

Petal Power

Golby-Reasoner Chapter
American Hibiscus Society

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The Show a No-Show

After Charley claimed Gary and Donna Schneider's hibiscus that were grown to sell at our show, it seemed we had east coast sources lined up to supply plants. Don't you love it when a plan comes together? Then came Francis. Don't you just hate it when a plan falls apart?

The damage to the plants destined to be sold at our show, along with the damage to the plants that would have produced blooms to be shown at the show, made the decision to cancel the show inescapable. While the decision to be made may have been inescapable, the board members confronted with the issue did so with heavy hearts. After all, this was to have been our 41st annual show.

That fact that the Dr. Jack Hoffman Chapter (Miami) Show on October 3rd was also cancelled does not make the cancellation of our show any more palatable. The Hoffman Chapter show and ours were, perhaps luckily, the only Florida shows scheduled for this fall.

The new date for our show is Saturday, May 28th, with a set-up day on Friday, May 27th. It is unlikely that you have a 2005 calendar to post important dates on, so put the above dates on the back page of your current calendar. Then you can transfer it to the 2005 calendar when you get it, along with the dates for the appointment to get the dog its shots, have the septic tank pumped out, get a heart by-pass, etc.

In October – it's Peggy Dessaint!

The date of our Chapter meeting is October 10 – at the usual time and place. However, nothing else about the October Chapter meeting will be usual, because presenting the program will be Peggy Dessaint. (She'ss the person referred to as “The Treasure” in several past issues of *Petal Power*. While petite, Peggy is a big fish in a little pond. And, she is a member of our Chapter.

"Peggy Dessaint is an extension agent in environmental horticulture at the Manatee County Extension Service in Palmetto. Her column, 'Suncoast Gardening', appears twice a month in the Sunday House and Home section." That is quoted from the end of her September 5th *East Manatee/Bradenton Herald* article which beautifully featured hibiscus and information about our show. (*Editors note: In our last issue we stated that Peggy wrote a column for publication every other week. According to the above quotation, Peggy's column appears only twice a month. Boo Hoo. Only 24 columns/year not 26.*)

The Chapter has been fortunate to have had Mrs. Dessaint as our special guest two times during the years we have been associated with the Chapter. You should make it a point not to miss her appearance, particularly since her topic will be one dear to all, - “Pests and Pesticides”. That's October 10th!

Workshop/Potluck – October 21

It is almost potluck time! OK, so we like potlucks – and of course workshops. Details about the event will be outlined at the October 10th Chapter meeting, with some coordination conducted by phone thereafter. It is usually one of the best attended events in the Chapter year – because it's fun and the food is great!

Shade or Sun?

“Sun or shade” is and has been an issue discussed by hibiscus growers wherever they reside. An article on the subject by Charles Black appeared in the August 2004 issue of *The Petaloid*, the “Official Publication of the

Lone Star Chapter.” Mr. Black owns Hidden Valley Hibiscus, Escondido, California and is well known to members of The Hibiscus Mail List on the Internet. Plants that have had their beginning in Hidden Valley have been known to make their appearance in local garden centers.

Since Mr. Black’s article is a full page, we will attempt to capture the substance of it by using a combination of summaries and quotes. He begins with the thought that he had heard from the very beginning of his experiences in raising hibiscus that “greatly reduced flowering in the heat of mid-summer is to be expected”. But that was not his experience. He notices, as we do, a change in bloom color with the season, but no change in the quantity of blooms or buds.

Of course, Mr. Black raises all his plants in greenhouses. That then may be the reason he sees no decrease in blooms during hot weather. However, temperature in the green houses exceeds 100 degrees almost every day in the summer. As we understand it, those temperatures are reached with lots of ventilation and the use of shade cloth or shade paint to keep most of the sunlight out. The result is that the plants are in pretty high temperatures and in some sunlight, but not full sun.

Mr. Black concludes the following: “I have come to believe that it is this shade during the hot days that allows my hibiscus to bloom profusely all through the summer. I have as high or higher temperatures inside the greenhouses as Florida or Texas have outside on a summer day. If reduced flowering were only about temperature it would happen in the greenhouses as well. Since it does not, I have to conclude that the big difference is the partial blocking of the direct sunlight, allowing only 30-40 percent of the normal amount to strike the plants when it is hot. There is a well known relationship between sunlight and temperature that commercial growers tinker with when growing all sorts of plants in greenhouse conditions. The general rule is that both cannot be high or low at the same time.”

He goes on to recommend that to provide good blooming during the summer months for outside plants that shade cloth be rigged up to allow a greater than 50% shade factor. (He has had the best results with a 65% shade factor.) Mr. Black indicated there are several companies online that offer easy-to-assemble metal frames that are suitable for covering with shade cloth.

Mr. Black concluded his article as follows: “It just seems a shame that most everyone accepts reduced flowering during the prime months of summer when it is not necessary if a shade structure can be integrated into the garden area. Of course, there are varieties of hibiscus that bloom in heat and sun, but I am talking about our favorite exotics that seem not to like both conditions together”.

Mr. Black brings to the table interesting information, built on experience. Questions to our members in the past about “shade or sun” have been answered all the way from “full sun” to “filtered sun”. Perhaps those answers need to be expanded. Short of getting into the subject of shade cloth, perhaps the answer needs to be something like “In cool weather, sun. In hot weather, filtered sun, but in the heat of the day, heavily filtered sun”.

September 10th Board Meeting Minutes Excerpts

There was no August 6, 2004, Board meeting – hence no minutes to publish.

President Grant indicated that the Annual Show, scheduled for August 18th, has been cancelled. (That had been determined through a telephone canvas of a majority of the members of the Board.)

Dave Flanders reviewed the items that had been accomplished in regard to the cancellation of the show. Grant reviewed contacts she had made with AHS people, First Baptist folks, and others.

A motion was made and seconded that the show be scheduled for May 27-28, 2005. The motion passed.

During discussion it was determined that the Loves will chair and the Flanders will do the publicity for the May 2005 show. Mark Love requested that “trainee” co-chairs be appointed for the 2005 show with the thought that they would chair the next show.

Hibiscus Gardening in October

Helped by some (hopefully) unusual weather patterns, we have had more than our share of rain. Taking the “glass half full” view, it has noticeably reduced water bills. We addressed some means whereby the over-abundance of water on in-ground plants could be combated. Potted plants should do well with the sometimes ridiculous amounts of rain. However, have you noticed any of your large plants in pots, with lush foliage, showing symptoms of a lack of water? They may well be thirsty, since they may be forming their own personal umbrella, shedding water away from their pots.

October is historically the beginning of our dry season and is the beginning of what one might call “fall.” However, in Florida there is no drastic change. There is usually noticeably less rain in October than in August and September and the humidity and temperature are not as high. October usually brings the start of the kind of weather we are in Florida for.

In a way, you start to prepare for winter now. This is the last month to do any pruning you feel compelled to do. You should make sure your plants are in their best condition, because a healthy plant survives the cold better.

If you are in to hybridizing your flowers, late October is the time to begin that process again. According to Eric Golby, Harry Gouling (an illustrious hybridizer) felt he got his best set of seeds during this time of year.

It is very likely that the rains have flushed away most of any fertilizer you applied to your plants. It will probably therefore be necessary to apply more, whether it complies with your fertilizing schedule or not. Particularly if you are in an area that is prone to winter frosts/freezes, and particularly if you will use a slow-release fertilizer, make the application now so the resulting flush of new growth will have time to harden off before the cold weather arrives.

The rain has probably helped your pest control problem by upsetting some of their life cycles. With the beginning of the dry season and before the cool weather arrives, various critters may well make an appearance, so keep the sprayer at the ready.

While the rain may have aided in critter control, it has most likely washed much of the mulch away from your plantings. Of course, sparse mulch is not a condition to have as we enter the dry season. Therefore, this is a good time to start the replenishment process. Three to four inches of mulch will make a world of difference in the amount of watering you will have to do during the coming months.

October brings a period when the gardener may have lots to do, depending how extensive your gardening efforts are. It's the time to plant the fall/winter annuals, many types of bulbs, herbs, etc. If one is looking for exercise, the October garden can provide plenty. However, in the hibiscus garden, it is possible that the most effort the gardener will expend is picking lots of beautiful blooms! Now that's the kind of work we all look for!

4hibiscus.com/html/trivia.html ??

Here are several items from the new web site's Trivia page:

National Tree of Jamaica– The Blue Mahoe (*Hibiscus elatus*)

The Blue Mahoe is the national tree of Jamaica. It is indigenous to the island and grows quite rapidly, often attaining 20m (66ft) or more in height. In wetter districts it will grow in a wide range of elevations, up to 1200m (4000 ft.) and is often used in reforestation.

The tree is quite attractive with its straight trunk, broad green leaves and hibiscus-like flowers. The attractive flower changes colour as it matures, going from bright yellow to orange red and finally to crimson.

The Blue Mahoe is so beautiful and durable that it is widely used for cabinet making and also for making decorative objects such as picture frames, bowls and carving.

Quoted from: http://www.jis.gov.jm/special_sections/Independence/symbols.html

Now That's a Big Flower

If you think dinner plate-size hibiscus blooms are big, here's a topper. According to the Guinness World Records listing, the largest flower is *Rafflesia arnoldi*. It grows in southeast Asia and blooms are up to 3 feet wide and weigh up to 24 lb. It's bud resembles a large cabbage, it blooms at midnight, and stinks.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

Coming Events

October 1, 9:30 a.m.: Board Meeting, South Branch Library

October 10, 2:00 p.m.: Chapter Meeting, **Peggy Dessaint**, "Pests and Pesticides"

October 21, 6:00 p.m.: **Workshop/Potluck** at the Boettcher home