



HENDRY HERALD

JAMES E. HENDRY CHAPTER

of the **AMERICAN HIBISCUS SOCIETY**

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

SEPTEMBER 11-MEETING! WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO GROW FABULOUS HIBISCUS



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT JACK BERNATZ



Can you feel it? The excitement in the air, being generated by 67 members of the James E. Hendry Chapter of the American Hibiscus Society who are preparing to bring to the community our expertise in propagating, planting, and growing those magnificent, blooming, exotic, hibiscus plants.

We will start with our first general meeting of the fiscal New Year on **Patriot's Day**, September 11th. At this meeting, we will be presenting the Member of the Year Award for the 2021-2022 year. Our award-winning members will share their extensive knowledge on hibiscus, "WHAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT HIBISCUS BUT ARE HERE TO FIND OUT!"

Up next, a Plant Sale is planned in October at Rotary Park, where we will be offering to the public 350 exotic hibiscus plants of 50 different varieties.

Stay tuned to our Wonderful Web Site that is being well maintained by our webmaster Cathy Dunn, to stay abreast of the happenings in the JEH.

Our focus throughout our year will be culminated by our 70th Annual JEH Show and Plant Sale. Here we will be providing 650 Exotic Hibiscus Plants with 50 varieties to select from on April 29, 2023.

Once again I ask all of you to follow the happenings of the chapter by visiting our web site often.

hendrychapterhibiscus.com

Looking forward to seeing you all real soon. Stay Healthy, Stay Safe. Jack

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER FOR THE JEH OCTOBER 9, 2023 MEETING

MATT MARTINDALE A NOT TO MISS EVENT !

Matt Martindale, owner of Hibiscus Place, LLC. in Summerfield, Florida has announced his retirement. This may be one of the last opportunities to listen and learn from one of the National preminent of all the hibiscus hybridizers, grafters and growers on, " **What our Plants are telling us** ". There will be a plant sale of Matt's plants with many one of a kind cultivars. More information to follow as to what cultivars will be available for sale

SUBMITTED BY PROGRAM CHAIR MICKI DOUGHERTY



Hurricane Pre-pruning

Hurricane season started in June, but as the summer progresses it starts to kick up more. Healthy trees are a key part of making sure your home and landscape are ready should a hurricane head your way. When in doubt, look for a certified arborist to prune your trees. As far as palms go, avoid anything called "hurricane pruning" as this will do more harm than help to your tree.



September What to Plant

Annuals/Bedding plants: If summer beds need refreshing, try scarlet sage, nasturtium, celosia, and wax begonia for color into fall.

Bulbs: Plant gladiolus every 2 weeks to stagger blooming. Stake each plant.

Herbs: Plant herbs that tolerate the warm temperatures of early fall, such as Mexican tarragon, mint, rosemary, and basil.

Vegetables: September opens the door for more vegetables to plant. Cabbage, cauliflower, and broccoli

Shrubs: Consider placing native shrubs, like beautyberry, marlberry, firebush, and dahoon holly, where you can view the birds that enjoy them.

What to Do

Lawns: Continue to monitor the lawn for signs of insect damage. Fall armyworms, chinch bugs, mole crickets, and sod webworms are still active this month.

Fertilizer Bans: Numerous municipalities in southwest Florida prohibit the application of fertilizer to lawns and/or landscape plants during the summer rainy season (June–September). Check to see if such an ordinance exists in your area

Vegetable gardens: Prepare the fall vegetable garden if not done in August. Using transplants from your local garden center will get the garden off to a fast start, but seeds provide a wider variety from which to choose.

Perennials and bulbs: Divide and replant perennials and bulbs that have grown too large or need rejuvenation. Add organic matter to planting beds and monitor water needs during establishment.

Irrigation: Check that irrigation systems are providing good coverage and operating properly before summer rains taper off.

Citrus: Fertilize citrus with a balanced fertilizer either this month or in October. Use controlled-release nitrogen because rain will not leach it from the soil too quickly.

DON'T FORGET HY'S WAY FOR THE SUMMER MONTHS

In this hot weather hibiscus need at least an inch of water twice a week. To determine if your sprinkler is delivering that amount place several cups in the garden area and run the sprinkler for 15 minutes. If there is now 1/2 inch of water in the cup you need to run the sprinkler for a half of an hour to deliver one inch of water to the area. Also to determine if you are getting water to the plant take an 18 inch stick (like a plant stake or dowel rod) and stick into the ground to see how deep you are watering by the wetness on the stick.

With hot weather it is important to have at least 3 inches of mulch to keep roots cool and the garden area watered. Do not fertilize until you have watered the plants and water again after fertilizing to avoid burning the roots.

If you have leaves that are chewed, use snail bait (from Lowes, Home Depot or local hardware). Remember if there are ants on you plants you may have aphids. If so, treat with horticultural oil or horticultural soap and repeat twice one week apart to kill the new generations. Most important, after all your work on your garden, sit and enjoy your garden with a cool drink and read. **A garden shows that you have faith in the future. HY LANS**

HY LANS was our resident hibiscus advisor. Hy passed away in June of 2013 but his advice lives on. Our chapter has a book published "HIBISCUS FOR YOUR GARDEN" that contains all the advice Hy offered over the years. We sell the book for \$10 and it is a real bargain for the hibiscus gardener.



WATERING IN THE HEAT

Although we live in a great area for hibiscus, it is not ideal. Our coastal summers are hot and humid. We don't enjoy this weather and neither do our plants. When asked about the ideal conditions for hibiscus, I always say, "they like the same conditions we do." Moderate heat and moderate moisture are preferred by both grower and plant. Right now, we are experiencing less than ideal conditions. The heat is stressing our plants and making it difficult for us to give them the kind of care they need. Among the most critical issues is watering. Nothing is more essential to health (whether plant, human or pet), than staying properly hydrated. Last year I prepared a rather extensive discussion on the subject, and it bears repeating as more plants in containers are killed by improper watering than perhaps any other single cause.

"Watering" may seem like a "no brainer." All one has to do is open the hose and make sure the water gets into the pot. But simply pouring water on a plant does not guarantee success. In fact, plants (especially those in pots) are killed far more often by excessive watering than by drying out. In short, watering well is an acquired skill. And like all skills it requires a bit of understanding and some practice.

First the "understanding" . . . roots are the "heart" of the plant. Besides anchoring the plant in place, the roots gather the critical moisture and minerals that the plant needs and transport them from the soil for utilization throughout the plant. Simply put, the health of the plant is directly tied to the availability of water. Now for a few practical considerations:

UNDER WATERING - Under watering causes the soil to become so dry that the plant suffers systemic dehydration. Hibiscus do not like to dry out fully between waterings. Too little water will result in yellowing leaves and young plants can also suffer the death of tender growth. If the drying out is severe and prolonged, the plant might not recover. Avoid this problem by using self-watering planters, watering globes or a gravity-fed, self-watering system.

OVER WATERING - Over watering is a very, very common problem. Plants both indoors and outdoors are frequently drowned by well-meaning home gardeners. The waterer fails to appreciate the needs of the plant and operates under the misconception that "more is always better." Plants situated outside in pots are the most likely to suffer the ill effects of too much water. Those planted in the ground have the general buffering of the surrounding soil to lessen the impact of excess

watering. But pots provide a micro-environment that can become quickly overwhelmed by too much water. Over watering can occur naturally (eg. a week of storms with heavy rains) or by improper watering (eg. watering too much or watering when it is raining). Over watering leaches nutrients from the soil and causes problems for plants that don't like their feet wet (eg. hibiscus). It can lead to plant diseases caused by a variety of fungus and it can trigger damping off in seedlings.

WATERING AT THE CORRECT TIME - Outdoor plants should be watered in the morning after the dew has burned off, BEFORE the heat of the day. If possible, do not water in the evening as this will keep the soil too wet for too long. Even if the plant is a bit wilted at the end of the day, resist the temptation to water. Potted plants can cope well with a little dryness overnight better than with too much moisture. Excessive moisture over an extended period will only encourage the growth of deadly fungus. If you judge that it is indeed necessary to water in the evening, try to do so early enough so that the pots have a chance to dry out a bit before the nighttime hours.

IMPROPER WATERING - The general rule is that plants should be watered at the soil level without getting the foliage wet. Wet foliage aids in the spread of plant fungal diseases and cause sunburn on both indoor and outdoor plants, especially if one waters during the heat of the day. But hibiscus are tropicals that have developed in climates that are frequented by showers. In fact, watering under the leaves helps prevent insect infestation. But watering the leaves is no substitute to getting water on the roots. One can easily rush along watering, fully convinced that the plants are being well watered when in fact only the first few inches of soil are wet while the bottom half of the plant remains dry. To make sure that I am doing a good job, I periodically turn a pot on its side and gently pull the plant out. Much to my dismay, on more than one occasion, I have found that the soil was wet only halfway down. Under these conditions, the plant's root system would soon be compromised. Be sure to water thoroughly until the plant is well-watered and then let it dry out. Not, of course, to the point of damaging the plant, but sufficiently so that the plant is showing definite signs of needing an infusion of H₂O.

PRUDENT WATERING - Before watering your plants, remember to examine the soil carefully. Top soil will dry quickly, but it can still be quite wet just a couple of inches below the surface. If you are unsure whether you should water, you probably shouldn't. To be sure, lift the pot to see if it is heavy water is fairly heavy, 8.345404 lbs per gallon). Avoid "topping off" a plant with "just a little water" as this does NOT help the plant, but hurts it. True, the plant needs to retain a certain level of moisture in the soil but it should not be continuously wet. This condition promotes the growth of deadly fungus, deprives the soil of oxygen, and retards the development of a healthy root system.

WATERING ON A SCHEDULE - Many gardeners make the mistake of watering on a fixed schedule rather than on the basis of whether or not the plant needs water. Watering should always be tailored to the plant's needs! And those needs are dictated by the intensity of the sun, soil composition, size of the plant and the condition of the plant. In a healthy environment, wet soil dries relatively quickly as the roots bring moisture into the plant and the sun pulls the nutrient-rich water through the plant and evaporates it through the leaves. But cloudy days will slow this process down and every plant has a different rate of transpiration due to variations in leaf coverage. So be careful to treat your hibiscus as individuals. When you water, be aware that one pot might need water and the pot right next to it might need to forgo the additional moisture.

WATERING IN THE HEAT article was written by Father Robert Gerlich, S.J., former President of the New Orleans Chapter and a first class hibiscus hybridizer. It is copied with his permission.

YOU'RE NOT IN KANSAS ANYMORE!

SW Florida is a rapidly growing region of our wonderful state, and it is estimated that 6 out of 10 new Florida residents move here from other states. The Cape Coral/Ft. Myers Metro Area has the fifth highest growth rate in the nation according to Census figures, so we are welcoming many new residents from outside Florida every day. The physical beauty of our area is no doubt one of the major factors influencing people to relocate here, but it can be challenging to adapt our former gardening practices to the requirements of a year-round growing season in our subtropical paradise!



While many residents may long for the evergreens, spring bulbs and wildflowers they enjoyed in their previous homes, I invite you to experience the abundance of subtropical plants and native species that will flourish here in SW Florida. It is not difficult to create a beautiful landscape that doesn't require a great deal of maintenance if you just consider the governing principles of successful gardening in our unique climate.

In Florida your garden can experience vastly different conditions depending on the season. Florida is not called "The Sunshine State" purely for marketing purposes - most of our days are bright and sunny. As the angle of the sun changes, areas that are shaded in winter can be in full sun during the summer months. The seasonality of our rainfall can also affect your landscape; the dryer winter months give way to abundant rain in the summer that can cause soggy areas. And our soils are sandy, which allows rapid drainage during summer rains but also discourages water retention in the winter months. Because sandy soils also dissipate nutrients more readily, fertilizer requirements may be different.

So how can you best adapt to the new Florida environment that you may feel is so alien to your previous gardening endeavors? The most important consideration for gardening anywhere is to select the right plant for the right place. Observe your garden at different times of the day throughout the year to determine which areas are shaded and which receive more sun. Since some areas may be in full sun in the summer and more shaded in the winter, look for plants that will tolerate a sun/shade mix. Your local garden center can help you identify these plants. If your sandy soil dries out quickly and produces plants that appear below par, your best option is to add organic matter, such as compost, to the soil. Compost not only helps retain moisture, but it also promotes the retention of nutrients and encourages the growth of beneficial microorganisms that are vital to your plants' health. Mulch is also an easy way to help cool the soil, preserve moisture and prevent weeds – and it makes your garden beds more attractive.

One of the best ways to learn more about gardening in SW Florida is to visit the University of Florida IFAS (Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences) Extension Website. www.edis.ifas.ufl.edu. You'll find a wealth of resources here, including various Lawn and Garden Topics, Handbooks, and FAQs. Extensive gardening information for Lee County can be found at: <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/lee/?topic=home-landscapes>

Compared to your previous home, the SW Florida environment may seem quite different and challenging, but don't be afraid to experiment with the beautiful exotic plants that thrive here. Rather than wishing for the familiar plants you grew before, you can cultivate an exciting landscape that has a 'sense of place.' After all, the graceful palms and vibrant tropical flowers that grace our area surely influenced your decision to make SW Florida your new home. Reflect your joy at being in SW Florida in your garden!

Cathy Dunn, Florida Master Gardener, JEH MEMBER, Garden Club of Cape Coral Member

SEPTEMBER 11 MEETING: 1:30 enter your blooms, light refreshments, vote on mini show winner, buy your 50/50. 2:00 short business meeting followed by a very interesting WHAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT HIBISCUS BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK presented by award winning growers! 2166 VIRGINIA AVE, FORT MYERS



