

## Greetings Fellow Hibiscus Growers

I hope all of you survived Hurricane Lili. We are fortunate not to have suffered much more than shingles blown off. We'll probably have to replace it but my greenhouse only had 2 of the gable vents blown off. They were recovered from the neighbor's yard and replaced. I was able to put all my plants in the greenhouse so I had no plant damage. Some of you that I have heard from have had varying degrees of loss. Sandra relates that almost every tree on their property was blown down; none hit the house or the greenhouse, and the birds all came through well. Rick was reported to have fared well, as did David. I understand that Michael lost one his greenhouses "down the bayou". These are the only people I have heard about.

At the Orchid Society meeting I attended last week, many growers reported a virus-like invasion since the hurricane. The speaker was from South Florida and he related that he has suffered from similar problems after a hurricane blew through. If you identify problems, it may be that they blew in on the winds of Lili.

## A Life Lost

It is with great sadness I report that Bill Adam's wife, Linda, lost her battle with cancer October 23rd. Linda fought a hard fight for 16 years. Bill, the Society extends our condolences and will support you as you come to terms with your loss.

## Minutes

The last meeting was held October 1st, 2002. The checking account will be switched to Gulf Coast Bank by the Treasurer, Ricky Meaux. Father Gerlich presented a program on winterizing hibiscus. Dates for Festival de Fleurs 2003 will be April 5th and 6th. A discussion was held regarding the Christmas party. Sandra will present proposals at the upcoming meeting. Be there to vote for your choice. A list will be compiled for refreshments for future meetings. Be ready to sign up for your turn. The topic at the next meeting will be on hybridizing hibiscus, presented by Barry Schlueter. The meeting time will be changed to 6 o'clock due to Daylight Savings Time ending. Muy Grande was voted as the best flower for this meeting. Kay Dourant won the door prize. Raffle plants were won by David, Ricky and Lou. Next meeting will be November 5th. Refreshments will be provided by Lou Trahan and Bootsie Dupont.

## Winter is coming

When the temperature is exected to drop below 34 degrees, hibiscus, especially while they are young, must be protected from the cold, and especially against cold winds. Failure to do so could result in severe damage, or loss of, plants.

Fertilize your plants regularly throughout the colder months using a balanced fertilizer, but apply less than you would during the warmer months. This will help keep your plants healthy and strong, and in the best condition to withstand cold snaps.

The northwest wind that precedes most cold fronts can lead to dehydration, which may cause more damage than the actual cold. Wind damage to plants results in typical leaf burn or marginal browning. As the plants dehydrate, they develop damage similar in appearance to fertilizer burn. Most of the damaged leaves will fall off in a short time and

will be replaced by new leaves with the return of warm weather, which may be followed by another cold snap. These new, tender leaves will be more prone to damage than the older leaves. Prevention will be much less stressful for the plants.

Before you move your plants inside, you may want to prune them. With the right tools and know-how, pruning is simple. Remember to:

- Use sharp tools

- Prune at the right time

- Prune to an outward pointing bud

- Cut away all dead, criss-crossing and weak looking wood

- Make all cuts clean and smooth

- Leave no stubs to cause decay

- Use clean tools, especially from one plant to another

Examine the plant and cut off all dead, diseased or injured wood, cutting well down into live green wood, and making the cut at a slight slant to shed water. Remove small twigs and branches that cross and grow toward the inside of the plant. This allows air and light to the interior of the plant, which helps to cut down on fungus and insect problems.

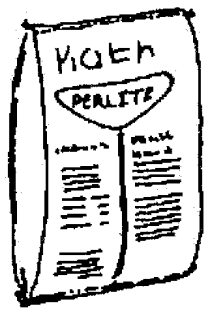
To help your plants retain their bushy status, you can “pinch back” the plant. This can be done any time and continually between heavy pruning. Pinching back is done by pinching off the youngest foliage at the tips of the branches, which initiates a complex hormonal rearrangement that results in new branches and foliage in the right places. This is what you do to an otherwise healthy plant that has grown too leggy. Pinching back may be done to remove diseased growth or to keep flowers from appearing until a show.

However, the most common rationale for pinching back plants is to keep them compact and bushy. This process should be done often to be effective. Keeping a plant pinched back often results in lush foliage, more flowers, and a fuller bush. Whether it looks leggy or not, tweak the top of the stem that has more than four sets of leaves but lacks lower branches. Wait until a flower bud appears just below a growing tip. Let the new bud develop a little, then pinch off the tip of the new growth. The flower bud just below then benefits from the food that would have gone to the pinched growth. The only equipment needed for pinching back are the thumb and forefinger.

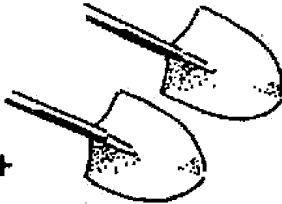
With winter coming, you may have to resite your potted hibiscus to insure that the plants get adequate hours of sunlight each day.

Pick out that special bloom to show at the meeting. There will be lots going on so arrive early and bring a friend. Happy growing. If you have creative ways to display flowers or use plants in holiday decorating, please share with fellow growers.

# Potting Mixture



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+



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1 PART  
PERLITE

+

2 PARTS  
PEAT

+

1 PART  
SAND

=

GOOD  
POTTING  
SOIL