

# MIKE BERNARD

## ACADIANA CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

March 08 - Newsletter

### “Get Ready”

When I was a young man one of my favorite past times during the day was listening (yes, I could actually hear back then) to music as I attacked most of my projects or chores for the day. Most of you probably did the same thing. We all had our favorites but for me “soul” music always stuck out and I listened to it as much as possible. Elvis, the Beatles, all of Rock and Roll, the English invasion, etc. etc. As I look back on those younger days with a broad smile on my face I keep thinking about that music and how one soul group in particular always came up with the tune of month. Just recently I was looking through some old music and came across an old cassette. I just had to play it. If you are old enough you might remember a group called the Temptations and one of my favorite tunes of their time was a song called “Get Ready”. As I listened to that old cassette I thought to myself what an appropriate theme song for our group as we “get ready” for our time of the year. Are you ready for our time of the year? Have you made your preparations and adjustments in advance to have your most successful bloom year ever?

Some of you are just getting started in you as much as we possibly can about the care and maintenance of these magnificent plants . We’ll focus on the basics and you’ll have plenty of opportunities to ask questions. I encourage you to do so. Believe me, “WE HAVE ALL LOST PLANTS!” The good news is you will learn soon enough what changes you need to make in your maintenance procedures.

What a great beginning we have for our first meeting. Dr. Rod Hendrick will be our guest and he will focus on an area that most of us know nothing about and yet his very subject may “long term” be responsible for the very survival of your plants. He will talk about pruning, both the root ball and your plant and I will ask him to make several comments about the potting mix and our needs to change it out occasionally. Be observant and take good notes. It’s important!

And so, ladies and gentlemen, as that soulful group the Temptations would say, “Get Ready”. Get Ready for another truly magnificent year. Get Ready for the joy and enthusiasm that these beauties bring to every conversation. Get ready for some new additions to your growing collection. *I’m ready or you?*

See you Tuesday March 4th at 6pm.....Buddy

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Part of my objective in this newsletter will be to educate you on the many plants that are available for your collection. Whether your objective is to have just a few or whether you choose to have as many as you can handle, I will do my best to identify blooms for you and then try to tell you where you can find each plants. Initially I will feature mostly Dupont plants. They are some of the finest available and you have the advantage of availability and location. Start making your list or call me if you are looking for a certain one.

Pictures....1)...June's Dragon. Runner up for Hibiscus of the Year 2006. About a 9 inch bloom and a must have. Dupont has this one. 2)..Dupont's Moonlight Madness....note the cup and saucer look of this bloom. I actually saw this flower as a seedling and thought it was a winner. It obviously was! 3)...here's a seedling Bobby gave me on a recent visit. He will not be offering this beauty commercially however I believe it to be outstanding. You will probably be asking me for a cutting. Hard sell! 4)...here's Voodoo Queen. Another bloom of Dupont's that I use in my hybridizing efforts. Great bloomer with exceptional shape. About a 7 inch bloom. 5)...here's Night Fire. This wasn't the greatest picture but I wanted to include her anyway. That bloom is normally a very dark navy blue and that eye is fire engine red. In person she is a winner. This is not a Dupont bloom however the last time I was there he actually has some to sell....

*If you would like to include any blooms from your own collection then get the picture or suggestion to me for later newsletters*

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### Quotes of the Month .....

*“Patience is the ability to keep your motor idling when you feel like stripping your gears.”*

*And*

*“The best way to be successful is to follow the advice you give others.”*

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### ***Important dates to mark down.....April 4th, 5th, and 6th.....Festival Des Fleurs***

***2008**.....This is one of the 2 main fund raising events of the year for our chapter. We will set up our booth on Friday the 4th and participate in the show and sales the following 2 days. A sign up sheet will be available at both the March and April meetings for interested workers . We ask that anyone interested in working the show please sign up for volunteered times. The chapter thanks you in advance for your help.*

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### **Blooms and Things for March**

I have noted that most of the big stores are now putting out their bedding plants and many of us will be wandering around looking and trying to decide if it's too early to put down a few plants in our flower beds. The same thing happened last year and it's really hard not to buy a few. On that regard I am no different than you are so naturally I have already picked up some pansies and snapdragons and have made some selective plantings around my yard.

I have also spent some time looking at the different fertilizers and insecticides available and determining if I will make any adjustments in my procedures this year. Here are several things I have looked for.....1) this year I will be using a granular fertilizer in the base of my pots. The fertilizer I have decided on is one put out by Osmocote that is 14-14-14. It has green labeling on the container. I think Bobby Dupont uses one put out by Sta-Green but I'm not sure of the readings on the package. Maybe I can find out. I will also use my occasional liquid fertilizer application about ever two weeks and use Epsom Salts once per month. I'll let you know if I do anything different. If anyone is trying something that is working please let me know so that I can inform the group.

Here's an idea and an offer to everyone.....first the idea.....if you buy bedding plants, keep the little plastic containers your plants come in for future use. Later if you decide to try hybridizing (April's topic) then those little con-

tainers will come in handy for seed planting and you will not need to buy something else. Also remember that most of these stores will have extra trays available for their customers. Don't hesitate to ask for a few.

My offer.....I have collected pots for several years. You will ***not*** believe how many I have. If you need any pots then please come by and get some. You will actually do me a favor by eliminating some from my yard. I have 1 gallon black pots (probably 600+), and no telling how many 3 gallon. Some are black and some are different colors. Let me stress again.....you will do me a favor if you get as many as you want. Please do not hesitate. If we get no takers then I will eventually throw them away.....

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Here's a short reprint from a newsletter put out by Charles Black from Hidden Valley Hibiscus.....I think the information is appropriate for our climate.....

### ***Mid-Winter Blues***

.....We are going to talk about the condition of our hibiscus in February. Tucked away in the greenhouse or inside our house, they are actually doing just fine, although neither is growing as fast nor blooming as much as normal. However, both our potted and in-ground hibiscus that were left outside to brave the elements are showing the signs of winter. We have some dead stems or tips of stems showing now, and due to the wet winter here in California (same for Louisiana) there are a lot of black spots on many of the leaves. These signs of winter look bad, but they are not as dire as they seem. Once spring arrives, we will prune away all dead wood, and lots of live, green wood will be left that will start growing again as soon as the weather warms. The black spotted leaves will fall off naturally as spring progresses, to be replaced with fresh, green leaves by early summer. What we won't do is run out right now to try to correct the problems we see! We don't want new growth or new leaves to emerge until all danger of frost or freeze is past, so we will just let our outdoor hibiscus continue as they are until March.

It can be useful to spray the plants with Bayer 3-in-1 pest control any time now. It contains a fungicide that acts against the black-spot fungus, with the added benefit of an insecticide and miticide to control aphids and spider mites. This is not essential just yet, but getting an early start on preventing insects and slowing the spread of leaf fungus is never a bad idea.....

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I hope everyone is enjoying these warmer temperatures. I'm seeing plenty of new growth coming out on my babies but like Charles Black from Hidden Valley Hibiscus would say and I would add, "be patient..... and watch the weather channel". Personally, I'm keeping a watchful eye.....

See you next Tuesday the 4th of March at 6 pm.....Hooked on Hibiscus .....Buddy

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of the American Hibiscus Society

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