. This practice is not embraced by many botanical gardens which typically cut down large swaths of trees in order to increase light. That being said, the reason many do this is understandable as increases in available light also increase flowering potential. But as with any landscaping style there is always trade-off, and to me, Kanapaha is one of the most beautiful botanical gardens, in part, because of its preservation and incorporation of the natural ecosystem. That being said, one of my major goals here at Kanapaha is to heavily focus on the addition of flowering perennials in all spaces where light is not a limiting factor in order to bring in more color and interest to the gardens as a whole. I also hope to one day have funding to replace our sidewalk through the eastern loop, which would be much appreciated by people in wheelchairs and would further enhance the current landscaping. And I hope to fulfill one of Don's major dreams by building a conservatory to really put Kanapaha on the map. Doing so will allow us to display a greater diversity of plant groups, freeing us from the limiting climate of North Central Florida.

Although Don did an amazing job filling up 62 acres over the past few decades, I will continue the goal of adding new specialty gardens to every last nook and cranny to expand upon the experience of our visitors and to further expand the diversity of our current specialty gardens.

I am extremely lucky and grateful to have had the opportunity to grow up at Kanapaha and now the opportunity to manage Kanapaha. My childhood set forth the foundation for my interest in nature and has been instrumental in molding me into who I am today. Kanapaha is a public park, open 6 days a week, with admission rates and memberships fees set to balance public accessibility with operational economic realities. We are so

lucky as citizens of Alachua and the surrounding counties to have access to a park such as Kanapaha. Above all else my goal as director is to make sure Kanapaha Botanical Gardens continues to exist and improve so that we, our children and grandchildren can witness firsthand the magic I felt when I came here as a child with my parents and that I continue to feel every passing day. All I can say is thank you, Don, for giving us all this most special gift!

Alexis Caffrey
NEW DIRECTOR OF KBG



... Message from the Director Emeritus

It was on a sweltering summer day much like today, that Jordan and I took a whirlwind trip to visit some of Florida's premier botanical gardens to garner ideas and determine the prospects for establishing one in Alachua County. That was a third of a century ago when we drove a Datsun without air conditioning and baby Summer in tow so it was a memorable trip all around. We were graciously received by the administrators of Fairchild Gardens (now Fairchild Tropical Garden) and Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. In fact, they were quite encouraging and correctly pronounced our primary limitation to be identifying sources of funding.

In the decades that followed, we have largely succeeded in giving substance to that dream in the form of Kanapaha Botanical Gardens. The generous supporters who made it all possible are far too numerous to identify here, but they first and foremost include Alachua County, who made available a magnificent 62 acre parcel for the undertaking and an occasional infusion of money in the early years. Then too, we generally found luck to be a tail wind pushing us forward far more often than a head-on hindrance. We voluntarily elected to pass up a number of professional opportunities that came our way in preference to staying put and toughing it out; clearly Kanapaha has been worth the effort.

One of the most valuable lessons to come from those years of effort is that Kanapaha Botanical Gardens is a big enough dream to accommodate the

aspirations of other individuals. Volunteers materialized to assist us in almost every aspect of developing the gardens and, while we didn't recognize this in the beginning, we could not possibly have succeeded without their benevolent support. In the past few years, this volunteerism has attained unimagined significance in our overall operations as individuals have stepped forward to adopt entire gardens. Chief among them is our oft lauded Jonathan Lubar who has honed to perfection two major collections, the Herb Garden and The Bulb Garden (formerly Crinum Garden). His success in transforming erstwhile botanic offerings into truly magnificent and immaculately maintained gardens has become legendary in Kanapaha circles and well beyond. And Neil Johnson, orchestrator of many fine construction and carpentry projects over the years, has adopted the Hummingbird Garden with spectacular results. The Alachua County Master Gardeners are presently inventorying and mapping our somewhat eclectic Butterfly Garden, with the intent of adopting and transforming it as well. These generous personal indulgences take a lot of weight from the shoulders of Kanapaha's lean staff with the effect of substantially enriching the experience of visiting Kanapaha.

While there is always more to do, as I reaffirm nightly lying awake listening to the weeds grow, Kanapaha has reached a level of maturity that qualifies it as one of Florida's premier gardens. We still have been unable to muster the resources to

build a conservatory, but then some dreams always remain unrealized and, from my perspective, life's glass is truly more than half full. So, as another hellish summer descends upon us, I have begun to feel the impact of those decades of work and seem to have a bit less spring in my step. I feel completely comfortable with stepping aside and handing the reins to someone who has long shared the dream of Kanapaha and who, in fact, essentially grew up with Kanapaha.

When still in high school, my daughter Alexis once asked me about the credentials one should bring to a botanical gardens career. I advised her that it would be desirable to hold an advanced degree in a botanic discipline and to have experience in the field as well. Thus did she pursue graduate work after completing her B.S., culminating in a M.S. from UF, where she published an account of her field work with aquatic plants. She thereafter was employed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, where she continued to conduct field work (under often hellish summer conditions) and became very adept at a great variety of field research operations. When she instantly (and gleefully) accepted my offer to work with me at Kanapaha, a decision that entailed a salary reduction and considerably more work and responsibility, I felt confident that the future of our mutually beloved gardens was assured, a conviction that has been reinforced and strengthened with every passing day.

In particular, she took on the thankless tasks of bookkeeping, record keeping and filing while she simultaneously improved and expanded the scope of Kanapaha's offerings to the community, endeavors that are abundantly obvious to all. And so I asked our Board of Directors to appoint Alexis Caffrey to be Kanapaha's Assistant Director and, later, Director, when I decided to step aside to bask in the glow that comes with the title of (esteemed) Director Emeritus. I know with certainty that Kanapaha Botanical Gardens is in good and competent hands as Alexis is uniquely qualified and the community we both love is uniquely well served.

It is my intention to continue working at Kanapaha Botanical Gardens, perhaps half time, in a volunteer capacity. This will afford me the luxury of selecting the projects that most interest me without getting caught up in many of the necessary but mundane chores that consume a part of every day. Kanapaha can, in fact, be a tar baby, as Alexis well knows. Hopefully, this arrangement will enable me to spend a bit more time with Alexis' son (and more significantly---my grandson) Liam, to help introduce him to the joys and enchantment of this special bit of Eden that has occupied such a special place in the hearts of his grandparents and mother before him.

I am profoundly thankful for the generosity and kind support of Kanapaha's many wonderful benefactors. Ours is truly a warm and generous corner of Eden, as I have come to appreciate with every passing day. When I first latched onto the Kanapaha tar baby, I was young and immortal; the thought of a successor never entered my mind. The notion of Kanapaha had barely been conceived (and Alexis not at all). Ultimately, in all such enterprises, mortality rears its head and succession becomes the most central concern. I am especially privileged to have the opportunity to bequeath the guardianship of this special place to the one person who truly grew up here and whose commitment and love are certainly equal to my own. My most profound hope is that this transition will provide her the same satisfaction I have known and that the community we both love will continue to profit from her devotion. And that I can get my hands on Liam more often.

Don

*Alexis Goodman,
Director
Don Goodman,
Director Emeritus*



Something New at The Water Lily Pond

Visitors who venture onto our Water Lily Pond boardwalk seldom fail to comment on a new, in fact unique, feature that sets it apart from any water garden ever experienced. The giant Victoria Water Platters, of course, are always on the tongue of anyone who has ever viewed them as we grow them, but there is something amazing beyond that. The tiny green floating plants known as Duckweed and Water Meal are not uniformly dispersed across the water surface, where they tend to distract from the majesty of the huge Victoria leaves with their upturned rims. Instead they have been corralled behind slender black floating booms, there to serve as a stunning backdrop to the sumptuous water lilies, snowflake plants, mosaic plants and floating pea. The long and complicated story of how it should be so is a trade secret, or at least the story for another time.



A little blue heron utilized a Water Platter leaf as a fishing platform. In the background, Duckweed and Water Meal are confined behind a slender floating barricade so the water lilies can be viewed against mirror black water unsullied by a surface film of the tiny floating plants.

Duckweed and Water Meal are the earth's smallest flowering plants and, therefore, of botanic interest in their own right. Before the spectacle is lost for another season, please make time to come out and view the largest and smallest water plants in one visual sweep. It's likely the only good reason to voluntarily go outside in July or August and you won't see it anywhere else.



PONDS DE-KOIED

Several visitors have noted that the large colorful koi have disappeared from the Children's Garden as well as the stream spanned by the Water Gardens' arched bridge. We initially shared their puzzlement but then discovered that the culprit was an otter who apparently chanced upon the bonanza and paid nocturnal visits to the all-you-can-eat buffet until the food ran out. We spotted him/her twice but were unable to contrive any response that would end the carnage. Koi guru Don Hellard told us there is really nothing you can do; they will eventually return to their natural home---in this case Lake Kanapaha---when they tire of the increasing exertion required for diminishing rewards. Please bear with us while we repopulate our waters with koi.

Container Garden

The new Container Garden features a great variety of plant forms, colors and textures matched with a similarly great variety of pots, urns and other containers.



There is something new and colorful just east of Summer House---The Container Garden. Developed by Jordan Goodman (who wears the Gift Gallery manager hat among others), this expansive collection of potted containers combine a great array of plant forms and colors that are carefully matched with a similarly great array of pots, urns and planters to create a stunning spectacle. About a third of the items flaunt succulent plant assortments that draw exceptional praise from those who view its offerings. If you haven't done so already, please make it a point to view this sensational collection while the warm weather holds.



Gazebos Get a Facelift

Much effort has recently been put into pressure washing, painting, sealing, and staining Kanapaha's structures that are exposed to the elements. Thanks to Kanapaha's trusty Adam Maxwell, the gazebos at the native second growth forest (east of the Vinery), Herb Garden, Woodland Garden and Rose Garden have received a facelift. Furthermore, the Alachua County Master Gardeners have not only left their green thumbprints on the Butterfly Hill, but have also provided their handiwork to paint the gazebo in that garden. In the recent past, veteran volunteer Neil Johnson painted the gazebo in the Bulb Garden and Richard Pohlman refurbished and painted the Balanoff Gazebo on the Ginkgo Lawn. In addition to the work on our gazebos, the Pavillion has been pressure washed and sealed. This was quite a large feat and was accomplished by Kanapaha's Adam Black. These improvements will not only increase the lifespan of these structures but will be appreciated by the customers who utilize them.

& OUTDOORS *and* IN

VIEWS OF VOLUNTEERS

A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

Because Kanapaha Botanical Gardens doesn't have the resources---fiscal or human---to do all that is necessary to the maintenance of the 62 acre facility, we remain always in the debt of generous volunteers who take up the slack and make it all possible. We have often cited the enormous contribution made by ALACHUA TREE SERVICE'S WAYNE NORTON and citation is clearly in order again. During the past few months, WAYNE has volunteered his services to remove a number of trees that, for one reason or another---mostly safety concerns---became liabilities. He placed his services and his equipment at our disposal and, in one instance where he needed additional resources, secured the assistance of JIM PAINTER, who employed a crane to extract a large and particularly threatening dead tree. As always, we consider WAYNE to be an ecosaint.



We are also indebted to JOHN and MARY MILLER (Tampa, FL) for providing us with a large collection of bromeliads that now flank the entrance walkway into the woodlands east of Summer House. WOOD RESOURCE AND RECOVERY, a business that processes wood waste to produce a host of garden friendly materials---mulch, compost, soil mixes and amendments---recently provided free delivery of a load of potting soil we required for the development of our new Container Garden. And THEN, OF COURSE, WE CONTINUE TO ENJOY THE VOLUNTEER SERVICES OF OUR PERENNIAL GREETERS PATTY, ANNIE, PHYLLIS, KATHY (both of them), JOAN, JUNE, JANET, DIANNE, SUSAN, GEORGIA, as well as our outdoor volunteers, NEIL, BARRY, JONATHAN, GREG & COMPANY and the many others who keep things looking neat, colorful and enchanting. To all of these, and others unnamed, go our most sincere thanks.

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