

Petal Power

Golby-Reasoner Chapter
American Hibiscus Society

February, 2008

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Mini-Show and Judging

Our March 9th meeting will feature a mini-show and a discussion of judging by AHS judge and past AHS president Zelma Neef, who also is an Affiliated Chapter Member along with her husband, Walter (Wally).

The mini show will succeed to the extent that Chapter members bring whatever blooms they have. OK, so the scheduling of a March show, mini or not, is not the best timing considering that at about that time of year many plants have been pruned to one degree or another. Of course pruning means no blooms. However, since not everyone will prune or will not prune all their plants - blooms are possible and so it is to those folks that we say **“bring your blooms!”** And they don’t have to be perfect blooms! The imperfect blooms will permit Zelma to point out faults if she is so inclined.

So bring your blooms and enjoy those brought by others. By-the-way, remember that it is very likely that Friday’s and Saturday’s blooms could be displayed along with Sunday’s blooms – on Sunday if they were stored in a refrigerator. The mini-show meeting is at 1:00 pm on Sunday, March 9th at Synovus Bank, 26th Street W. and Manatee Ave.

February 1, 2008 Board Meeting Excerpts

- Guest Carl Kramer, Nominations Chairman, was provided with a list of possible nominees through discussion with Board members. Candidates are needed for President, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Secretary and two Directors. The possibility of having evening board meetings to accommodate possible employed board members was discussed.
- Annual Show: Janet Love reported that five tents will be available from members. Dave Flanders will provide bloom display wires. Gene Haugh wrote a letter to Seed Pod Editor Rita Hall regarding errors related to our show which appeared in the latest issue.
- Membership: Betty Seipel reported that the previous chapter meeting was attended by a number of guests, and a new member joined.

- President Boettcher reported that Dottie Erikson has arranged for our use of the Palma Sola building for our annual picnic. The board agreed to recommend Peridia golf club for our annual restaurant meeting in June.
- Dave Flanders exhibited a certificate that will be presented to new members.
- Show sponsors will be sought. President Boettcher will discuss this at the next Chapter meeting and seek volunteers. Shirley Boettcher will prepare presentation materials as required.

Repotting Creatively

Prior to beginning a rather mundane discussion of repotting and potting-up we were looking through some material we had filed away and uncovered a March 2000 *Petaloid*, the newsletter of the Lone Star Chapter. At the time Barry Schlueter (editor of the new hibiscus handbook) was the editor and so the article we are quoting from, “Repotting Creatively” was probably written by him.

“Plants as vigorous as Hibiscus will tolerate container culture only so long as the soil is satisfactory. Over a year or two, a number of negative things happen in the pots.

“You know the drill. Your High Voltage plant is six feet tall, has more branches than the Bank of America and seems to need watering twice a day now. The ten-inch pot blows over frequently. Flowers and foliage are decreasing in size. Root bound it is.

“Gardeners are often victims of logic and greed in this circumstance, acting on the supposition that ‘More is better.’ Some of us with flimsy vertebrae have had to find another motto.

“The bigger and better fans just keep repotting year after year, always increasing pot size by an inch or two in diameter. At the end of this rainbow is a pot the size of Galveston Island which can only be moved by hosting an expensive party with enough strong drink to provide numerous volunteers – the same guys who like to lift old VW’s up onto curbs, tip over cows, that group.

* Words of Wisdom *

Never go to bed mad. Stay up and fight.
-Phyllis Diller

“An alternative to that mayhem is to decide what size pot you can move without help or injury, and just not buy any pots larger. When High Voltage needs repotting, prune back ½ to 1/3 of the top growth, reshaping it to suit. Remove the old pot, and use a big knife or hatchet to cut away at least 1/3 of the outside roots.

“Replant into a cleaned old pot (use 10% bleach solution) or a new one the same size, using virgin soil mix of choice. Drench once but apply no fertilizers, and give the plant lots of sun and only modest water. When strong new growth appears, normal feeding and watering can resume.”

March Hibiscus Gardening

Virtually all danger of damaging cold weather is no longer a concern, no matter where you live in Manatee and Sarasota counties. Therefore, assuming you haven't pruned your plants earlier – March is the time to do major pruning on our Hibiscus – to the extent you wish to. Pruning should include removing any cold damage (cut back to live wood) and any old hard growth, and generally shape the plant for the long growing season ahead. Early March is also the time when plants are repotted or potted-up. (“Potted-up” is our term for moving plants into a larger pot.) While not as extensive as some of our discussions on the subject – for a different outlook we quoted above an article on the subject in this issue of PETAL POWER.

In the same respect, in another PETAL POWER article in this issue we are quoting from an article about rooting cuttings since as you prune plants you end up with a bunch of cuttings that may be candidates for rooting. All the subjects concerning pruning, repotting and rooting are discussed in the *The Tropical Hibiscus Handbook*.

Whether you prune, repot or pot-up or do “none of the above”, spraying with something like Funginex or copper is always a good thing to do in the spring. Hibiscus really don't have many fungus problems, but a thorough spring spraying with a fungicide is a good idea.

The “spell-check” portion of our word processing program just took offense to our use of the word “Hibiscus” as a plural. Eric Golby once told us that “Hibiscus” was one of those words that was either plural

or singular and so (perhaps) in his memory we use it that way. Anyway, “hibiscuses” is such a mouthful!

If you have in-ground hibiscus that you want to move sometime – this is the time! That doesn't mean that they couldn't be moved pretty much throughout the year, but February and March are prime months for transplanting since the plants are semi-dormant and less shock will take place.

Last month we recommended that a light dose of fertilizer be applied late in February, particularly on plants that were not going to be pruned. We wondered if candidates for pruning should be candidates for even a light fertilization. We still wonder that. Plants that have not been pruned, or were only lightly pruned, should be given their first heavy fertilization of the year before the end of the month.

The timing of fertilizing plants that were heavily pruned is a source of discussion – varying from making the application at the same time as the plant is pruned to waiting until the first new leaves appear. Others have proposed making the application somewhere in between. We have tested most of the variations and haven't really noticed any great difference, leading us to say fertilize when you please after pruning; just make sure you do it sometime!

As you are spending your gardening time in the comparatively cool weather of March, utilize the good weather to mulch all your plants – in-ground and in pots. In-ground plants will benefit from three or four inches of almost any mulch. Potted plants present a somewhat different problem, but pine bark chips work pretty well. Whatever mulch is used and where ever the plants are planted, remember to keep the mulch away from the trunk of the plant.

Rooting Those Cuttings...

Curt Sinclair, owner of *Exotic Hibiscus* in LaBelle, Florida, wrote an article about rooting cuttings for the *Petaloid*, the newsletter of the Lone Star Chapter. Prior to Curt's arrival on the scene pretty much only what are commonly known as garden variety hibiscus were grown by planting cuttings – referred to as “growing on their own root”. Curt found that many of the varieties that previously had only been commonly propagated by grafting could also be grown by rooting their cuttings. He is therefore a pretty good expert on the subject of rooting plants. We are therefore quoting some of the article since some of our readers may well want to try rooting the cuttings they obtain during the pruning process. Curt writes just like he talks, so keep that in mind as you read the following:

“What part of the plant is best? Hard green tips and the soft brown wood just below the green wood. If you do not have much wood and need to use some of the older wood, lightly scrape the end to expose the cambium layer, and even cut through the end which also exposes the cambium layer. Many plants do not even need Dip-&-Grow ... It should be dry when cutting as moisture invites more fungi and bacteria. If the wood is wet from rain or dew, I suggest dipping it in a peroxide or bleach solution.

“Size of cuttings? I like to use two or three eyes and no tiny, thin wood. Think of it this way, the cutting has to have enough energy stored to hold the cutting for 5 to 6 weeks, until it can sprout roots to support the new plant. A small one-eyed cutting gets a very poor percentage of takes.

... “While I have Oasis Cubes or other commercially available media, you can use a mix of peat and perlite (60-40) ... Just stick your cutting deep enough to stand up (1/4 inch). While a mist bed with bottom heat is great, most of you will not have them. Keep the cuttings in heavy shade for the first two weeks (Yoder Bros. uses 80% shade) and then give them a little more light (50%). Of course, they must be kept damp the whole time.

“After 4 to 5 weeks you can apply a little 50%-strength water-soluble fertilizer. They do not need heavy phosphorus. Leave two to three leaves and it is usually best to cut them in half so they will not transpire too much water. The leaves are vital, as they have stored energy the cuttings will need to survive.

“I see no difference in takes when the cuttings are in groups or clusters, or in individual pots or cubes. If you cluster your cuttings in a large pot, be sure to put the small ones on the outer edges so that they can get light. If they are in the middle and the tall ones' leaves cover them (another reason to cut leaves) they will die.”

(Editor's note: We are (more than) out of space for this issue. This portion of Curt's article will “take you” and your cuttings till the next issue of PETAL POWER when we will publish his final three paragraphs.)

Please Welcome New Members:

Suzanne “Tootie” Baldini 778-0393
4255 Gulf Drive #119
Holmes Beach FL 34217

Mr. Robert Haendel
752 Oakview Drive
Bradenton, FL 34210

538-0692

Chapter Meeting Minutes, February 10, 2008

President Boettcher called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. and guests were introduced. Betty Seipel gave new member Tootie Baldini a membership certificate and “survival kit”.

A motion to approve the January 13, 2008 meeting minutes as published in PETAL POWER was made, seconded and passed. Shirley Boettcher gave the January financial report. It showed an ending balance of \$2922.77. It was accepted and directed to file.

Mark Love gave an update about the Palmetto Fair Grounds show site, and Donny Waldroup has access to 40 tents that can be made available. President Boettcher indicated that there will be a shortage of tables and providers will be sought.

The next chapter program will be a mini-show and Zelma Neef will discuss bloom preparation for shows.

Nominating Committee Chairman Carl Kramer discussed the need for candidates for chapter offices and is seeking volunteers.

President Boettcher discussed the possibility of obtaining financial support for our show from commercial sponsors and Shirley Boettcher will prepare presentation material. Volunteers are sought.

Janet Love introduced Donny Waldroup who presented, “Waking up Plants”.

Carl Kramer conducted the raffle for a plant holder.

The meeting adjourned at 1:59 p.m.

Judy Duncan and the Loves served refreshments.

Gene Haugh, Secretary

Coming Events

February 29, 10:00 a.m.: Board Meeting at the Hilt home.

March 9, 1:00 p.m.: Chapter Meeting, “Mini-Show and Judging”, Zelma Neef.

May 15: Annual Show and Plant Sale.