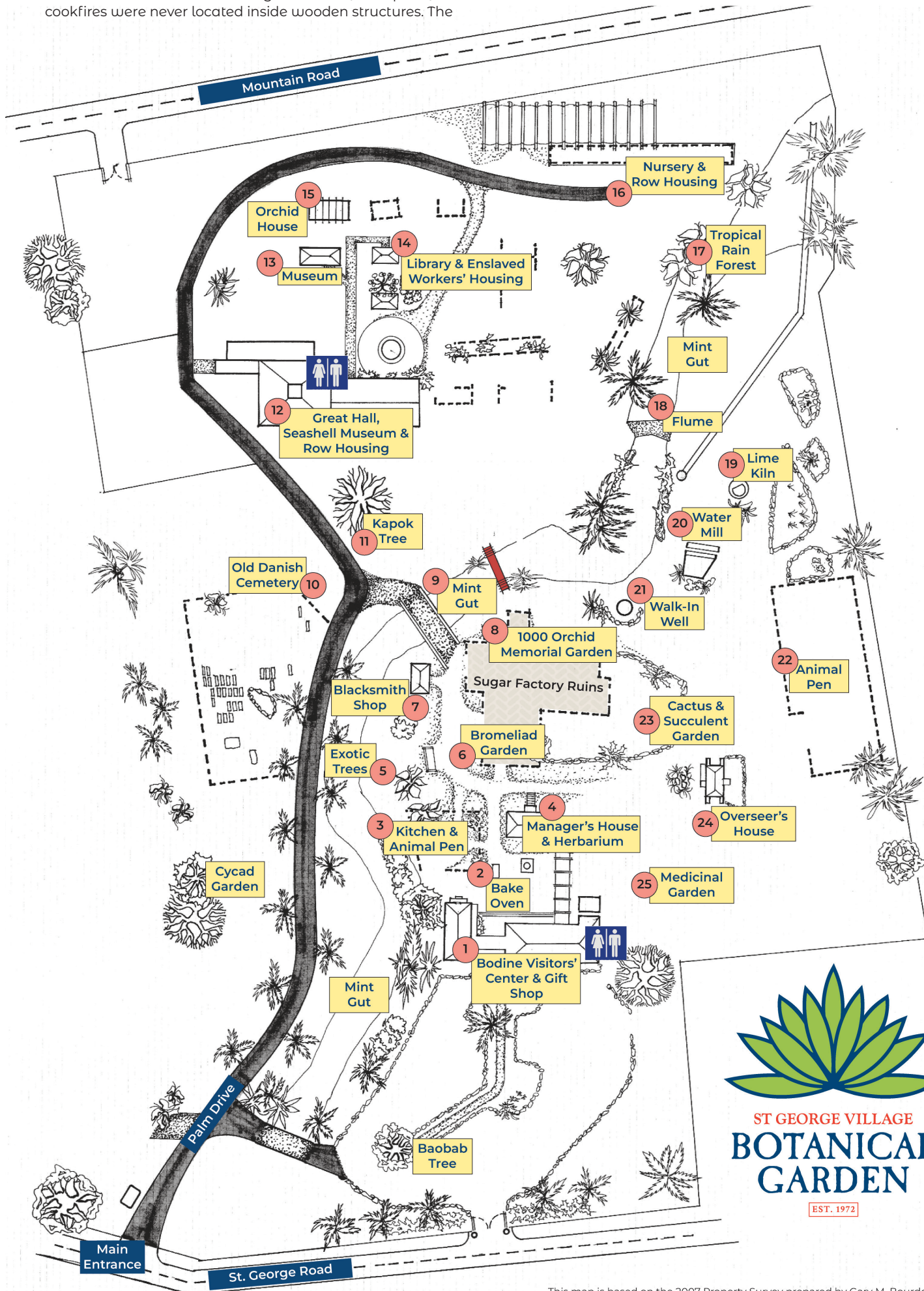


## Welcome to the St. George Village Botanical Garden

- 1 – The Garden's 16 acres, donated to the St. Croix Garden Club in 1972, include the ruins and repurposed buildings of an 18th century Danish colonial sugarcane plantation. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Garden is home to more than 1,500 Caribbean and pan-tropical plants and trees. The Gift Shop offers a wide variety of gifts made by local artisans as well as cold drinks, bush tea, salves and ointments made from crucial botanicals.
- 2 – The Village Bake Oven dates from the early 1800s. It was used to bake bread and food for the Manager and Overseer and their families.
- 3 – The small space just inside the stone wall ruins on the right is the former Kitchen with its original stone floor. Open flame cookfires were never located inside wooden structures. The

larger enclosed Animal Pen contained animals that would be prepared for meals or smoked in the adjacent smokehouse. Notice the Tahitian Gardenia, Ixora, Hibiscus, West Indian Gardenia and Bay Tree in this area. Bay Rum was first developed on St. Thomas in the 1880s and was a favorite of Britain's Prince Albert.

- 4 – European plantation owners were largely absent from St. George, and a Manager and an Overseer supervised the day-to-day operation. The Manager's House was built between 1815 and 1826. Today, it houses the Herbarium, with more than 6,000 specimens of dried and pressed plants mostly gathered on St. Croix during the 1970s and 80s.
- 5 – The Exotic Trees in this area include the South American Cannonball Tree, related to the Brazil Nut tree, with fragrant ornamental flowers and heavy cannonball-like fruit. Extracts from the tree and fruit are used to treat hypertension, tumors, pain, inflammation, and dog mange. The African Sausage



- Tree's fruit can weigh up to 26 pounds and has antibacterial, antifungal and antitumor properties. The Wild Almond tree's Latin name, *Sterculia foetida*, is derived from *Sterculius* the Roman god of manure and fetid meaning smells bad. The flowers smell awful and are pollinated by flies. The oil from the seeds can be used as a biofuel.
- 6** – The Bromeliad Garden was established in the ruins of the Sugar Factory. Bromeliads can grow in soil (terrestrial), or attached to trees or rocks (epiphyte). The best-known Bromeliad is the pineapple. Notice the Spanish Moss, an epiphyte, which is neither a moss nor native to Spain!
- 7** – The Blacksmith Shop, built in 1826, severely damaged in the 1867 earthquake and rebuilt by 1873, was in use through 1923. The plantation was entirely self-sufficient and plantation machinery and parts were made and repaired by the blacksmith.
- 8** – The 1,000 Orchid Memorial Garden was established in the ruins of the Sugar and Rum Factory. It was designed, planted and is maintained by the members of The St. Croix Orchid Society. The garden is dedicated to the enslaved Africans who lived, worked and died on St George Plantation. Sculptures by Waldemar Brodhurst depict an enslaved worker blowing a conch shell to signal the beginning and end of workday; Queen Mathilde, one of the four women who led an uprising (Fireburn) 30 years after emancipation in protest of poor working conditions; and a drummer. Owning a drum, and communicating at night between plantations, would have been met with severe punishment.
- 9** – Mint Gut was once a freshwater navigable river that flowed year-round, connecting Estate St. George to the hills in the north and the sea to the south. Archeologists have confirmed that ancestors of the Taino Indians traveled from South America around 100 A.D. by boat and inhabited this site. Clearing the land for sugarcane in the 1700s caused runoff that filled in the stream and lowered the water table. Mint Gut now only flows after very heavy rains.
- 10** – The graves in the Old Danish Cemetery date from the days of Danish rule 1733 - 1917. The masonry and ballast brick headstones mark European burials. Those that are edged with stone and shell are the enslaved African burials. Most of the plaques from the headstones have been stolen, but one remains with the date 1841. One of these burials is likely that of Sarah Kortright Heyliger, who married an early owner of St. George Plantation, John Heyliger, in 1799. Sarah's sister was Elizabeth Kortright Monroe, wife of James Monroe, 5th United States president.
- 11** – The Kapok Tree is native to every tropical region of the world. The silky fibers attached to the kapok seeds were once used for filling mattresses, pillows and life jackets. The soft and easily carved wood was valued by Amerindians for making canoes. In the Caribbean, Kapok trees often reach heights of 100' with a diameter of 8' or more, although they can exceed 200' in some other locations. The Garden's Kapok Tree is more than 100 years old. It is also called Monkey No Climb because of the thorns on the trunk.
- 12** – The Great Hall, built in 1976, is a popular venue for community events including Mango Melee, when thousands of people visit the garden to celebrate the abundance of mangos growing on St. Croix. The center of the hall sits atop a 55,000-gallon cistern, which collects rainwater from the roof. The building unites two Worker Row Houses, built between 1836 – 1860 but, like most of the masonry buildings on St. Croix, were probably re-built after the 1867 earthquake. The Seashell Museum, a collection of mainly Caribbean shells is located in a space where enslaved workers lived.
- 13** – The St. George Village Museum chronicles a history of people and plants on this property spanning almost 2000 years. Displays of artifacts from early Amerindian settlers and the Danish colonial period provide a glimpse of the lives of people who have occupied this site. After sugar production declined, cotton was grown on the plantation. St. Croix's own breed of cattle, the Senepol, were also raised on site before the land became a botanical garden.
- 14** – The area of the Enslaved Workers' Housing is a well-preserved example of a plantation "village". In 1749, 28 enslaved Africans were brought to Estate St. George to clear the land and plant sugar cane. Over the years the number of enslaved workers ranged between 160 and 187.
- The botanicals in the ruins naturally occur on St. Croix and include the St. Croix Century Plant, a type of agave that is extinct in the wild. The Garden propagates them in our Nursery and is working on repopulating the island. The Touch Me Not still grows on the Northwest corner of St Croix and on Buck Island. The bottom side of the leaves are covered with fiberglass-like spines which embed in the skin. It is often removed as land is developed but should be protected, as it is a "real Crucian." Sweet lime, an invasive plant with its citrus, bitter taste, also grows in this area and is used to flavor drinks and baked goods. The Library houses a collection of over 600 volumes of books and periodicals, as well as an important collection of horticultural, botanical, and historical literature and photographic records.
- 15** – The Orchid House is home to the Garden's orchid collection. Badly damaged during Hurricane Maria in 2017, it was completely restored by a grant secured by The St. Croix Orchid Society in 2022.
- 16** – The Garden's Nursery is located in enslaved workers' Row Housing. Plants are propagated in the Nursery for planting throughout the Garden and for sale to the community.
- 17** – The Tropical Rainforest area of the Garden gives visitors an idea of the way the vegetation of St. Croix looked before human intervention. It is not a true rainforest (which needs at least 80 inches of rain a year compared with our 50 inches).
- 18** – The Flume was built to carry water from an upstream dam in Mint Gut to the Sugar Factory.
- 19** – Coral and shells were heated in the Lime Kiln to produce a calcium-rich powder, lime, that was mixed with molasses and used as mortar for building construction on the plantation.
- 20** – The Water Mill was built around 1830 and fell into ruin after the 1867 earthquake. It once had a large water wheel that provided power to a cane-crushing mill. The water mill and crusher were contained in a building and a conduit carried the cane juice to the sugar factory. Water from the mill came from an upstream dam. The water flowed along an aqueduct that was supported by 39 stone arches.
- 21** – Water was drawn by bucket from the bottom steps of this Walk-In Well. The well was hand dug around 1800, providing water for the sugar factory until 1840 when it ran dry. It was then used for dumping waste from the factory.
- 22** – This Animal Pen contained larger domestic animals destined as food for the manager, overseer and their families. Enslaved Africans rarely ate meat, subsisting largely on a diet of yams, plantains, breadfruit and other complex carbohydrates known as "provisions". Salt pork was occasionally used to flavor their food and any meat they were granted was that which was deemed undesirable by the plantation cook.
- 23** – The Cactus and Succulents planted amongst the sugar factory ruins are one of the most complete public collections of Caribbean cacti and succulents. Note the Prickly Pear which is a host for the Cochineal, a bright red, tiny parasitic insect which preys on the cacti. A brilliant red dye is extracted from the crushed bodies of the insects. (25,000 live insects or 70,000 dried ones are needed to make one pound of dye.) When the Spanish arrived in St. Croix they were shocked to find native people wearing red cloth, a color reserved solely for royalty and the very wealthy in Europe. However, exporting the cactus to the European climate was unsuccessful. Cochineal is still commonly used in coloring foods and cosmetics.
- 24** – The Overseer's House dates from the 1820s and replaced an earlier one built in 1768. The Overseer was much despised and meted out frequent punishments and whippings. Damaged by the 1867 earthquake, the exterior stairway was widened when the building was repaired. Originally the stairway was only one person wide to keep the building from being stormed by unhappy workers. Currently, the building houses a population of Jamaican Fruit Bats, essential for plant pollination. At the side, along the wall are bananas and plantains.
- 25** – The Medicinal Garden showcases some of the most popular botanicals used over the centuries for healing. Annatto seeds from the Lipstick Tree or Achiote are used as a natural coloring agent. Commonly used in butter, cheese, popcorn, drinks, and breads. It has been used as a body paint, natural sunscreen, and for removing intestinal parasites.
- The cashew is native to Brazil's Amazon rainforest and bears numerous, edible, pear shaped false fruits called cashew apples. The true fruit of the tree is the cashew nut which must be roasted to destroy the caustic shell before it can be eaten. Cashew bark, leaves, and nuts have been used as a remedy for diarrhea, hypertension, and cold symptoms. It has also been used as a contraceptive and aphrodisiac.
- Ginger Thomas or Yellow Cedar is the official flower of the US Virgin Islands. The leaves are used to reduce fever, treat colds, headaches, high blood pressure & symptoms of syphilis. It is also used to strengthen a woman's body after childbirth.
- The Noni or Painkiller Tree has a multitude of medicinal properties and is used frequently to reduce inflammation. The leaves when heated and applied to an aching joint will relieve pain.

**Questions or concerns during your  
self-guided tour?  
Call our Gift Shop: 340-692-5191**