

# Petal Power

Golby-Reasoner Chapter  
American Hibiscus Society

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## Zelma and Wally honored...

Associate members Zelma and Wally Neef were honored at a luncheon at Michaels on East, for 300 of the 900 Selby Garden volunteers. Avid reader Eric Golby sent us a clipping from the February 21<sup>st</sup> *Sarasota Herald Tribune* that told of the gala. Specifically, Zelma and Wally were recognized for over 4,000 hours of service. Along with Gulf Coast Chapter offices, Zelma has been president and Wally, a board member, of the AHS.



*Dave and Rae Win! (Photo by Tom Miller)*

## The Fair Show was more than fair...

Indeed it was for several of our Chapter members. It was a particularly fine day for the Flanders as they captured the Best Collector Single. Of course we had to run a picture of that achievement. Congratulations!

Other Chapter members at the Show included Tom and Sandy Brown with gold and blue ribbons. Donny and Eva Waldroup won gold and blue with blooms from their home and Durante Park. Dick and Mary Hodill were involved with the judging and may have entered blooms, but our reporter on the scene was unable to say for sure.

Issue after issue we continue to pile up the points with the new President and we continue that effort with the picture of Dave, Rae and their winning bloom. And everyone knows a picture is worth a thousand...well, points. We have been wrongly accused of courting favor with Mr. David Flanders because our salary review was forthcoming. Our response to that accusation is, "how does one review something that is non existent"?

## It was a beautiful day...

Indeed, it was a beautiful day to be out of doors, which was just where our “Chapter Meeting” was on March 10<sup>th</sup>. To be specific, a good number of Chapter members were outside at Curt Sinclair’s *Exotic Hibiscus* nursery.

It is always difficult to estimate how many folks will attend an event like the “field trip” to Myakka City. Whatever your estimate might have been, it was probably too low, because there was a real good turn out and that’s as specific as we can be. Our members were joined by members of the Sunset Chapter, which made the crowd look even larger.

As we said it was a beautiful day – made even more so by the hundreds of beautiful blooms in the hot house (which indeed it was – “hot”, that is). We didn’t have an opportunity to interview Curt, but there is no question that he appears to have a fine operation going, with thousands of plants of various varieties and sizes. We can only hope his sales support such a large operation. It appeared that



*Curt Sinclair with Eric Golby at Curt’s nursery*

members of both Chapters represented did their part to help Curt’s sales.

## AHS President out and about...

Curt Sinclair has been “marketing” Hibiscus in several ways during the past month or so. Since a local newspaper carried a note about it, many of our Chapter members watched, and some taped, Curt’s appearance on Martha Stuart’s television show last month. Everyone we have talked to thought he represented himself and the AHS very well in what must be a real pressure cooker situation. Curt had (with certainly considerable effort) managed to have scores of beautiful blooms for Martha to “ooh” and “ah” over. Curt even presented her with a Hibiscus Handbook, compliments of the AHS.

Curt’s March 2<sup>nd</sup> appearance on a Chicago radio station, WGN, wasn’t known about here. Although we know Curt’s “appearance” happened, that’s about all we have heard. He was on Michael Nowak’s “Let’s Talk Gardening” show, for any Midwesterners among our readers. WGN is one of the few 50,000 watt stations in

the nation, which means Curt and hibiscus topics were heard by a large portion of the nation, to say nothing about the program being available on the Internet to the world.

Perhaps as an outgrowth of Curt's "appearance" on Chicago radio, once again there was some discussion on the Internet about forming a Chicago chapter of the AHS. Curt's leadership in establishing a hibiscus booth at the Chicago flower show last summer may also have generated some interest in a Chicago AHS chapter.

## Hibiscus gardening in April

*(Editor's note: Ray Kates, past Chapter president ('95) and founder and first editor of **Petal Power**, wrote several pieces about caring for Hibiscus during various months of the year. We are reprinting excerpts of his thoughts concerning "April."*

This is what we have all been waiting for – seeing our plants coming to life and starting into growth for another year. Root growth is regulated by soil temperature and it must be over 65 degrees to initiate growth. At the same time you will see leaf growth and then you will observe the insect hordes, particularly aphids. Spray with *Orthene*... *(Editor's note: You should consider using horticultural oil or insecticidal soap prior to going to Orthene.)*

April is usually a dry month. April showers don't bring May flowers in Florida because there are usually few, if any good rainfalls...You are again reminded to mulch your plants to conserve water...

Fertilize your plants and this month you can use a heavier application than you used in March. You brought them through the hard winter and out of dormancy and now is the time for their reward. Use a balanced fertilizer that works for you. *(Editor's note: The slow release fertilizer, 7-2-7 with minors, sold by the Chapter is recommended.)* Always water in the fertilizer and remember that it is much better to do it lightly and regularly as opposed to heavily and sporadically. If you are new to growing Hibiscus and have not yet developed a fertilizing plan, ask questions of more experienced growers in the chapter and be prepared for enthusiastic and detailed responses...One of the most beautiful and awe-inspiring things about gardening is that the hobby can take you just as far as your pocketbook and enthusiasm will ever want to go.

Keep the emerging weeds in check by pulling or hoeing. Be aware that some of the most common weeds are host to the dreaded white fly. Just a little extra work now means much less insecticide spraying later on.

## From coffee filters to screen...

Last month we passed along the thrust of an Internet exchange about using coffee filters in the bottom of pots to stop the loss of potting soil. It apparently also eliminated the intrusion of earth worms and we wondered if the filters would keep out ants. Somewhat in answer to our query, we received a welcome call from Eric Golby. He recalled that an AHS member some years ago used discarded window screen in the bottom of pots - and it did keep out ants. Thanks Eric!

It would seem screen would do everything coffee filters do, albeit being somewhat more difficult to use. However, screen could be cut to fit virtually any size pot and the non-metallic type would last almost forever. Since screen is relatively inexpensive, if the problems solved with it are indeed problems for you, it may "be a way to go."

## Bleach and you...

Or, bleach and your hibiscus (and other plants). The use of a diluted bleach mixture as sort of a last ditch remedy for bringing back plants from the edge of death has been discussed in various venues from time to time. The advocates of bleach say that its use has at least the possibility to "bring back" plants that have lost many or most of their leaves, have wilted leaves (and have sufficient water), and just generally look sick. The idea is that bleach kills various bacteria, viruses, and fungi in the soil.

The discussion about bleach usually relates to the dilution – the frequency of use is thought of as being "once is usually enough". On the subject of dilution, Tom Miller (Sunset Chapter), a significant proponent of using bleach said (on the Internet):

“We usually say about 15% bleach and 85% water and drench until the pot begins to drain. When I spray my plants in the yard (*Ortho Dial'n Spray* hose-end sprayer), it's probably a weaker dose. I have a handful of germinating seedlings in the garage and I was afraid some seeds may have gotten too soggy so they got heavy mistings with a fairly strong solution. These have been my experiences and I can't vouch for others' successes.”

However, an elementary school project (not a lab test) netted the following results:

“My son did a science fair project – watering plants...The ones watered with ¼ bleach mixture did the best. 1/3 bleach came in second. Even ½ did as well as those watered with tap water. That included seeds, seedlings and established plants, as well as my orchids. Which seemed to have less problems with fungus growing on the leaves and pests were fewer (scale and leaf chewers).

-Anne in FL zone 9b”

The school project “report” sounded like bleach mixtures were used continuously as the plants were watered. That is not how we have heard the use of bleach discussed previously, so we included it only for information on dilution rates.

As the Internet discussion continued, Amy said:

“Right—it's a pretty strong disinfectant. It'll permanently get rid of humans, too, if the gas is breathed in, or you combine it with anything containing ammonia—don't mix household cleaners together!”

Amy ended the subject, and we will too, as follows:

“...we must respect all chemicals and compounds ...using them for the wrong thing, in the wrong place, in the wrong amounts, and ESPECIALLY mixing them together can cause disastrous results in not only your plants, but you.”

## Let's not get confused!

At least not any more than we normally are. The first quarter *The Seed Pod* listing of the 2002 hibiscus shows, indicated that the Golby-Reasoner Chapter Show will be held in Sarasota. That, of course, is not correct. Our show will be held in Bradenton, at the Bradenton Auditorium. This error has happened for at least two years. Hopefully, this will be the last year of this somewhat continuing error. Dave Flanders has discussed the situation with *The Seed Pod* Editor.

## April Chapter Meeting

The April Chapter meeting will feature Allis Wallis, representing the Manatee River Garden Club. Ms. Wallis was scheduled to be with us in our January meeting and due to an accident had to cancel. We look forward to greeting her on April 14<sup>th</sup>. Her subject relates to the arranging of flowers, a subject that our reading indicates receives much less attention today than it did in the past. It does make sense that if you raise them, you should know how to display them. See you there, that's the April 14<sup>th</sup> Chapter meeting.

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