

Petal Power

Golby-Reasoner Chapter
American Hibiscus Society

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Hardy Hibiscus!?

If that seems like a contradiction of terms then you should make it a point to attend the January Chapter meeting when Gene Haugh will discuss “Hardy Hibiscus”! Gene has a considerable amount of research under his belt on the subject of these varieties that seem to just be gaining the kind of popularity they deserve. As you are aware, Gene is also the founder and master of our Chapter website and would be the person to ask if you have questions about things related to the World Wide Web.

We had a few reservations about the size of our new meeting place – thinking that it might be a bit small. Let’s prove that those concerns were correct! Come to the January 14th meeting and help fill the room!

New place - new time....

It seems like we will be meeting in a new location as we gather for our January 14th Chapter meeting. We really did have one meeting in our new location, but that was way back in September and we have been here and there since then. So as you head toward the meeting, whether you have been there before or not, remember we now meet at the **Synovus Bank** on the corner of Manatee Ave and 26th Street West. We use a side door facing 26th Street.

Also – Chapter meetings now begin at **1:00 p.m.** We haven’t had much experience with the new starting time having used it only once too – so remember, 1:00 – not 2:00 p.m.!

A Great Kickoff!

The annual Chapter Christmas Luncheon, held at the Bradenton Yacht Club on December 9th, was once again a great kickoff for the Christmas Season! The setting was wonderful, the food and service were exceptional, and the fellowship was outstanding. To bring the Christmas spirit to life, **Jean Tourt** was ready to accompany the assembled

carolers on the piano, but alas – no piano! But in to the rescue “rides” songster, **Carl Cramer** to lead the carols sans accompaniment – and amazingly, the carols sounded pretty darn good!

The many details involved in arranging the Luncheon were in the capable hands of **Dottie Erikson** (Chair), **Beege Hunter**, **Betty Seipel**, and **Pat Grant**. Those who have not had responsibility for an event like the Luncheon don’t know the effort required to plan and execute such an event. Thank you so much ladies! We also need to recognize the fact that **Dottie** and **Len Erikson** donated poinsettias and two festive door hangers (designed by Dottie) for the door prizes. **Leo Delbert** saved the day by stepping in at the last minute to transport the considerable pile of presents on their first step on the way to children of migrant workers.

Festival of Trees a Treasure

A large percentage of the members of the Chapter worked together to staff a booth at the Crosley Mansion Festival of Trees from November 29 through December 7. The Festival ran for nine days, which was surely the longest time the Chapter ever participated in a single event. It surely taxed the membership to staff a booth for that long and we certainly want to recognize all those that were a part of that effort. So here is the list...

Dave and Rae Flanders, Dottie and Jack Taaffe, Beege Hunter, Betty Seipel, Bill Grant, Gayler Boettcher, Yvonne Santiago, Petey Pierrette, Donny Waldroup, Tom and Sandy Brown, Belle Hilt, Karin and Leo Delbert, Dottie Erikson, Pat Grant, Jeanne Nathan, Norma Bryar, Janet and Mark Love, Sue Haugh

After seeing the number of folks who were involved you will perhaps have an appreciation of the number of phone calls necessary to schedule them through-out the nine days of the festival. It is

therefore with some amount of fanfare that we recognize **Dottie Taaffe** for making all those calls and for putting together a complete schedule – an achievement some felt might be impossible.

All members, but particularly those that who worked at the festival, will be interested to know that 41 plants were sold, along with some handbooks and Month by Month booklets. So monetarily there was \$313.00 profit, but probably more importantly the Golby-Reasoner Chapter was visible to many members of the community – the only garden-plant type club represented. But perhaps even more importantly our members had an opportunity to be a part of a pretty large event, to meet lots of nice folks, and have a pleasant time doing so.

Sunday, May 27th!

In case you weren't at the November Chapter meeting, the Christmas Luncheon, and missed it in the minutes of the November meeting in the last issue of *Petal Power*, the day and date of our Show has been changed to **Sunday, May 27th!** We want to make sure you make the change on your calendar – so, if you haven't made the change – do it now!! The set-up day remains Friday, May 26th and the location of the Show also remains the same: the Manatee County Fair Grounds. The facilities there provide the framework for us to again produce an outstanding Show for exhibitors and the public.

Worth trying - - ?

It was mentioned at the Christmas Luncheon, that hibiscus blooms would stay open a second and perhaps a third day if the stem (cut a very little longer than usual) was put in a grape. (No mention of what kind of grape.) Supposedly, the moisture and sweetness provide just what the hibiscus bloom needs to stay open. So.....when you have a bloom and a grape – at the same time, give it a try and let us here at *Petal Power* know what happens.

Hibiscus Gardening in January

Eric Golby wrote many years ago when talking about January gardening – and this is not a direct quote – that in addition to keeping cold protection material handy, and listening to weather forecasts to be on guard for the occasional cold snap, there isn't much to do in the hibiscus garden in January.

However, so far this year except for a few isolated days, we have not had much in the way of cold weather and we certainly haven't had much rain. That combination at least means we need to be watering our plants in addition to being on the watch for some critters that normally at this time of year wouldn't be a problem. The dry weather may bring spider mites in particular – unless we have some pretty cold weather soon. Feel the leaves with your fingers for a sandy feeling – or use a magnifying glass. The upper sides of the leaf may have pale or yellow splotches while the underside may have bumps or scabs with a salt and pepper look. You can use soap and oil – several times, or use an insecticide labeled for mites or the more selective miticide spray such as *Kelthane* (which only controls mites). You will probably have to use the chemical sprays at least twice.

A subject we don't want to consider is that if we don't have some cooler weather soon we could be in for a really bad infestation of insects to start off our spring! Now there is something to look forward to as we think about our spring chores. So what's new? If it wasn't bunches of critters – it would be something else.

Since January is sort of right in the heart of our dry season, it surely does make sense to check any and all irrigation systems that you have to make sure they are operating as they should. Malfunctioning nozzles, or whatever, give a false sense of security and waste water. And of course, due to the cooler weather, all plants – hibiscus included – use less water, so irrigation systems on timers need to be adjusted to account for this decrease in thirst.

It appears our weather may not be departing from normal and at least as we write this, our dry season has indeed been dry. While our winter temperatures so far have been above average that may well change and so we could be faced with a period of both dry and cold weather. Not a good combination for hibiscus and other plants. All plants will survive better if they are totally engorged (Peggy Dessaint's terminology) with water before the cold hits.

Therefore, in the morning of the day a frost or a freeze is expected, water all your plants well. We stress “morning”, because the plants need as much time as you can give them to take up all the water they can before the cold arrives. This is true for plants in pots as well as those in the ground. Of

course we would assume you will move your prize potted plants into a garage or some such and would water them after moving them and save your back.

We won't go into the whole litany related to protecting plants from the cold - with the exception of a reminder, particularly for newly transplanted folks from the north, that our ground here will virtually always be warmer than the air during periods of cold weather. Therefore, in order to take advantage of that fact when covering plants to protect them from the cold, be sure to puddle the blankets, quilts, or whatever on the ground and anchor them there with bricks or something in case it's windy.

Some would say a light fertilization at this time of year, as sort of a maintenance approach to keeping hibiscus plants healthy, would be a good thing to do. For some, depending on where the plants are, that might indeed be a thing to do. However, for those who live where frosts or freezes are possible, fertilizing at this time of year is not a good idea unless they are in pots and, without fail, you will move them into a protected area prior to every cold night.

Generally speaking, this is not a good time to transplant in-ground hibiscus plants. However, January is an appropriate time to transplant (or plant) cold-hardy or dormant shrubs and trees. They don't need to be pruned at planting time, but keep the root balls well watered.

Early Days with Hibiscus

The above headline was the title of one of the articles of a "Rambling Reflections" series written by Eric Golby for *The Seed Pod* during the early 1980's. We thought these articles were particularly interesting since they contain glimpses of the people at that time as much as they tell the hibiscus story and so we will reprint some of them from time to time.

"As most of you know, I'm a fourteen generation plant grower, and such a label is seldom seen these days. My father (the late Walter H. Golby) grew hibiscus in the greenhouses of the world-famous firm, Rochefords, in southern England (now in its 200th year), where he was section foreman at the age of 19. So, it was no surprise when he ordered

some hibiscus from the mail-order catalog of Reasoner Brothers in Oneco, FL. He was then operating his own florist and nursery business near Boston, MA.

That was my initiation to the wonderful world of hibiscus, and I have loved them ever since. ... Later, he ordered hibiscus from Evans and Reeves, Los Angeles, where we acquired the hibiscus of all hibiscus, a double yellow named Crown of Bohemia.

We were never able to supply the demand for this one. ... We rooted cuttings with bottom heat in the greenhouse, grew them onto five-inch pot plants, and pinched and shaped them as choice specimens (usually in bud or bloom). I think we sold them for \$1.50. Many of them went to the choice plant lovers on Beacon Hill, Boston, where they were often grown in tubs and brought indoors for the winter.

A few thrifty people tried the old practice of almost drying them out for the winter, as a means of semi-dormancy, then applying the water and plant food to bring them back to life in April or May. It was a chancy thing to do, as a little too much dryness was fatal. The ones that were kept warm and in a sunny window survived much better. A few of those apartment dwellers amazed me with old hibiscus five to six feet tall in tubs that were four feet across. Their methods of care were often bizarre, like the dear old soul who bought a can of Puss 'n Boots cat food, though she had no cat. She stirred a spoonful into a jug of water and put that on her hibiscus every week! The aroma was barely noticeable, but the blooms were terrific."

More in a future issue of *Petal Power!*

Golby-Reasoner Chapter, AHS Chapter Meeting Minutes December 9, 2006

Those present enjoyed our Christmas luncheon!

CLASSIFIEDS

Cold Porcelain Creations! Lifelike Hibiscus and other flowers, singles/bouquets. Yvonne Santiago: Yvonne@coldporcelaincreations.com, www.coldporcelaincreations.com or (941) 538-9521.

Coming Events

January 5, 10:00 a.m. Board Meeting at Manatee
County Library South

January 14, **1:00 p.m.** Chapter Meeting at **Synovus
Bank, Manatee & 26th St. W.**, Gene Haugh –
“Hardy Hibiscus”