



# Mike Bernard Acadiana Chapter American Hibiscus Society



July 2015



Or...is it *just me*???



Being able to identify Hibiscus plants adds to the fun of this hobby!

CAN YOU NAME THESE BLOOMS?  
(Names further down in this newsletter)



**Mike Bernard Acadiana Chapter - [www.acadianahibiscus.com](http://www.acadianahibiscus.com)**  
of the American Hibiscus Society

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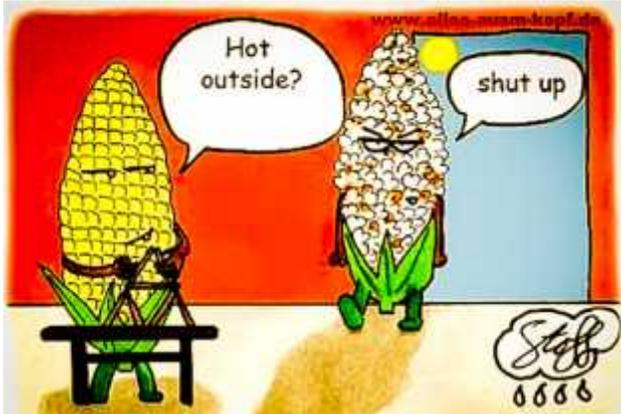
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HOW MANY DID YOU KNOW??



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HAPPY BIRTHDAYS TO:

July	
Doug Trahan	4
Barbara Messina	6
Carolyn Cormier-Stoute	9
Lorraine Kizziar	13
Jim Faulk	15



- July 7<sup>th</sup>...Chapter meeting
- August 9th...New Member Barbeque  
**(this event replaces our August meeting date)**
- September 1...Chapter meeting
- October 6...Chapter Meeting
- November 3...Chapter **meeting (this is our last official chapter meeting of 2015)**

## *Buddy's Blooms n' Things*

Most of the information we share amongst ourselves was obtained either through personal experience, conversation with others, or by reading the written word from someone else. Most of you know that I believe strongly that the information source you choose to follow **MUST** come from a similar climate to our own. The following article was written recently by our good friend and New Orleans chapter President Father Robert Gerlich. Read his message well as he addresses our two biggest enemies throughout our extreme summer months: Spider Mites and proper watering. My comments can be found in blue.....good blooming everyone.....Buddy

## Defeating Summer's Two Greatest Killers: Spider Mites and Improper Watering

I wrote about these dual threats to our plants' health last year, but the threat remains. So I thought it important to repeat my discussion as both mites and improper watering practices are prime causes of plant fatality during the summer heat.

From what I have been able to judge, the only creatures that flourish in our summer heat are the bugs! Hibiscus begin to languish as temperatures climb into the 90s. But as they struggle with the heat, the opportunistic bugs flourish. Heat and high, dry temperatures provide the ideal conditions for perhaps the most pernicious and damaging hibiscus pest -- spider mites. Our recent rains will help to hold down the mite



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populations, but they will spread quickly if we have an extended period of high pressure with its dry, hot temperatures. Spider mites are not true insects, but tiny members of the arachnid family -- spiders. Nonetheless, they are terrible pests capable of causing serious damage to hibiscus as well as to any number of other plants. Their feeding leaves holes in the leaf surface from which moisture escapes, leading to rapid desiccation. The leaves yellow and dry quickly. If unchecked, the mites can even kill the plant — a fact most of us know from sad experience. In most cases, however, mites seldom kill large plants if treated. Smaller plants and young seedlings can quickly succumb to the toxic chemicals injected by mites as they feed. So pay especially close attention to younger plants, checking under their leaves frequently for signs of mites. Spider mites, like all garden pests, are best dealt with early and with the use of as little chemical poisons as possible. Thus I recommend that you make a habit of following this simple procedure:

- Monitor plants regularly. Isolate newly purchased plants until you are sure they are bug free. [We could all do a better job in this area. Don't let the excitement of a few new plants get the best of you. Always isolate first.](#)
- Practice prevention. Since mites favor dry, dusty conditions, keep the plants free of dust and the humidity high to discourage them from multiplying. [My best procedure is blasting or washing off my plant leaves each day.](#)

- As soon as you find signs of an infestation, use the lowest toxic level of treatment. [Watch for ants at the same time. Ants = aphids](#)

- Move to more toxic chemical controls only if necessary and warranted. [If you catch mites early and give them a daily blasting this may not be necessary. Pay attention.](#)

- Rotate miticides (chemical pesticides specifically designed to kill mites) so that they remain effective. Mite infestations will quickly build up a tolerance to chemical poisons when misused or overused. Read directions carefully before using any chemical product and use recommended precautions!

The most low tech and least toxic approach to treating mites is to spray under the leaves of the plants with a sharp jet of water. This method is effective but it requires persistence. Yet, even an occasional treatment will help retard the growth of mite populations. For best results, “hit” the plant twice a day for a week. [I agree 100% with this statement. Blast away.](#) Charles Black of Hidden Valley Hibiscus is a proponent of this method and offers a good discussion on mites on his website. [See our website at www.acadianahibiscus.com under Hibiscus doctor. Exceptional pictures.](#) Minimally toxic sprays include insecticidal soaps and horticultural oils. One product, Mite-Rid, a neem oil based



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product, claims good results, but I have never used it. In our heat, oil-based and soap sprays can be problematic. If they are applied too heavily, they suffocate the leaves, defoliating the plant. To avoid this from happening, spray in the “cool” of the evening and “wash off” the plants the next morning with a hose, especially when temperatures are over 85 degrees.

Should more aggressive chemical pesticides be necessary, consult your local nurseryman. Be sure and ask for a ***miticide***. Not all chemicals are up to the challenge of mites. Among the newer products is Forbid. Some of our members, who have used it, report very positive results. Unfortunately, this product is very expensive. Fortunately, a little goes a long way. Even judicious spraying will not prevent leaves from yellowing and falling from an infested plant. Plants replace leaves once they have been damaged by spider mites, and chemical sprays will often hasten this process and sometimes contribute to it. Be patient, the plant will quickly send out a crop of new leaves to replace the fallen ones. If this doesn't happen, the damage to the plant may have been more serious than anticipated. If the branches appear dry, scrape the bark to determine whether the plant is still alive. If it is still a healthy green beneath the bark, allow it more time to recover. Just be sure not to overwater a defoliated plant as excessive watering will likely compromise the root system and end up killing the plant. [I have had excellent results using an aerosol can of](#)

[Rose Pride by Ortho or Ferti-Lome's indoor/outdoor bug spray.](#)

## Watering in the Heat

Watering well is critical to the health of hibiscus, especially during our intense summer heat. When possible, water in the mornings and let the plants dry out in the course of the day. This helps avoid fungus growth. ***But when you water, be sure to water thoroughly.*** One can easily rush along watering, fully convinced that the plants are being well watered. To make sure that I am doing a good job, I periodically turn a pot on its side and gently pull the plant out. Much to my dismay, I have found that on occasion the soil was wet only half way down. The bottom half of the plant was still dry. [This is an excellent procedure.](#) [Now do it!](#) In short order, the plant's root system could suffer major damage unless this situation is corrected. Simply flooding the plant with more water can compact the soil and suffocate the root system. More plants probably die of overwatering than from lack of water. So, what is one to do?

If I have only a few plants, I like to place the problematic pots in a bucket of water, letting them absorb the water they need (this process requires 10 to 20 minutes depending of the size of the pot and the water level in the bucket). [Let the air bubbles totally run out before you move on.](#) But this method is impractical when one has lots of potted plants. So, if I know that a plant is having trouble getting enough water, I water twice. After watering normally, I



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move on to water my other plants. Then I return to the first plant and water it again now that it has had time to absorb the first dose of water. Generally this does the trick. This past year Dupont nursery introduced a new product to their watering regimen to help improve root growth and to hinder the fungus that promotes root rot. The product is called *Watermax*. It is produced by a company called "Clean Grow." (Click on the link to find their home page: <http://www.cleangrow.com/watermax/>). According to their website: "Watermax is a noninvasive neutral pH water treatment for use in all greenhouse and hydroponic systems. By inhibiting the formation of scale, mineral deposits, and bio-film Watermax will dramatically improve sanitation. Watermax promotes healthy, faster growing plants through increased oxygen, calcium, and magnesium intake. Watermax is a safe alternative to toxic and corrosive chemicals." It is a relatively cheap product that is used in only small amounts. Amazon sells Watermax, so it is readily available.

*\*\*I have not tried this product but I'll order some and report back my findings.*

*Keep your plants happy and they will continue to reward you through the summer.....Buddy*



Keep on waterin' your babies!!

SO, REMEMBER THE PLANTS AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS NEWSLETTER? I ASKED IF YOU COULD NAME THEM? HERE'S THEIR NAMES BY THEIR NUMBERS:

1. Angel's Wings
2. Bon Temps
3. Byron Metts
4. Bayou Rose II
5. Cherry Appaloosa
6. Eye of Kali
7. Sassy Girl
8. Red Bernard
9. Victoria's Touch III (hybrid)

SO HOW DID YOU DO??



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STAY COOL PEOPLE & WATER THOSE BEAUTIES!

