

# HOOKED ON HIBISCUS

*Official Publication of the Mike Bernard Chapter, AHS*

## MIKE BERNARD CHAPTER- AMERICAN HIBISCUS SOCIETY OCTOBER 2003

### What Happened?

At the last meeting, new officers were introduced. Approval was given to create a new Board position for the Immediate Past President, which will be held by Sandra Theall. The third Board position will be held by Kirt Crain. Our BOD is now set for the 2003-2004 member year.

The budget was reviewed and approved with changes. The Chapter is solvent, but we need to work hard to improve and maintain our treasury.

Final approval was given for a donation of \$1000 to the UL Horticulture Department. I have made contact with Dr. Dennis Wollard, who will consult with Billy Jacobs about the best need to represent our memorial for Mike Bernard.

Plants were available for those members who wanted to make cuttings; instructions were provided on proper preparation of the cuttings.

A mini show was held, with flowers judged in the categories of Single, Double, Miniature Single, Miniature Double. Buddy Short, who was not present but had someone bring some flowers, won 3 of the 4 categories. Kirk Crain was also a winner.

Plans are in the works for the Christmas Party. General consensus was for it to be held at a local restaurant, Dutch Treat.

At the coming meeting we need to select a Show Chair and a Plant Chair. Bill Adams has volunteered to be Plant Chair and is looking for help.

### DATES TO REMEMBER

#### Future Meetings:

October 7

November Grafting Party Date TBA

December Christmas Party Date TBA

#### Shows:

None in LA or TX

National Membership Meeting Tampa FL November 15-16

### TOPICS OF INTEREST

The educational offering for the upcoming meeting is preparing your plants for winter. A slide show will be presented and we will make time for questions and answers. When I get my plants ready for winter, I have to cut them back severely to be able to fit them in the greenhouse. Anyone contemplating putting in a greenhouse underestimates the size needed. Mine is 10x12, with several sets of benches and shelves. I try to overwinter about 65 plants plus other plants I want to save, and 55+ orchids. If I were to leave the hibiscus at their full size, I could not get many inside. I do not do root pruning at this time, but I do give some plant food to carry them through. My greenhouse is heated

and ventilated, and we have installed several zones of watering. During the winter, I replace my summer shade cloth with a lighter-weight shade cloth to compensate for the lower levels of light during the winter months. Last year, I did lose a few plants but I think they were in a “dead zone” not receiving enough water and/or light. As temperatures fall, watering should be reduced. The loss of leaves to pruning makes it harder for the plant to transpire water to the air, allowing too much water to remain in the pot, leading to root rot. Barry Schlueter recommends the addition of the produce **RootShield**. It helps protect roots from nematodes and from fungi causing roots to rot. One treatment is probable sufficient for the life of the plant.

To properly prune plants, use bypass shears, which have curved blades. Make sure the blades are sharp to avoid crushing damage to the plant stem. Do not leave a stub when you make your cut. It is not necessary to apply any type of sealant. The cut surface will heal naturally. If you have had problems with leaf cutter bees or other pests that bore into freshly cut branch ends, place a thumb tack into the tip.

Since we are planning to have a grafting party in November, you may want to plan your pruning for that time. If possible, make your cut just below a leaf node, on a branch having several more leaf nodes. Label the branch and place it in water to keep it fresh. The label allows you to share a named specimen. Grafting wood will be available for a small fee. Supplies needed include a crafters’ knife, such as an Xacto knife. They are readily available at craft stores. Thick rubberbands are needed to secure the graft. Wax will be provided. Identification strips or tags are helpful.

. The Hibiscus Handbook, both old and new, has very good information on grafting and making cuttings.

Once grafts or cuttings are completed, they need to be protected from drying out until rooting or grafting is accomplished. If you have an old aquarium, this makes an excellent rooting greenhouse. Cover the bottom with at least one inch of pea gravel for drainage. Place your pots on this base, water well, and cover the aquarium with plastic or glass and place in bright indirect light. Do not place in direct sunlight. The aquarium will become a steambath.

Another method is to place your pots in a clear plastic bag, using 2 or 3 short stakes to keep the bag up. Water well and secure the bag around the pot and place in bright indirect light. This too will become a steam bath in direct sunlight.

## DEFINITIONS

These are some terms you make encounter with grafting or rooting cuttings:

**Bark** the softer, outer covering of a stem or root as distinct from the wood from which it may be peeled, varying sufficiently in color, texture and general appearance as to form an important means of distinguishing between species.

**Bud** the undeveloped stage of a shoot, flower or leaf

**Cambium** layer of rapidly dividing cells located between the wood and bark of woody stems and roots, responsible for their growth in diameter and the healing of wounds; of special importance in grafting.

**Cutting** a severed portion of stem, leaf or root used in propagation.

**Eye** a growth bud used in budding; a spot or ring of contrasting color in the center of a hibiscus.

**Grafting** the process of uniting a part of one plant (scion) with the stem or roots of another (understock).

**Rootstock** stock for grafting consisting of a root system along with the base of a plant.

**Scion** the aerial part of a graft combination, induced by various methods to unite with a compatible understock.

**Understock** same as rootstock

## INTERNATIONAL HIBISCUS GARDEN

The International Hibiscus Garden was officially dedicated at the Burden Research Center in Baton Rouge. Damon Veach, Ron Hendrick, Pat Hegwood and Bobby Dupont were the driving forces behind this worthwhile venture. I'm sure there are more people involve but these are the ones I know of. A couple of Hibiscus enthusiasts from Germany were in attendance. Apparently Europeans love our favorite flower also, and grow many plants there. I didn't get to talk to them. I asked Damon to provide some background but I have not received it.



## RESOURCES

American Hibiscus Society

<http://americanhibiscus.org>

The Tropical Hibiscus Mail List

<http://www.trop-hibiscus.com/ml.html>

The Australian Hibiscus Society

<http://www.australianhibiscus.com>

The Tropical Hibiscus "Queen of the Tropics"

<http://www.trop-hibiscus.com>

**NEXT MEETING OCTOBER 7 AT 6:30 PM.** Bring flowers for judging. Refreshments will be provided by Lou and Doug and Bobby and Bootsie.