



HENDRY HERALD

JAMES E. HENDRY CHAPTER

the AMERICAN HIBISCUS SOCIETY

WHEN YOU GARDEN, YOU GROW hendrychapterhibiscus.com FEBRUARY 2024



HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY



HY'S WAY FOR FEBRUARY

PRUNING YOUR HIBISCUS

When To Prune: In Southwest Florida, the time to prune hibiscus is *late February*. You do not want to prune when a frost is likely. The frost can kill tender new growth. Remember, **blooms grow on new growth**, not old growth. Pruning results in more branches which results in more flowers. Pruning allows you to shape the plant. *Pruning is not a black art. It is simple-when you know how.*

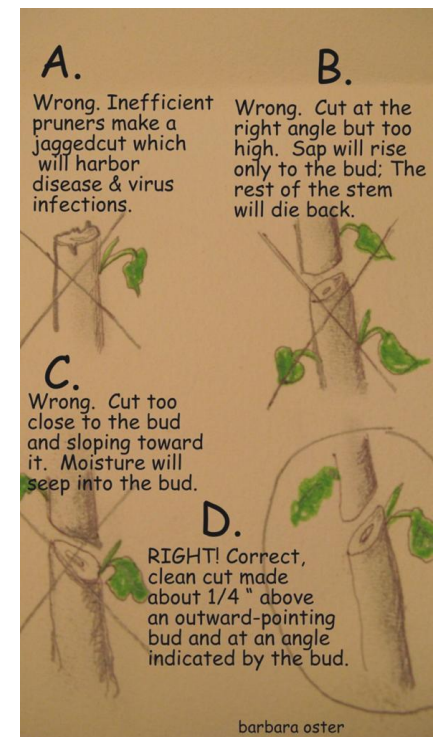
- Prune at the right time.
- Prune to an outward pointing bud. This is directional pruning.
- Cut away all dead, all crossing and weak-looking wood.
- Make all cuts clean and smooth. Use a clean sharp pruner.
- Do not leave stubs above a bud as the stub will decay.
- Remove all horizontal branches within 4 inches of the ground.
- You can remove a third of any branch (leaving at least two nodes) without hurting the plant.

How To Prune:

- Remove all dead wood. Using a fingernail or small knife, scrape away $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the brown outer bark of a branch you are not sure about. A live branch will be bright green underneath the bark; if the branch is brown or light tan the branch is dead. Remove the dead part of the branch down to where it is green.
- The general rule in pruning hibiscus is to cut the plants back one-third all over. You can leave a few old stems intact that will provide a few early blooms.
- Prune at a node. So what is a node? It is a definite bump on the surface of the stem where a branch is growing or had grown. The best node is one that has a leaf growing from it. If all leaves have already fallen off, just choose a node pointing outward and up. Be sure you cut $\frac{1}{4}$ inch above the node at a 45 degree angle to shed water.
- Remember that blooms occur on new growth and not old growth. Pruning causes new branches and therefore more blooms. After pruning, apply a foliage fertilizer in $\frac{1}{2}$ the suggested label strength.
- Very old bushes with old hard wood, large thick branches and small flowers need rejuvenation by drastic pruning. You may need a pruning saw. Saw them off two feet from the ground on a slant outward. A whole new plant, bushy and with more flowers will result.

After pruning do not overwater. Because of the loss of leaves, the plant cannot cope with excess water. Also, be careful to not over fertilize until the plant has grown leaves.

We are forever grateful to Dr. Hy Lans for sharing his knowledge of hibiscus with the James E. Hendry Chapter.



WHAT TO PLANT IN FEBRUARY [HTTPS://EDIS.IFAS.UFL.EDU/](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/)

Annuals/Bedding plants: Good performers in south Florida's mild winter include impatiens, verbena, dianthus, strawflower, and lobelia.

Bulbs: Many bulbs can be planted now. Divide large, crowded clumps. Provide adequate water for establishment. Some examples include Amazon lily, crinum, and agapanthus.

Groundcovers: Consider replacing areas of grass with drought-tolerant, low-maintenance groundcovers.

Vegetables: Winter vegetable gardening is in full swing. Last month to plant cantaloupes, cucumbers, eggplant, lettuce, peppers, spinach, and tomatoes for a late spring harvest.

Protect crops in the unlikely event of a frost or freeze.



WHAT TO DO

Lawns: Fertilize lawn grasses to improve color or coverage. Choose a fertilizer (not a "weed and feed") with 0% or very little phosphorus unless a soil test indicates the need for it. A fertilizer with controlled-release nitrogen provides longer-lasting results.

Roses: Prune roses this month to remove damaged canes and improve the overall form. After pruning, fertilize and apply a fresh layer of mulch. Blooming will begin 8–9 weeks after pruning.

Shrubs and palms: Fertilize shrubs and palms by spreading fertilizer evenly over the soil surface and watering it in. Follow with a fresh layer of mulch to conserve moisture and reduce weeds. Delay pruning any cold-damaged branches until new growth starts.

Avocados and mangoes: Disease-susceptible varieties of avocado and mango may require applications of copper fungicide.

Citrus: Fertilize now if not done in January. Frequency and amount of fertilization depend on the age of the tree.

Trees: Don't wait until hurricane season to check your trees. Hire an ISA-certified arborist to do an inspection.

See International Society of Arboriculture: <http://isa-arbor.com/>

LLOYD SIEGENDORF	FEBRUARY 6
CHARLOTTE HARFF	FEBRUARY 8
JENNIFER RICKS	FEBRUARY 10
TOM DiBELLA	FEBRUARY 12
JERRY McINTYRE	FEBRUARY 19
JUDY WEYANT	FEBRUARY 23
CAROL DOWNING	FEBRUARY 25



GARDEN COUNCIL BREAKFAST hosted by JEH Chapter of the AHS Jan 12th

Thank you to everyone who donated food and / or helped with this event. We



had a fabulous spread for the ladies. However, the highlight was our blooms! We had two "Christmas trees" decorated with blooms plus others scattered around. Whenever we have an event where our blooms are on display the number one question asked is "Are they real?" Most people are absolutely amazed!

Micki Dougherty chaired this event and did a terrific job. President Beth Meehan gave Micki a Storm Front plant as a Thank You.

Just as a reminder, about 30 different garden clubs make up the Garden Council.

Meetings are held the 2nd Friday of the month in September, November, January, March, and May. A newsletter, "The Courier", gives more information about the council and the events that they hold. This newsletter is emailed to you when it is published. As a member of our chapter, you are a member of the Garden Council and can attend any of the meetings or events.

An added bonus to our membership is that we are able to use the Garden Council Headquarters free of charge. If you belong to other groups or clubs, you are probably aware of how difficult it is to find a place to meet. Reported by BETH MEEHAN

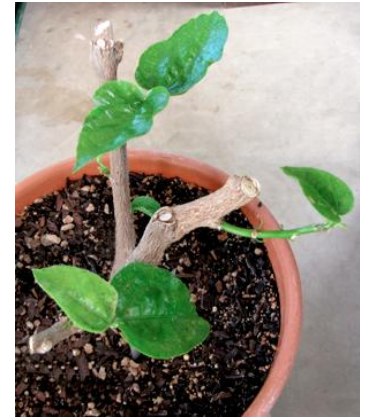


Some welcome advice from Father Gerlich.

Spring Hibiscus Pruning

If you are fortunate enough to have had your hibiscus in a greenhouse or in a warm garage or carport, you may be looking at a tall, gawky plant with few leaves and long branches. You now have a choice -- let the plant fill out and bloom or prune.

Let me offer this consideration to you fortunate few Hibiscus are tropicals and in tropical climates they may be pruned at any time of the year. Here in our more temperate climes, major pruning generally occurs during Spring. Of course, hibiscus



heavily pruned hibiscus

plants can be lightly pruned throughout the growing season into late Summer or early Fall. This promotes summer blooming, as **hibiscus bloom only on new wood**. Moreover, light pruning by pinching back the branch tips, or tip pruning, during the growing season encourage a more dense growth habit. Nonetheless, as a rule, springtime should be the only time for rejuvenation pruning. This entails a major cutting back and shaping of the plant to prepare it for the blooming season.

The trick is to cut the plant back early enough so that it has the maximum amount of time to recover before the show season begins.

If one waits too long, it could be mid-summer before the plant starts producing blooms and then the heat becomes a problem. If one prunes too early, the new growth can be easily damaged by a late frost or a sudden cold snap. I usually suggest that people keep an eye on the weather reports. If it looks like an early Spring, prune early. If the weather follows a cold pattern, then wait until it is a bit warmer. In general, I tell people that, for the greater New Orleans area, the best time to start spring pruning is during the period between the blooming of the Japanese magnolias and the flowering of the azaleas. That's a time window from mid-January to mid-February. Remember, this is only a "rule of thumb." Of course, you can prune later than mid-February, and sometimes work schedules make that necessary. But the later you prune, the fewer blooms you will have early on in the season.

Should you choose to do a major pruning on your plants, it is helpful to leave at least one or two branches intact on your rarer cultivars. That way you will have some scion wood to share.


Be sure not to overwater your newly pruned plant. With the decrease in foliage, it needs less water. Too much water will stress the plant, and likely suffocate the roots. Cold, damp and oxygen-poor soil encourages the growth of fungus and not hibiscus! Before pruning hibiscus, make sure your pruning shears are sharp and clean, preferably sterilized with alcohol gel, Clorox or some other disinfectant. This is important to prevent the spread of any disease agents from affected branches, should any be present.

Charles Black's website, Hidden Valley Hibiscus, offers a helpful description of the pruning process. Consult his website for further information.

Robert Gerlich, S.J.

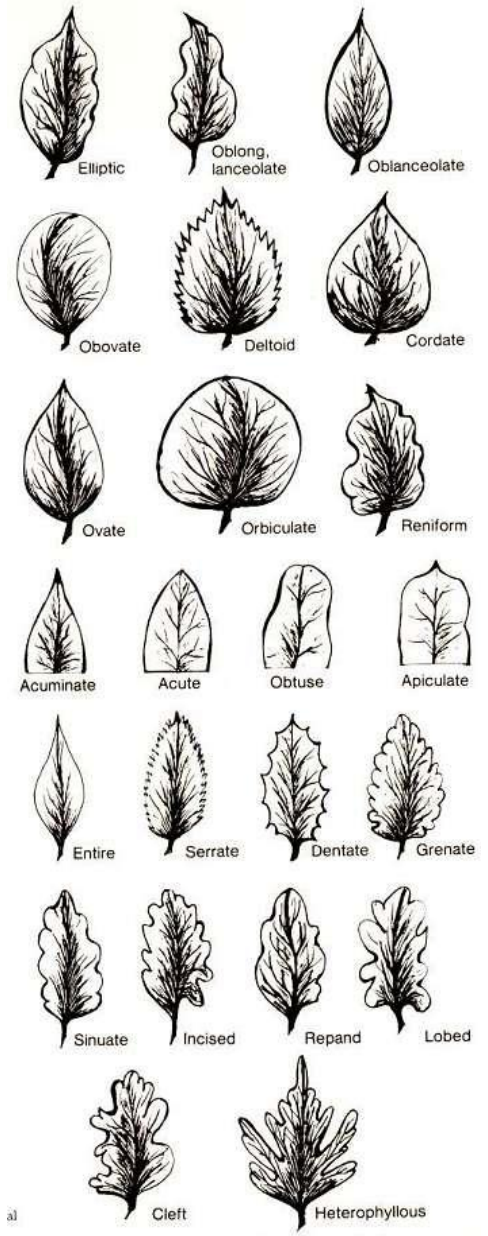
"Do not follow where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and make a trail." Emerson

SHOWN IS THE WIDE VARIETY OF HIBISCUS LEAVES

Cheap and easy greenhouse idea: remove the handles from dollar store umbrellas and insert over your tubs, bins or large pots 



Mr. Patel from Facebook showed this idea



"You can start anew at any given moment. Life is just the passage of time and it's up to you to pass it as you please." CHARLOTTE ERIKSSON

Info on the MARDI GRAS season from DAMON VEACH

Easter is early this year, March 31. And it is early. A short season means fewer parties or sometimes a busy time with multiple parties going on throughout the area. Most people know very little about this season, but if you live here, you are in the middle of the action. The colors alone mean something to all who enjoy this time of the year. **Purple represents justice**, **Green stands for faith**, and **Gold** signifies power. Now you can sit back and enjoy the season, the parties, and the food, especially the great king cakes. Have a great day - and a great period of time surrounded by the purple, green and gold.

BEWARE OF EXCESS MOISTURE! CATHY DUNN

One of the hardest lessons I've learned over the past several years is how to control moisture in my potted hibiscus – and I'm not confident that I've totally learned the lesson! When I first bought plants at one of the sales, I immediately put them in the larger pots. The roots were invariably strong and heavily intertwined in those little 4-inch pots, but I wrestled them out and put them in larger 3 gallon pots. Many seasoned growers would say that was too much of a leap, but I had good success...for a while. I put the pots on my pool deck where they had southern exposure with the benefit of the 35% SPF provided by the pool cage. Everything seemed to be going well. Then I started noticing a decline in some of the plants; I unpotted a couple and found that they no longer had those nice thick fibrous roots, but rather a fragile net of little roots. And the soil in the pot was invariably soaked with discolorations/mineral deposits around the drainage holes. What happened? My bet is that I drowned them! I didn't drill additional drainage holes, and those deposits were the salts from the fertilizer that I liberally applied. The plants that I was smart enough to move out in the garden did quite well – in fact my Kade Archer is a plant I purchased at my first JEH sale, and it's been moved twice in the garden.



What tips can I give you for avoiding excess moisture? My first recommendation is to buy a moisture meter. I was just happily pouring water on my pots because they were dry on top; now that I have a moisture meter, I can put it in the pot and see that the bottom is registering 'moist' or even sometimes 'wet.' Meters are available on Amazon for about \$14. My second recommendation is to drill LOTS of extra drainage holes in your pots. Next, be mindful of your potting medium. I was using "Miracle Gro" potting soil, and it is just too heavy for hibiscus roots. Now I buy only potting MIX (not soil) and I incorporate coco coir (available on Amazon), perlite and sand in the potting mix. I've also discovered **ProMix** potting mix; it is a very light mixture that has a consistency very similar to coco coir and I also add some perlite to help keep the mixture aerated. I have found **ProMix** at WalMart and sometimes it is available at Home Depot. It costs more than other mixtures, but we pay a lot for these plants and our goal is to keep them alive!

How will you know that your plant is suffering from excess moisture? If you have a plant that looks limp and doesn't respond with a good soaking it probably has excess moisture and has developed root rot. I have successfully saved a couple of plants in this state; I removed them from the pot (usually the soil was heavily soaked in the bottom) and put them in totally dry potting mixture. I cut off about half of the leaves to reduce stress and moved the plant to a shady spot. I spray the leaves with water a couple of times a day. When the plant starts to recover I lightly water it and continue to spray the leaves.

Hibiscus plants will suffer far more from overwatering than underwatering, so remember this when you're tempted to dump some water on your plants. One final observation – my potted plants don't seem to mind excess rainwater! Of course, the amount of water they receive when it rains is beyond our control, but I suspect that the plants are receiving great nutrients in that rainwater and I'm thankful for every little bit we receive, especially now during the 'dry season.'

CATHY DUNN, Master Gardener and JEH Vice President

THE 7 KEYS TO LONGEVITY

NEW YORK TIMES 1/14/2024

1. Move more
2. Eat more fruits and vegetables
3. Get enough sleep
4. Don't smoke and don't drink too much either
5. Manage your chronic conditions
6. Prioritize your relationships
7. Cultivate a positive mind-set

Gardening for Wellness

[University of Florida \(ufl.edu\)](https://ufl.edu)

There are a variety of reasons why one may decide to start a garden or build a beautiful landscape. It could be a passion for plants, a desire for a welcoming home, or a need to grow food. But spending time in nature and getting our hands dirty provides so much more. Working in your garden or landscape yields a plethora of health benefits and can be a major factor in boosting your quality of life. Read on to learn about a few of the benefits that you may be reaping from your gardening passion.

Reduced Anxiety and Stress

In today's whirlwind society, we're always looking for ways to decrease anxiety and stress. One way to do that is by spending time outside. Even just sitting in a park and enjoying the scenery or going for a walk in the woods can help with mental fatigue and reduce stress. There is a positive correlation between tree density and stress recovery, so the more trees the better!

For those of us who are stuck inside for most of the day, having indoor plants can help too. It's been proven that looking at indoor plants can increase attention spans, lower stress, and boost work satisfaction. Unpleasant environments take more brain power to process than pleasant environments, which explains why we feel calmer and have a greater mental capacity when we view plants and nature scenes.

Better Memory

Research has shown that people have a better working memory after walking through a green arboretum than they do after walking through a busy urban area. Nature exposure boosts memory and attentiveness in children as well.

Greater Happiness

Interacting with nature is so powerful that it can raise self-esteem, lower anger, and boost positive emotions or behavior. The presence of water further promotes these benefits. As this relates to lifestyles, people who are more focused on nature and sustainability tend to have a more positive outlook and be more satisfied with their lives than those who prioritize nature less.

Interestingly, more species diversity is also connected to personal and community well-being. There are plenty of other reasons to have a diverse landscape (such as benefits to wildlife), but research is also showing that biodiversity is best for people. We mentioned previously that greater tree density is better for stress. Well, it's also better for our perceptions of our health in general. A block with 10 or more trees, on average, causes personal health perceptions to improve in ways proportional to a \$10,000 raise or being seven years younger¹. If you're feeling inspired by that statistic, then you can start researching [Florida-Friendly trees to add to your yard](#).

Increased Creativity

Humans have been inspired by nature for as long as we've existed, but did you know that spending time around plants elevates creativity in general? If you work in a team, you can try outdoor "walking meetings" to help with brainstorming. Given nature's effect on brain function, it's no surprise that increased creativity is a byproduct.

Higher Productivity and Attention

If you find it hard to pay attention and stay productive at your job or during projects at home, greenery may help. The combination of nature views plus sunlight streaming in is linked to higher productivity and attention span. Viewing plants reduces stress, so this frees up more brain power for getting through your to-do list. In addition, the air-purifying qualities of plants and the fact that they release moisture into our dry indoor air helps with physical health. The better we feel, the easier it is to focus.

Now that you know more about what plants and gardening are doing for us, think about what you can do to better harness these benefits. Do you have a space where you can take a walk each day? Are there any houseplants that you can add to your home or workspace? Do you have a few more hours that you can devote to interacting with your garden or landscape each week? As we've learned, the more you focus your life on nature, the more nature can do for your personal wellness.

JAMES E. HENDRY CHAPTER MEETING

January 14, 2024

President BETH MEEHAN led the Pledge, introduced Past Presidents who were present, and welcomed guests: NORM ELLISON, MARILYN ELLISON, CYNTHIA TERRY. New members present were DEBBIE MESSNER and RICHARD MESSNER.

Minutes were accepted as published. The Treasurer's Report showed a healthy balance. The Report was accepted.

New Business

*MICKI DOUGHERTY was acknowledged and thanked for organizing the Garden Council breakfast

*Our next plant sale will be January 20th at Covenant Presbyterian Church on McGregor Blvd. CATHY DUNN and NANCY KOPP are Co-Chairs. CATHY reported on the advertisements in progress. There will be 400 plants that will be picked up at the nursery in Sarasota by NANCY, CATHY DUNN & JERRY McINTYRE and JOYCE YATES on Friday morning. Set up will be from 8-8:30 and the sale starts at 10:00.

* VALERIE COSTA and MICKI DOUGHERTY presented the program on Hibiscus Important Facts which covered how to report your new 4 inch pot babies, types of soil for the pot, good fungicides, winterizing, preparing blooms for a show, how to open a bloom, taking care of bugs (gall midge, thrips).

MINI SHOW WINNERS:

Amateur	Single	3 Way Tie	
	Rosalynn		DENISE HELFRICH
	UNK		PAUL YEKEL
	Moorea Boondah Boo		CATHY DUNN
Double			
	Midnight Madness		TERRY MARTIN
	UNK		TERRY MARTIN
Seedling	Single		
	Nicole's Rainbow		VALERIE COSTA
Seedling			
	UNK		TERRY MARTIN
		GATOR MAGIC	
Mini Double			
	Gator Magic		JULIA MURRAY
Mini Single			
	Hawaiian Salmon		TERRY MARTIN

Submitted by JOYCE YATES, Secretary



Message from President BETH MEEHAN

January has been a busy month for us. First, hosting the Garden Council Meeting, and then having our plant sale at Covenant Presbyterian Church.

The plant sale was a success! No, we did not sell out, but that is ok, in my opinion. That meant that everyone who came to the sale had a selection to choose from. I believe this is so much better than selling out in a short amount of time and then losing customers.

We also had our first look at the church, which will also be the venue for our big Show and Sale on April 6. We were very happy with the location, the kitchen facilities and the layout in general. Covenant Presbyterian Church was very accommodating and, hopefully, we can continue to hold events there. We had several people say they had trouble finding the entrance and parking. If we can be consistent in where we hold our events, our customers will be better able to find us.

A huge THANK YOU to all the volunteers. It's a huge amount of work to bring in 400 plants, set up the hall, sell the plants and then clean up afterwards. The Chapter needs everyone's help. A special thanks to **CATHY DUNN** and **NANCY KOPP** who chaired the event.

As mentioned above, we do have some plants remaining. We will offer these to members at a future meeting. Please watch for details in future email announcements. Best wishes **BETH**

A Green Menace! by CATHY DUNN

Shortly after I moved to SW Florida I was walking in my garden and noticed that several branches on a standard hibiscus had been defoliated overnight. I walked over to the shrub and unwittingly began inspecting the branches when I received a vicious sting. At first, I thought I had encountered a wasp, but upon closer examination I observed a large bright green caterpillar. I would soon learn that the caterpillar did indeed sting me, and that it was a true green menace!



The caterpillar in question was an Io Moth Caterpillar, one of seven species of *Automeris* moths, with a geographic range from Canada west to Utah and south to Costa Rica and Mexico. The caterpillar can reach lengths of 2.5 inches and is bright green with a yellow-white and red stripe; its body is covered in tufts of black-tipped yellow-green spines. These spines are hollow and break off easily, embedding deeply into skin. When the spines break off, they release a substance known as urticating venom, which causes a sudden burning or stinging sensation. The affected area may redden and begin to itch and turn red; some individuals experience allergic reactions which require medical attention. I had quite a reaction to the sting with raised red itchy welts that lasted for several days. If you have the misfortune to be stung by one of these caterpillars immediately cover the area with cellophane tape, which when removed will extract the tiny spines. Wash the area carefully and apply ice and a baking soda and water paste to help relieve pain; you should also observe the area for any signs of a serious reaction. If you have observed Io Moth Caterpillars in your gardens please be sure to warn young children as they are often attracted to these colorful caterpillars.

Unfortunately for us, the Io Moth caterpillar is present year-round in our warm climate and some of its favorite food is available in abundance. The caterpillars feed on a wide variety of plants including hibiscus, royal poinciana, Washington fan palms, red mangroves, elms, and willows. The female moth lays small clusters of 20 – 35 creamy white eggs along the stems and ribs of the leaves on host plants. During her brief life span a female will lay several hundred eggs; adult Io Moths do not have functional mouthparts and cannot eat, so their lifetime is only one to two weeks. Around 10 days after being deposited, tiny 2 to 3 mm larvae emerge and begin to gorge themselves on the host plant. The caterpillars develop through 5 instars, or phases between two periods of molting, and each instar possesses urticating spines. The first instars are yellow to orange or brown in color and are present in groups; these early instars are usually present on the underside of leaves and can be difficult to observe. The final instar is the familiar lime green caterpillar which is solitary; after 4 weeks the mature larva spins a loose silken cocoon among debris on the ground or in crevices. The adult moths emerge in several weeks and are primarily active at night; given their short lifespan they breed almost immediately after leaving the cocoon.

What are the signs that you have an Io Moth Caterpillar problem? The caterpillars can defoliate a shrub almost overnight, and this is generally your first indication that you have an issue. Another clue is the presence of 'frass' or excrement; all that voracious eating produces an abundance of small dark pellets! The caterpillars are often difficult to see as they are the same color as new leaf growth, and the initial instars are quite small and cluster together on the underside of leaves. One thing is certain – if you see one Io Moth Caterpillar there are more in the area! If you see signs of an infestation, make sure you wear gloves and very carefully search for the caterpillars. The best way to deal with these pests is to knock them to the ground and step on them or cut them in half with pruners as I do – just be careful not to touch them. Pesticides are not recommended as they are not effective for 1-2 days and the caterpillars can do a lot of damage in that span; pesticides also negatively impact other beneficial insects and butterflies.

CATHY DUNN is a Lee County Master Gardener and JEH Vice President

barbara oster, editor TERRY & ELAINE MARTIN, MAILERS

