

THE COMMISSION NEWSLETTER

Conserve nature, preserve life



TOP NEWS OF THE MONTH

NCC'S CODRINGTON HEADQUARTERS REFURBISHMENT

THE REFURBISHMENT OF the National Conservation Commission's Codrington House Headquarters in Waterford, St. Michael is underway. A decision was made due to the deterioration of the roof as well as leaks and moisture problems.

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THE RESTORATION OF the historic Trash House in Queen's Park was completed earlier this month. The process included the removal and replacement of the existing roof and the stabilization of the existing wall.

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QUEEN'S PARK: TRASH HOUSE RESTORATION COMPLETE

GM'S MESSAGE



Mr. Ryan Als
General Manager (ag.)
National Conservation Commission

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THE NEW YEAR is upon us and as we pause briefly to take a look back at our progress and achievements for 2023, we must underscore our appreciation for the public's patience while we conducted necessary upgrades to areas such as Silver Sands, Oistins Bay Garden, Queen's Park, King George V Memorial Park, Fitts Village Esplanade and Browne's Beach.

We have made significant progress through these projects, which has us well-positioned to conquer 2024 together, hand in hand, step by step, as we move forward with a collective focus, a renewed spirit and a strong desire to succeed.

There is no challenge too great, no climb too steep and there are no gaps that we cannot bridge together. Let's work together this year to eliminate littering especially in the parks and on our beautiful beaches.

Let us also desist from driving on the beaches this year. Our turtles tend to nest on the beaches and their delicate baby turtles can get crushed if they are driven over.

If more exercising is one of your new year's resolutions, consider planting a tree and even developing a garden – this is a wonderful way to exercise and destress while beautifying your surroundings. You can also consider walks in the parks with family and friends to reconnect with Mother Earth.

We often underestimate the calming effect of nature but a rejuvenating sea bath can make a huge difference. Regardless of your preference, make 2024 the year that you explore more of our beautiful country and embrace its gems - our parks and public spaces.

At NCC, we reaffirm our commitment to conserving and preserving these gems. We will ensure they are well maintained and aesthetically pleasing. On behalf of the Commission, here's wishing you all of your heart's desires for 2024 and may your mental and physical health be a top priority.

NCC'S HEADQUARTERS REFURBISHMENT



The refurbishment of NCC's Codrington House Headquarters is underway.

THE REFURBISHMENT OF the National Conservation Commission's Codrington House Headquarters in Waterford, St. Michael is underway.

Acting General Manager of the National Conservation Commission (NCC), Ryan Als, explained that 'due to the deterioration of the roof over the years, which resulted in leaks and moisture problems, a decision was taken that it would be prudent to refurbish the entire building'.

"The refurbishment includes the floors, ceilings, windows, ventilation, electrical and plumbing," he outlined.

Als added that the roof of the building was never replaced although the building, which was first constructed in 1825, had undergone several modifications over the years.

"Originally constructed from limestone and timber with the classic plantation style house design we are accustomed to seeing

across Barbados. The building was converted to office spaces with air conditioning, additional lighting and other modern conveniences," he explained.

Over the past few months, Als added, the workmen have been working assiduously to replace the roof in addition to the requisite electrical and plumbing work.

"The original balcony, which was enclosed, has also been reopened and the existing PVC windows have been replaced with wooden windows and complementary wooden hoods in keeping with the original architecture," he noted.

The doors in the building will also be replaced with the original 'tall doors', which Als estimated are about nine feet in height.

Three of these doors are still in the building and the team is constructing the others required based on their measurements and style.

In the next feature, Craftsman, Bhopal Sundar, sheds light on the building process of the hoods.

TRANSFORMATION TRACKER

NCC'S CODRINGTON HOUSE HEADQUARTERS IN JUNE, 2023



Front and partial overhead view of the Commission's Headquarters in June, 2023.



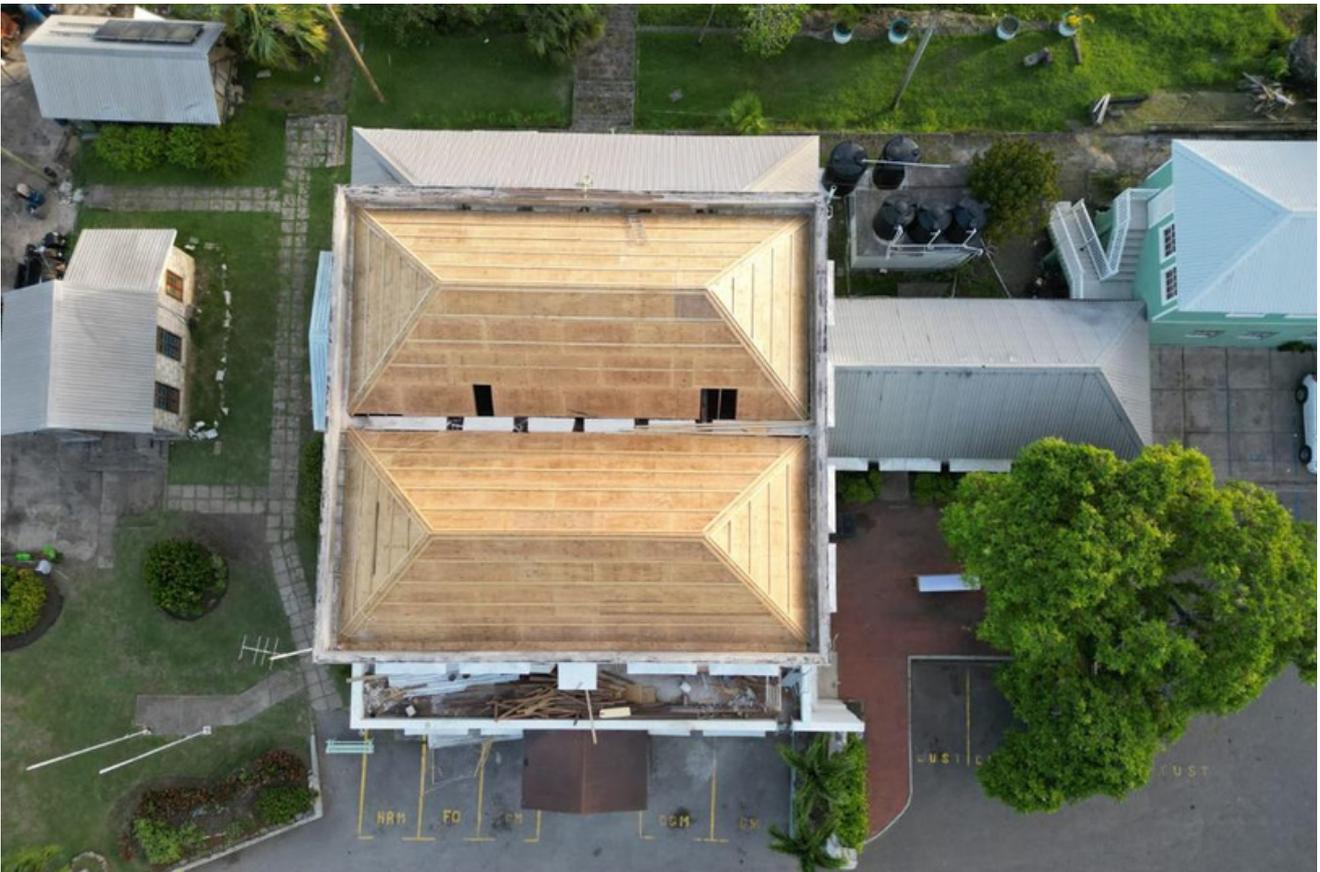
Overhead view of the Commission's Headquarters in June, 2023.

TRANSFORMATION TRACKER

NCC'S CODRINGTON HOUSE HEADQUARTERS IN JULY, 2023



Overhead view of the Commission's Headquarters in July, 2023.



Overhead view of the Commission's Headquarters in July, 2023.

PRESERVING THE CODRINGTON HOUSE'S HOODS DESIGN



Bhopal Sundar carefully cutting a piece of timber for the window hoods' design.

THE COMMISSION'S PLANTATION style hoods above the exterior of its windows are among the features that are being preserved in the Codrington House Headquarters' refurbishment process.

Craftsman, Bhopal Sundar, is spearheading this preservation effort through the rebuilding of the window hoods, utilizing treated pine.

"We are cutting the pieces of treated timber to obtain the smaller pieces needed to make the hoods, after which they are planed by being placed on the [wood] molder to form the pattern of the siding board," he explained.

After that pattern is formed, Sundar said it is placed on the table, turned over and another machine is used to form the bead.

"The beaded pieces of wood are placed together along with other pieces to form the

stacked pattern of the hood. Each piece must be cut to the correct length, not necessarily the same length, to fit the stacked pattern of the hood," he outlined.

The frame is crafted from a different type of timber and Sundar noted that 'all of the angles are different to get the shape', which requires the use of numerous tools.

In a brief history lesson, he said that in the plantation era, the plantation houses did not contain air condition units rather, double hung sash windows were utilized in the building process.

"The installation of hoods above these windows facilitated ventilation. They were placed over the top sash so that when it rained, the bottom could remain open and allow the breeze to circulate and come up hence the bell shape," he explained.

While Sundar acknowledged that the design is 'used for style now', he emphasized that it was

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Hoods are the heart of NCC's Headquarters refurbishment



One of the window hoods being crafted for the Codrington House Headquarters.

designed for ventilation purposes.

The life of the hood, Sundar added, depends on the on the type of material used in the building process.

“For instance, this is treated pine, and can last between 18 to 20 years as long as it is painted and kept clean of moss and mildew. Mahogany can last up to 100 years, I have worked on buildings that were 200 years old and the mahogany was still good,” he explained.

Comparatively, cedar can last up to 150 years however, Sundar noted that mahogany and cedar are significantly more expensive than treated pine.

“With this work, there is a lot of wastage of material, and you cannot afford that volume of wastage with mahogany,” the Craftsman of over 35 years declared.

Sundar indicated that the building of each hood requires 67 pieces of timber and ‘every single joint has to be cut, it is a lot of sawing’.

“The outcome is good as intended but it is an art and you must have a love for it,” he asserted.

Ryan Als, NCC's Acting General Manager,



The stacked pattern of the hood with various lengths of timber for the shape.

noted: “the wooden hoods are a lot better than the fibre glass ones that were previously on our Codrington House Headquarters”.

“It brings a level of authenticity to the refurbishment process, and it preserves the aesthetic and functionality,” he explained.

Als said that in addition to the preservation of the hoods design, they have changed the windows from the PVC style to the double hung sash windows, which were used originally.

He added that a similar approach is being taken for the doors and ‘everything is fitting in as we try to return the building to its former glory’.

Meet NCC's new Chairman, Ms. Alicia Carter



Ryan Als (left) presenting a peace lily to Alicia Carter (right).

Ryan Als, NCC's Acting General Manager, presented Carter with a peace lily plant on her assumption of the role.

Als said that he is looking forward to working with Carter to implement the new initiatives at the Commission and to improve the existing programmes and projects.

"We will work as a team and she will provide the necessary support on policy matters which guides the management of personnel and resources," he said.

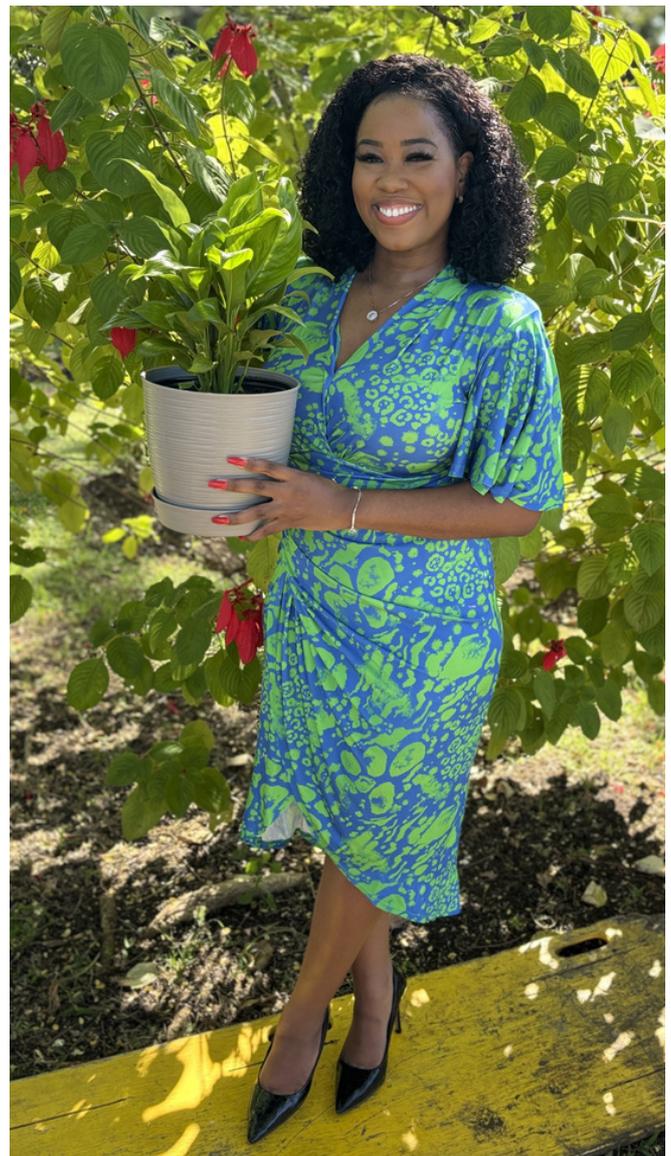
Equally excited, Carter reaffirmed her unwavering commitment to the Commission in every sphere.

She will share more about her vision, plans and strategic approach in the next edition of The Commission Newsletter.

MS. ALICIA CARTER, attorney-at-law, was recently appointed as Chairman of the Board of Directors at NCC.

Carter said that she is honoured to assume the role, having served as Deputy Chairman for the past five years.

"Upon assuming this new role I have determined the strategic direction of the commission based on the objectives, as set by the Cabinet of Barbados. I am delighted to have the opportunity to be aligned with an organization that plays a significant role in the sustainable development of Barbados," she asserted.



Alicia Carter striking a pose with the peace lily presented to her by Ryan Als.

QUEEN'S PARK: TRASH HOUSE COMPLETE



The restoration of the Trash House in Queen's Park has been completed.

THE RESTORATION OF the historic Trash House in Queen's Park was completed earlier this month.

Acting General Manager of the National Conservation Commission (NCC), Ryan Als, thanked visitors to the Park for their patience during the restoration process.

This restoration included the removal and replacement of the existing roof, the stabilization of the existing wall and the removal and replacement of the existing columns.

The excavation of the floor, preservation and stabilization of the back wall and adjoining columns, the casting of a ring beam on all columns and the coral rendering of the entire structure were also among the work conducted on the Trash House.

The preservation of its authenticity, Als previously said, was paramount to the restoration process.

"The trash house is a historical treasure that has taken time to restore as the preservation of every treasured stone had to be reused in the process," he said.

Als added that the Commission's team ensured that they used materials which were incorporated into the original structure as well as the same design and construction method.

The Commission's will soon conduct the landscaping aspect of the project, which was preceded by the repaving of the pathway to the Trash House.

Als extended a special 'thank you' to entities such as the Barbados Museum and Historical Society to ensure that the historic gem is returned to its former glory.

The Queen's Park Refurbishment Project commenced in July, 2021 and several areas have been restored including the Trident Fountain and the Band Stand.

TRANSFORMATION TRACKER

The completion of the Trash House in Queen's Park



Side view of the Trash House in Queen's Park



Another side view of the Trash House in Queen's Park

TRANSFORMATION TRACKER

The completion of the Trash House in Queen's Park



Back view of the Trash House in Queen's Park



The inner back wall view of the Trash House

TRANSFORMATION TRACKER

The completion of the Trash House in Queen's Park



The under view of Trash House's roof



A closer under view of the Trash House's roof

QUEEN'S PARK: CHRISTMAS PREPARATIONS

The Royal Commonwealth Society's Tree Project comes to Queen's Park



Members of the Barbados Defence Force securing one of the trees with sand.

HISTORY WAS MADE this Christmas as the Royal Commonwealth Society's 'Christmas in the Square' project featured the outfitting of 56 beautiful Christmas trees in Queen's Park, as part of the project's 10th Anniversary.

NCC's Senior Electrician, William Husbands, said it is the first year that Queen's Park was selected as a location for the placement of the Christmas trees.

Husbands was elated with the move, which he openly welcomed, as the Christmas trees and their beautiful lights and decorations enhanced the ambience of the Park, which is a staple for Barbadians on Christmas morning.

Husbands explained that his team facilitates the installation of and electrical work for the lights on the trees, therefore, the project's

extension to Queen's Park brought the Yuletide season's ambience to another public space that is managed by the Commission.

Earlier in December, members of the Barbados Defence Force (BDF) were busy placing the Christmas trees at vantage points in Queen's Park and across The City.

The Royal Commonwealth Society's 'Christmas in the Square' project gives students of the nursery, primary and secondary schools as well as Barbadian youth groups an opportunity to display their creativity through the creation of Christmas trees decorations.

The project's participants primarily create these decorations from recycled materials and draw on inspiration from the images and emblems of the countries, which are incorporated into their themes.

QUEEN'S PARK: CHRISTMAS PREPARATIONS

Members of the BDF placing the Christmas trees around the Trident Fountain



QUEEN'S PARK: 0 CHRISTMAS TREES!

How lovely are the decorations on the trees in Queen's Park!



The Royal Commonwealth Society's Tree



Seventh Day Adventist Primary's Tree



St. Stephen's Nursery School's Tree



The Republic of Burundi's Tree

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Meet Technical Officer, Mr. Carlos Gilkes



DEEPLY EMBEDDED IN Carlos Gilkes' heart is his unconditional love for Folkestone Park and Marine Reserve in Folkestone, St. James.

His appreciation for Barbados' only marine protected area developed over 25 years ago, when he was reassigned to the picturesque marine protected area as a Park Naturalist. Gilkes joined the National Conservation Commission (NCC) in 1994 as a lifeguard in training and was assigned to Enterprise Beach in Christ Church on completion of the course.

"I have been able to toss stones into the sea from every location I have lived, therefore transitioning to a Park Naturalist at Folkstone was easy for me," he declared.

Gilkes' primary focus at the time was the development of a speech and an operational

concept for the Folkestone Museum.

The collection of specimens for the museum and aquariums, were among the Park Naturalist's duties, in addition to the examination of the flora and fauna at Folkstone, which is 2.2 kilometres square of marine protected area.

The Folkestone Park and Marine Reserve was established in 1981 by the Designation of Restricted Areas Order 1981, and the Marine Areas (Preservation and Enhancement) (Barbados Marine Reserve) Regulation 1981.

The marine protected area is divided into four zones: a scientific research zone, a northern water sports zone, a recreational zone, and a southern water sports zone.

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Adventures at Folkestone through Gilkes' lens



Gilkes examining the khus khus grass on a section of Needham's Point Beach.

With a natural gravitation to the sea, Gilkes' curiosity led him to the discovery of a small 14 foot boat that was assigned to Folkestone.

"It was cleaned up and fully functional after which, I started to sail it. We used one of the Transport Department's tractors to launch it and Adrian Rodman would come down to launch it and he also accompanied me on the boat from time to time," Gilkes said.

The informal boat trips became a staple on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

He explained that these days aligned with the cruise ship schedule and the influx of visitors to Folkestone.

"Pretty soon, it became a regular occurrence and in November, 2000, the Commission invested in a Boston Whaler Boat – a 21 foot boat – and I was loosely referred to as the 'Captain' and it is now the position of Boat Operator," he explained.

Gilkes also drew on his experience with the Barbados Coast Guard and his marine knowledge to guide this aspect of his duties.

This knowledge was further enhanced when the quick-witted Gilkes pursued his bachelor's degree in Public Sector Management, while he balanced his duties as the Boat Operator.

The proverbial academic bug bit Gilkes once again in 2019, when he pursued his Master's degree in Natural Resources and Environmental Management.

As for the Commission's boat, its operations were regularised and it remains functional over 20 years later.

While Gilkes reminisced on adventures at sea, he noted that 2019 was a significant year for his career.

"It was during this year that I came to Codrington Headquarters to take up a more significant role at the Commission,

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Gilkes continues to rise to the occasion

where I was initially responsible for the creation of a maintenance plan for the public spaces in Barbados and that meant that I had to examine each park and public space,” he explained.

Gilkes placed these parks and public spaces under the microscope and quickly realized that this responsibility in NCC’s Technical Department entailed the oversight of 122 parks and public spaces.

“By examining them, I was able to determine the equipment that was needed, and a database was created to determine the cost of what we were trying to achieve. All of the spaces needed work especially the infrastructure such as the benches and fences and the cost was staggering upon investigation,” he indicated.

Notwithstanding the result of the investigation, Gilkes said that it proved to be ‘a good tool to gauge the mitigation measures for

inclusion in the development of a proper maintenance programme for the parks and public spaces’.

“In 2019, I also visited The People’s Republic of China for a Sustainable Development course and it was very insightful as they demonstrated their sustainability through the reuse of wastewater for multiple purposes such as irrigation,” he outlined.

On his return, Gilkes was formally assigned as the Acting Technical Officer in the Technical Department with responsibility for the Codrington Nursery’s Plant Tissue Culture Laboratory, the Apiary and aspects



Gilkes has gained more knowledge and experience over the past four years as a Technical Officer.

of beach management and biodiversity.

“It was a massive difference when I transitioned to Headquarters in terms of the volume of work, the projects being executed and to also see that my full capacity was not being utilized previously,” he said.

This eye-opener, Gilkes opined, also highlighted the value of his input in decision-making processes.

Still, he declared: ‘Folkestone will always remain at the top of my heart’.

“It will always be integral to me, I value the knowledge I gained in marine conservation and my experiences over the years there,” he asserted with a smile.

CONSERVATION CHRONICLES

Beach management is at the core of the Commission's mandate



An important sign about beach vegetation on the beach in Bay Street, St. Michael.

AT THE CORE of NCC's mandate is the importance of beach management through conservation.

NCC's Technical Officer, Carlos Gilkes, described the Commission as 'the advisory agency for beach management inclusive of advice on types of plants, as well as what can and should be done on beach areas, as we readily provide this information'.

Gilkes underscored the importance of this role as he shared concerns and challenges in terms of the usage and in some cases, the misuse of beaches.

"At some beaches, such as Browne's Beach, Pebbles, Bay Street, there have been a significant amount of usage and in the winter season especially, these beaches are inundated with visitors, and it becomes

challenging for the average person to access a beach chair or to use their own beach chairs," he explained.

Gilkes added that the Commission has also been experiencing challenges with indiscriminate driving on the beaches.

With reference to the sign captured in the picture above, he said it is a practice that NCC is aiming to stamp out.

"We want to preserve the ecological processes such as the sea turtle nesting on the beaches and ensure that they can continue without instances of being driven on or trampled," he firmly stated.

Gilkes added that they aim to have beach spaces that are accessible to the sea turtles in support of the Commission's partnership with the Barbados Sea Turtle Project.

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The Commission reaffirms its commitment to conserving beaches



Technical Officer, Carlos Gilkes, pointing at the path used by some motorists to access a section of the beach in Bay Street, St. Michael in disregard of the sign.

Prime beaches such as Drill Hall and Payne’s Bay, Gilkes explained, have been on their radar in terms of the sustainability of the sea turtles’ ecological processes with the planting of beach vegetation.

“These species [the sea turtles] will be able to come, lay and return to the sea without being impeded by the bright lights of vehicles or otherwise distracted from re-entering the sea,” he said.

While he alluded to Drill Hall as a pristine location for the sea turtles, he credited the partnership and consultations with the Barbados Sea Turtle Project for the guidance of its cleaning and maintenance.

“The vegetation is not trimmed haphazardly and even the sargassum collection is done from particular vantage points and we do not allow our equipment

and vehicles to come on this beach to compact it,” he explained.

Gilkes alluded to the signs erected at some of the Commission’s beaches with information about the DOs and DON’Ts in terms of the sea turtles, to edify the public and guide their actions when they are sighted on the beaches.

In addition to the partnership with the Barbados Sea Turtle Project, Gilkes said: “The Hilton Barbados Resort has been a true partner with NCC at all stages of their developments and ours, and any development that occurs on this particular strip of the beach has to be authorized by the Commission”.

In the next edition, the Commission’s thrust to reintroduce beach vegetation and the ideal types of plant species for this process will be examined.

TEAM WORK IS ESSENTIAL IN THE LAB

Staff of the Codrington Nursery's Tissue Culture Lab take us on a tour



Rashad Wickham (in yellow shirt) reviewing the stock records with Sharon Williams.

TEAM WORK BRINGS the vision to fruition in the Codrington Nursery's Plant Tissue Culture Laboratory.

The Lab is the Commission's artery that facilitates the subculturing of plants and the production of media for the process.

The dedicated team, led by Technical Officer, Carlos Gilkes, comprises Sharon Williams, Qusheeka Phillips and Rashad Wickham.

The processes conducted in the Lab are intended to propagate species of plants at a quicker rate, using small explant material thus resulting in one plant being broken down into multiple pieces.

According to the Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, the subculture of plants is the process in which the plant tissue or

explant is first subdivided and transferred into fresh culture media.

At NCC's Lab, this process entails the sourcing of explant material which are cuttings of the plants from the Nursery and the initiation, which is the initial insertion of the cuttings to the media.

If growth is the aim, CMP media will be used while MS media is used for mutating.

This is followed by the subculture aspect where the plant is broken down to yield more plants, which is conducted after a minimum of six weeks.

Gilkes explained that the team has gained adequate experience with utilizing this process for plants such as chrysanthemums, Boston ferns, fishtail ferns, carnations, kalanchoes and orchids.

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Subculturing is second nature to the Lab's staff



Sharon Williams examining the Red Guava plant tissues stock in the Lab.

their eyes close now’.

While he noted that this is testament to their knowledge of the job, he also extended kudos to retired team member, Marva Knight-Miller, and Wayne Cummins, who, along with Phillips and Williams, have been committed to the lab's development.

He heaped equal praise on Wickham, who is on job attachment at the Commission, after satisfactorily completing his Give Back Hours at the organization and making a positive impact through this contribution.

“The way he progressed during that time made him an excellent candidate for being here today. It is a tough role to come into as you need to have a background, or you will need to dedicate the requisite hours,” Gilkes explained.

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“These are species we would have tried and tested to see their growth and development rate. It is not an exact science as yet but for the most part, the ferns and chrysanthemums are the species that have been doing pretty well,” Gilkes explained.

Wickham echoed Gilkes' sentiments while he alluded to the process being different for specific plants as ferns, for example, are not as delicate as some of the other plants, such as Orchids, which were initially one of the more challenging species for the staff.

“Once you reap success with one Orchid, you can use it to undertake the process again to yield more plants, as it will also have the specific desired traits and qualities,” Wickham declared.

Beaming with pride, Gilkes said that the team members ‘can cut up and initiate the subculturing of these species with



Red Guava and Boston Fern plant tissues in containers with labels and their respective insertion dates.

Cleanliness is key to the Lab's maintenance



Rashad Wickham, one of the Lab's personnel, ensures that there is an adequate amount of materials in the Codrington Nursery's Plant Tissue Culture Laboratory.

Wickham has both prerequisites as he recently completed his bachelor's degree in Agricultural Studies at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus in Trinidad.

As Gilkes reiterated that 'the lab is where it is today because of their commitment and dedication', he credited the Commission's Acting General Manager, Ryan Als for its concept and introduction.

Gilkes noted that Als brought the idea to fruition during his early years with the Commission as a Technical Officer and noted that his foresight at that time paved the way for its existence today, which he deemed as critical to the Commission.

The maintenance of the lab is equally critical and Wickham explained that they ensure it is well maintained, as it is a sterile environment. "This is largely due to the volume of traffic as we are in and out of the Lab frequently, therefore we clean constantly to reduce the amount of contamination. Most of the things may not be air tight and some form of contamination may get into the area, which we do not want, so we clean as regularly and efficiently as possible," he said.

As the staff collectively declared their love for their jobs, they alluded to greater efficiency as their primary focus, with the support of more modern equipment to facilitate each aspect of the process.

The Tissue Culture Lab is a reservoir of resources



Qusheeka Phillips ensuring the Autoclave's cover is well-positioned and secure.

Here are some more facts about the Subculturing Process

- During the initiation process, sterile bottles are used to catch water from the tap and they are labeled accordingly with the respective plant's name.
- Carnations have plenty of shoots therefore from 15 tubes, you can get two trays or 72 tubes of plant tissues.

Here are some more facts about the Tissue Culture Lab

- The team generally uses standard disinfectants to maintain the Lab and also reduce the presence of bacteria in the air.
- They also make all of the media that are used in the Lab and they are stored in a refrigerator to preserve their life.

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