

MIKE BERNARD

ACADIANA CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

February 2008
Newsletter

Hold! Hold!

Looking at these beautiful blooms should remind us all of what is right around the corner. Springtime! Yeah baby! For me, and I'm sure for you too, it could not come soon enough.

The colder air last night (frost) brought back memories of some of my past duck hunting days and I'll use that analogy as a reminder to each of you that we are not ready yet.

We would go out to hunt and on occasion someone would bring along their well trained hunting dog. Those dogs were beautiful to watch in action and I always marveled at the incredible discipline that they displayed. We would shoot a duck and then the dog's master would say to his dog, "Hold!" "Hold!" That meant to hold steady until the master gave his command to "fetch or go". It was truly beautiful to watch that well trained dog just sit there until he was told to go. You are probably wondering where I am going with this. Well, here are my thoughts. I hope they make sense to each of you.

South Louisiana weather is rather unpredictable. That is for sure. We can be bundled up with our biggest coat one day and looking for the nearest shade tree the next. Amazing, isn't it? Unfortunately those welcome warm days tend to lull you to sleep and, if you are not careful and well disciplined, you begin to get that itchy feeling of springtime. *I know I do!* Then those pruning sheers start to come out and you can't help but clip off a few branches. Predictable? I think so! The warm temperatures persist and those pruned branches start to produce some tender new growth. *You know* that it is still toooooo early to be doing this but you do it anyway. All of a sudden, the weatherman comes on and informs us that the next arctic blast is coming our way. You realize that your tender new growth will not survive

Bloom pictures 1) Blackjack 2) High Definition 3) 4th of July
4) Cajun Cocktail 5) Rainbow Christie



the cold temperature. Have you done that? I know I have..... **way too many times!**

So what is my message to each of you for this month? As the duck hunter would say to his well trained and disciplined dog, "**Hold! Hold!**" It is not time to go yet. Be disciplined and hide those sheers. You know we'll have more colder weather sometime in the near future. So rather than getting out those sheers, start looking at websites or the pictures on our newsletter to determine what plants you want for this year. Look at your potting mix and decide if it is draining properly or do you need to make an adjustment. Maybe even change your pots of choice or change your fertilizer. They are all important and will all lead to a happier life for each of your beautiful plants.

"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass....It's about learning to dance in the rain"

The following is an article that is very appropriate for right now. It was written by hybridizing genius Barry Schlueter and deals with the topic.....

"frost and what causes it".....

There's a lot of misunderstanding about the conditions under which frost occurs. Here's the simple truth. With some of it's energy removed, steam becomes liquid water. Remove some more energy, and the liquid water becomes ice. And that's the way frost forms: moisture in the air comes into contact with a cool surface (such as a hibiscus leaf) and condenses (dew forms), because the gaseous water loses some of it's energy to the cool leaf surface. The cooling of the leaf occurs when there are no clouds and the leaf is exposed to the cold sky. When enough energy is lost, the dew solidifies into frost (ice).

It is important to understand that, while water always turns into ice at 32 degrees F and below, it is possible to have frost on leaves when air temperature is higher than 32 degrees even up to 38F! The reason frost can form above 32 air temperature is that the energy leaves the dew so rapidly (much faster than it can from air itself). So the temperature of the dew reaches the freeze point of water quicker than does water in the surrounding air. Surfaces which are more-nearly vertical, or those facing other warmer surfaces (such as a nearby house, garage, or heavy foliage), don't accumulate much dew and aren't exposed as much to the colder sky directly overhead, and therefore aren't likely to have as much frost formation.

Frost is prevented from forming by an overcast sky or other direct overhead blocking of the super-cold sky (such as a protective covering: sheet, shade cloth, etc.), or by temporary strategic heating of the surfaces on which dew would form. "Washing off the frost" from the leaves before sunrise heats the leaves (tap water is usually around 50-60 F), and frost is eliminated. Since frost generally forms in the wee hours of the morning, such washing also needs to be done then. Frost is also prevented when a rapid breeze of ambient air re-heats the dew on the leaf surface more-quickly than frost can form.

Are hibiscus hurt by frost? Yes, at least new growth can be damaged, and foliage is "burned". Actually, the surface cells of the plant tissue swell as 32 F is approached, be-

cause freezing water expands, sometimes to the point of rupturing the leaf cells. Curiously, if there is a thick enough coating of ice on a leaf surface, the thickness itself provides a certain amount of insulation, which is often to hold the actual leaf cells' temperature closer to that of the ambient air and thereby prevent damage to some plants.

So, it's a two-stage process: moisture in the air condenses on a leaf, which is then stripped of it's heat by the cold night sky to become frost (ice). To prevent frost on your bushes, cover them, or place them beneath a tree or porch overhang or provide some heat.

So now you know. I would suggest that you study this article on FROST as I intend to give a written test at our first meeting in March. Not to worry, Sandra told me she will proudly explain the technical aspects further during that meeting.....

Let me remind you that our 1st meeting of the year will be the 1st Tuesday of March which is the 4th and feature Dr. Rod Hendrick. April will feature Hybridizing and be on the 1st . That is NOT April fool. The meetings in 2008 will be at 6pm and will be over no later than 7:30. Please mark those dates down.

I look forward to seeing each of you soon.....I remain "Hooked on Hibiscus".....

Buddy

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of the American Hibiscus Society

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