

Petal Power

Golby-Reasoner Chapter
American Hibiscus Society

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<http://web.tampabay.rr.com/hibiscus>



AHS Past President Curt Sinclair

Curt Sinclair is the Program

That's right, Curt Sinclair is the program for our Chapter's February meeting. Curt has been active in hibiscus circles for a number of years on both the local and national level. He is the most recent Past President of the American Hibiscus Society. We think it is fair to say that hibiscus received more national exposure during his tenure as president than ever before. His appearance on the "Martha Stewart Living" television show, and its reruns nationally and locally in various markets, introduced hibiscus to millions of people who had never seen a hibiscus bloom or had seen only the common garden varieties. We assume that Curt's appearance on the Martha Stewart Show also generated additional publicity in the print media since it did that in the Tampa Bay area.

Currently Curt operates a large hibiscus nursery in Myakka City which is also referenced elsewhere in this issue of *Petal Power*. Undoubtedly, Curt's appearance on Martha Stewart's show provided some sales for his nursery. We can only hope his sales remain at a level that will sustain the business. Curt's business is based on hibiscus that grow on their own root, that is, they are not grafted, which may make the business economically viable.

Curt has been very cooperative in providing blooms for several Chapter events. He has also made plants available, on a consignment basis, for the Chapter to sell and we look forward to continuing that business arrangement in the future. It is therefore perhaps apparent that, as we applaud the missionary work Curt has

accomplished for hibiscus, his business and the AHS, we as a Chapter also wish him well because of the benefits a large grower a few miles away can bring to us.

Laying all the aspects of previous discussion aside, Curt is an experienced speaker and an engaging one. Everyone will find Curt Sinclair an entertaining and knowledgeable individual who is anxious to share his expertise with anyone who will who listen. Everyone should make every effort to attend the next Chapter meeting – it is indeed one you don't want to miss. It is also a meeting that you can be comfortable about bringing guests to – invite your neighbors. The meeting is on February 9th. Mark your calendar right now!

State Fair, February 6-17

The State Fair Hibiscus Show is on February 15th. Of course the Hibiscus booth at the Fair will be “open” every day of the Fair. Tickets will be available for those entering blooms in the Show and staffing the booth at any time. President Flanders assumes he will have tickets prior to the Fair opening and he will surely have them by the February Chapter meeting on the 9th for those planning to attend the Show/Fair after that date. Should you wish to tend to the booth prior to the Chapter meeting, call Dave Flanders to arrange to get tickets.

A Board meeting of the AHS was scheduled in Tampa for February 16 and 17, **1963**. According to a letter sent to Eric Golby, that was the week-end of the “Judged Show at the State Fair”. (This year it's February 15th.) According to the letter, AHS president Mrs. John Wylie said, “There will be a show at the State Fair even if she has to draw pictures on the wall”. It's more than a little interesting to note that the “convention” was held on 3 days in June that year at the Del Monico Hotel in Miami Beach. The rates were \$17.00 per person, double or triple occupancy – or \$22.75 for a single. Those prices included two nights lodging, dinner Friday night; three meals Saturday; breakfast and banquet luncheon on Sunday. And, oh yes, sales tax and parking.

PSBP – lookin' good...

While much, if not most, of Palma Sola Botanical Park (PSBP) is still a “work in progress”, it would appear that the Chapter members, attending the January meeting held there, were very impressed. Impressed with all that has been accomplished and impressed with the vision of what the future holds. For those who had not been to PSBP since May 2001 (the last time the Chapter had a booth at the May Festival), the changes that have taken place are amazing. And perhaps a bit confusing since it's difficult to find anything that looks the same as it did just a little over a year and a half ago.

Our reporter on the scene reported (that's what reporters do) that there was a fine turn-out for the meeting. Considering that the Bucs were playing in a playoff game, the attendance was astounding! Our reporter thought perhaps there were about forty there, although he admittedly did not count the attendees. Obtaining details is not one of his strong points.

All Chapter members will have two opportunities to visit the PSBP in March – on Chapter business. On March 15th the Chapter Spring Workshop will be held there and on March 22nd and 23rd the Chapter will have a booth at the first annual PSBP Festival.

The Spring Workshop is (1) an expansion of the “New Member Workshop” concept we have held in late September or October and (2) a marriage to the spring potluck/workshop that was a part of the Chapter calendar until a couple-three years ago. The offspring of this expanded marriage is a hands-on workshop for all members – and no potluck. You win some - you lose some. We win because it is great to have a truly working workshop for all Chapter members. Some will say we lose and will be disappointed that there will not be a potluck. However, to be realistic, some of us haven't worked off the calories from the October potluck. We are of course, referring to the now-famous Italian/Greek potluck! Truly a legendary potluck. A potluck for the Ages. An almost religious experience type potluck.

The May Festival is now held in March, since it was thought to be too warm in May when they used to hold the May Festival. (The logic of that sentence is astounding.) The Festival is also being expanded from a one-day event to two days, Saturday and Sunday. The Chapter will have a booth providing information about hibiscus and the Chapter. We will also be selling plants obtained from Curt Sinclair.

See articles in the February issue of *Petal Power* for additional information about the two events being held at PSBP.

Eric Golby and PSBP

Those who have had the privilege to know Eric Golby, or at least know of Eric Golby, appreciate the fact that Eric played a role in many horticultural arenas. Since our Chapter's January meeting was at the Palma Sola Botanical Park (PSBP) it is appropriate to review Eric's role in the establishment of the Park.

In late 1990 Eric wrote Pat Glass, Chairman of the Manatee County Commission on the subject. Ms. Glass responded in a December 14, 1990 letter acknowledging Eric's interest in the desirability of turning what was then the county nursery into a "tropical horticultural park". Ms. Glass also paved the way for the subject to be placed on the Board of Commissioners' agenda.

Not letting the subject go, Eric wrote a "Guest Columnist" article for the February 11, 1991, *Bradenton Herald*. The portions of that column that we will quote treat the case for saving the PSBP site from development as well as something about our hero, Eric Golby.

"I am a fifth generation horticulturist, and a 44 year resident of Manatee County, have been a member of over a dozen plant or horticulture-related societies, and was employed as head of a nursery in the immediate area for several years, so I feel well acquainted with the property I wish to discuss.

"The Manatee County nursery property at 17th Avenue and 99th Street Northwest in Palma Sola on about 10 acres of land is being cleared of its palms and other plants so that the county may offer this land as surplus property and sell it, possibly for real estate development.

"This would be a terrible mistake! This land is in one of the most favorable frost-free locations in all of Manatee County. There is not a comparable site this side of Fort Myers. It is almost freeze-proof, which means that unusual and rare palms, fruits, flowering trees and other sub-tropical plants could safely be grown there for generations in the future to enjoy.

... "the Norman Reasoner Chapter of the American Hibiscus Society would dearly love to show off beds of the newest hybrids of their flower. There are many other plant societies here that would delight in participating with their particular specialty. It would be an ideal showcase for community involvement in a lovely garden atmosphere.

... "NOW is the time that we need to convince the county commissioners to save this irreplaceable piece of county property for the people of the future, before it is too late!"

The PSBP has been and is a labor of love for scores of folks in our community. Two of our Chapter members have been particularly active in the development of the Park: Len Erikson and Bob Hunter have been on the Board of the PSBP Foundation for many years and Bob was president of the Foundation for perhaps more years than he would like to recall. However, it is interesting to note that a person for whom our Chapter is named had a role in pushing "the powers that be" for what has come to be, the Palma Sola Botanical Park.

Grafting tips

The *Hibiscus Handbook* gives a good explanation of grafting and the March workshop will provide “show and tell” illustrations as well as some hands-on experience. Although the workshop will necessarily be limited in the degree to which the concepts in the following can be used, they can perhaps be practiced as you graft at home.

On the Internet’s “The Hibiscus Mail List”, Barry Schlueter from Webster, TX was responding to a question when he wrote the following:

“Marcos, your intuition is excellent; I have long believed that, all other things being equal, the most satisfactory grafts have rootstock and scion about the same developmental age. So we root even green rootstock tips, and even when still only 0.125” or so, they are very receptive stocks for small green tips from new seedlings.

“If we are grafting a half-hard scion, where brown meets green on the stem, we try and use a young rootstock, with ITS bark in transition from green to brown. For brown wood scions, I select a stock with brown exterior but hopefully without too much bark thickness yet ... smooth is good. And we are also matching diameter, more or less.

“Yes, when I graft I am surrounded by rootstocks of various sizes and ages, cleaned up for grafting by a helper, so I can make my choices.”

Poinsettias - more than Christmas cheer?

We were reminded about the possibility of poinsettias attracting whiteflies by this December 26th email from Tom Miller to The Hibiscus Mail List:

“One of the plants associated with Christmas is the poinsettia, brought from Mexico by Joel Poinsett in the 1800’s. Over the years, my wife has used poinsettias many times as Christmas decorations and kept them afterwards. The worst outbreak of whiteflies I ever had was years ago when I suspect they were attracted to our yard by leftover poinsettias. If I had known about *imidacloprid* back then, I could have solved the problem quickly, but instead I battled them for months.

“The point of this is that it is wise to regularly check your poinsettias for whiteflies to avoid a major infestation.”

We know that many folks grow poinsettias in their home gardens without developing whitefly concerns. However, several times we have heard about those who have made the connection between poinsettias and whiteflies and therefore we pass it along as “something to be aware of”.

Why not wear our Chapter colors? Purchase *your* Chapter shirts while the size selection is still good!

What size do you want?

Four sizes of Chapter shirts are available so it is very likely your size is among those on hand. An attempt is going to be made to have some of each size at each Chapter meeting in order to make it easier for those not having one or two to get - one or two. Lets face it folks, at \$14.00 they are a real bargain for a pretty high

quality shirt. (Men; have you seen the quality of the shirts on the sale table at *Beall's* – selling for \$19.95?) Many of us often walk around with some kind of advertisement or logo on our clothing ... Why not wear our Chapter colors? Purchase *your* Chapter shirts while the size selection is still good!

A special “Thanks” to Marlyn Marshall

Marlyn Marshall took the reins of the Treasurer’s office of the Chapter at a time when others did not step forward. Marlyn proceeded to conduct the fiscal business of the Chapter with expertise and good cheer. But, this article is not to thank her for her year-long endeavor, although we do. This article is meant to thank her as we recognize her outstanding effort in compiling a complete financial summary of the year 2002. In only three pages, Marlyn categorized and totaled every expense and every dollar of income the Chapter experienced financial picture of 2002 and can and will serve as a guide for fiscal responsibility in 2003.

A very, very special thanks Marlyn for an unexpected, much appreciated piece of work - which must have been frustrating to complete, but which will be of value to many in the future.

Readers may find it interesting to know the Chapter had income in 2002 of \$9,930.57. It had expense of \$10,833.47. Can we interest you in some shirts, - how about some *Hibiscus Handbooks*?

And special thanks also to ...

Len Erikson, Betty Seipel and Jack Taaffe for their super contributions as ***Petal Power*** Circulation Managers during 2002. Gayler and Gene greatly appreciate your willingness, promptness, devotion to the calling, conscientiousness, etc. Seriously!

More Hibiscus Publicity

The December 12th edition of the *Herald-Tribune* carried a story, dateline Myakka City, praising hibiscus and featuring two color pictures of hibiscus blooms which really said all that needed to be said about hibiscus. With the dateline of Myakka City most would guess the article focused on Curt Sinclair and his hibiscus nursery there – and they would be right. However, the story of how our President Dave Flanders became interested in hibiscus was documented along with several of the Chapter’s activities, including decorating the tree at the Crosley Mansion with Curt’s blooms.

Eric Golby is also recognized and quoted in the story. He is recognized as “the oldest charter member of the American Hibiscus Society”. (He is also the youngest, best looking, etc. because, as we recall, he is the only remaining charter member.) In the article Eric tells about his father’s ordering hibiscus out of a Reasoners’ catalog 77 years ago: “When those five arrived, I was amazed, (but) today those 2 to 3 inch flowers wouldn’t have much interest. Today, Curt is turning out flowers 8 inches across. You’ve come a long way, baby.”

Curt’s spring appearance on the Martha Stewart show was mentioned in the article and Curt was said to have experienced 100,000 hits on his web site after the show. (But did he sell any plants?) The Martha Stewart show was rerun on Thursday, January 2nd. In a short note to The Hibiscus Mail List the following Saturday, Curt said he had already signed up 6 new AHS members (Members at Large), “plus (sold) 8 Handbooks and of course some nice sales ... This is fun. I always said, ‘We ship smiles!’” (Guess that answers our question about sales.)

The electronic Petal Power....

Is now going to all the AHS chapter presidents and that resulted in the following (edited) email to Gene Haugh, the ePP guru:

“I wanted to send him (Eric Golby) a 94th birthday card but the address we have is incomplete ... I would like very much to get back in touch with him as he is an old friend. My father, Bob Curtis, knew

him and Norman Reasoner since 1952 when he worked in Manatee County as a Cooperative extension agent. He says he learned much of his early horticultural knowledge, as a fresh out of U of F graduate, from Eric. I was born in Bradenton in 1960, but Dad transferred to Fort Myers in 1963 where I grew up in the plant world of my father. We bought my first grafted Hibiscus from Eric in 1978. I have been hooked ever since. I haven't made many shows due to work for about 6 to 8 years, even this past year when I was Hendry Chapter president again ... Best wishes, Craig P. Curtis”

Hibiscus gardening in February

February brings an urge to hibiscus gardeners to launch into a major pruning of their plants. The symptoms of the malady include a gripping of the hands as though pruning shears were in each of them. It is not a pretty sight.

Legend has it that Sally Golby (and Sally is a legend) said pruning can start after Valentine's Day. Eric Golby has said wait a couple weeks longer. But then, he has written: “After the 20th ... pruning can begin – but I would rather wait. We have had light frosts as late as March 9th”.

Where you live in Manatee and Sarasota Counties will have a lot to do with your approach to gardening including when it will make sense to prune heavily. Those living on the islands are pretty much freeze/frost free while 20 miles east, frost is relatively common and freezes do occur – almost annually. To illustrate, as of mid-January 2003, those east of I-75 have been living dangerously if they haven't protected their tender plants at least three times this winter. And how many times have Tom and Jean Tourt, who live on Holmes Beach, covered their plants this winter? We'd wager – none, that is zip, zero. Therefore, Tom and Jean's approach to the timing of their pruning could differ considerably from Mike and Trudy Topolosky who live in Mill Creek.

For the purposes of discussion here in *Petal Power* we are going to err, if we must, on the safe side and write as though everyone lived close to I75. That being the case, we urge readers to wait until late

February/early March before starting your pruning.

And then begin the process only after paying close attention to the weather forecasts to assure there isn't a late winter storm brewing up north that could mean cold weather here. Since we are playing like that's when the major annual pruning will take place we will discuss pruning, repotting, and up-potting in our February issue.

Let's talk about other general February hibiscus gardening issues. In addition to being a relatively cool month, February tends to be one of our driest.

Blooms are needed for all our meetings and other events. Be part of the scene and bring what you have!

Add to our Therefore gardeners need to be prepared both to protect their plants from the cold and from drying out. However, this winter has been unpredictable so far, both colder and wetter than usual. Does anyone wish to guess what the rest of the winter has in store for us?

Eric has recommended in the past that after the 20th a light fertilization – half strength – will help plants phase out of the dormant stage. He has also said that it would be good, at about the same time, to make an application

of a granular minor element mix on the ground around each plant. Follow label directions. On the islands/keys a second application should be made in July.

On the subject of winter fertilizing, we were taught, and we will probably continue to abide by the rule of no fertilizer between about the first of November to the latter part of February. Curt Sinclair has another view of winter fertilization as outlined in response to a question on the subject on The Hibiscus Mail List. Curt recommended continuing to fertilize at the same frequency but at half strength. “Can vary some with the weather. Real cold, hold back ... slow release fertilizers do not release under certain temperatures. Check the labels. As a rule of thumb, I would not count on

them under 60 degrees”. Curt makes a good point in regard to slow release fertilizers. They may be responsive to temperatures, both high and low – and to water amounts. While the label on the fertilizers Curt purchases in large quantities may give information about the effect different factors have on release rates – the small containers the home gardener purchases tend to be mute on the point. Wish they weren’t.

We have corrections/updates...

for the new member directory:

Norma Bryar’s May- Nov. phone number area code should be 585 instead of 243.

Cheryl Flynn’s email address is now:
FloridaFlynn@yahoo.com

Pat Houppert’s email address is:
houppert@ix.netcom.com

Golby-Reasoner Chapter Chapter Meeting Minutes January 12, 2003

President Flanders recognized guests and thanked the staff of Palma Sola Botanical Park for the invitation to meet at the Park.

Attendees were divided into two groups and toured the Park from the elevated decks of the two main buildings. Everyone seemed suitably amazed with the scope of the work completed and impressed with what the future of the Park might be.

The meeting was called to order by President Flanders at 2:50 p.m.

A motion was made and seconded that the minutes of the December 14th Chapter meeting be approved as published in *Petal Power*. The motion passed.

Treasurer Phyllis Mohn reviewed the financial report as prepared by out-going Treasurer Marlyn Marshall. The balance on November 30th was \$4,377.25. There was income of \$756.00 and expense of \$960.63, resulting in a December 31st balance of \$4,172.62. A motion was made and seconded that the report be filed. The motion passed.

There was no report from the Sunshine Committee since the chairperson was ill.

The Hospitality Committee was represented by the

refreshment volunteers for the day, Trudy Topolosky and Len Erikson.

Gayler Boettcher, Editor of *Petal Power*, asked for volunteers to serve as Circulation Managers during 2003. Rae Flanders and Trudy Topolosky “stepped forward”.

President Flanders outlined highlights of the January 3rd Board of Directors meeting:

1. Welcomed new Board members and Chapter officers.
2. Voted to participate in the Palma Sola Botanical Park (PSBP) Festival, March 22nd and 23rd, with a Chapter information and plant sales booth.
3. Discussed and initiated action on several events planned for the coming year.
4. Discussed alternatives and assigned action items relative to bloom table covering for our future annual shows.

Volunteers were requested to staff the booth at the PSBP Festival and a sign-up sheet was circulated.

Free tickets to the State fair are available to those entering blooms in the State Fair Hibiscus Show, Saturday, February 15th and to those staffing the Hibiscus booth, February 6-17. Call President Flanders.

The Spring Workshop will be held at 10:00 AM, March 15th, at PSBP. The workshop will treat rooting, grafting and spring plant care. Materials will be provided at nominal cost.

Chapter shirts, in four sizes, are available @ \$14.00 each. It was mentioned that one of the AHS chapters were selling their chapter shirts for \$25.00.

Chapter members were urged to bring blooms to Chapter events.

President Dave and Rae Flanders will be providing the program for a meeting of the Holmes Beach Garden Club on Thursday, January 16th.

The role that Eric Golby played in the establishment of the PSBP, through letters to county commissioners and the *Bradenton Herald*, was detailed by Boettcher.

President Flanders introduced a period of questions and answers about hibiscus plant care, which is to be a part of each meeting in the future. A lively discussion followed. Eric Golby commented on our current weather which has been unseasonably wet, so wet that roots wouldn't grow. Now it is drying out somewhat so the roots should be able to grow. The “Golby gem of the day”: Eric said that he had hibiscus before a freeze – and lowbiscus afterward.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:30 PM.

The raffle for a hibiscus plant was won by Jeanne Nathan.

Gayler Boettcher
Secretary

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