

Petal Power

Golby-Reasoner Chapter
American Hibiscus Society

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How about a P & R program?

If that sounds good to you – you are way ahead of us because we just made up the “P & R” stuff to save space. It refers to Pruning and Repotting and that’s the subject of the program for our February Chapter meeting. Our esteemed (which is perhaps too strong a word) Editor, Gayler Boettcher, will be the presenter and he has taken the appropriate oath which requires that the mess such a topic might produce - be minimized and contained. It is considered that that is a small cost for the opportunity to continue to meet in the plush surroundings of Synovus Bank. We would urge meeting attendees to assure that Boettcher lives up to the letter and spirit of the oath he has taken.

Pruning and Repotting are timely subjects and Boettcher most likely knows the subject. He will be illustrating the subject with a live plant or two so all in all it should be a pretty entertaining program. You can tell that we don’t want to over-sell this program, considering the presenter, but everything considered it should at least be a fun time and please remember that the meetings now start at 1:00 PM.! That’s 1:00 PM on February 11th, at Synovus Bank.

In keeping with the thought that puns are the finest form of humor there is one in plain sight somewhere in the otherwise staid pages of this issue of PETAL POWER.

New Year, new banner

PETAL POWER Publisher Gene Haugh likes to start a New Year with a new look for PETAL POWER and thus we are sporting a new banner for our first issue of the New Year. We hope you like it – we do!

Excerpts from the January 5th Board Meeting

- Annual Show: Advertised plant sale time will be 1:00-4:00 p.m. Pat Grant and Shirley Adams will look into the possible use of credit cards at the show. Dave Flanders has lined up 7 judges so far.
- Publications: 12 handbooks are left. Dave Flanders will look into the feasibility of half-size “Helpful Tips” handouts.
- Dave Flanders will give a hibiscus talk to the

Mount Vernon Garden Club on 2/14/07 at 9:30 a.m.

Gardeners speak on Global Warming

We see more than enough chatter from scientists and those with (perhaps) self-serving agendas pontificating about Global Warming so it is interesting to see what farmers/gardeners say on the subject. A recent story in the ever shrinking NY Times, sent to us by Gene Haugh, did just that.

In central Maryland, warmer winters permit the growing of Southern magnolias and apricot trees, but more insects are wintering over, and weeds seem far more aggressive. It was reported that that area jumped a zone, from 7 to 8, according to the hardiness zone map based on lowest winter temperatures in the past 15 years, just published by the National Arbor Day Foundation.

Warmer temperatures have also benefited Long Island’s grape growers, who are starting to plant syrahs, which need more heat to develop flavor. Kiwi vines are being planted in Cutchogue, N.Y., which would not have survived a few decades ago. Meanwhile, the warmer weather in the form of milder winters will bring more insects and disease that aren’t controlled through “freezing out”.

We here in Florida find it hard to see much warming – it has always been hot – and true, farmers here may be able to see a difference. We are certainly concerned about the frequency and intensity of hurricanes which could be influenced by a warming trend. However, one wonders if our great-great-grandchildren will be concerned about global cooling?

Hibiscus Gardening in February

Normally the hibiscus gardener has relatively little to do during the winter months from November through mid-February. Of course a cold snap will give the hibiscus gardener that lives in an area that is prone to frosts/freezes something to do very quickly. It is not unknown for this area to have a significant cold spell after Valentine’s Day. In fact, Eric Golby wrote somewhere that we have had light frosts as late as March 9th. We haven’t had anything that late for some time, but the area

east of I-75 had some frosts into mid-February in the not too distant past. Of course those living nearer the Gulf will have an entirely different outlook about the prospect for cold weather throughout the winter months.

Immediately following the thoughts concerning the prospect of cold weather we have to comment that our unseasonably warm weather continues as this is written. As we wrote last month that may mean a particularly bothersome crop of unwanted critters could be upon us as spring and summer approaches. Oh joy! Be watchful!

And it continues to be dry – and February isn't known for its bountiful rains. However, although we have had above-average temperatures, our plants will still need less water at this time of year. The potted plant that needed daily watering in July may be able to go three days or more this time of year. The in-ground plants that need watering weekly in August might now require water every two (or even three) weeks. The fact that plants don't grow much now is really noticeable in lawn grasses which in mid-summer could stand to be cut every five days now can go two weeks – or more – between cuttings. And the grass that had leaves that started curling between July's twice-a-week watering may be quite content with watering every two or three weeks during our dry season. That assumes a good $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch of water is applied during each watering.

I assume all our readers are aware that we are back to water restrictions including once a week watering for lawns. Perhaps now would be the time for those who attended the July Chapter meeting to put to use the concepts Jack Tichenor discussed in his presentation about micro irrigation for landscaping plants. One of pluses about micro irrigation is that it is not subject to watering restrictions. Jack is an Extension Service Agent and can be reached there (at the Extension Service) if you have questions.

Some gardeners will feel tenseness or a twitch in their pruning hand sometime after Valentine's Day. While those living in "frost free" areas could allow that feeling to be translated into the pruning motion complete with the appropriate tools, those who live in the I-75 area would be well served to wait until late February or early March – particularly with respect to in-ground plants. Plants in pots could be pruned earlier if you will put them in a garage or such in case of a cold snap. With the thought in mind that pruning, as well as repotting and potting-up, will not occur until around the first of March we will not discuss those subjects until our February issue.

Another reason why we will wait until the February PETAL POWER to discuss pruning, etc., is that we expect to have a reporter at the February Chapter meeting when Gayler Boettcher is scheduled to discuss those subjects. We hope everyone will be at the meeting, however if you are in the hospital (the only really acceptable kind of excuse a member would have to not be there) – rest assured we will report any gems of wisdom (?) Mr. Boettcher conveys to the gathering.

While we wait for warm weather that we can be "sure" about before we prune our hibiscus, many of our plants should be pruned while it is still cool – before they start to bud. Roses and crape myrtles come to mind as falling in that category.

As we mentioned last month, continue to watch for spider mites. Controls would include soap sprays or a miticide such as *Kelthane*.

A vulture boards an airplane, carrying two dead raccoons. The stewardess looks at him and says, "I'm sorry sir, only one carrion allowed per passenger."

A light dose of fertilizer on our hibiscus would be appropriate in February, on those plants that you are not planning to severely prune this year. In fact, most of our landscape plants should be treated to a "wake-up" feeding in late February and into March. Full dosages should be applied on palms, shrubs, perennials, citrus and lawns.

We will not see many blooms on our hibiscus during this time of year, but there will be some. With that certainty comes some more good news – along with some bad news. The good news is that the blooms may last more than one day – two or three is not all that unusual. The bad news is that the blooms may not be true to the variety in color, bloom size and/or bloom configuration.

Early Days with Hibiscus Continued...

Last month we started reproducing excerpts from a series of articles entitled "Rambling Reflections" Eric Golby wrote for *The Seed Pod* in the early 80's. This month we pick up the story when Eric's father was operating his own florist and nursery business near Boston, MA.

"In the late thirties and early forties we were growing a number of two and a half-inch pot hibiscus under contract to a wholesale nursery firm whose checks were very welcome following the Big Depression's moneyless days. After Pearl Harbor, we had to keep the greenhouses at a lower temperature to conserve

on fuel, so the hibiscus became a low-priority item as we replaced sub-tropical plants with cut flowers and potted plants such as sweet peas, chrysanthemums, carnations and Dutch bulbs that produced well at a lower temperature. Getting fuel and supplies in those war years was not easy because that was a low priority occupation. My work as a 20 MM shell loader was not.

Illness forced Dad to sell the business and retire to Florida in 1945, and I followed. The day after my arrival, I went to see Norman Reasoner at Reasoner's Tropical Nurseries. The war years and the preceding depression had not been kind to the Florida nursery business, so it was a year before I could be hired there, in spite of my persistence. I was placed in charge of the small nursery surrounding his home, consisting largely of grafted hibiscus.

These were brought in from the 20-acre nursery at Palma Sola, then a somewhat remote place, a few miles away from the much handier and easier to find location in town. I was in seventh heaven, as these were the *crème de la crème* of the hibiscus of the late forties."

We have been quoting from a copy of the article, not from *The Seed Pod* it was published in, and the second page has been lost. The second article of the series appeared all on one page and therefore when we share that article we will have the opportunity to share it all with our readers. But that's for another time. By the way, for the benefit of our newer members, the Norman Reasoner who Eric Golby went to see for a job is the "Reasoner" in the name of our Chapter. For many years we were known as the Norman Reasoner Chapter.

Golby-Reasoner Chapter, AHS Chapter Meeting Minutes January 14, 2007

President Boettcher called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. in the Synovus Bank meeting room, and welcomed several guests and visitors.

A motion was made to accept the November 11, 2006 minutes as published in Petal Power. It was seconded and approved.

Treasurer Adams' report for the month of December showed an initial balance of \$3,819.25, income of \$1014.00, expenses of \$932.65, and ending balance of \$3900.60. The report was accepted.

President Boettcher then covered these items:

- The Annual Show will be held on Sunday, May

27th at the Palmetto Fair Grounds with set-up on May 25th.

- The Crosley Mansion Festival of Trees netted a profit of \$313.00 from plant and literature sales. 23 Chapter Members participated, and our hibiscus Christmas tree won the Peoples' Choice Award.
- The June Restaurant Meeting will be held at Peridia Country Club.
- At the latest Board Meeting it was decided to look into possible use of credit cards at the Annual Show and provide a rubber stamp for simplifying check writing. The Annual Picnic will be held on April 1st at Palma Sola Botanical Park.

Gene Haugh sent a letter of thanking Randy Cox for providing the Crosley Mansion hibiscus blooms, and summarized 2006 Chapter Website performance.

Rae Flanders introduced Gene Haugh who gave a talk on "Hardy Hibiscus".

The meeting adjourned at 1:46 p.m. and Marilyn Young and Rae Flanders provided refreshments.

We welcome new Members!

Please add the following to your directory:

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