



# HENDRY HERALD

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

**WHEN YOU GARDEN, YOU GROW** [hendrychapterhibiscus.com](http://hendrychapterhibiscus.com) **AUGUST 2024**

## 2024 AMERICAN HIBISCUS SOCIETY CONVENTION

The American Hibiscus Society AHS convention was held June 21 & 22 in Houston. JEH had 6 attendees: **JILL BRESLIN, VALERIE COSTA, MICKI DOUGHERTY, DENISE HELFRICH, NANCY KOPP** and **BETH MEEHAN**.

The first day was primarily AHS business topics. Second day was business, educational breakout sessions followed by the awards banquet. The newly elected President of AHS is **OTTMAR SCHIMEK**.

Beth gave the 2024 Presidents report for JEH which summarized our year of activities related to show, sales, meeting topics and membership.

Beth was recognized as becoming the new AHS historian and shared her goals of preserving AHS historical information, memorabilia, and legacy member plants.

Denise took part in the new AHS board member swearing in as Director representing Florida. Congratulation goes to our members who received the following awards:

- A. B. Morrison Award for Exhibitor with the most "Best of Show" Seedlings in 2023 – **VALERIE COSTA**
- Gold Seal Sweepstakes 2023, Collector for Florida - **VALERIE COSTA**
- Gold Seal Sweepstakes 2023, Open Collector for Florida – **MICKI DOUGHERTY**
- Presidential Award for Best Newsletter – **BARBARA OSTER**

Seedling of the Year, **SOTY**, 2023 is **BIG POPPA** from **Robert Gerlich/Dupont**; #2 **EVANNA'S JOY** from Matt and Barbara Martindale; #3 **PAUL FELSBURG** from Todd and Janelle Alvis.

The dinner concluded with a silent auction that JEH attendees donated items for sale. Next AHS convention will be held near New Orleans June 20 -21, 2025. **DENISE HELFRICH**



New AHS Board Members



Most "Best of Show" Seedlings  
Valerie Costa



Gold Seal Sweepstakes  
Collector (Fla) - Valerie Costa



Gold Seal Sweepstakes  
Open Collector (Fla) - Micki Dougherty



Best Newsletter Award  
Barb Oster

# AHS SEEDLINGS OF THE YEAR 2023 (SOTY)



**EVANNA'S JOY**



**PAUL FELSBERG**

## #1 BIG POPPA

### Weekly Tip: from DRIFTWOOD GARDENS

Hot summer months are at hand. Check your watering supplies to make certain that you are prepared to keep your landscape hydrated. Many landscape plants, especially vines, hibiscus, annuals, and perennial plants, and anything recently planted in your landscape, need lots of water in this summer heat! Make sure to check on them even though it rains, plants can still dry out very quickly in the heat of the day.

### Nuisance Birds also from DRIFTWOOD GARDENS



We love birds. We observe them with enjoyment. We provide food, shelter, and water for them. Sometimes, however, birds can become a nuisance, like when they eat the fruit that we have carefully nurtured to maturity. Without causing harm to our fine-feathered friends, there are numerous methods available to control problem birds right now:

- **Owl Decoy** looks like a large predator bird, keeping problem birds at a distance.
- **Garden Netting** may be draped directly on the plant(s) to prevent birds from consuming the fruit or thrown over a frame built taller than the fruiting plant.
- **Rubber Snakes** will frighten most birds. Be sure to reposition them daily to outwit the more intuitive birds.

**Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant."**

– ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

**No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted."** AESOP

We will need cuttings for our **AUGUST 11 GRAFTING WORKSHOP**. I know many of you might be planning to prune your plants, and we'd like to request that you reserve a branch or two for use in our grafting workshop. **We need woody cuttings from Big Bad Flower varieties**, so if you have any of these varieties that you are planning to prune, please save us a branch or two for August 11th!

Ideally cuttings should be made the morning of our meeting; if you need to make cuttings prior to Sunday the 11th please put them in a glass of water to save for Sunday. All cuttings should be labeled with the variety name and wrapped in wet paper towels and placed in a plastic bag to transport to the meeting.

hope that your rootstock is taking off, and if not we will have plenty of plants for you to use for your grafting.

I look forward to seeing you on August 11th for our grafting workshop! Once you learn how to graft, you'll be able to start lots of new varieties or even create a multi-variety plant!

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. Cathy

Occasionally in this wonderful hobby, you run across information that is so profound and right on the money that few, if any, changes or adjustments need to be made. Such is this article entitled "Defeating Summer's Two Greatest Killers". This article was written by our friend and New Orleans chapter member and former President, Father Robert Gerlich. I have added a few personal comments in blue as most of these procedures have been tried by me with successful results. If possible, you should save this article so that you can refer to it on a continuing basis. IT IS THAT GOOD!!!! BUDDY

### Defeating Summer's Two Greatest Killers: Spider Mites and Improper Watering

I wrote about these dual threats to our plants' health last year, but the threat remains. So I thought it important to repeat my discussion as both mites and improper watering practices are prime causes of plant fatality during the summer heat. From what I have been able to judge, the only creatures that flourish in our summer heat are the bugs! Hibiscus begin to languish as temperatures climb into the 90s. But as they struggle with the heat, the opportunistic bugs flourish. Heat and high, dry temperatures provide the ideal conditions for perhaps the most pernicious and damaging hibiscus pest -- spider mites. Our recent rains will help to hold down the mite populations, but they will spread quickly if we have an extended period of high pressure with its dry, hot temperatures.

Spider mites are not true insects, but tiny members of the arachnid family -- spiders. Nonetheless, they are terrible pests capable of causing serious damage to hibiscus as well as to any number of other plants. Their feeding leaves holes in the leaf surface from which moisture escapes, leading to rapid desiccation. The leaves yellow and dry quickly. If unchecked, the mites can even kill the plant — a fact most of us know from sad experience. In most cases, however, mites seldom kill large plants if treated. Smaller plants and young seedlings can quickly succumb to the toxic chemicals injected by mites as they feed. So pay especially close attention to younger plants, checking under their leaves frequently for signs of mites. Spider mites, like all garden pests, are best dealt with early and with the use of as little chemical poisons as possible. Thus I recommend that you make a habit of following this simple procedure:

- Monitor plants regularly. Isolate newly purchased plants until you are sure they are bug free. *We could all do a better job in this area. Don't let the excitement of a few new plants get the best of you. Always isolate first.*
- Practice prevention. Since mites favor dry, dusty conditions, keep the plants free of dust and the humidity high to discourage them from multiplying. *My best procedure is blasting or washing off my plant leaves each day.*
- As soon as you find signs of an infestation, use the lowest toxic level of treatment. *Watch for ants at the same time. Ants = aphids*
- Move to more toxic chemical controls only if necessary and warranted. If you catch mites early and give them a daily blasting, this may not be necessary. Pay attention.
- Rotate miticides (chemical pesticides specifically designed to kill mites) so that they remain effective. Mite infestations will quickly build up a tolerance to chemical poisons when misused or overused. Read directions carefully before using any chemical product and use recommended precautions!

The most low tech and least toxic approach to treating mites is to spray under the leaves of the plants with a sharp jet of water. This method is effective but it requires persistence. Yet, even an occasional treatment will help retard the growth of mite populations. For best results, "hit" the plant twice a day for a week. *I agree 100% with this statement. Blast away.* Charles Black of Hidden Valley Hibiscus is a proponent of this method and offers a good discussion on mites on his website. See our website at [www.acadianahibiscus.com](http://www.acadianahibiscus.com) under Hibiscus Doctor. *Exceptional pictures.* Minimally toxic sprays include insecticidal soaps and horticultural oils. One product, Mite-Rid, a neem oil based product, claims good results, but I have never used it. In our heat, oil-based and soap sprays can be problematic. If they are applied too heavily, they suffocate the leaves, defoliating the plant. To avoid



this from happening, spray in the “cool” of the evening and “wash off” the plants the next morning with a hose, especially when temperatures are over 85 degrees.

Should more aggressive chemical pesticides be necessary, consult your local nurseryman. Be sure and ask for a miticide. Not all chemicals are up to the challenge of mites. Among the newer products is Forbid. Some of our members who have used it report very positive results. Unfortunately, this product is very expensive. Fortunately, a little goes a long way. Even judicious spraying will not prevent leaves from yellowing and falling from an infested plant. Plants replace leaves once they have been damaged by spider mites, and chemical sprays will often hasten this process and sometimes contribute to it. Be patient, the plant will quickly send out a crop of new leaves to replace the fallen ones. If this doesn't happen, the damage to the plant may have been more serious than anticipated. If the branches appear dry, scrape the bark to determine whether the plant is still alive. If it is still a healthy green beneath the bark, allow it more time to recover. Just be sure not to overwater a defoliated plant as excessive watering will likely compromise the root system and end up killing the plant. [I have had excellent results using Triazicide hooked to the hose for broad applications and, for individual applications, using a newly developed aerosol can of Triazicide or Ferti-Lome's indoor/outdoor bug spray.](#)

### **WATERING IN THE HEAT**

Watering well is critical to the health of hibiscus, especially during our intense Summer heat. When possible, water in the mornings and let the plants dry out in the course of the day. This helps avoid fungus growth. But when you water, be sure to water thoroughly. One can easily rush along watering, fully convinced that the plants are being well watered. 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, I have found that on occasion the soil was wet only half way down. The bottom half of the plant was still dry. [This is an excellent procedure. Now do it!](#) In short order, the plant's root system could suffer major damage unless this situation is corrected. Simply flooding the plant with more water can compact the soil and suffocate the root system. More plants probably die of overwatering than from lack of water. So, what is one to do?

If I have only a few plants, I like to place the problematic pots in a bucket of water, letting them absorb the water they need (this process requires 10 to 20 minutes depending on the size of the pot and the water level in the bucket). [Let the air bubbles totally run out before you move on.](#) But this method is impractical when one has lots of potted plants. So, if I know that a plant is having trouble getting enough water, I water twice. After watering normally, I move on to water my other plants. Then I return to the first plant and water it again now that it has had time to absorb the first dose of water. Generally this does the trick.

[Here are a few little extras....since 95% plus of my plants are in pots, I have tried 3 additional ideas.](#)

1) [Find yourself some finely ground mulch \(Gardenese has one called Soil Conditioner\) and mulch the tops of your potting mix. That will help keep some moisture in your pots and keep most of your mix from totally drying out. That works for me.](#)

2) [If your plants are in pots, then, if possible, move them to a shadier location. Three to four hours in this brutal sun is just too much. Move them and they will smile at you. Survival is more important than a few extra blooms!!](#)

3) [I'll bet you if your plants are in complete sun for most of the day then your leaves are bleaching out. Find that Epsom Salt and give each plant a monthly application. That will bring back some coloring in your leaves. Most members forget that.](#)

[And finally, if you want to try something different: double pot your plants. Example: place a 2 gallon pot inside a 3 gallon one. That extra insulation will be helpful.](#)

[Keep your plants happy and they will continue to reward you throughout the summer .....Buddy](#)

[Once again, we are using some fabulous information from two of the premier hibiscus growers/hybridizers in the United States. We thank these gentlemen for allowing us to copy their information. barb](#)

[PS Blue type is Buddy Short's words, Black type is from Father Gerlich](#)

## TAKING TIME OFF

## Notes from President CATHY DUNN

It seems that throughout our lifetimes, we are accustomed to taking time off during the summer. I don't know about you, but I still feel that strong pull of having 'free' time on the weekends (even though I've been retired for more than 10 years!) and the sensation of being released from responsibilities in June until it's time for activities to gear up again in September, much as they did when we were in school. It's always good to have some time off, and our plants feel the same way! The intense heat and frequent rainfall we experience during the summer months affects our plants just as it affects us – they get sluggish and a little cranky. Leaves turn yellow, gall midge infestations seem to be in full force, mealybugs suddenly appear, and we aren't supposed to fertilize here in Lee County until October 1. It's daunting to even try to work out in the garden unless you go out very early, so just think how your plants feel – they can't take a break from the sun and come inside for a cool drink. They're trying to endure this brutal weather just like us and hang on until fall when they can start to put energy into blooming rather than surviving. I've asked several of our knowledgeable members how they manage their plants during the summer, and the consensus is that they give them time off. No heavy drenches, no big doses of fertilizers, just some spot treatment for pests that you might find. Most of our experts feel that the plants will respond better to treatments when they've been given a little break, and as Valerie pointed out fertilizers and pesticides are usually cheaper in the fall when demand has fallen. I always walk through my garden every morning to pick off all the yellow leaves, yellow buds, and any spent blooms on my plants because I consider it therapy for me and the hibiscus – they can put their energy into maintaining those healthier leaves and I can look out and enjoy a sea of green leaves without blemishes! Plus, I can see any issues that may need my attention, rather than finding a sick plant later in the week. Our chapter will be taking the month of July off this year, and the Board has agreed to take off July and August before we begin our 2024-2025 season in September. I'm a true believer in taking time off, especially when it's 93 degrees and the humidity index is in the upper 90s' as well! I hope you'll be able to enjoy some down time over the next few weeks, and that you'll use some of your 'free time' to check out our Facebook page for the latest news, take a look at all the events and pictures on our website, and start to plan for the varieties that you want to add to your collection at our October 19<sup>th</sup> sale at Rotary Park!

## THE QUEEN OF THE NIGHT

## CATHY DUNN

Growing up in Southern Virginia, I remember hearing my grandmother and mother talk about a magical plant – the Night Blooming Cereus. The plant took on a mysterious aura for me, especially since I never saw one either at a friend's home or for sale in a garden center. Several years ago, a friend acquired a plant from a fellow garden club member, and when she was giving away plants before moving back North, she asked if I wanted any of her plants. I excitedly said, "I'd love a piece of the Night Blooming Cereus!" I inherited the entire plant, which I promptly put into a very large pot to keep on my lanai. Then I added a trellis to the pot because the plant seemed to be growing overnight and it appeared intent on climbing. I knew the plants usually flower after several years in a pot, so I somewhat ignored my new treasure, other than watering it regularly.



Imagine my surprise when 5 buds appeared! The buds were tiny at first, then seemed to grow exponentially. Three buds didn't progress very well and dropped off, so I was left with 2 buds to observe. Each day I was amazed at how much the buds grew overnight; pale pink 'tendrils' embraced the growing white inner flower. After about 3 weeks, the buds were 6 inches long and one morning I noted a slight 'opening' of the buds. I wasn't sure how long it would take the buds to fully open, but I suspected that it would be within a day or two. During the day I marked the progress of the buds and decided that they would open that night. At dusk, the flowers were beginning to swell and expand, and by 9 PM they had started to open. The scent was intoxicating! By midnight the flowers were fully opened, and when I walked through the sliding door to the lanai the sweet scent from those two blooms was overwhelming. The next morning, the flowers were closed and over the following days they slowly wilted and fell off the plant. (I have since learned that you can pick the flower at night and store it in the refrigerator so you can admire it the next morning.)

The Night Blooming Cereus is a type of orchid cactus native to rain forests, where it grows high in the trees. As it grows in a riot of tangled 'leaves' the plant can reach 10 feet, which is why a

trellis is often recommended. As a member of the cactus family, the cereus plant does not have true leaves. The plant produces pencil shaped stems that allow the plant to climb, and flattened stems that resemble and function as leaves. 'Leaves' that have been on the plant for 2 active seasons produce the flower buds, which form on the indentations of the notched 'leaves.' In most areas the cereus is a houseplant that enjoys summers outside, but here in SW FL it thrives year-round in our subtropical climate. The plant requires bright light, preferably morning sun as the stronger afternoon rays can burn the 'leaves'. The cereus should be planted in well-draining soil and allowed to dry between regular watering. A water-soluble fertilizer is recommended during the spring, although I never applied fertilizer and my plant grew at warp speed. The cereus is a classic 'pass-a-long plant' and can be propagated by easy to root cuttings.

The Night Blooming Cereus proved to be a highlight of my gardening adventures here in SW FL. After hearing of this mystical plant for my entire life, I was elated to acquire a cereus plant and to be rewarded with blooms so quickly. Since I didn't have an appropriate shady place for this large plant in my garden, I divided the plant into 6 individual plants that I distributed to several elated friends. I'll never forget the experience of having this magical plant, and I'm happy that my friends have enjoyed the opportunity to raise this unusual gem.

**CATHY DUNN, President of James E Hendry Chapter, Master Gardener**



## CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

Each year the JEH Board considers the feasibility of making a charitable contribution to worthy non-profit organizations in our community. This year, we had 3 successful sales that provided sufficient income for us to contribute a total of \$1,500 to 2 excellent organizations in our community. The Board voted to donate \$1,000 to the Community Cooperative, an organization in Fort Myers that provides Meals on Wheels, Mobile Food Pantries, Growing Healthy Kids programs, Social and Education Resource Centers, and Sam's Community Café Kitchen and Community Market. Founded in 1984, the Community Cooperative annually assists more than 174,000 men, women and children in the greater Lee County by providing 2.2 million pounds of food, 105,000 meals delivered through Meals on Wheels, and 246,000 meals cooked and served in the community café kitchen. The Board also voted to

donate \$500 to The Calendar Girls of Florida, a song and dance team made up of 30 women over age 60. The group is available to perform for other non-profit organizations, nursing homes, parades, banquets, parties and many other venues and community functions throughout Southwest Florida. The Calendar Girls support the Southeastern Guide Dogs as their favorite charity. This program provides guide dogs to visually impaired veterans, youth and children. You should be proud that your support of our sales helps to provide funds to 2 organizations that are making a big impact on our community!



## APHIDS IN THE GARDEN

## INFO from DRIFTWOOD GARDENS

Aphids are one of the most common and destructive garden insects. They weaken and damage plants by sucking on tender tissue. Aphids, at a minimum, can disfigure plants, or, with a heavy infestation, they can annihilate them by weakening growth and spreading viruses.

Scout for garden pests regularly. It's best to control aphids early, and fortunately, controlling them is fairly easy with an application of the 3 in 1 Bioadvanced pest spray or insecticidal soap. Beneficial insects, such as ladybugs, provide another effective control method as they are insatiable consumers of aphids!

It is especially common to see more pests in our summers with all of the humidity. Most plants are better able to withstand an onslaught of garden pests if they are healthy to begin with. Using organic soils, composts, fertilizers, and mulches will ensure that your plants are strong, vigorous, and ready to deter the enemy.



