

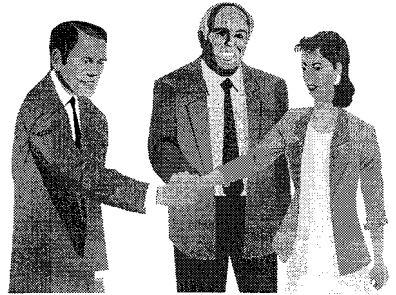
HOOKED ON HIBISCUS

Official Publication of the Mike Bernard Chapter, AHS

MIKE BERNARD CHAPTER- AMERICAN HIBISCUS SOCIETY SEPTEMBER 2003

Hello to all. The winds of change are occurring, not just with the seasons but within our Chapter. Elections were held at the last meeting. The new leadership team is as follows:

| | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| President | Gwen Williams |
| Vice President | Dan Jowers |
| Secretary | Joyce Melebeck |
| Treasurer | Ricky Meaux |
| Board of Directors | Rick Landers |
| | Dorothy Jowers |
| | Sandra Theall |



At the meeting it was proposed that the immediate vice president become a Board member. This would be a new position. Rick Landers will check with the National office to see if there is any problem with this proposal. If there is none, then Kirk Crane, who was also seeking the position of Board member, will become our new member, and Sandra will assume the newly created position. Thanks to all who accepted the challenge to serve the Chapter.

PRUNING

Do you finger prune? What, you don't know what "finger pruning" is? We all do it when we pinch back tips that are growing in the wrong direction, or where we want a plant to branch out. Chances are, if you look at your thumb and forefinger, you will notice a stain, greenish-brown in color. This may well be where the term "green thumb" comes from. If the tip pinched of is large enough, dip it in rooting hormone and put it into a loose mix, water well and set it in a shaded area. Do not let it dry out. In a few weeks, with a little luck, you could have a new plant.

DATES TO REMEMBER

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| September 2..... | Meeting |
| October 7..... | Meeting |
| November 4..... | Meeting |
| December..... | Christmas Social (date TBA) |
| March 2..... | Meeting |

ON THE WEB

Pat Merritt maintains a pictorial summary of hibiscus shows she attends. To view specific shows use: (reprinted from The Petaloid)

Acadiana: <http://www.rozpat.net/Lafayette2003show.htm>

New Orleans: <http://www.rozpat.net/neworleans2003show.htm>

AHS Convention: <http://www.rozpat.net/ahs2003convention.htm>

Lone Star I: <http://www.rozpat.net/lonestar2003show.htm>

Baton Rouge: <http://www.rozpat.net/batonrouge2003show.htm>

Space City II: <http://www.siveks.com/0703show/sccshow0703.html>

Lone Star II: <http://www.rozpat.net/2003lonestar2.htm>

To access the National site go to www.americanhibiscus.org Announcements, minutes of the National meetings, show results, application forms, registration forms, links, and more are available.

To subscribe to the Tropical Hibiscus Mail List (THML), log on to <http://groups.yahoo.com/> where you insert "THML", without quote marks, in the search box, then click Search. Click on THML. Then click on "Join the group". If you haven't already registered with Yahoo!Groups, do so here in order to join. You will be able to communicate with AHS members and international hibiscus growers and breeders.

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Jean Hebert reported that she found gall midge, characterized by bud drop and the presence of small worms in the buds, on some of her plants. It seems that Florida is having a significant problem with this pest. Jean had results by repeatedly spraying with Bayer Rose Spray.

I had a mild infestation of mealy bugs. I found Insecticidal Soap in a spray bottle at Lowes and this worked well, since it was only on 2 or 3 plants. I have had significant bud drop but repeated examination of the fallen buds have not revealed any sign of insects. I have concluded that the drop is probably due to the heat. My plants are very green and vigorous, producing plenty of buds, but few are maturing. Capistrano and Cupid's Pillow are exceptions. Donna Lynn has had a few blooms, and Rusty Nail has produced 2 or 3 lately.

The following information on the use of magnesium is from Barry Schlueter.

Magnesium is very important to hibiscus, having been present in quantity on the volcanic residues where exotic hibiscus evolved. They need magnesium for a variety of things, including it being a component of the chlorophyll molecule. Chlorophyll makes plants green and is critical to photosynthesis: the plant manufacturing food for itself.

Epsom salt supplies the magnesium (Mg) hibiscus need, but it is so soluble that it passes through the pot in a period of days to weeks if applied to the soil on top of the pot. In periods of heavy rainfall, hibiscus can be magnesium deficient within 2 or 3 weeks of having been given some.

One answer to the tyranny of Epsom salt is called potassium magnesium sulfate

Users of the Space City fertilizer may notice that Mg is absent from the formula. The reason is that including magnesium with all those other chemicals tends to form water-insoluble compounds in the bag or tub. Rocks!!

We were trying to keep the blue powder...POWDERY, for ease of use. Magnesium prevents that.

So instead of monthly applications of Epsom salt, consider applying K-Mag to your pots now, and perhaps you can make it until March with foliage still deep green and happy. Thanks Barry.

Now that September is upon us, we can look forward to slightly cooler weather. This should allow for a spike in blooming of those plants that were affected by the extreme heat. Now is not the time to slack off on feeding your plants. To encourage better blooms, you can apply potassium nitrate. Dissolve 1/2 cup of potassium nitrate in 5 gallons of water; use one cup of the mixture per 4 gallon container. Fertilize every 2-3 weeks, alternating between potassium nitrate and your regular fertilizer. The commercial fertilizers sold for use on house plants and potted plants are suitable for container grown hibiscus if they contain magnesium and small amounts of minor elements in addition to the big 3. However, be aware that fertilizers having high chloride levels should be avoided because leaf burning can result.

A complete fertilizer contains nitrogen, phosphate, and potash, while an incomplete fertilizer contains one or two of those nutrients but not all three. Note that the term *complete* as applied to fertilizer does not mean a product contains all the essential major and minor elements, but only that all three primary plant nutrients are present. A fertilizer may be complete and still lacking important nutrients such as magnesium, iron, or zinc.

ON THE AGENDA

At the next meeting we need to determine who will be Show Chair and Plant Chair. We also need to decide on a location for the Christmas party.

Refreshments will be provided by Jean Hudelot and Dan and Dorothy Jowers.

I plan to have education offerings at most of the meetings. To meet the needs of the membership, please give me your suggestions of topics you would like to have presented.

A birthday list will be passed around. No year, please. Each month, members celebrating birthdays will be recognized. We can include anniverseries. Participation is voluntary.

The minutes and the treasurer's report will be available at each meeting for review. Highlights will be included in the newsletter.

Bring your best bloom for judging. We will have 4 catagories: single, double, minature single and minature double. Winners will have bragging rights. Sorry, no prizes will be awarded