

PSBP "Work Day" Set

The Board of Directors set October 6th as the Palma Sola Botanical Park (PSBP) "Work Day". Note that "Work Day" is in quotes, since only the portion of the day between 9:00 a.m. and noon will be "worked". (Now that's a work-day everyone could appreciate!) Ten members signed up for the work day at the September Chapter meeting, however if you didn't sign-up but would like to participate, please just "show up"! Everyone should dress appropriately and bring gardening gloves (if you use them), pruning shears, and sun screen. In addition to pulling a few weeds and doing some pruning, we will be planting a few plants, assuming we can get the Park to buy them. (PSBP is located at 9800 17th Ave. NW.)

November Field Trip Destination Announced

Program Chair Rae Flanders led a discussion in the September Chapter meeting that resulted in the establishment of the Fiorelli Winery as the destination of November's Chapter field trip. Yes indeed, a winery just 10 miles east of I75! Details of the jaunt will be in the October issue of PETAL POWER, but we wanted to let those who weren't at the meeting know what was coming in November.

Potluck Coming...

Last year, the Board of Directors chose to combine the October Chapter meeting, which would have been on the second Sunday, with the "Annual" potluck which is always scheduled late in the month. Apparently that seemed to work out alright so the same approach is going to be used this year. Therefore, the potluck, which is scheduled for October 25th, will "feature" a short Chapter meeting. It has also been announced that there will be a "fun" program and – if several new members sign up – there will be a short program about some element of hibiscus gardening.

Tom Tourt, former chapter member
Passed away August 25, 2007
Age 81

There will be another issue of PETAL POWER prior to the potluck that will treat a few details and provide directions to the Boettcher home, the site of the event.

Meager Chapter Dues

We were recently told by one of our Chapter members that we should mention that the Golby-Reasoner Chapter retains very little of the \$27.50/\$30.00 annual dues collected each year. Therefore, being ever responsive to our member/readers, we will do just that! Our local Chapter keeps very little of the dues - \$25.00 of each membership is sent to the AHS for the dues of that organization. The dues of the Chapter are only \$2.50 (Single Membership) or \$5.00 (Family Membership), which are indeed, quite meager.

So then, you may ask, what happens to my \$25.00? The most visible item that is paid for by AHS dues are the four quarterly issues of *The Seed Pod*. *The Seed Pod* in recent years has had nice color pictures of hibiscus blooms and they have occasionally contained information that would be of interest to the hobbyist hibiscus gardener.

Of considerable expense to the AHS is a liability insurance policy that it buys to cover all the shows that the various Chapters sponsor each year. The expense each chapter would incur for a policy for their individual show, if they could obtain it, may well be cost-prohibitive resulting in – no show.

Peggy Dessaint & Lubber Grasshoppers

Peggy Desaint, an Extension Agent and a former member of our Chapter, writes a column for the

Bayshore newspaper about various gardening subjects. Recently Peggy touched on the subject of Lubber Grasshoppers which drew our interest since we recently saw our first lubber.

Folks, if you haven't seen a lubber, you haven't seen what surely must be the king of grasshoppers. (In keeping with our contention that puns are the cream of all humor and that they should be enjoyed whenever possible - there is one hidden somewhere in the remaining portion of this issue of PETAL POWER.) When they are all grown up – in the late summer – according to Peggy they are 3” to 4” long, yellow/green, and have a round red mark on each side. That may be what Peggy thinks, but the one we saw must have been about a foot long! OK, so it just seemed like it was a foot long! But even a 4” grasshopper is really, really huge - and when your not expecting to run into one it seems a lot bigger – and then when it's all in Technicolor to boot – it's quite an experience!

Peggy discusses Lubber Grasshoppers as she treats crinum lilies which “are worthy additions to Manatee landscapes.” She says “One lubber can chew large holes in a crinum leaf in no time (they also dine on other bulbs and many ornamentals such as hibiscus). So remain alert for this pest and stay ready for action ...If you are unlucky enough to find them on your property, the best time to control them is when broods emerge from the ground in late February and March. They are 1” long, and black with an orange-red stripe down the back. Then you can stomp on them several at a time. By the time you notice them in late summer, a tennis racket and 2 bricks are needed – swat and toss the bricks. Basically, they laugh at insecticides.” Let's hope you never need to know what to do about lubbers.

October Hibiscus Gardening

In most years we would be looking forward to October as offering a time for drying out after several months of the rainy season. Not so much this year. Realizing that the season for “the storms that are not mentioned by name on these pages” runs until the last of November – and a lot could change – we will end the year with a large rain deficit. Keep the watering hoses handy.

Pat Merritt, the Editor of *The Petaloid*, the newsletter of the Lone Star Chapter, picked up a comment on the hibiscus mail list on the internet by Charles Black of Hidden Valley Hibiscus in California about watering hibiscus, as follows:

“In a university study done under very controlled conditions some place in the Deep South, the same amount of water was applied to the plants being tested. But, in one case it was applied all at once in the early morning. This was compared with dividing the same amount of water into several applications throughout the day. The latter group of plants performed much better and the speculation was that thorough watering only in the morning resulted in a condition near to wilting by the end of a hot day.... even though the plants were not visibly wilted. The experimenters thought that each day the plants had to recover from this pre-wilting condition before they could start growing again. ... It is my opinion that much of the slow down in flowering reported by hibiscus enthusiasts in mid-summer is due to uneven watering that is stressing the plants.”

And you might say – “So now you tell us!” Sorry about that, but it may be something you can consider next summer. Of course we are not without hot weather in the remainder of September.

Since October does bring somewhat milder weather it also brings a period when our hibiscus will be blooming very well – whatever our watering pattern. The blooms should be pretty true to type in color, confirmation, and bloom size. Make it a point to visit your plants every morning to bring in the blooms so that you can enjoy them for the longest time possible. After all, that's what it is all about – this hibiscus gardening - isn't it? If you miss picking blooms for a day or two, pick the spent blooms off the plants and ground. This policing of spent blooms helps conserve plant energy and is just good hygiene for your plants.

Although “Fallish”, we should still be ready to combat insects and to apply fertilizer in October, realizing that depending on where you live related to the possibility of frosts/freezes, October (or early November) may be the last month for fertilizing for a few months. (Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, so they lit a fire in the craft. Unsurprisingly it sank, proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it too.)

In the last issue of PETAL POWER we discussed at some length Bayer's new product *Insect, Disease, & Mite Control* (IDMC). We have been using IDMC for about a month and a half and it seems to be providing a good control of mites. IDMC contains *Imidacloprid*, which is known to provide good control of virtually all insects, but not mites - and even sort of promotes mites. Therefore, our interest is in what IDMC provides in the way of mite control.

A couple of months after quoting Charles Black's comments about watering, Pat Merritt quoted Mr. Black in *The Petaloid* again - this time about *Imidacloprid* - as follows:

"However, this systemic product does not work on spider mites. This is because mites do not feed on the vascular fluid in plants (sap) but rather pierce cell walls and suck the chlorophyll out. Imidacloprid is absorbed and transported through the plants vascular system in the sap, which is what sucking insects like aphids and white flies eat when they feed on plants. The whole picture is made more difficult to manage now that we know that Imidacloprid stimulates egg laying by spider mites and mites MUST be controlled within 2-3 weeks after applying Imidacloprid. If mites are present when Imidacloprid is applied get ready for a big outbreak a few weeks later unless the plants are treated for mites before that happens."

Mr. Black's comments perhaps show why we were prone to think that Bayer's marketing of IDMA might well be "a big deal" for the hobbyist gardener. In fact, that's exactly what we called it in last months PETAL POWER.

Those folks who live where frosts may be a concern during the forthcoming months should look at mid-October as about the last time to do any pruning or shaping of in-ground plants. Using that guideline will give sufficient time for the sprouts that result to "harden off" before the cold weather actually arrives. Of course pruning and shaping of potted plants can occur anytime, assuming they will be moved into a protected area as needed.

From time to time, the pages of PETAL POWER are sprinkled with references to various chemicals. As they are mentioned, or perhaps discussed at some length, we assume that our readers will read the

labels and follow them - to the letter. We hope they do. To do otherwise may be extremely dangerous. Also, insecticides are for use on plants - not on humans. Therefore, appropriate clothing should be used when spraying, particularly insecticides, including long pants and sleeves. Disposable medical type gloves should be a must any time chemicals are handled. Some chemicals have a way of building up in the body with dire results - as one member of our Chapter has found out!

Chapter Meeting Minutes September 9, 2007

President Boettcher called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. at Synovus Bank. The August 12 minutes were approved and the August Financial Report by Treasurer Adams was accepted. Auditor Carl Kramer reported the final balance was correct.

President Boettcher announced that former member Tom Tourt had passed away on August 25 at Sandwich, IL.

Dottie Erikson passed around a sign up sheet for the October 25 potluck which will be held at President Boettcher's home. Rae Flanders described the planned November field trip at Fiorelli's winery and members opted for the tour only (no snacks) at \$5 plus tax.

Recent Board actions included approving purchase of 25 handbooks and a schedule of Board and Chapter meetings submitted by Dave Flanders.

Several members offered to receive Petal Power by email only.

A "work day" at Palma Sola Botanical Park (PSBP) is planned for October 6 and a signup sheet was circulated. Dick Hodill volunteered to be a hibiscus resource person for PSBP and serve on their board. The chapter declined an invitation to a PSBP plant and antique sale in October.

The program by guest Pat Neal dealt with care for orchids. The meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m. with desserts served by Dottie Erikson and Pat Grant.

Gene Haugh, Secretary

Coming Events

Oct. 5, 10:00 a.m. Board Meeting
Manatee County Library South

Oct. 6, 9:00 a.m. - Noon. Work Day
Palma Sola Botanical Park
9800 17th Ave. NW

Oct. 25, 6:00 p.m. Potluck Dinner
Gayler Boettcher home
9213 Forrester Drive.