

A FASHIONABLE GARDEN IN MIAMI

CHARITY BLOOMS AT THE ANNUAL SPLENDOR IN THE GARDEN BENEFITING FAIRCHILD TROPICAL BOTANIC GARDEN. BY LAUREN BROWN



A model at last year's Splendor in the Garden event. RIGHT: Cochairs Frances Sevilla-Sacasa and Swanee DiMare at the 2014 Splendor in the Garden event. BELOW: The visitors' center at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.



Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden is world renowned for its lush landscape filled with tropical flowers and plants that you can't find anywhere else. But many people don't know about the intensive research and learning opportunities it offers to students—from elementary school to master's degree candidates—including field studies, graduate and teacher development programs, on-site classes, and the vast Fairchild library and archives.

That's why philanthropist Swanee DiMare and Frances Sevilla-Sacasa, CEO of Miami Operations at Itaú Private Bank International, began cochairing Fairchild Garden's luncheon and fashion show, Splendor in the Garden, in 2012. Both DiMare and Sevilla-Sacasa have worked on Fairchild's annual Gala in the Garden, held every February for more than 20 years, but wanted to create a separate event that would specifically benefit education programs and support the science and research conducted at the botanic garden.

"A LOT OF THE RESEARCH DONE AT FAIRCHILD HELPS THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE WORLD."

—FRANCES SEVILLA-SACASA

They have witnessed first hand how the proceeds raised from Splendor in the Garden impact Fairchild from one year to the next. "We had our scientist working a couple of miles down the road from the garden itself, and our goal was to bring this scientist right on site," says DiMare. "This is what we accomplished when we opened the DiMare Science Village." The Science Village was named in honor of Swanee and her husband in 2012. "It's a beautiful building with huge windows, so when children are at Fairchild, they can see the scientists at work. I get goose bumps when I see a busload of kids running through the garden. It makes me feel good to expose them to something so special."

Both DiMare and Sevilla-Sacasa have personal reasons for being so passionate about Fairchild Garden. Sevilla-Sacasa is a Miami native who lives just a bike ride away. "While Fairchild is one of the top botanical gardens in the world, it's not as well known as it should be in our own community," she says. "We need to understand what we have and preserve it, as a lot of the research that is done there helps the environment and helps the world."

DiMare became involved right after Hurricane Andrew wreaked havoc on Miami in 1992 and has

CONTINUED ON PAGE 132



FROM LEFT: Fairchild Garden covers 83 acres and has the world's greatest living collection of palms; Ken Downing of Neiman Marcus walking the runway at last year's Splendor in the Garden event.

been on the board of trustees since 2000. "It's a place that's very dear to my heart, and it's nice, so to speak, to see your garden grow," says DiMare. "Fairchild encompasses everything—education, science, the arts, music, and now, fashion."

But besides the funds Splendor in the Garden raises toward the property's science, research, and education programs, DiMare and Sevilla-Sacasa know the event is also a unique opportunity to show off the magnificent grounds that Fairchild Garden is famous for. They even encourage all Splendor in the Garden attendees to take a tour before they leave so they can see for themselves how their contributions help beautify the grounds. "We always have a basket of flip-flops so they can kick off their heels and experience things like the butterfly exhibit," says DiMare.

That's why holding a fashion show overlooking Fairchild Garden's Pandanus Lake makes Splendor in the Garden such a remarkable afternoon—it merges all kinds of aesthetic experiences for a plethora of good causes. The fourth annual Splendor in the Garden will be held on January 14, beginning with a Champagne reception followed by lunch and a spring fashion show curated by Neiman Marcus Senior Vice President and Fashion Director Ken

Downing and emceed by *Miami Herald* columnist Stephanie Sayfie Aagaard. The event closes with the recognition of the 2015 Fairchild Philanthropy honorees (who also walk the runway during the fashion show).

The five outstanding women being recognized this year are former University of Miami President Donna Shalala; Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle; Fairchild Gala in the Garden committee member Raphael Bastian; Jennifer Valoppi, founder of the Women of Tomorrow mentor and scholarship program; and Yolanda Berkowitz of the Voices for Children Foundation.

"We honor women who make giving fashionable," says DiMare. And choosing those philanthropic women is no easy task. It's something both DiMare and Sevilla-Sacasa consider very carefully, looking for individuals who have been supportive of Fairchild in a variety of ways. "It's easy to write a check," explains DiMare. "But sometimes you have to roll up your sleeves and go to work. It's difficult to find people who do that, so we're very fortunate." *Splendor in the Garden takes place January 14 at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, 10901 Old Cutler Road, Coral Gables, 305-667-1651; fairchildgarden.org. OD*

FLOWERS BY NUMBERS

It takes over 45,000 members and 1,200 volunteers to keep Fairchild "growing."

- Incorporated in the state of Florida in 1936 and opened to the public in 1938, Fairchild Garden is the oldest major cultural institution in Miami-Dade County.
- It's named for Dr. David Fairchild, the nation's foremost economic botanist and founder of the US Department of Agriculture Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction Section.
- Fairchild Garden covers 83 acres, including 11 lakes, and has 125 employees; 15 conservation staff members hold doctoral degrees in botany, horticulture, or education.
- The 16,400-square-foot Tropical Plant Conservatory holds 1,900 plant species from the tropics.
- The Fairchild Library includes more than 19,000 volumes.
- Fairchild reaches over 200,000 schoolchildren each year.
- As recognized by the American Public Gardens Association, Fairchild has the world's greatest living collection of palms and cycads.
- Fairchild's arboretum is an eight-acre display of 740 species of tropical flowering trees.

CHARITY REGISTER

Opportunities to give.

NATIONAL YOUNGARTS FOUNDATION

Enjoy an evening presented by Max Mara with this year's Arison Awardees Josh Groban, Chris Young, and Jeff Koons at the YoungArts Backyard Ball benefiting programming for the National YoungArts Foundation, which supports the next generation of rising talents.

When: Saturday, January 10, at 6:30 PM

Where: YoungArts Campus, 2100 Biscayne Blvd., Miami

Contact: youngarts.org

VOICES FOR CHILDREN FOUNDATION

Join Miami's most influential and philanthropic community leaders at the Be a Voice, Feel the Passion Gala, which will raise funds for the foster care youth of Miami-Dade County.

When: Saturday, January 17, at 7 PM

Where: Mandarin Oriental, 500 Brickell Key Dr., Miami

Contact: voices4.org

HUMANE SOCIETY OF GREATER MIAMI

Join Miami's pet-loving philanthropists and take part in Pawpurrazzi to raise funds to support over 400 homeless and abandoned animals that are in the care of the Humane Society.

When: Friday, January 23, at 7 PM

Where: Jungle Island, 1111 Parrot Jungle Trail, Watson Island, Miami

Contact: humansocietymiami.org

JACKSON HEALTH FOUNDATION

The Golden Angels Gala will bring Miami's philanthropic leaders together to raise funds to support the Jackson Health System as well as honor the many Golden Angel Society donors.

When: Saturday, January 24, at 7 PM

Where: Soho Studios, 2136 NW First Ave., Miami

Contact: jacksonhealthfoundation.org

MIAMI CITY BALLET

Proceeds from the Miami City Ballet Gala celebrating its 29 years will benefit the company's education and outreach initiatives.

When: Saturday, January 31, at 6:30 PM

Where: Soho Studios, 2136 NW First Ave., Miami

Contact: miamicityballet.org