



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**BONNET HOUSE SEEKS A FEW BROWN THUMBS**

**FORT LAUDERDALE, F.L., December 1, 2008** - Fort Lauderdale residents familiar with our historic neighbor, Bonnet House, tend to think of the building with its paintings and furnishings, and not so much the “gardens” surrounding the house. But the official name is Bonnet House Museum & Gardens, and now new emphasis is being placed on the restoration of the long-neglected landscape.

To help, Bonnet House has organized a new group of volunteer gardeners called The Bonnet House Brigade. It’s proving to be an excellent outlet for frustrated condominium dwellers who long to do some tropical gardening, or anyone who’d like to contribute a little perspiration to a worthwhile endeavor.

The first project, completed this past summer, was to restore the Desert Garden originally designed by Frederic Bartlett and Hugh Taylor Birch. The formal circle has been reinstalled outside the front door and many new trees have been added, some very rare (an Africa Oil palm), date palms, pencil trees, cactus, agave and aloe, all planted in white desert sand and bordered with coral rock. It’s stunning. Bonnet House Brigade members participated by digging up, dividing, watering, nursing and then replanting many of the existing but salvageable plants that were already there.

Another project being designed is the new South Gate to the museum at the end of Breakers Avenue, right beside Coventry House. Now walled up, this was actually the original entrance to the estate. The new entrance will contain an admissions kiosk, pathways to the house, more plantings and an archeological exhibit designed to resemble a Tequesta Indian hut.

Bonnet House Brigade members are not just turned loose with machetes and weed-whackers. There is a master plan to be followed, Master Gardeners are on staff and professional landscape companies do the heavy lifting. No tools are necessary -- clippers, shears, trowels, rakes and so forth all provided -- volunteers should just bring their garden gloves. Even simple hand-watering would be a much-appreciated contribution.

An email and phone list is being established to notify members of official Brigade days, which will be on selected Saturday mornings, or on Mondays, when the house is closed to visitors. Volunteers who prefer to work at other times can simply ask Stephen Draft, the museum curator (and also a Master Gardener), what’s next on his very long to-do list.

For more information and to join the Bonnet House Brigade contact Stephen Draft at 954-563-5393 x138, email him at [stephendraft@bonnethouse.org](mailto:stephendraft@bonnethouse.org), or visit the website at [www.bonnethouse.org](http://www.bonnethouse.org).

Even non-gardeners ought to make a visit -- if only to see all the changes.

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Bonnet House Museum & Gardens -- 900 North Birch Road, Fort Lauderdale  
Open for tours Tues. - Sat. from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm; Sundays from 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm  
[www.bonnethouse.org](http://www.bonnethouse.org)