



## HOOKED ON HIBISCUS

**MEETING:** Tuesday April 5, 2005 6:30 Ira Nelson Horticulture Center on Johnston St. Refreshments furnished by: Susan Gautreaux & Tammy Latiolais. We have no one scheduled for the May meeting yet. Volunteers are requested.

**FESTIVAL des FLEURS:** As a reminder Festival des Fleurs is Saturday April 2<sup>nd</sup> & April 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Blackham Coliseum on Johnston St. Please be sure to lend a hand if you have some spare time Saturday and/or Sunday. Our chapter will be there selling plants, answering questions and handing out flyers for our upcoming events.

**SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL:** As you know last month's issue was cut a bit short due to my Mom's illness. At the time, we did not know for certain whether or not she was going to pull thru. But a change in doctors was ordered and her new doctor was able to get her back on track within days of seeing her. I want to thank everyone that inquired about her and/or kept her in your thoughts and prayers. Right now she is as good as new and is looking forward to being at Festival des Fleurs and at our show in June.

**FAREWELL:** Sadly our chapter has had another family move from the Lafayette area. Joyce and CJ Melebeck have moved to Houston. As I understand it, CJ has already accepted a job with Hewlett Packard as well as Joyce & CJ's home sold within 2 days of it being put on the market! Joyce & CJ will soon join the Space City chapter in Houston. Acadiana's loss is Houston's gain. Good luck Joyce & CJ on your new venture.

**SECRETARY NEEDED:** Since Joyce was the chapter's secretary, we will have to appoint/elect a new one to fill in her vacancy for the remainder of the year. We will take nominations from the floor and then vote so this position can be promptly filled.

**LAPTOP DONATED:** One of our members, Mr. Buddy Short, has graciously donated an older laptop to the chapter. This will enable our chapter now to have the capability of making our own Powerpoint presentations as well as being able to show other presentations at chapter meetings plus at shows if we want. Thank you Buddy for such a generous gift!

Having this laptop will go a long way in being able to produce vital and interesting topics for our members to view. New Orleans chapter has done a few and I envision being able to having a Powerpoint program on just about any topic, such as grafting, pruning, repotting, winterizing, etc. We could even have the laptop in use at our shows for when people ask about flower blooms or a flower name, we could have it in the database for them to see.

While having this laptop alone is a giant step for our chapter, we need to also get some additional hardware in order to accomplish being able to view it in a classroom setting. The projectors range in price from around \$900.00 to 1200.00 or so. It is my recommendation that the chapter allot the funds needed to purchase this projector later in the year.

**BLOOMING ON THE BAYOU:** Breaux Bridge is entering into the flower festival marketplace with their own flower sale; arts and crafts & car show. It will be held downtown along the Bayou Teche on Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup>. 9 am – 4 pm.

**REMINDER FOR ALL JUDGES:** Anyone who is a judge or wants to be a judge ***MUST*** attend the Judges seminar in Baton Rouge at the Burden Center on Essen Lane on Sunday, April 17<sup>th</sup>. The seminar will begin around 11am and should end for 2pm or so. This is a must if you want to maintain your status as a judge or are interested in becoming a judge. The only other requirement is that you must judge at least 3 shows per year and we can get special permission for you to judge at our show in June. And with 3 shows in Louisiana that should be an easy requirement to fill. Why should anyone consider becoming a judge? Well, for starters it is fun and highly educational. You play a part in deciding the status of flowers as well as seeing the blooms before they are put out on the head table. You vote may even decide a seedling is worthy enough to be Best of Show and eventually lead to a future Hibiscus of the Year. Look at Bobby's Black Dragon & Etoufee', both of which are in contention for Hibiscus of the Year this year. If anyone needs a ride, please contact Rick or Sandra.

**LEFT OVER FROM LAST MEETING:** We will be voting on the 2 possible changes for Board of Directors. One is to add a 2<sup>nd</sup> VP whose duties would be primary to handle getting speakers or setting up demonstrations. The other item for consideration is to eliminate the wording "for one year" for the previous President to sit on the board. It would not have a time limit on it.

**DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME RETURNS:** Don't forget to set your clocks ahead 1 hour Sunday morning.

### **FROM THE NET:**

I know you have made this point before, but it is a very important one which is to vary the fertilizer used on Hibiscus. Hibiscus do react to change and changing the feeding will trigger blooming, every time. It is good to have a reliable maintenance mix of your own choosing, but to make additions or sudden changes in feeding like adding extra magnesium sulfate, just before the cooler weather. This does two things, triggers more blooms and helps them to set seed pods. Good doses of fertilizer every fortnight (two weeks) keeps the plants healthy and keeps the blooms coming. We have realized, in our climate, that fertilizer is put to use in 12 to 14 days. This is normal granular fertilizer not slow release pellets. Also, this isn't their response to water soluble fertilizer which is soaked up into the plant in three or four days and must be applied twice a week during the growing season. Taking away fertilizer for two months in the Winter also helps the plants to react in the Spring when you come back with a feed program again. It is a good kick start. Extra potassium nitrate in the Spring also kicks in a lot of new growth that will later provide many, many new blooms. Actually, you two don't even need to hear this advise but I want all our readers to soak up the ideas that will serve them best.

### **Hibiscusly, Larry J. In Miami**

From another reader:

Hi

Friends:

Barbara Weiss has suggested we revisit the subject of seeders. It would be good to know which of those you have that set seed best, worst, etc. Any tricks you might have in getting seeds, etc.

Along these lines, I've recently seen it suggested that painting the pads with a sugar solution (5 tsp / cup dissolved in hot water) helps to initiate the development of the pollen which grows down the tube to fertilize the ova. I'll be trying this with some that I want more seed from like Fifth Dimension, which for me is not an easy seeder - average at best. Another tip is that the application of Epson Salts, magnesium sulfate, tends to favor the development of seed and increase the seed count per pod.

Also, I found one of Larry J's posts a while back interesting in that he suggests one of the goals of hybridizing is to come up with good seeders, not as an end result but as a stepping stone to the development of new and interesting varieties.

I'm sure a lot of people will be looking forward to this discussion, as many are interested in getting into hybridizing and one of the first steps is acquiring good seeders.

From Rod Hendrick, President of Red Stick Chapter in Baton Rouge:

This article is a result of all the talk several weeks ago on Imidacloprid and spraying in the house. I put this together and had our ornamental entomologist check it to make sure that I was correct.

The soil drench formulations of Imidacloprid were put on the market to fill a gap in the product line. The 75% wettable powder works well as a spray (although you can spray or pour it on the potting, it is not formulated for that) on chewing and sucking insects. You get some scale control from the spray along with aphid and whitefly control. For scale control on stems you should add some Ultrafine oil to the mix to help hold the

material on the stems and get the added effect from the oil. The systemic control part comes in after it goes down the plant and back up to the leaves. This method of application only has scale control on the stems from the topical application, the material coming back up the stems is not in the right layers to affect scales on the stems. The granules are slow release to the roots from the application in/on the potting mix. This material comes up the inner layers of the stems and will give you scale control on leaves but not limbs. Neither application will go to buds or blooms, you have to spray it on them. This material like most of the other insecticides is pH sensitive and the pH of the spray mix should be adjusted with vinegar or other acid to 5.5-6.5 or the material will start to break down rapidly in the spray tank and may be almost inert in an hour or two. Dursban will break down almost completely in water pH of 8 in 30 minutes. Check your water pH as most drinking water in the US is above 7. Mine is 8.5 to 9.

The liquids, Marathon II or Admire II (from Bayer) have 21.5% active ingredient and while it will work as a spray on the plant it is formulated for application to the soil. The data sheet says that it works applied to the soil in trenches for insect control on vegetables or it can be applied in the irrigation water. Imidacloprid is used on a wide array of field crops, vegetables, tree fruits, ornamental production and in veterinary practice. We benefit as a very minor use. When you use the granules in the pot you get a grey mass of muck where you put it that dries to a rock later. You can pour, spray or inject the liquid in to the pot. Since it is 8.6 times as concentrated as the 2.5% Merit/Marathon granules you don't need nearly as much per pot and you can avoid the dust and fine spray particles hanging in the air and blowing around. The dermal mammalian toxicity of Imidacloprid is 4,000 and the acute oral toxicity is above 5,000 (no effects at that dose). There were no effects from inhalation tests at the highest test rate. These figures are expressed as LD50's in mg/kg (milligrams per kilogram of body weight) or parts per million (ppm). Generally this data is collected from tests using rats and may not be exactly transferable to humans and pets. It is a very good index of the relative toxicity of a material to mammals. Some materials are more toxic to fish or birds than mammals.

Knowing the toxicity of the materials you are using is very good practice. If you are looking up the LD50's on the materials that you use, be sure to get all of them. There is one for dermal application, one for ingestion (oral), one for inhalation and some times one for eye irritation. Generally these are pretty close, but sometimes there is one mode of intake that is much more toxic than the others.

LD50 means the dosage in milligrams per kilogram of body weight applied in the stated manner that will kill 50% of the test subjects in a certain time frame. Malathion and Sevin have dermal LD50s at or above 4,000 mg/kg. Phosdrin, which was used in greenhouses and on some field crops had a dermal LD50 of 6 mg/kg. I don't think you can get it any more. It was highly toxic but gone in 24 hours. DDT had a high dermal LD50 2,000+ and an oral LD50 of around 200-1,600 depending on the animal species. Aspirin has an oral LD50 of 1,500 mg/kg. Aspirin is one of the two leading causes of accidental child poisoning. The other is vitamins. Beware of Flintstones!

Another concern is the establishment of spray routines without checking for damaging insect/mite levels. This is how you get resistance built up to insecticides. Imidacloprid seems to have the potential to develop resistance in insect populations more quickly than some other materials. This may be due to its having a similar mode of action to nicotine (so the literature suggested). Spray schedules in greenhouses for whitefly control is what led the massive whitefly problems that occurred several years ago to field crops and outside ornamentals. Rotating chemicals in such a spray schedule doesn't work either. If you can't sleep if you don't spray every week, use Ultrafine oil, I don't know of anything ever developing resistance to oil, although the citrus red scale did develop resistance to cyanide gas in California.

**PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS:** As seems to be the norm here lately, I have found myself extremely short of time for the newsletter. Again, I apologize for a shorten version. It is my hope that I can once again get on track next month and return the Hooked on Hibiscus newsletter to the length and depth of information we all have come to expect.

I urge anyone who has the least desire to do something more within the chapter consider becoming a judge. We are in dire need of judges in the Texas/Louisiana region. I definitely do not regret my decision four years ago to become a judge. I have met a wonderful group of people by doing this. It is almost like a family. There are steps that you must take before becoming a judge. You will not be thrown to the lions, at least right away. ☺ And there are always others there to help you along the way.

I would also urge everyone to try and make plans to attend the convention in Orlando this June. Right now Southwest out of New Orleans has airfares going for \$39.00 on the internet. Return trips are about \$89.00. You cannot beat those prices especially with the cost of gasoline going ever higher daily. It will be my first time there for the Annual Convention as well. And the more people that show up from the Texas/Louisiana region, the more the people in Florida will take notice of us. And besides if Bobby is lucky enough to have one of his blooms as the Hibiscus of the Year, it will be good to have a showing of support from someone who has supported our chapter so much over these past few years. For without Bobby's assistance our chapter could not and would not be in the financial position we are in nor be as strong of a chapter as what we are.

Remember this chapter is ***YOUR CHAPTER***. As with our flowers, you get out of it what you put into it.

**IT WILL MAKE US ALL GROW AND BLOOM!** And everyone loves beautiful blooms!

**OOPS:** Please add June 4 Abbeville Daylily Festival to the list on the next page.