

Petal Power

Golby-Reasoner Chapter
American Hibiscus Society

February, 2004

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web.tampabay.rr.com/hibiscus



Golby-Reasoner Chapter gifted this Japanese Lantern to Palma Sola Botanical Park (picture by Dorothy Erikson).

It's Festival time at Palma Sola Botanical Park

The Palma Sola Botanical Park (PSBP) festival, March 13 and 14, is important for our Chapter for two reasons this year.

Reason #1 The Chapter meeting will be held Sunday, March 14th, at PSBP, at the regular time, 2:00 PM. The person that calls you prior to each Chapter event will tell you where in the Park the meeting will be held. If you haven't attended a festival, you will find it interesting and fun. See you there!

Reason #2 The Chapter will have a booth at the festival again this year. A number of members will be staffing it and those there Sunday afternoon will enjoy seeing the other Chapter members before or after the meeting. There will be plants for sale in both one gallon and quart sizes. They are being obtained from Curt Sinclair.

The booth never has too many hibiscus blooms for decorating the Spring Tree (it could look like a Christmas tree to some) and the booth in general. Therefore, whenever it is that you come to the festival, please bring whatever blooms you have. If you are unable to attend, the folks who will be staffing the booth may take your blooms for you if you ask. Here is a list of those who are scheduled to "work the booth":

Saturday morning – Phyllis Mohn, Kathi Schmidt, Ed Johansen, Leo & Karin Debert

Saturday afternoon – Jeanne Nathan, Norma Breyer, Dave & Rae Flanders

Sunday morning – Phyllis Mohn, Dotty & Jack Taaffe, Tom & Sandy Brown

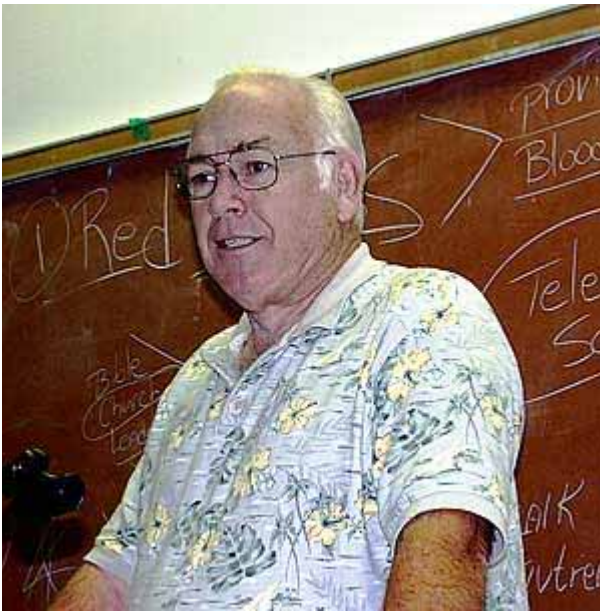
Sunday afternoon – "Petey" Birchall, Mike & Trudy Topolosky, Beege Hunter

Look for your AHS ballots!

In the past several years we have had no compelling reason to stress the importance of completing and returning the American Hibiscus Society (AHS) ballot. But this year, we have our very own reason for doing so in the person of one **David Flanders!** Dave is a candidate for the Board of Directors and we unabashedly ask that you cast your ballots for him.

We have not been asked by Dave to either ask our members to vote for him or – to shut up about it. Dave has been an active member of our Chapter for several years and is our most current past president, serving two one year terms (further service limited by the Bylaws). He conducted several workshops for the Chapter and was a one man “Speakers Bureau” making numerous appearances before community groups representing the Chapter. We have not talked to Dave about this, but to us it seemed like during his tenure as Chapter president that Dave, and his wife Rae, attended all the AHS functions. In doing so he would have become aware of some of the “workings” of the Society. During the past year, Dave has been the president of the AHS Chapter President’s board. As such he would have learned something of the politics of the AHS. We feel Dave Flanders is prepared better than most to serve as an outstanding member of the AHS Board of Directors. We are therefore asking that you vote for Dave.

The ballots should arrive around the first of May. Just to remind you, we will reprint this reminder in our next two issues.



Candidate Randy Cox(Harry Goulding Chapter) describes his ideas at our Feb. Chapter Meeting

Time to talk pruning...

Happily, this year’s decisions about pruning can be based on growth considerations and not by how much your plants were damaged by cold weather. Realizing that we could still experience some cold weather, the chances that we will escape it, improve with each passing day. Therefore, we will not discuss pruning as a “medical” event.

A few years ago, a **Petal Power** reporter interviewed Eric Golby about when spring pruning should take place. We learned that his direction to the folks at Reasoner’s Nursery was to whip out the shears and prune away if it was the first full week of March. We understand that “Mrs. Hibiscus”, Sally Golby, voiced the opinion that pruning could start after Valentine’s Day. (We assume that weather forecasts played a role in the actual timing.)

In ground plants may never require pruning if they have enough space and that space is in the right place, (and growth and bloom production is maintained). Most homesteads don't have that kind of space and so some pruning will be required at some point. Most would agree that pruning is beneficial since it promotes growth, but it also curtails bloom production. However, not all the pruning on a given plant needs to take place at the same time. Pruning a third of the plant at a time, with three or four weeks in between each surgery, is a rather accepted method of providing a continuing supply of blooms.

Plants in pots will require some pruning sometime. How much to prune? The term "hard prune" used by some, projects an image that is probably just what many enter into as they approach their in-pot plants at this time of year, assuming they have not pruned their plants much since this time last year. Chapter members of some tenure may recall meetings or workshops featuring Bob Hunter or "Mr. Hibiscus" (Eric Golby, of course) demonstrating the pruning of potted plants. In each instance, the pruning was pretty severe. In some instances, the plants were returned to the next Chapter event to show how vigorously they were growing – how "happy" they looked.

However, there may be instances when such drastic pruning may not be appropriate. Plants that have been pinched back as they have grown during the year may not need pruning or neither will plants that just haven't grown much for one reason or another. Visualizing what the plant will look like after another year of growth may help determine the course of action to take. Whatever the state of the plant may be, now or in the future, the current state of the roots may lead you to repotting or potting-up. Either of those endeavors may well lead to pruning, to one extent or another. See the following article about the potting business.

The Hibiscus Handbook has a good sized section about how to prune. The real secret of pruning involves the cut itself. Peggy Dessaint had a very succinct description of where to make the cut in one of her *Bradenton Herald* articles a couple years ago that we will borrow from with some embellishment. Look for leaf buds that have an outward tilt. Make the cut about ¼inch above the bud, at a slight angle, with the bud on the high side of the cut. New growth will emerge in the direction of the bud. As a general rule, one should avoid cutting above buds that face back into the plant. The new Handbook suggests that that general rule should be disregarded when pruning drooping or arching varieties.

Christmas Gifts

Numerous Chapter members brought wrapped gifts to the Christmas party for delivery to the children of migrant workers. (There were a particularly large number of gifts, it appeared.) Sally Beesley, a former member of the Chapter, continues to be our link to this program and therefore after the party Dotty and Jack Taaffe delivered the presents to her house. Shortly thereafter, Sally sent the Chapter a letter, portions of which are as follows:

"Thank you all so much for the wonderful gifts and toys. You are so good to remember the children.

The families this year were very poor! They had no idea of the American sizes. It is a good thing the ages are on the forms. We were able to give each child the correct size. ... Thank you all. May God bless each and every one of you! Love, Sally Beesley

Sally (and her husband Bill) had to drop out of the Chapter when Sally became involved in the world of retail. Sally collected Barbie Dolls, bears and then beanie babies – began working at a store that sold them – and has now purchased the store. It's at the Red Barn Flea Market, the portion along 14th Street, and the store is named "Sally's". Is that original or what?

Chapter Website Update

The chapter website has added something new: a full year's worth of hibiscus monthly care information. It's based on the monthly care items that were published in each issue of *Petal Power* during 2003, so if you're wondering what a year's good care looks like, this is your chance. Go to:

web.tampabay.rr.com/hibiscus/hibiscus_care.htm

Incidentally, this does not mean that *Petal Power* will no longer publish a monthly care item each month—there's always new information and more insights to include.

There are also two new additions to the Windows wallpaper images section named Yin Yang and Galaxy that Gene Haugh has created. Go to:

web.tampabay.rr.com/hibiscus/wallpaper.htm

Repotting and potting-up

As you are surveying your potted plants to determine what needs to be done in terms of pruning, also consider which ones should be repotted or potted-up. They are the ones that have been in the same pot for two years or more, that are blowing over all the time, need watering more than your other plants (maybe even twice a day) and the size and amount of foliage and blooms are decreasing. Plants displaying any or all of those symptoms are probably root-bound and need repotting or potting-up.

Some folks move plants into larger pots each time they become root-bound, increasing the size of pot a gallon or two each time. That is repotting-up or potting-up. You can imagine the result of that approach. After several years you will have to host a Chapter meeting to have enough strong backs available to move your huge pots to where you want them – until the next meeting.

Be that as it may, potting-up probably along with some pruning may well be what you want to do. When potting-up, use only new planting mix and rough up the root ball with some abandon. Roughing up the root ball will aid the roots to adjust to the new soil and pot size.

In a variation of potting-up you proceed with the ever-larger pot concept until the pot size reaches the size you have determined is the maximum you want to wrestle around. You then proceed with repotting (in the same size pot) every year or two.

Tom Miller (Sunset Chapter) told a story on The Hibiscus Mail List about Harry Goulding (as in the “Harry Goulding Chapter” which is in Punta Gorda) “taking a root-bound plant in a small pot and setting it on top of a bigger pot full of potting soil. Eventually the root-bound plant sent its roots into the larger pot and that pot became full of roots. As the story goes, I think, he placed the plant in two tiers of pots, onto a third and larger pot and the roots grew into that. There's more than one way to skin a cat.”

Repotting involves pruning roots and branches in somewhat equal amounts and returning the plant to the same size pot. The plant is easier to handle in subsequent steps if at least a third of the foliage and limbs are removed first. Then take the plant out of the pot and use a really big knife or a sharp hatchet to cut away at least a third of the roots growing on the outside of the root ball, including a portion of the swirling root mass that has probably formed at the bottom the root ball. Replant in the same pot (or some other old pot of the same size) cleaned up with a 10% bleach solution or, if you are feeling particularly flush, use a brand new pot! In any case, use only new potting mix. The over-all objective of this exercise (and it is indeed exercise if you do lots of repotting) is to remove the same (or larger) percentage of the plant growing above the ground as you take off the roots. Therefore, after you have replaced the plant in a pot, take a look at it to assure you have met that objective. If you have doubts, cut off more limbs.

Some folks feel that as you backfill with potting mix when repotting or potting-up, you shouldn't tamp down the mix. These folks water the back fill and then add more mix, repeating the process until the backfill is at the desired level. Whether that approach is used or the backfill is tamped, the last step in the process should be to thoroughly drench the plant and then for several weeks water only modestly.

The concept of applying only modest water applies to plants that you have only pruned as well as those that have been repotted or potted-up. In-ground plants that have been pruned to one degree or another should also be included in the "modest water" rule. Pruning removes some percentage of a plant's leaves, reducing the amount of transpiration that can take place and therefore reducing the amount of water required by the plant.

Eric Gobly wrote the following after mentioning pruning: "I like to start the plants off clean. Hibiscus do not have many fungus problems, but a thorough spraying with *Funginex* is a good idea." Who are we to do otherwise?

And then comes the question of when to fertilize after plants are pruned. Some say fertilization should take place about a week after pruning. Others say fertilization should be withheld until the plant has well-formed leaves. It seems most agree that there should be some delay between pruning and fertilization.

The March Hibiscus Garden

March is usually thought of as the month when our hibiscus wake up from a state of dormancy. If the number of blooms at the February Chapter meeting were any indication, the hibiscus woke up early this year. Our reporter assigned to attend the meeting said he didn't remember any previous meeting with more blooms on display. And several were "Best of Show" quality. Somewhat the same abundance apparently occurred at the State Fair hibiscus show which had over 900 blooms entered. We believe we read that they had only three tables of judges – and didn't complete the judging until something like 2:30 in the afternoon! Very little of the preceding has anything to do with "March gardening" – you have heard of "stream of conscious" writing? If that was an example, it may be an improvement over our usual writing which streams from the unconscious – or at least reads like it has.

As indicated in other articles in this issue of *Petal Power*, March is the month when pruning and repotting are conducted in this area. This is when we do our major pruning, removing old hard growth and shape the plant for the long growing season ahead. Since March tends to be windy, it is particularly appropriate to stake or re-stake your larger plants this month. Use Tie-Tape or poly twine for tying. March winds often rock and loosen larger plants if they are not well staked.

If you have in-ground plants that you want to relocate, March is a good time to do it. In a normal March, in which the plants are just coming out of their semi-dormancy, they suffer less from a March move than when they are in a vigorous period of growth. However, even though this may not be a normal March, it would seem better to transplant in-ground plants now than to wait until later when hot weather will add stress to a plant already traumatized by being relocated.

March is a good month to mulch your hibiscus, both in-ground and potted plants, before you get busy with other gardening chores – and before it gets any hotter. Use what ever you use on the rest of your garden on in-ground hibiscus. Something like pine bark chips work well on potted plants. Keep the mulch from touching the base of the plant to prevent fungal rots at the soil line.

We used to hear a lot about root pruning old, established in-ground hibiscus. This involved using a sharp spade, cutting down the full length of the blade in a circle around the plant. If you subscribe to this exercise, March is the month for it.

Begin an inspection of leaves and stems at least monthly, weekly would be better, until next fall for spider mites, scales, whiteflies, aphids, etc. These critters feast on succulent new growth, avoiding tough older leaves.

Many can be controlled with horticultural oil or insecticidal soap. Of course, if you have the bucks, you could spring for some *Marathon* that would provide months of control of about every pest. But then there are some that might say spider mites relish *Marathon*

We have a New Member!

Please welcome (and add the following to your Membership Directory):

Shirley Adams
2704 Bay Drive
Bradenton, FL 34207
Tel. 739-9225

Shirley is a fast starter and accepted responsibility for taking care of membership name tags.

Golby-Reasoner Chapter, AHS

Chapter Meeting Minutes

February 8, 2004

The meeting was called to order by President Pat Grant at 2:00 PM.

A motion was made and seconded that the minutes of the January 11th Chapter meeting be approved as published in *Petal Power*. The motion passed.

Treasurer Phyllis Mohn reported that the balance on hand December 31, 2003 was \$3,717.55. During the month there was income of \$935.00 and expense of \$426.17, resulting in a January 31, 2004 balance of \$4,226.38.

President Grant introduced new member Shirley Adams.

President Grant indicated that the March 14 meeting would be held at the Palma Sola Botanical Park (PSBP) during the annual Garden Festival. The Chapter will have a booth at the Festival again this year, chaired by Donny Waldroup and Gayler Boettcher. Volunteers were asked to sign up to staff the booth during the two days of the Festival, March 13 & 14.

Dotty Taaffe read a letter from Sally Beesley, thanking the membership for the Christmas gifts given to the children of migrant workers.

Janet Love asked for a volunteer to assume responsibility for the member name tags. Jan will be co-chair of the Show this year and as such will have much to do. President Grant appointed new member Shirley Adams.

President Grant introduced Randy Cox, candidate for First Vice-President of the American Hibiscus Society, who discussed items he would like to change in the AHS.

Refreshments were graciously provided by Jean Tourt and Janet Love.

A raffle was held for a "New Ruffles" from the stock of Chapter owned plants maintained by Donny Waldroup and five plants contributed by Randy Cox.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:52 PM.

Gayler Boettcher, Secretary

CLASSIFIEDS

BANANA Lovers! Large Staghorn fern for sale that thrives on banana peels. Call Karin Delbert @ 794-5271.

Cold Porcelain Creations! Lifelike Hibiscus and other flowers, singles/bouquets. Yvonne Santiago: (941) 727-7293, vonry01@aol.com, or www.coldporcelaincreations.com