

Petal Power

Golby-Reasoner Chapter
American Hibiscus Society

July, 2008

Editor: Gayler Boettcher: gboet@gte.net

Publisher: Gene Haugh: gene.haugh@gmail.com

Web Site: 4hibiscus.com

Seeds for everyone!

That's right, what will surely be the highlight of our August Chapter meeting will be that everyone will try their hand at planting hibiscus seeds – and everyone will take home planted seeds to raise into – hibiscus of course, but what kind will be unknown because each one will be the first of a brand new variety. In coming months everyone will be invited to show off their plants as they grow into – something. Kathy Grandoff from Unbelievable Hibiscus will be there to “show and tell” how the planting of seeds should be done – it should be lots of fun in addition to being educational!

Notes from the Net

As indicated, everyone who attends the August Chapter meeting will have the opportunity to try their hand (or thumb) at growing hibiscus from seed. In one of those “will wonders never cease” situations, the Lone Star Chapter's *The Petaloid*, carried a couple of emails from The Hibiscus Mail List that discuss that very subject. Since gardening success is mainly a matter of learning by experience or learning through the experience we thought we would share these methods – to add to what you will hear at the Chapter meeting.

Cindy Erndt, Alvin

From TX: “Several folks have asked about baby seedlings. I now have about 85 from this year with a few more to go. I am just a beginner at this and ... I use Park's Biodome to germinate the seeds. (*Editor's Note: The Biodome is a plastic tray that holds planting plugs and water – is covered with a clear dome - and is a product obtained from Park Seeds.*) It is placed on top of my old style TV which keeps the temperature around the low 80's.

“As soon as the first leaves (not true leaves) appear and are flat, I transplant them to 4” pots. This prevents loss due to damp off. These pots are put in my sunroom, which receives filtered sunlight. When the seedlings have 3-4 true leaves, I move them outside on my patio. These are hand watered

usually every other day. After a month or so, they are moved to my green house. ...”

From Buddy Short, Lafayette, LA: “Since you asked, I will do my best to give you my simple method. Once I have harvested my seeds I place them in an envelope for a couple of weeks. I do not plant fresh seeds, but rather wait until they harden. At that point, I nick the seed to see if it is a good seed or not (meaning showing some white meat). Some people plant fresh seeds. I prefer to do as I stated. I use a Miracle Grow seed starter mix, top my seeds with vermiculite, water them in, and today plant 6 seeds per 4 inch pot. I used to plant individually in a tray of 72 compartments; however this method seems to work just as well. I start my seed in my storeroom where they get morning sun but a good steady temperature. My storeroom seems to stay around 80+ degrees. ... I think the temperature is ‘the’ key factor. I spray mist off and on during the day. I have no set routine. It is simply a feel thing for me. Germination seems to take from 4-5 days to as long as two weeks. Sometimes I believe I plant the seed too deep thus the delay of others. Once my seeds have sprouted I start to apply a light fertilizer at ½ strength. Gradually I move them outside into filtered light. Today I have about 50 germinating in my storeroom, another 60+ at 4 inches outside, another 100+ at a foot and a half and who knows how many others. ...”

Ah... The Good Old Days

Last month we discussed the show results and in the July Chapter meeting we heard a balance on hand in the treasury that is slimmer than we might like (\$2,139.41 after AHS dues). But you know that we often hear about how things were so much better in “The Good Old Days”. In fact, they were a lot worse – or at least they were a lot different. That was just what we thought when we ran across the Annual Financial Report for July 1972 – June, 1973 so we just had to share portions of it with our readers.

** Words of Wisdom **

Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him to fish and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day.

The income for the year was \$1,002.84 while the expenses were \$948.27. Significant among the expenses were the dues to the AHS of \$223.00 while the members paid dues of \$274.50. Oh, did we mention that there were **117 (!)** members in the Chapter? If there were two members in each membership that dues were paid for – memberships were something like \$4.70 each! (Today the AHS dues are \$25) It appears the Chapter was able to retain about 19% of the dues members paid. Today, the Chapter keeps less than half that.

Although we just about forgot it – the point we were going to make is that the amount on hand in July 1972 was \$164.98 which was reduced to \$54.57 by June the next year. (Due to what must have been uncontrolled and unconscionable spending. Just kidding.) That was about a two thirds reduction of the treasury. Comparatively, our treasury only decreased around 50% in the last year. In comparison to the “Good old days” we are doing pretty well, which doesn’t mean we won’t we looking for ways to add to our treasury.

Something different!!

On July 7th, 2008, a new page was written in the history of the Golby-Reasoner Chapter when the Board of Directors met at 6:30 in the evening. In the recent history of the Chapter, the Board has met during the morning since all the members were either retired, did not work, or could miss work for a few hours. However, with three members who work it made sense to have the Board meetings during other than work hours. Surely the Board must have met in the evening at some point during the 60 some years of our Chapters’ history, but it seems like a new thing now.

What next?

While perusing the online New York Times, our Senior Research Manager Gene Haugh found an article that will at least raise the question “If this, what next?” – is it sort of a “They’re everywhere, they’re everywhere?” kind of thing?

Article dealt with a straggly beach weed, the Great Lakes sea rocket that scientists have found is able to

do something that no other plant has ever been shown to do. It appears if the sea rocket detects unrelated plants growing near it, the plant aggressively sprouts nutrient-grabbing roots. But if it detects other sea rockets, it politely restrains itself.

Since the research was published about a year ago, other scientists have found three other plant species can also recognize relatives. These various studies seem a little creepy as they picture life among plants that have long been viewed as passive that now can be seen to sense all sorts of things about plants around them – using means much different than those used by animals. We won’t go into the details, but perhaps what gardeners have long thought – that plants react to their voices and are individuals – will at some point be scientifically proven. As we said, “What next?”

Rain rain go away come again another day...

We are just about to launch into a few repetitions of the old children’s poem/song because – well, because at this writing we have had a couple weeks (out of the last three) of rainy weather. We have to think that this is what Floridians refer to as normal rainy season weather. While the lack of rain provides challenges for gardeners, and rainy weather tends to decrease some of those challenges, gardeners should not feel that rain erases them altogether. In fact, relatively consistent rain requires additional vigilance in some respects.

During dry weather, many gardeners see most if not all their plants almost daily. That’s because they require water almost daily, depending on temperature, their location, size, and whether they are potted or in the ground. However, just because it rains every day for a week and the plants don’t need watering, the gardener still needs to look at the plants every day or so, because some really bad things can be happening to your plants – on almost a daily basis – rain or not.

Having said that, the frequent rain we have been enjoying (“enjoying” is a word heard less and less as the rain continues) does disturb the life cycle of several of the critters that hibiscus growers tend to fight tooth and nail during dry weather. We have, from time to time, written on these pages about the

concept of spraying water on plants, upward under the leaves preferably, every day or so to interrupt the critter cycle – particularly of mites. With the hard rains that some areas have been experiencing gardeners get that service, compliments of Mother Nature – free of charge!

That does not mean that our hibiscus are insect free, but there seems to be a significant decrease in the critter count due to the rain. For those bad critters that are found, a systemic spray would seem to be the best bet since it will be taken into the plant and will not be washed away so readily. Again, we would point toward Ortho's *Systemic Insect Killer* or Bayer's *Insect, Disease, & Mite Control*.

Hibiscus planted in the ground may find the rainy weather less than pleasing. We have all heard from "day one" that Hibiscus don't like wet feet. That is they don't like to stand in water because it blocks oxygen from their roots. But what can one do when an in-ground plant appears to be in the middle of a pond, or perhaps it is in the more likely, but somewhat less dramatic "seasonally wet" area. Ah yes, "seasonally wet", a term largely unknown to the Northerner. That is an area that seems like any other part of your yard until there is a rainy spell. Then the water stands in it and it takes a significantly long time to dry out.

If your in-ground plants appear to be in more water than they like there aren't many things that can be done to help them short of transplanting them. Certainly you could pull back, past the drip line, all that mulch that you piled around your plants to conserve moisture while it was dry. This will help them dry out a little faster. Of course if you have surface water moving through your plants during one of the Florida showers (also know as "tropical downpours"), forming dirt dams or waterways to divert the water past the plants may be beneficial.

A fact that is part of Florida gardening is that rain leaches fertilizer through, or out of, our sandy soil. It is very likely that your in-ground plants will need more fertilizer this summer (if the rains continue) than you have used in the past several summers. Plants in pots, containing good potting mixes, experience the same leaching process; however, we are probably more used to that fertilizer demand due to the continuous concentrated watering required by potting plants.

Directory Changes

Jay Cowart's email address: captjc@yahoo.com

Dave Kaplan's email address: dlkaplan100@verizon.net

Don Mixon's phone number: (813) 390-6040
(Kathy Grandoff: (813) 355-6966)

Chapter Meeting Minutes, July 13, 2008

The Golby-Reasoner Chapter meeting was called to order by President Flanders at 1:00 in the Synovus meeting room. Twenty-six members and 2 guests were present.

Membership Chairman, Betty Seipel, welcomed and introduced new members, Jean and Kim Hadden, and presented them with a membership certificate and new member survival kit.

The motion was made and passed that the minutes of the last chapter meeting be approved as printed in the Petal Power. Treasurer Shirley Boettcher's report was received and a motion to file was passed. Gene Haugh distributed the new directories, adorned with a beautiful Hibiscus. Thanks, Gene!

Show Chair, Janet Love, presented Sandy Brown with her ribbon for Best Amateur Double, "Gator Magic" and four cold porcelain napkin rings made by Yvonne Santiago. Our congratulations to Sandy.

Sunshine Chair, Dottie Taaffe, read a response from a card sent to Ruben Santiago and reported that Ruben is now in the hospital. Our prayers are with him and Yvonne.

Both Dave and Rae Flanders described activities and business from June's National AHS Conference in Boca Raton. The Fall Membership meeting will be November 7-9 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Brandon, FL. The next Convention will be in Baton Rouge, LA at LSU June 11-14.

Gayler Boettcher moderated a Question and Answer session "What's With Your Hibiscus". There was much discussion and participation. This will continue to be part of our monthly meeting, but in about a 10-minute time constraint.

Don Mixon donated a beautiful plant, "Ruffled Beauty" for the raffle. The lucky winner was Shirley Boettcher.

Next month's meeting will be August 10 at the Synovus Bank. We will learn the process of planting Hibiscus from seeds and actually go home with our own plants to nurture. Don't miss it!

The meeting was adjourned, followed by delicious refreshments served by Beege Hunter and Betty Seipel.

Rae Flanders, Secretary

Coming Events

Monday, August 4, 6:30 p.m. Board Meeting, Central Library, 1301 Barcarrota Blvd. W.

Sunday, August 10, 1:00 p.m. Chapter Meeting, "From Seeds to Best of Show!", Kathy Grandoff, Unbelievable Hibiscus, Synovus Bank, Manatee and 26th St. W.

