



HENDRY HERALD

JAMES E. HENDRY CHAPTER
of the **AMERICAN HIBISCUS SOCIETY**

WHEN YOU GARDEN, YOU GROW hendrychapterhibiscus.com **APRIL 2022**

In order to succeed in life, you need a backbone and a funny bone.

APRIL - a busy month for us!

April 10 GENERAL MEETING OF JEH

April 10 Palm Sunday

April 15 Passover begins

April 17 EASTER

April 22 Earth Day

April 29 Show Set-Up Day

April 30 JEH 69th ANNUAL SHOW and PLANT SALE



THE WORKINGS OF OUR SHOW AND SALE

Friday, April 29th: The committee for transportation of show stuff from storage unit to church is meeting at 9:30 to load up.

All members not transporting stuff should be at the Church by 10:00 to set up show. Plants will be arriving from Big Bad Flower, pick-up trucks will be arriving from storage unit with show equipment. BARB YEKEL is in charge of scheduling workers. See her for work assignment.

After set-up is done, pizza will be served for lunch and members can buy plants with their \$5 discount. Cashiers will take credit cards or cash.

Saturday, April 30th: Your arrival time at the church depends on several things. See BARB YEKEL for your work arrival time. Then get there earlier to set up your blooms. Leave yourself plenty of time to do blooms. Bring address labels so you don't have to write your name on exhibit cards over and over. There WILL be experienced exhibitors in the area that will be happy to help you. It's fun to win so make sure you bring blooms. Remember you can only enter 1 bloom of a variety but bring several if you have them and choose the best to enter. Any questions? Call Jack (239) 738-3706, Nancy (239) 433-5215, Barb (239) 887-3088, or Barbara (239) 542-7601, for answers.

IS EPSOM SALTS (SULFATE OF MAGNESIUM) GOOD FOR HIBISCUS

Aloha Randy, Here at Hibiscus Lady Nursery in Waialua, Hawai'i, we LOVE Epsom Salts. It is actually sulfate of magnesium, a minor element that tropical hibiscus love. It helps the leaves stay healthy and green, and we also feel it helps with blooming. For our plants in the ground or our plants in a 3-4 gallon pot, we sprinkle a handful (maybe 3-4 Tablespoons?) on the ground in the root area and water it in. For 1 gallon pots, we sprinkle about 1 Tablespoon on the soil and water it in. Warning: Don't do this more often than every 2 months. Too much or too often and you will end up with brown around the leaves which are trying to kick off the excess. Written by Jill "The Hibiscus Lady" in Hawai'i.

HY'S WAY FOR APRIL

As spring arrives the harmful insects (aphids, white flies, mealy bugs and scales) also arrive. Check all your hibiscus plants at least **once a week** on both top and under surface of the leaves.

Use Bayer systemic protection. Use it now and again in six months. The reason to use it now before you find any insect infestation, is that it takes time for the systemic insecticide to reach the upper portions of the plant. You want the insecticide in the plant's leaves **prior to the insect's arrival**. The sucking insects (aphids, white flies, mealy bugs and scales) suck the plant's sap and ingest the insecticide which is fatal for the insect. Avoid using insecticide sprays which can kill useful insects such as bees and lady bugs-the systemic fertilizer is safe for these useful insects as they are not sucking insects. If you want to spray, use horticultural soap or oil on the top and under surfaces of the leaves.

Why do you buy plants? They make you happy, of course! But there are other hidden reasons why plants make your life better. Sharing your home with living, growing things is powerful on many levels. Here's why having one plant (or 100!) helps you be your best self.

Plants have curative powers. Gardening indoors and out is more than just an interesting hobby. Growing plants produces healing powers. Studies show being around plants **lowers stress levels.**

LEE COUNTY DIVISION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

When Tony Mauriello spoke to our group, he left a bunch of handouts. One of these is a list of native landscaping plants for a variety of soils. Here is a partial list:

DRIER SOILS in the SUN: Seagrape, Lyreleaf Sage; Gopher Apple, Rusty Lyonia, Wiregrass, Blanketflower (Gaillardia), Beach Sunflower, Florida Greeneyes, Dotted Horsemint

DRIER SOILS in PARTIAL SUN: Simpson 's Stopper, Coral Bean, Coral Honeysuckle, Starry Rosinweed, Passion Vine, Yellow Jessamine

DRIER SOILS in the SHADE: Marlberry, Coontie, Carolina Wild Petunia

AVERAGE SOILS in the SUN: Florida Swamp Privet, Saw Palmetto, Sand Cordgrass, Lopsided Indian Grass, Blazing Star, Leavenworth's Tickseed, Black-Eyed Susan, Goldenaster, Sunshine Mimosa

AVERAGE SOILS in PARTIAL SUN: Dahoon Holly, Walter's Viburnum, Firebush, Beautyberry, Fakahatchee Grass, Tropical Sage

AVERAGE SOILS in the SHADE: Myrsine, Shiny-Leaf Wild Coffee, White Indigo Berry, Rouge Plant

WET SOILS in the SUN: Elderberry, Buttonbush, Saltmarsh Mallow, Narrowleak Sunflower, Yellow Canna, Lance-Leaved Arrowhead, Prairie Iris, Elliott's Lovegrass, Blue-Eyed Grass

WET SOILS in PARTIAL SUN: Wax Myrtle, Spider Lily, Bald Cypress, Swamp Milkweed, Tampa Mick Vervain, Frog Fruit

WET SOILS in the SHADE: Virginia Willow, Giant Leather Fern, Swamp Fern, Lizard's Tail

"Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise." Victor Hugo, "Les Misérables"

MAY 14th - ANNUAL PICNIC - LAKES PARK

SAVE THE DATE

MORE INFORMATION IN YOUR NEXT NEWSLETTER - NEW PAVILION B2

Vanilla Production in Southern Florida

Last month we learned that the vanilla orchid is the source of natural vanilla flavor, which is the leading flavoring used worldwide. Demand for natural vanilla continues to escalate, and the price of vanilla has likewise increased over the years. The seed pod vanilla bean produced by the vanilla orchid is the source of natural vanilla. A large healthy plant can produce about 2 kilos (2.2 lbs.) of green beans, which weigh between .3 and .4 kilos when cured; a kilo of cured vanilla beans contains approximately 200-400 beans. Seven years ago, cured vanilla beans were selling for approximately \$10 per kilo; prices are currently as high as \$600 per kilo – trading at a price higher than silver! It is easy to understand why there is such great interest in vanilla production in southern Florida.



Why is vanilla so expensive? There are a number of reasons:

1. Vanilla bean growth is highly centralized; Madagascar produces 80% of the world's vanilla beans, and 70% of that nation's population is reliant on this crop for their income. Any economic, climate or export difficulties will significantly affect crop yields and distribution.
2. Vanilla production is a labor-intensive and lengthy process; the majority of the growing and curing efforts involve manual labor. The vines are hand-planted, hand-pollinated, hand-harvested, and hand-cured. Vanilla orchids do not produce beans for 2-3 years after initial planting, so there is a significant delay in crop yield.
3. Historically there have been marked supply and demand fluctuations for vanilla. For many years cheaper artificial vanilla (vanillin) dominated the markets, but over the past 10 years the 'all natural' trend in food processing has increased demand for real vanilla.
4. Because of high demand, vanilla beans are a target for theft. Since most vanilla orchids are grown by independent farmers in third-world countries, there is very little security available for growers.
5. Climate challenges pose a threat to vanilla production; Madagascar is subject to storms and cyclones which are occurring more frequently due to climate change.
6. Demand is steadily increasing for vanilla, and China and Brazil are newly emerging vanilla consuming countries that are driving additional demand.

Increased occurrences of disease and hurricane damage have caused a decline in Florida's citrus yields which has led farmers to search for alternative cash crops. Because of the tremendous value of vanilla and the increased demand for natural flavors, interest has grown in vanilla production in Florida. Other tropical areas such as Hawaii, Puerto Rico and Mexico have established small pockets of vanilla production that cater to niche markets of brewers, herbalists, and bakers. The high labor costs associated with vanilla production would likely prevent Florida from competing globally, but demand for specialty vanilla is rapidly growing.

South Florida's hot and humid climate is ideal for growing vanilla orchids, but to ensure that the vanilla grows successfully and quickly without compromised taste, disease resistance or yield, UF researchers have been working to identify the most appropriate cultivar. For the past several years Dr. Alan Chambers, a tropical plant geneticist at the UF/IFAS Tropical Research and Education Center (TREC), has led studies on vanilla DNA gene sequencing. More than 300 varieties of vanilla orchids have been tested, and the group is close to finding a cultivar with the traits necessary to sustain a viable Florida vanilla industry. Fortunately, vanilla orchids require very little space to grow and will flourish on tropical fruit or avocado trees. Around 1,000 plants can be grown on an acre of land, and vanilla orchids can also be grown in shade-house cultivation environments.

The tremendous value of vanilla coupled with the many difficulties in transporting vanilla beans to processing facilities outside the growing area has caused Florida growers to seriously evaluate the possibility of vanilla orchid production. Since southern Florida is one of only a few locations in the U.S. with conditions to favorably grow vanilla orchids on a commercial scale, the public and private sectors have joined forces to determine how to reliably establish vanilla orchids as a crop. Now that the vanilla genome has been sequenced by TREC, scientists and volunteer residents will begin growing vanilla orchids to evaluate their growth patterns and sustainability. It's an exciting prospect for Florida farmers who are looking for a new crop that has a high yield, low growing density, and reliable profitability!

Cathy Dunn, Lee County Master Gardener Volunteer

Garden Club of Cape Coral and James E. Hendry Chapter of the American Hibiscus Society Member

Prime Time To Hybridize by Robert Gerlich, S.J.

Former President of the New Orleans Chapter

Personally, I find all aspects of hibiscus cultivation fun. Raising beautiful plants is very satisfying, and watching a graft “take” and grow, provides a real sense of accomplishment. But there is nothing quite as exciting as hybridizing. *Watching a new cultivar open for the first time is a thrilling moment. Every hybridizer strives to “create” something new and beautiful, and when that happens, one experiences the joy of making the world a bit brighter and, I feel, a bit more hopeful.*

Here in New Orleans, we can expect to be able to continue hybridizing until temperatures become too hot for flowers to produce reliable pollen -- generally mid-May in our area. Why not give it a try? Even if you have no room to raise more plants, your seeds can be sent to the AHS seed bank and distributed to people all over the world who request seeds from us.

The process of hybridizing is quite simple. Place the pollen of one flower on the stigma pads of another. The pollen grows down a tube into the ovary where the ovules (unfertilized seed) are fertilized. A pod forms and ripens. When after 9 weeks or so it turns brown, harvest the small seeds inside and plant them in a sterile potting mix.

Now that the process is explained, let me provide a bit more detail. Spreading pollen on any available bloom is what “pollen dusters” do. These are people who simply want to create something new and are uncritical about the qualities of the plants being pollinated. Hybridizers are people who seek a particular type of offspring. They choose the parents with an eye to certain characteristics — flower size, colors, bush qualities, blooming habits, etc., and consciously strive to reinforce those positive qualities expressed by the parent. I generally work with pollen parents (flowers that provide the pollen) that have good blooming and growth habits and that have good, moist and plentiful pollen. That is my general rule, but I violate it occasionally, and use a problematic pollen producer when it has a “good day” and adequate pollen. Selecting the “mother” or pod producer is just as critical, and somewhat more difficult. Not all flowers set seeds with equal ease. Only with experience in tracking numerous successes and failures can one come to an understanding of which flowers are more likely to set a pod.

Almost all flowers will occasionally set pods, while some will almost always do so. Cajun Orange Crush, Blood Shot Eyes, Pink-on-the-Mountain, and Storm Front have proved to be exceptionally good pod parents. Like the pollen parent, the pod parent should have good flower qualities and, whenever possible, superior bush habitat. My “highest priority” is good bush and blooming characteristics, and then come “size” and interesting color combinations. Choices sometimes require one to balance a number of considerations. And that is where the real skill, luck and persistence of a hybridizer become evident. Crosses have a better chance of “taking,” if they are made before noon. Both the pollen and the stigma pods are moist at this time so the grains of pollen have a better chance of growing down into the ovaries and fertilizing the ovules (unfertilized seeds) before they dry out. Some hybridizers even spray their crosses with a mist of water to help keep the pollen and pads from drying out too quickly, especially in hot and dry locations. Once the cross is made, be sure to label the flower (Mother X Father / Date of cross, if desired) so that you can later note the correct parentage of the resulting seeds.

Within a day or two the flower will fall off, and a pod will form if the the process has been successful. Over a period of a few weeks, the pods (capsule) will swell and mature. Normally this takes between 50 and 90 days, but it can be shorter or longer depending on the flower and the growing conditions — cooler weather means slower development. At any stage of the pod’s development it can abort. This may be due to insects, stress on the plant caused by uneven watering, too hot or too cold conditions, etc. Should you lose pods, don’t be discouraged. Persistence will be rewarded!!

As the pods reach maturity, they will begin to yellow and start to crack. In most cases, pods will appear to be getting ready to detach themselves from the plant. Once the pod yellows and cracks it is time to



harvest the brownish/black seeds inside. If the weather is mild, and I have the time, I prefer to plant fresh seeds immediately, as they germinate more quickly. If unable to do so, I store the seeds in a small envelope, writing the crosses on the outside, and plant them when my schedule and the weather cooperate.



THANKS TO **FATHER GERLICH** FOR ALLOWING US TO USE HIS MOST INTERESTING AND INFORMATIVE ARTICLE.

Give hybridizing a try! If you run into problems or have questions, we have several A-1 hybridizers in our group.

ARE YOU GOING TO BUY PLANTS AT THE UPCOMING SALE?

THANKS FOR TAKING ME HOME is an important essay on what to expect, what to do, how to keep your new hibiscus healthy. by **BUDDY SHORT**

Here are a few helpful hints to keep me smiling throughout this summer....

1...when I get to my new home, put me in a location that is not in direct sun. I was recently in a greenhouse environment so gradually expose me to direct sunlight. Putting greenhouse plants immediately into direct sun will cause leaf burn with your leaves turning partially white. The key word is gradually.

2...examine the bottom of my pot. For best results, my pot should always have plenty of drainage holes. The bottom of a 1 gallon Dupont pot has 16 holes. That, in itself, should tell you maximum drainage is necessary for best results. Do not put me in a saucer, as I do not like "wet feet". Flip the saucer upside down, drill a few holes in the saucer, place the plant on top of the saucer, and use it as a way to get good air circulation under your pot.

3...I am a hungry plant so feed me in small doses but frequently. Use a balanced fertilizer or one that has a higher potassium reading (last number). I do not like a bloom booster or fertilizers that are high in phosphorous. Or why not stop by our checkout desk and pick up a canister of our specially formulated hibiscus fertilizer?

4...in South Florida summers, I will probably need to be watered every day with even a possible cool spray in mid afternoon. Or look for some shaded areas to give your plants some temporary relief. As the temperatures start to cool off you should also taper off my watering. Too much moisture in cooler temperatures exposes your root systems to possible root rot or fungus. In South Florida we lose more plants to moisture than we do to colder temperatures.

5...for best bloom results I like to be slightly root bound. You can move me up to the next pot size, however, avoid putting me in a much larger pot if my size and root formation does not support that move. Pull your plant out of the pot, examine the roots, and then determine which next size pot would work best. Typically it's 1 to 2, 2 to 3, etc. Gradually move up.

6...if I should become stressed, I tend to show my displeasure by pushing out yellow leaves. I am either: too hot or too cold; too wet or too dry; getting too much light or too little; too much fertilizer or too little. Try doing just the opposite of whatever procedure you were trying. Again, pull your plant out of the pot and examine the roots. Normally that will lead you to your next move.

7...I can stand a light freeze, but if it is really windy and cold, I need to be brought inside where it is nice and warm. A greenhouse, garage, or inside room are best, so long as I can still have some light. Once the temperature gets consistently below 55 degrees, my blooms will be much smaller and less frequent. Even if it is not freezing outside, a consistent cold North wind can suck the moisture from your branches and ultimately kill your plant. Block the wind if possible.

Follow these simple points today and even throughout the year and your plants will start smiling and soon be rewarding you with maximum output. Good blooming everyone. *Buddy*

BUDDY SHORT, Secretary, Treasurer and Hybridizer Extraordinaire

MIKE BERNARD ACADIANA CHAPTER OF THE AHS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE from JACK BERNATZ

Hello to All,

Here we are, a quarter of the chronological year has passed, and we have just 3 months remaining of our Fiscal Year in the JEH Chapter of the AHS. One cannot help but notice that JEH is ready and willing to share the Wonderful World of Exotic Hibiscus. The immediate buzz of our upcoming Show & Plant Sale has required months of preparation including finding a new location. We will hold the 69th James E. Hendry Annual Show & Plant Sale at First Assembly of God Church, located at 4701 Summerlin Road, Fort Myers on April 30th 2022 from 1-4pm. As we all know, if your friends and family wish to add to their collection of Exotic Hibiscus, getting to the show promptly at 1:00 pm will serve them well to have a good selection of the 50 varieties we have to offer. Of course, we expect all you members will be helping on set-up day and will have your choice of plants after the show is set-up. Lunch will be served to all the workers and the cashiers will be available to take all credit cards or cash for any plants you want to purchase with your \$5 member discount.



We also hope that all of you will have had a chance to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.

We have been active as a group supporting other Chapters Shows and Plant Sales. Having several of our members winning many prizes from bloom entries, and just enjoying the fellowship of other groups that enjoy the Wonderful World of Hibiscus.

Let's all participate and make The 69th Annual James E. Hendry Show & Plant Sale, our best show yet!!

Wishing You all a happy and productive April. Stay Healthy and Stay Safe, hope to see you all soon.

JACK

GENERAL MEETING of the JAMES E. HENDRY CHAPTER 3/13/2022

March 13, 2022

Chapter Meeting

- 1) The meeting was called to order at 1:50 and the Pledge of Allegiance was completed.
- 2) Member Amelia Maitz's daughter Sophia were introduced.
- 3) Holly Lott and Dan Lott were thanked for coming to Berne Davis early to trim and fertilize plants.
- 4) Micki Dougherty introduced our speaker Sandy Troy Pennington and friend Lenore. Sandy brought hibiscus jam, hibiscus punch, and gave everyone a hibiscus teabag. She has you tube videos which can be accessed through sandy STP. Roselle is an annual bush which needs to be replanted every year. It's native to Africa. Many parts of the plant can be used: it has a large red calyx, it contains a large amount of protein, it's dried to make coffee, and it's also known as sorrel. Sandy encouraged us to sample the Roselle freezer jam, the punch, and/or tea.
- 5) Another activity Sandy takes part in is the SWFL Plant Swap. She said it's a very active group. She uses the "Black Manchester" specie of Roselle which she purchases from Sow Exotic Plant Nursery in Winter Haven. Her home number is 239-561-3633 for questions.
- 6) The February Treasurer's Report was given by Barb Yekel: The treasury is healthy. Wanda has collected over \$4000 in Door Prizes for our April Show and Sale. She also has over \$1850 from sponsors.
- 7) Micki announced the Garden Council sponsored luncheon on March 31. It will cost \$32 and attendees are welcome to dress the part by wearing hats and gloves.
- 8) The Convention will be July 7-10 in Lafayette, Louisiana.
- 9) The meeting was adjourned. Respectfully submitted, Joyce Yates, Secretary
- 10) Terry Martin won the \$25 50/50. Congratulations Terry!

MINI SHOW

Best Double	Mon Ami	RICHARD WALTER
Best Single	Who Dat	RICHARD WALTER
Best Miniature	Pride of Hankins	NANCY KOPP
Seedling	Determined Darlene	VALERIE COSTA



barbara oster, editor

