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ST. GEORGE VILLAGE BOTANICAL GARDEN UPGRADED TO LEVEL 2 BY ARBNET ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

FREDERIKSTED, Virgin Islands (July 30, 2025) – St. George Village Botanical Garden in Frederiksted has been upgraded to a Level 2 Accreditation by The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program and The Morton Arboretum, for achieving particular standards of professional practices deemed important for arboreta and botanic gardens. The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program is the only global initiative to officially recognize arboreta at various levels of development, capacity, and professionalism. In addition to the recent upgrade, the St. George Village Botanical Garden is also recognized as an accredited arboretum in the Morton Register of Arboreta, a database of the world's arboreta and gardens dedicated to woody plants. The Garden is the only registered arboretum in the Greater and Lesser Antilles.

The St. George Village Botanical Garden was established in 1972. The Garden encompasses 16 acres with over 1,000 Caribbean and pan-tropical plants and trees growing against a backdrop of ruins and repurposed buildings of an old 18th and 19th century Danish colonial sugar plantation.

The living collections at St. George Village Botanical Garden are extraordinarily diverse, spanning across many plant families and hailing from a variety of tropical climates around the globe. The Garden prides itself in focusing its efforts first and foremost on the collection and conservation of woody tree and shrub species native to the Caribbean and culturally significant to St. Croix and the island's ethnobotanical history.

The Garden has four key sections designated to the collection and display of these species, which are the Conservation Garden, Native Arboretum, Palm Arboretum, and Exotic Tree display. The Conservation Garden is dedicated to the collection and display of significantly threatened species endemic to the region, such as *Erythrina eggersii*, *Solanum conocarpum* and *Zanthoxylum flavum*. Our *Zanthoxylum f.* is currently one of only two known species left on the island. The Native Arboretum, on the other hand, focuses on exhibiting larger specimens of trees native to the Caribbean such as *Canella winterana*, *Andira inermis*, *Bucida buceras*, and *Sideroxylon foetidissimum*. Our Palm Arboretum collection includes over 25 species that grow in the Caribbean and adjacent regions of Central and South America. Finally, visitors are invited to let their imaginations run wild exploring our more "exotic" species on display such as the Cannonball Tree (*Couroupita guianensis*), Sausage Tree (*Kigelia pinnata*) and Banyan Tree (*Ficus bengalensis*). The exotic display is topped off with a view of our signature tree, a towering Kapok (*Ceiba pentandra*) in the heart of the Garden. Spanning the Garden's 16 acres with an emphasis on these four major sections, we have documented, labeled, and mapped over 100 woody tree and shrub species for a one of a kind garden experience.

"The St. George Village Botanical Garden is an extraordinary place, built around the ruins of a former 18th- and 19th-century sugar cane plantation. Upgrading from a Level I to Level II ArbNet accreditation strengthens our standing in the global arboretum community, increases our visibility throughout the

region, and opens the door to deeper collaboration with a broader range of experts. This recognition helps us continue to fulfill our mission of education, conservation, and community engagement.”

- Sarah Brady, Executive Director

About ArbNet

ArbNet is an interactive, collaborative, international community of arboreta. ArbNet facilitates the sharing of knowledge, experience, and other resources to help arboreta meet their institutional goals and works to raise professional standards through the ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program. The accreditation program, sponsored and coordinated by The Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Illinois in cooperation with American Public Gardens Association and Botanic Gardens Conservation International, is the only global initiative to officially recognize arboreta based on a set of professional standards. The program offers four levels of accreditation, recognizing arboreta of various degrees of development, capacity and professionalism. Standards include planning, governance, public access, programming and tree science, planting and conservation. More information is available at www.arbnet.org.