

# Petal Power

Golby-Reasoner Chapter  
American Hibiscus Society

August, 2005

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## Peggy Dessaint in September!

That is, Peggy Dessaint will be the speaker at the September 11<sup>th</sup> Chapter meeting! Peggy is the Environmental Horticulture Extension Agent at the Manatee County Extension Service in Palmetto. She is perhaps most well known locally for her bi-weekly newspaper columns in the *Herald*. She is also a member of our Chapter! Her topic will be "New Critters, New Products." This meeting/program should be a must for all our members. Peggy is very knowledgeable about most things horticultural and, in addition, is a very entertaining speaker.

**IMPORTANT!** Peggy Dessaint is interested in what is causing hibiscus buds to prematurely drop off in our area. Therefore, she is asking that everyone who is experiencing bud drop to bring in a few samples of buds that have dropped off their plants. She will bring a microscope to enable her to see what types of critters are in the buds. Of course, in addition to adding to Peggy's wealth of information, our members will find out what their particular cause of bud drop is. Since about half the members at the August meeting indicated they were experiencing bud drop, there should be no shortage of buds for Peggy to look at.

### Membership list

Enclosed in this issue of *Petal Power* is a list of the current members of the Golby-Reasoner Chapter. Since the directory was published in December 2004, many deletions, additions, and changes have occurred and therefore you may wish to place the enclosure in the directory for future reference. Please note that the membership has declined considerably from the days when we had about 100 members. Thus the current emphasis on "growing the Chapter". Your help is needed!

### Nutrient Deficiency in Hibiscus

Several years ago, *The Petaloid*, the Lone Star Chapter newsletter, had an article with the above title, that may be pertinent to many hibiscus gardeners about this time

of year. We are going to use some information from it as we discuss "Leaf Sign Language":

<u>Leaves Affected</u>	<u>Signs Exhibited</u>	<u>Element Lacking</u>
<i>All leaves</i>	Stunted, yellowish veins, often red	Nitrogen
<i>Old leaves</i>	Small, twisted, off-color	Zinc
	Yellow veins, purplish	Phosphorus
	Grey, yellow blotches, veins green	Magnesium
<i>Young leaves</i>	Edges purplish and brittle	Potassium
	Wilted, water no help	Copper
	Yellow, all veins green	Manganese
	Yellow, large green veins	Iron
	Yellow, no veins green	Sulfur
	Only base of leaf is yellow	Boron
	Tips and edges only are yellow	Calcium

So if any of the above signs are noticed, where does one obtain what is needed to solve the problem? Of course the fertilizer especially prepared for the Chapter to sell at our shows contains nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Those elements are represented by the numbers 7-2-7. Our fertilizer also contains, as minor elements, magnesium, copper, zinc, iron, and boron. Therefore, if leaves on your plants display symptoms treated by those 8 elements, applying additional fertilizer may be the simple solution.

A minor element spray will normally contain zinc, magnesium, copper, manganese, iron, and boron. Several applications of the product as a spray or as a soil drench may be necessary to solve leaf problems requiring those elements.

For a calcium deficiency, a handful of gypsum may help the plant. Several years ago, a speaker at a Chapter meeting recommended using gypsum on a regular basis. We haven't bought into that practice, but at least one of our members followed the suggestion and had, if our memory serves us correctly, some noteworthy results.

A lack of sulfur will probably not occur since most fertilizers come as sulfates. If more iron is required, it is readily available in almost every garden center in the form of Ironite. Since we have recommended an application of Epsom Salt every month, we assume there should be no lack of magnesium.

We think the editor of *The Petaloid* at the time was Barry Schlueter, who was also the editor of *The Tropical Hibiscus Handbook*. He included the following thought about how to solve the missing element problem: "Just apply fish emulsion a couple of times, following label directions. Chances are, what you want is in there." Perhaps that is the simplest solution, remembering there could be some undesirable aromas involved.

### Fragrant white hibiscus

Our ever-searching Publisher, Gene Haugh, recently came upon an article from the Honolulu *Island Life* newspaper about a native white hibiscus that is both fragrant and easy to grow. While not a *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*, we thought it interesting that those on our island state were encouraging the cultivation of a native hibiscus that is apparently easy to grow from seed, cuttings, grafting, or air-layering. New hybrids are being developed which apparently share the qualities of fragrance and – blooms that last two days!

### September hibiscus gardening

It was considered common knowledge a few years ago that September weather produced the most and best hibiscus blooms. Therefore, most of the Florida hibiscus shows were held in September and October, including ours on the second Sunday of September. There has been a rethinking of that position and we now see most of the Florida shows, including ours, being held in the spring months. It seems that it is now just too hot for the production of quantities of good blooms in September. Maybe there is something to that global warming stuff.

September is the worst month for the storms that we do not mention by name. There is nothing one can do to protect much of anything from a direct hit by one those. However, the everyday type storms prevalent in September (our wettest month) will cause the least damage to healthy, well staked plants. In-ground plants need to be protected from too much water standing around them by using methods we have discussed previously in this space. The kind of rain normally

experienced in September will raise the water table dramatically and roots in water will die and rot because of a lack of oxygen.

Great amounts of rain will wash out the fertilizer from both in-ground and potted plants, so remember to fertilize regularly. The rain and high temperatures will take their toll on our Chapter's fertilizer too, so keep on adding that as necessary.

The combination of moisture and heat will enable all kinds of critters to proliferate. We have discussed the use of various means of controlling insects, almost always beginning with a suggestion to use a daily upward spray of water that will wash away many of the invaders. To some extent, the September rains, will aid in this endeavor. However, since the pests are usually found on the underside of the leaves, rain will not do the whole job for the gardener.

As we discuss pests and since we believe many gardeners are looking for ways to eliminate the use of chemicals whenever possible, an August 16 message on The Hibiscus Mail List (THML) on the internet drew our attention. The message from Joe Ludick concerned a product named *Organicide* which has been favorably discussed on numerous occasions on THML. Here's what Joe had to say, pretty much as he wrote it.

...have you tried *Organicide* from Home Depot? It is an organic spray that if used once a month – don't wait for bugs to spray – it will do a job for you much cheaper than those \$80.00 pint bottles. You folks worried about bugs – spray on the first of every month – whether you have a problem or not – add something like Miracle Grow to the spray to bring blooms.....

We have no experience with *Organicide*, but from the discussions we have monitored on THML, it appears worth a try. It does offer a more environmentally friendly alternative to chemical sprays. (The \$80.00 pint bottles referred to by Mr. Ludick might be "Merit", which is the liquid form of Marathon. Both have the same active ingredient – Imidacloprid.)

Of course September is the month when we should fertilize palms, shrubs, perennials, and citrus. Fertilize lawns late in September and into October.

### Words from other chapters

Our president Dave Flanders recently passed along two newsletters from AHS chapters in Louisiana. These chapters are relatively new and if their newsletters are any indication, they are having good success.

*Hooked on Hibiscus* is the newsletter representing the Mike Bernard Acadiana Chapter, located in Lafayette, La. It is four pages of small type style printing and, among other things, indicated that at their show the gross income from the sale of plants was \$9,792.25. (We mixed money from plants, fertilizer and publications into one total - \$6,992.00) Our profit was larger than theirs however. The newsletter included a couple pages of messages from THML about midges and aphids. We may use some of these in future issues of *Petal Power*.

*Redstick Gleanings* is the newsletter of the Red Stick Hibiscus Association in Baton Rouge, La. The July/August issue contained 15 pages printed on one side with full color, large pictures on virtually every page. There was about a page of general hibiscus information and three pages of emails from THML. It may have been computer printer produced and was very nicely done in terms of format and layout.

We appreciate receiving these newsletters since each of them give us something to think about.

### And we welcome new members...

Larry and Eileen DuBartell  
6925 43<sup>rd</sup> Court East  
Sarasota, FL 34243  
Tel. 360-6460

### Golby-Reasoner Chapter, AHS Chapter Meeting Minutes August 14, 2005

President Flanders introduced new members, Eilene and Larry DuBartell.

President Flanders called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

Trudy Topolosky and Dotty Erikson were recognized by President Flanders for making the luncheon meeting last month at the Iron Skillet, special and a success.

Treasurer Shirley Adams reviewed the financial report for July 2005. As of July 1<sup>st</sup> there was a balance on hand of \$4,407.69. There was income of \$172.50 and expense of \$825.00, resulting in a balance on hand, July 31 of \$3,755.19.

During the Hospitality Committee report it was indicated that the afternoon's refreshments were being provided by Karin Delbert and Betty Seipel. Jeanie Nathan and Dottie Taaffe volunteered to provide the refreshments for the November meeting.

President Flanders presented highlights of the August 6<sup>th</sup>

Board of Directors meeting:

- a. Jack Taaffe presented a report on the condition and needs of the Reasoner Memorial Hibiscus Garden at PSBP. Jack will present his findings and the resources needed to the PSBP Board for their action.
- b. The Board accepted Gene Haugh's report and recommendations clarifying an honorary membership in the Chapter. Gayler Boettcher will prepare other necessary Bylaws changes for action by the membership.
- c. Shirley Adams presented an up-to-date list of memberships in the Chapter. At that time there were 35 memberships, 54 members. An up-dated list will be included with the next issue of *Petal Power*.
- d. The Board established a Chapter Outreach and Membership Growth Committee to address concerns relative to those matters.

President Flanders read a paper describing the Chapter Outreach and Membership Growth Committee and asked for volunteers to serve on the Committee. The following members volunteered: Gayler Boettcher, Larry DuBartell, Gene Haugh, Jack Taaffe, Shirley Adams, Mike and Trudy Topolosky. Laura Morton, the program presenter, also volunteered. The Committee is to report their progress in making contacts in Lakewood Ranch at the next Board meeting.

The slate of officers and Board Members for the coming year will be presented at the next Chapter meeting by the Nominating Committee. Anyone wishing to be included should contact the Committee Chair, Carl Kramer.

Bob Hunter introduced the program presenter, Laura Morton of Community Supported Agriculture, who discussed the Geraldson Community Farms.

The September meeting program presenter will be Peggy Dessaint, discussing "New Critters, New Products."

Leo Delbert, conducted the plant raffle, which was won by Dottie Taaffe.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Gayler Boettcher, Secretary

### CLASSIFIEDS

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

## Coming Events

September 2, 9:30 a.m.: Board Meeting, South Branch, Manatee.

September 11, 2:00 p.m.: Chapter Meeting, Peggy Dessaint, "New Critters, New Products". Bring any fallen hibiscus buds you may find!