

THE HSPR NEWSLETTER

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1999, No. 1

FROM YOUR BOARD

The HSPR Board of Directors held its first meeting of 1999 in Ponce last February 6th. Our meeting place was the "fast food court" in the Plaza del Caribe -- a locality having been selected because of its central location rather than a reflection of the gourmet characteristics of the Board members. The date, however, did coincide rather conveniently with the Ponce Orchid Show and Sale. Several Agenda items were discussed and are reported here for your information.

Membership Dues. At the September, 1999 meeting, the Society amended its By Laws to include Family Member as an additional category of HSPR membership. The Board discussed this addition and agreed to the following schedule of annual dues beginning in fiscal 1999:

Family Membership:	\$ 20.00
Regular Membership:	\$ 15.00
Student Membership:	\$ 10.00
Honorary Membership:	Gratis

Honorary Member. In recognition of his long and dedicated service to Heliconia Society International and to the wide community of aficionados of the Zingerberales, -- as cofounder of HSI, Bulletin Editor, author and inspired leader and teacher, Fred Berry has been selected by the Board of Directors to become an Honorary Member of HSPR. Your President, who has known Fred for many years -- actually many years before Fred knew the difference between a Heliconia and a ceiba tree -- called him recently to give him the news. He accepted in true Berry fashion, thanking HSPR of his Honorary Membership for the honor -- and the fact that it doesn't cost him a "thin dime". HSPR has proudly gained a truly admirable member.

HSPR Logo. It has been generally agreed that our Society needs a logo -- that is, some visual symbol which identifies HSPR and its members. The Ponce Board meeting discussed this rather extensively and agreed to conduct a design competition -- and proceeded to draw up the guidelines for the competition. It was also decided that entries could be submitted by both HSPR members, and non-members alike. Details and guidelines are given in Announcements (below).

Plant Raffle and Sale. It was agreed to start a plant raffle and sale during regular meetings. The Board feels that this would encourage and facilitate the interchange of plant material among the members. Details of this activity are in the Announcements.

Cinco Dias con Nuestra Tierra is an annual event organized by the School of Agriculture of the University of Puerto Rico -- this year's fair being scheduled during the first week of March. It was believed that there was too little time for HSPR to stage an education exhibition (similar to the Marin Alto presentation of the Zingerberales at the Aibonito festival last June) -- but that HSPR members could form a group to sell plants in the vendor area. As of this moment, Sherry Ballester,

Martha Lankford, Paul Yoshioka and Bryan Brunner will man three sales tables -- and will distribute information about HSPR.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Further Thoughts About Ornamental Horticulture in P. R.

In the third issue of last Year's Newsletter, I expressed some views about what I consider to be the rather poor state of ornamental horticulture development. I ended the column by saying that there would be more on this matter in the next issue. Hurricane Georges, unfortunately, interrupted both my plans and the continuity of my editorial. Instead, I took the opportunity to get a bit philosophical about natural disasters, such as Georges, and suggested that such assaults of the environment were quite probably the very ingredients which Nature requires to ensure vigorous and healthy ecosystems. But thankfully Georges is now well behind us, plant life is rebounding and I suspect that our collective state of mind has improved considerably. So now, its "back to the ranch" -- and further presidential opinions on Puerto Rican horticulture development.

In my first column on this matter, I argued that the \$ 40 to \$ 50 million annual value of our horticulture industry was far below its economic potential. The reason seeming to be that growers, with very few exceptions, are targeting only our local market which in fact may be saturated or even over-saturated. And it seems quite apparent that the industry has made no significant effort to exploit a potentially huge export market -- a market which would include not only the US and Canada but the entire European Common Market as well. Quite frankly, Puerto Rican horticulture development is stagnant -- at a standstill. This disturbs me greatly, because I believe it's a situation that doesn't need to be. It's like an illness just waiting to be treated and cured with the right antibiotics -- in this case, healthy doses of vision and leadership. I don't think there's much argument about the diagnosis or the remedy. The question is, where do we find the medicines?

Some would say that government should, or could, supply both vision and leadership. After all, the primary purpose of government is "to ensure the well-being of the people" -- and in this sense, the government could or should play doctor and cure the patient. Certainly there are enough laws, regulations, acts, directives, etc. to do something. Most recently for example, the Puerto Rican legislature enacted: "Ley Num. 238; Ley Para el Ordenamiento de las Industrias Agropecuarias". ("Law to Order the Agricultural Industries"). The law first categorizes an astounding variety of agricultural activities, including horticulture. It then establishes a bureaucratic hierarchy of control, extending from the Governor through a descending series of levels and sub-levels, eventually reaching the grower. The grower's voice, to be heard at all, must ascend in reverse order through the system to an appropriate bureaucratic audience. The key word in Law 238 seems to be "ordenamiento" (or ordering) of the broad spectrum of recognized agricultural pursuits. Order certainly has its place in our increasingly complex world -- But I fail to see that order per se substitutes for either vision or leadership, the two antibiotics most needed for our ailing horticultural industry but which seem to be in rather short supply. Finally there is my personal bias in this matter. I've been knocking around this planet for so long now that when I hear that ordering of anything is being proposed from the top down, I predictably break out with a severe case of nerves and immediately look for a place to hide. Just say that I have a suspicious nature and I have my doubts about Ley 238 and its potential effectiveness and benefit to horticulturists.

But there can be enlightened or benevolent governmental leadership. The State of Hawaii provides an excellent example. We all know that Hawaii, like Puerto Rico, is a plant grower's heaven on earth -- everyone seems to be growing something for pleasure and, not uncommonly, for sale. Recognizing the economic potential of the rapidly expanding horticultural sector (which now surpasses pineapple and sugar in value), the Market Development Branch of the Hawaii Department of Agriculture, compiles and publishes annually the "Agricultural Export Directory: Floral, Nursery and Food Products". This cross-indexed directory lists growers and vendors, a detailed list of their products, addresses/telephone-fax numbers, even the number of employees. Interestingly, the large majority of growers list only 1 or 2 employees -- basically small family businesses. The Directory is distributed without charge and to me is an invaluable source of mail order plants and materials. In the context of this column, it is an outstanding example of enlightened leadership and service by the state government. The result?! Hawaii is now a world leader in horticulture development and export -- to the Far East, to the US, to Europe. This to me is the kind of effective and enlightened governmental leadership we need. Hopefully something similar to the Hawaii example will be forthcoming in Puerto Rico.

But certainly not all leadership should be or even needs to be provided by governments. Subgroups of any social structure always exist and are organized with their own leadership systems. There are Rotary Clubs, School Districts, small and large businesses, even churches, all of which have visionary goals and leadership. The horticultural industry in Florida is a case in point. It is huge, with an annual value of \$ 1.4 billion, that is: \$ 1, 400,000,000.00 -- (all those zeros are impressive). It has easily surpassed the values of citrus and sugar combined and is rapidly approaching the total value of vegetables and produce. And how did this phenomenon come to be?

To a large degree, the history of Florida's horticultural industry has involved grower's cooperatives and associations fundamentally established to benefit the membership. They are voluntary and they establish their own regulatory measures. Since these groupings are composed of taxpayers and voters, they can thus easily interface and interact with the state's governmental agencies, which in turn respond to the needs of the coops and associations -- needs such as research, disease control, subsidies, extension services, crop insurance, tax relief, etc. The Florida example seems to be a happy marriage between the horticultural industry and the state government whereby the vision and leadership comes from the private sector and the government provides the enabling and supporting roles. Not a bad team!!

Such a happy marriage unfortunately seems not to exist here in Puerto Rico. And I'm not sure the necessary ingredients are yet in place. I see no significant or viable association or cooperative of nurserymen. Perhaps its a cultural trait not to ban together cooperatively. But if a few growers could agree and work together to form a nurseryman's association with fundamental goals to develop an export market, to organize appropriate self-regulation and to establish necessary quality standards, it would undoubtedly succeed. Such success would attract attention of otherwise reluctant growers and the association would gain stature. Stature (read: large numbers of voters) would in turn attract the notice of government. And government could then be called upon (= told) to provide necessary support and service to the industry. Sounds simple?? Sounds too simple?? Perhaps.. The Catch 22 is at the beginning of this scenario -- "if a few growers could agree and work together -- etc." What this really boils down to is the Hero Syndrome -- without a few heroes leading the parade, persons willing to work and to take chances and to show the reluctant mob how the cow ate the cabbage, then ornamental horticulture has a dim outlook in Puerto Rico. Any volunteers to start the ball rolling??

Best wishes, Bob Lankford

HORTICULTURAL NOTES

Publication of Interest.

The editor has just obtained a copy of a 1995 publication which should be of interest to all HSPR members. The title is: Ornamental Gingers: A Guide to Selection and Cultivation (2nd Ed.), by Timothy S. Chapman of St. Gabriel, LA. This is a soft cover, spiral bound publication having 50 pages and, most beneficially, 53 color illustrations of selected species. Referring to the title, the term "gingers" in the sense of the author is the common name given to plants of two families, the Zingiberales and the Costaceae. The book, among other things, provides a census of ornamental gingers which have been introduced and are now being cultivated in the U. S. Please note that the remaining families of the Zingiberales (the heliconias, birds of paradise, peacock plants, etc.) are not included in this publication. Nevertheless, this publication is a most welcome addition to our knowledge of the order of plant which is the focus of HSPR. That the extensive chapter on genera and species is written in easily comprehended language and terminology is most welcome and certainly to be appreciated by non-botanists.

Chapman's book is currently available from:

Stokes Tropicals
P. O. Box 9868
New Iberia, LA 70562-9868
1-800-624-9706
Book No. 7600
\$ 25.00 + \$ 5.25 (S + H)

THE MEMBERS' FORUM

The HSPR Members' Forum was originally conceived as an activity which would allow members to share something of interest with others -- a new plant, or a news item, or a question about a diseased plant, whatever -- in a sense, it was designed to be a "show and tell" session at each meeting. With this issue of the Newsletter, we are taking the opportunity to broaden the Members' Forum concept to include written views, ideas and opinions. Thanks to Paul Yoshioka, we are inaugurating the editorial phase of Members' Forum with a well-reasoned follow-up to Dr. Duane Kolterman's talk to HSPR last June in Naranjito.

Contribution by Paul Yoshioka

(See following pages)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Meeting of HSPR.

The first meeting of the new year will be held on Sunday, 14 March, 1999 at 10:00 AM. The venue will be the home and finca of Nelsie Flores, which is located at Km. 14.5 on Highway 108 near Mayaguez. A map giving the location and the telephone number is attached for your use.

Instead of a formal speaker or lecture, we have arranged to have the Brooks and Judy Nelson of Marin Alto in Patillas to put on a practical demonstration workshop covering the "Hows" and "Whys" of plant propagation and cultivation. The workshop is designed to provide plenty of opportunity for questions and answers.

In addition, Paul Yoshioka will lead a discussion of his Members' Forum contribution on c/v's or cultivars. Later, our hostess will lead a tour of her finca which specializes in cut flower production.

HSPR Dues.

Annual dues are payable on or before the first regular Society meeting of the year -- in this case, on Sunday, 14 March 1999. There is a late payment grace period of 60 days following the date of the first meeting. Please make checks payable to: Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico, or pay in cash. Checks or cash may be given directly to our treasurer, Martha Lankford, at the next meeting. Late payment may be mailed to the treasurer at: P. O. Box 3162, Mayaguez, P.R. 00681. Do not send cash by mail. See dues amounts in "From Your Board", page 1.

Plant Raffle and Sale.

The Board decided to initiate a plant raffle (= sorteo) at regular meetings beginning next March 14th. Sherry Ballester will be in charge and suggests the following procedures:

- a. Members are requested to donate identified plants for the raffle.
- b. Tickets for the raffle will be sold for \$ 1.00. Members may buy as many tickets as they wish.
- c. Ticket numbers will be drawn in succession for each plant and each winner, in succession, will have their choice of the plants to be raffled -- first winner, first choice; and so on.
- d. In addition to the raffle, there will be an opportunity for member's to sell and/or exchange plants. Persons wishing to sell plants must contribute at least with one plant to the raffle.

HSPR Logo Competition.

Responding to general interest of the Society to have a suitable logo, the Board in January decided to initiate a competition during 1999, and formed the rules and guidelines for the activity.

The Rules:

- a. Competition will be open to HSPR members, and non-members alike.
- b. Judging and selection of the winning design and not more than two honorable mentions will be done by the Society members at the last HSPR meeting in 1999.
- c. The Society reserves the right to reject any or all entries; in the case that none are acceptable, a new competition will be organized.
- d. All entries must be in the hands of the President on or before the beginning of the meeting where selection is to take place.

Guidelines;

- a. Designs must be adaptable to both color and black-and-white reproduction.
- b. Designs shall reflect the interests, focus and/or goals of the Society (see below: Objectives from our Bylaws; and samples from the HSI logo competition).
- c. All entries will be on white 8½" x 11" stock.
- d. The design shall be compatible to reasonable reduction and enlargement.
- e. Entries must be identified on the back with the name, address and telephone number of the designer.

(From The Bylaws)

ARTICLE 2. OBJECTIVES

2.1. Objectives of the Society are:

- a. To stimulate and promote the enjoyment and understanding of Heliconia (Heliconiaceae) and related plants (members of the Musaceae, Strelitziaceae, Lowiaceae, Zingerberaceae, Costaceae, Cannaceae, and Marantaceae) of the order Zingerberales, through education, research, and communication.
- b. To seek avenues of interaction with the Heliconia Society International and other institutions which share similar interests, purposes, or objectives.
- c. To extend the Society's enthusiasm and knowledge of Heliconia and related plants to the private and public sectors of Puerto Rico through demonstrations and other systems of communication.
- d. To encourage and support the development of relevant conservation, research and commercial activities in Puerto Rico and elsewhere, as appropriate.