



Hibiscus International

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SPECIAL POINTS
OF INTEREST :

- > **Presidents Message**
- > **Page 1 & 2**
- Editors Report Page 2**



Tah. Brown Starfire



Tah. Copper Queen

PRESIDENTS REPORT

Hello Hibiscus Friends:

The IHS continues to make progress on some fronts, most aspects are running well and we have suffered set backs on others.

On the up side, the IHS Seed Auctions run by Kes Winwood have been very successful and the revenue will eventually be put to good use. For any wishing to contribute seed for the auction, just 5 seeds of a given cross is fine, please contact Kes at: keswin@wightman.ca

Hibiscus International, our cyber magazine, is doing very well with Jim Purdie as editor. Should any of you have anything to contribute, please contact Jim at: jpu11707@bigpond.net.au.

Our seed bank is still functional under the expert care of Peter E. Moll. Should anyone wishing to receive or contribute seed, please contact him at pelimo01@yahoo.com.br

The TPC and SOTY competitions are functioning well, again due to the most appreciated efforts of Jim Purdie. We are still trying to find ways to encourage people to enter candidates in the SOTY competition, and hopefully, slowly we will succeed. Nina has been very helpful as the HOTY coordinator, and recently the BOD decided to permit all trialing stations to also be voting judges, so this will add more expertise to aid in making our selections.

A setback has occurred with the original IHS Latina, which was founded by myself on behalf of the BOD with their approval for Spanish Speaking hibiscus enthusiasts. Members of IHS Latina were full fledged members of the IHS benefiting from its democratic base. From the beginning we had difficulty getting the introductory and support info in Spanish instead of English. For that reason alone, I passed ownership to Constantino, who had also accepted to be one of the forum moderators. We sort of forgot about the problem, but a few months ago Constantino was able to transfer IHS Latina from Yahoo US to Yahoo Argentina and changed the name to IHS Latin Hibiscos. It was the old IHS Latina with all the archives still intact and not a new or different forum, which should have still been subject to the BOD, since Constantino was only the owner on their behalf. Normally, all of this should have passed by the BOD since IHS Latina was a branch of the IHS. When members on that forum made inquires about problems with the change at the BOD level, there was a major upheaval on IHS Latin Hibiscos in that Constantino said the forum was no longer a part of the IHS and they should address problems to him. In ensuing communications, which happened pretty much unbeknown to the IHS BOD, a number of the major participant felt so insulted that they fell silent,

INSIDE THIS
ISSUE :

Inside Story

**At Nina's Place Pages
Page 3 & 4 & 5, 6 & 7**

Inside Story

**Planting a new Plant-
Page 8, Propagation by
Cuttings Page 9**

Inside Story

**The Last Hibiscus
Pages 10**

Inside Story

**Air Layering
Pages 11,**

Inside Story

**Grand Champ. 2009
TPC winners page 12**

Inside Story

**TPC 2009-3 Winners
Page 13**

Inside Story

or unsubscribed. When the IHS BOD became aware of the problem, it did everything under its power to resolve the situation favorably and have the forum returned under the auspices of the IHS BOD. As that was not possible, the BOD elected to form a new IHS Latin forum called IHS Hibiscos using Yahoo Spain. It has now grown to 45 members, including those most active on the former IHS Latina forum. Beth Jordan, a member of the BOD, is now the owner of the new IHS Hibiscos and Carlos Fernandez is the principal moderator, since he is also one that left the former group. This has not been openly discussed on the IHS English member forum as the BOD wanted to avoid a situation which most of the members would have found distasteful. However, I mention these events here, not in the hope that it will change past events, but simply to put the record straight.

Although we have assistance on updating the IHS web site, this is another area that needs to be improved. Jim Purdie does all the work relating to Hibiscus International and the TPC and SOTY/HOTY. Ian Rabena is running the nomenclature and can assist for some things. However, we have yet to get this aspect organized, and this is something we hope to solve by the time the next Presidents Message is presented in Hibiscus International.

Something to think about is that we will be due for a change in IHS Administrators the middle of this new year. In a few months we will establish an election committee for the purpose of finding candidates. If any of you are willing to serve, keep this in mind. Up front I will state that it is not my intention to run for the position of President or any other position, as I think it is time the IHS gets some new blood and ideas.

Warmest Regards and Happy Hibiscus Growing To All

Dick Johnson

EDITORS REPORT

My thanks to Nina Bjelovucic for the article on growing Hibiscus and the great photos. I hope you learn something

Also this issue has some articles which I hope you will find of interest and put to good use .Like how to treat and plant new bushes, and article on Ants, How to grow new plants by Air Layering, how to grow your cuttings, and a interesting story by Ross Mc Kinnon the Curator of the Brisbane Botanical Gardens.

The next issue is due out in the beginning of April and will contain an article from Bob Rivers-Smith on how he grows our favourite plant in New Zealand.

Kind Regards JIM PURDIE [Editor]

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AT NINA'S PLACE

I live in Croatia (Europe), at the Adriatic sea, in zone 9b. My climate is rather favorable for growing tropical hibiscus, because we have many sunny days the whole year round.

My love for hibiscus started 6 years ago, when I obtained a single red local variety. What impressed me the most was the trait that is usually considered to be the fault of hibiscus, and that is the one day duration of the bloom. Every day, my plant looked different: one day it was decorated on the left side, the other day on the right side...then, a few days nothing....then, the following day, it was covered with blooms all over....I fell in love with that ephemeral character of the bloom: captured for the brief moment, then lost...

Soon, I discovered other colors, and spent time circulating among the nurseries, under the balconies of other people, around the gardens, obtaining plants and wood. I soon had all the domestic varieties. Looking for more colors, I sat at the internet and there, one night, I discovered the whole realm of colors.

Since then, I have been collecting them from all over the world, and I have tried in my conditions more than 300 varieties. At the beginning, I was fascinated with every cultivar, but little by little I became more selective. I realized that there were some traits that I appreciated more...so I started looking for cultivars that had those traits. The search for the „perfect“ plant has shown me that in tropical hibiscus, just like in people, there is no „perfection“, but that there are some really worthy ones, and those ones are now my favorites. Those are the cultivars that are good upright growers, that branch well and can make nice compact bushes, that bloom profusely from late spring to late autumn, and that present their blooms in the way I can always see them.

The most important from my growing technique is the following:

I give them the soil that I take from a very old pine forest. That is the soil full of not fully decomposed pine material (needles, cones, bark), so it is extremely porous and light, and I suppose acidic. I mix that with about ¼ of perlite.

I give them a slow release fertilizer from early spring to late fall, plus the Mg SO₄ and KNO₃ once a week.

They receive full sun the whole year round, except from May to September, when I use some palm branches as a protection.

I prune a lot, in early spring

I repot regularly, in spring, until I reach the maximum size that I can handle. This year I will start rootpruning for the oldest varieties.

I watch for whiteflies and spider mites, and treat some time in advance.



View of Nina's hot house



Another view of Nina's hot house



Inside view of the Plants in Nina's Hot House



Two Early Americans from Nina's Collection



Three beautiful French Toast blooms in Nina's collection



Two Tahitian Princess Blooms looking very good for Nina



Nina's Tahitian Sophistication looking very nice



Nina's Climax Bloom showing its brilliant colours



Some more flowers from inside Nina's Hot House

HOW TO PLANT A HIBISCUS IN THE GARDEN

Article by Jim Purdie

When you buy a plant in a 4 inch or 6 inch pot, make sure you keep it watered until you are ready to plant it in the ground. It dries out very quickly and needs to be watered every day.

Be sure to prepare the garden soil well, a few weeks before planting, as the bush will probably be in that spot for a number of years. Put plenty of organic matter into the soil.

Check the pH and add Dolomite or Lime if it is below 6.2 to 6.5. Add blood and bone, superphosphate plus manure and compost to help give the plant a good foundation for the years to come. It is better to apply the dolomite or lime a few weeks before you apply the fertiliser.

Always plant the bush at the same depth in the garden as it was in the pot. Water in well with some Fish Emulsion to prevent shock to the plant. Put a hardwood stake down beside the bush, high enough to allow you to tie the bush as it grows. Tie the bush to the stake with pantyhose if you have any old ones available, as the panty hose stretches as the bush grows and does not cut into the trunk like green tie wire does.

As the bush grows, most times the plant will grow straight up without any side branches. When it has been established for a few weeks, if it is going straight up on a single trunk, cut the growing tip off. This will cause the bush to start sending out side branches, which will of course, mean more flowers, as the plant usually only flowers on the tops of the branches. More branches, more flowers. Some bushes grow too many branches, and they criss cross over one another and become thick, with the result, the sun and air will not penetrate. When the plant gets to this stage it really pays to prune some of the middle branches out to allow the sun & air to get into the bush. This helps to produce more flowers.

If the bush wants to sprawl over the ground, instead of growing upright, try tying panty hose around the bush to the stake while it is young. This will train the bush into an upright position. The same applies to a bush which sends out long side branches and covers up the bushes beside it. If you gradually tie these branches back to the stake, they will stay upright once they are set. However this would not be a problem if you have a large block of land where you can space the bushes well apart. If you are trying to put as many bushes as possible on a small block, and they are planted close together, you must attempt to keep the bush to its allocated area.

Of course, when you plant your bush, it is advisable to place some mulch around to keep the ground moist and cool. Make sure the mulch is kept away from the trunk, otherwise, the ground stays too damp near the trunk, and it can cause rot to attack the trunk and kill the plant. Keep tying the plant to the stake as it grows to support the bush from moving in the wind. Check your bushes occasionally to see if they are moving in the ground when the wind blows. Some of the tall growers sometimes need two or three stakes to prevent them moving in the ground. If they do move the fine hair roots break, and the plant loses vigour because of the constant movement of the roots.

Once the plant is established, it is just the usual routine of watering, and fertilizing regularly, and pruning each August or September [In the Southern Hemisphere, or in the spring if you are in the Northern Hemisphere], and renewing the manure and mulch each year. Keep checking the pH, as this is most important with any type of gardening. If the pH is not correct for the type of plant you are growing, the plant cannot take up the essential elements from the soil. Therefore be sure to check the pH regularly.

ANTS ON YOUR PLANTS

At a recent meeting of our society, several members were saying they were having problems with infestations of ants. Well the cavalry has arrived in the form of a sure fire [so I am told] recipe to rid your domain of these irritating little critters, Recently I was tuned into every gardeners friend, Col Campbell's radio show, and a listener rang in with this solution to the ant invasion.

1 Tablespoon of Borax, 1 Tablespoon of Borasic Acid, 1 cup of brown sugar and 2 cups of water.

Place all the ingredients in a **Glass or Stainless Steel saucepan**, [this is very important] and bring to boil. When the ingredients are blended, allow to cool, then place in small containers near ant tracks or nests.

If you have pets, make sure you keep them away from the baited areas. I hope this little hint helps in some way to solve your problems.

Article submitted by Peter Troon

PROPAGATION BY CUTTINGS

By Jim Purdie

When you prune your bushes it is a good time to think about putting down some of the wood as cuttings, and to help members with this project, I offer this article on the way I have found to be successful.

Cuttings of Hibiscus require warmer weather, so it is advisable to wait until the weather warms up. The temperature needs to be in the 22-27 C [70-80 F]. September to April [you will have to alter the time to suit your area] being the ideal months [In the Southern Hemisphere] to try and grow some of your favourite plants.

An ideal mix for planting your cuttings, is sharp coarse river sand and peat moss, in the ratio of 3 parts sand and one part peat. You can also use peat and perlite. Wash your sand before mixing in the peat.

You can plant your cuttings in community 150mm pots, or individual tubes.

If using 150mm pots, put about 20 to 30 cuttings in each pot. I find they seem to like the atmosphere created when they are planted close together, also you do not seem to lose as many from rot.

You can use tubes with one cutting per tube if you prefer. This saves you having to separate the cuttings in the 150mm pot when they have sent out their roots. I do not have much trouble dividing them. I just place the cuttings from the 150mm pots in a bucket of water, and this allows them to be separated quite easily.

Cuttings should be 5 to 6 inches long and pencil thickness. The cutting is cut sharply on an angle through a leaf axil. Make sure you have the eyes pointing upwards, and cut through the bottom eye. The leaves can be cut in half if they are large, or cut off close to the eye, if you are using a community pot, as they will take up too much room otherwise. Take care not to damage the new eye, as it will not shoot when the cutting takes.

I dip the cuttings in some rooting powder. Make a hole in the mix with a stick or a pencil end, about 1 to 1 1/2 inches deep, into which you push your cutting. The mixture should be damp before commencing planting.

Next place a plastic freezer bag over the cuttings and draw it down around the pot. I hold it with a rubber band. You should not have to worry about watering for a few weeks as the plastic bag creates a humid environment and assists the cuttings to take. It acts like a miniature hot house.

If planting in individual tubes, place them in a broccoli styrene box, and make a support above the box with some wire. Cover with plastic sheeting over the wire and down around the sides. You can usually get 30 tubes per box. When you first plant them and cover them with plastic, just watch they don't dry out. The plastic usually keeps them moist. I keep them in my shade house when I first plant them, and then gradually move them into full sun after they have been potted into some potting mix.

As they begin to shoot in the community pots, don't forget to gradually open the top of the plastic bag, otherwise the new green leaves will go mushy and die.

Roots should appear in about 4 to 6 weeks through the holes in the bottom of the pots. You can gradually open the plastic bags until the plants are ready to be potted up on their own.

Once they have been potted up for a couple of weeks, you can start to fertilize them with a liquid fertilizer.

Do not be fooled if your cuttings start to shoot nice green leaves as this growth is only taking place because the cutting still has some nourishment in it and it is not a sign that your cuttings are sending out roots.

Please be patient and wait until you see the roots coming out of the holes at the bottom of the pot and this can take a little longer than 6 weeks if the weather is cool or you are not using bottom heat in the colder climes. It is always best to try and grow cuttings in the spring when you do your pruning.

I hope you have success if you attempt this method of propagation. Some of the modern cultivars grow quite well on their own roots, while others require grafting because they have a poor root system and they need to be grafted on to a root stock like Ruth Wilcox [albo lacinatus]

“MANDRINETTE— THE LAST HIBISCUS

By Ross McKinnon, AM, Curator, Brisbane Botanic Gardens [May / June 2000 Article]

When one comes across the very last of a species of plants in flower, it is an awe inspiring sight.

When the last two plants of the species are growing in thick jungle on a precipitous slope in Rodrigues in the Mascarene Isles, east of Madagascar, the thrill of the hunt is all worthwhile.

I had taken annual leave to assist the Rodriguen government in the establishment of a botanic gardens and as a part of a site survey, had been casually introduced to the fact that there was a hibiscus above the proposed site of the botanic gardens, in thick jungle that had been reduced to only two plants of the species, *Hibiscus liliiflorus*.

I could hardly contain my astonishment and desire to share my “find” with my friends in the Australian Hibiscus Society Inc. of which I am Patron. [Ross was Patron of the Society in 2000 when this article was written and is still the curator of the Botanic Gardens in Brisbane].

Forest ranger, Hugo Meunier, and a team of 4 Creole, native Rodriguens, hacked at the bush for nearly an hour until we discovered the two remaining plants on a steep slope above a cataract gorge.

The two 5 metre tree hibiscus were almost entirely covered with lantana, an introduced weed from South America. We all spent half an hour, the natives with cane knives, hacking at the surrounding weedy foliage, carefully extracting it from the canopy of the rare Hibiscus plant.

Removal of the extraneous foliage, exposed the two, closely growing, *Hibiscus liliiflorus* plants in all their flowering glory. Their canopies were covered in the most exquisite orange flowers. I had to prevent members of the search party from scaling the Hibiscus trees to pick the orange blooms in my honour, as the timber was quite brittle and liable to break.

This species was feared extinct in 1981, when the last known individual died on the top of nearby Grande Montagne. Fortunately, these two individuals were located in 1983, but are fairly old and infested with scale insects and without regeneration.

USES-

Like other hibiscus, this plant has great ornamental value. It has been shown to hybridize with *H. rosa-sinensis* and *H. schizopetalous*, but who would want to with the rare beauty of this species “flowers”.

Rodrigues believe this hibiscus to have considerable medical qualities, hence its harvesting in earlier times as an emollient and pectoral for coughs. The leaves were also used wrapped around swollen joints, to ease pain and swelling.

After collecting the medicinally important leaves from these trees, local people regularly used to place money and make notches on the trees, implying that this species had some mystical properties. Only a half dozen forestry department workers knew of the existence of these last two *Hibiscus liliiflorus*, needless to say, we were all down on our hands and knees looking around the trunk just in case there were a few rupees.

CONSERVATION MEASURES-

Cuttings of these plants from Rodrigues have been grafted onto *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* stock in Mauritius and cultivated at the Royal Botanic Gardens Pamplemousses, and two plants are now growing successfully in Mauritius. This species is also growing in Waimea Botanic Gardens, Hawaii, presumably from cultivated material from Mauritius

Cuttings and fruit have been collected from the two individuals at Cascade Mourouk and many young plants are growing from the seed of these plants at Nancy and Kew.

DESCRIPTION-

A glabrous, heterophyllous, small tree up to four metres tall with large, showy flowers.

Leaves— distinctly petaloid, broad, ovate, 5-10 cms long, entire or crenate or when young, deeply frigid, obtuse or acute at the apex, firm, rounded at the base.

Flowers— regular, hermaphrodite.

Clongalyx– subtended by five linear bracteoles

Sepals five, lanceolate

Petals five obtuse, forming a bright orange funnel-shaped corolla.

Stamens– numerous, united in a long tube, as long as the corolla

Styles– five, included in the stamina column, stigmas capitate

[Summarised from Barker, 1877]

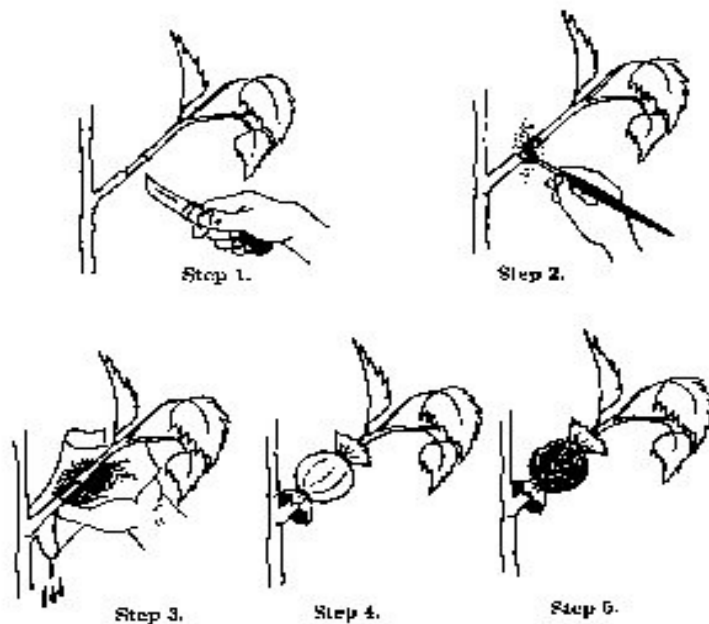
A rare find indeed!

With the survey and proclamation of “The National Botanic Garden of Rodrigues, this plant will be further preserved close to its natural habitat, and far any chance of hybridization with cultivated varieties.

AIR LAYERING [MARCOTTING OR MOSSING OFF]

Courtesy Les Beers [Growing Hibiscus]

This method of propagation will provide a larger plant in a shorter time. The best time for air-layering is in the warmer weather. A healthy upright growing branch is girdled completely with two cuts about 2.5 cm [1 in] apart and the bark and green cambium are removed completely down to the white wood. A hormone rooting powder may be applied to the upper side of the cut. [Steps 1 and 2 in the diagram]



Use plain water and place sphagnum moss in it to soak.

Next, squeeze a double handful of the well soaked moss relatively dry and wrap it around the cut area, covered by a piece of plastic, then a 15 x 15 cm [6 x 6 in] sheet of aluminium foil.

A layer of brown paper may be placed over the foil and tied securely. The plastic and foil will retain the moisture, and the brown paper exclude light and deter birds that may peck holes and let the moss get dry. [steps 3 and 4 in the diagram].

When examination shows that a good ball of roots has developed, the branch is cut off below the ball, and plastic and foil carefully removed without disturbing the roots and moss. Do not remove the moss. The end of the branch is then trimmed as close to the ball as possible before being placed in a bucket of water containing formula 20 [These days we use fish emulsion]. Allow the plant to become saturated then pot and water thoroughly. It is advisable to cut back some of the leaves and protect from the wind and sun until the new plant is well established. Place the potted air-layer in light shade for 2 or 3 weeks for best results. Fertilize lightly in thirty days.

GRAND CHAMPIONS FOR TPC 2009



**Grand Champion for TPC 2009 is
French Toast entered by
Elizabeth Jordan**



**Second Place went to
Moorea Bunda Burst entered by
Richard Johnson**



**Third Place went to
Hoosiers entered by
Denis Bojic**



**Winner of the members vote in the Seedling
Entries, Gray Goddess.**

The sixteen entries which the members picked will now be put before the SOTY/HOTY Judges and they will pick the SOTY winner and the top ten will then be grown by the trialling stations for 3 years and then the Judges will pick the HOTY Winner.

TPC WINNERS 2009-3



**Single-
Moorea Bunda Burst entered by
Richard Johnson**



**Double-
Magnifique entered by
Nina Bjelovucic**



**Miniature-
Moorea Anastasya entered by
Richard Johnson**



**Multi Bloom-
Bon Temps entered by
Nina Bjelovucic**



**Computer Art
Heart of an Angel entered by
Olga**