

# THE HSPR NEWSLETTER

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2002, No. 4

We are grateful to Dr. José Abreu Deliz for hosting our September meeting, and providing all of us with a delicious lunch. We had many visitors that day, old and new. Many plants were sold or exchanged, and many more were donated for the raffle. It was simply great. We also thank Dr. Sergio Tejedor for his very interesting lecture on growing heliconias from seed. A copy of the lecture is enclosed.

Our Christmas meeting will be next Sunday, December 8, 2002 starting at 9:30 AM. It will be hosted by Dr. Bryan Brunner and his wife Yarissa Montes de Brunner at their beautiful farm situated close to the Maricao State Forest. It is always a good idea to try car-pooling with another member (parking is somewhat limited) and to bring strong shoes for walking. Bryan will surely give us a tour of his lovely place, Montoso Gardens.

## From our last meeting

A new Secretary (Miriam Mercado) was elected, because Melania Rivera had to resign for personal reasons. Two other members, Dr. Ray Jerome and Noel Rivera were elected as Officers.

Our Treasurer, Mary Strow, informed that the bank account has a balance of \$3,494.94 but we still haven't paid Dr. Paul Yoshioka for last year's expenses of printing and sending the Newsletter.

The President, Sherry Ballester, spoke about the HSI World Conference for 2004 to be held in Puerto Rico, and the importance of this event not only for us, members of the HSPR, but for all of Puerto Rico. She sent an invitation to Mr. Endre Guttman to come to this meeting and present additional information about this event. Mr. Guttman, member of the HSI Board of Directors, has already worked on a schedule for the Conference and we would like, as a Society, to work side by side with him. Mr. Guttman did come, but, unfortunately, he was pressed on time and couldn't stay for the meeting. The President suggested that more HSPR members join HSI. She showed the forms to fill, and also copies of the HSI Bulletin, commenting on the interesting articles it usually contains, and the amount of new information we can obtain from them on Zingiberales. Several persons wrote down the address, interested in joining.

It was mentioned that we should look for public parks or established gardens as depositories for heliconia conservation. Judy Nelson spoke about the project of planting a heliconia garden at the *Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín*, which was started some time ago but was halted by situations inside the *Fundación*. This is a wonderful project that needs our support. Anyone interested in joining forces with Judy please let us know.

Our Christmas meeting was going to be at Bonnie's farm, but due to her health condition, Bryan and Yarissa Brunner offered theirs.

## From your Board

The HSPR Board of Directors met at the President's home last Saturday November 16, 2002. The purpose of this meeting was to address the issue of the HSI World Conference, and write a letter to Mr. Endre Guttman showing our desire to participate. Many of us are members of HSI. We sent him this letter:

Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico  
P.O. Box 2962 Mayagüez, PR. 00681-2962  
Tel.: (787) 827-3121. Fax: (787) 827-0458

November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2002

Dr. Endre Guttman  
11-J Villas del Mar, West  
Carolina, PR, 00979

Dear Endre,

We would like to congratulate you on the excellent job that you have done in organizing the 2004 Heliconia Society International (HSI) Conference to be held in Puerto Rico.

Acknowledging the complexity of this undertaking, Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico (HSPR) would like to offer to you any assistance that you may require. As you know, HSPR is a legally incorporated organization that shares the goals and objectives of HSI. It is composed of over 80 members, many of which are also members of HSI. Our membership includes hobbyists, commercial growers, and members with scientific interests in the Zingiberales.

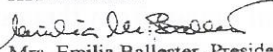
We are offering support in your endeavors by supplying cut flowers, providing accommodation for visitors, helping with the organization of the scientific sessions or tours, or anything else you may need.

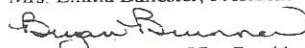
Many of our members throughout the Island have extensive collections of Zingiberales, palms, and exotic fruits that the participants may want to visit as pre- or post-conference tours. Among the many farms are the excellent Zingiberales gardens of Dr. Kelly Brooks in Patillas, and Dr. Raymond Jerome in Canóvanas. Dr. German Charrón, Dr. Bryan Brunner, Dr. Paul Yoshioka, Dr. Sergio Tejedor, Dr. José Abreu and Mrs. Emilia Ballester also have extensive and very interesting botanical collections in the central and western regions of the Island that may also be of interest to our visitors.

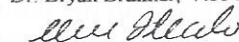
Dr. Paul Yoshioka and Dr. Bryan Brunner are also willing to offer the HSI board members their assistance in the coordination of the scientific sessions and editing of scientific presentations, technical papers, etc.

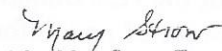
Please notify us at your earliest convenience if we can assist you in any way. We cordially invite you to our next meeting, on December 8<sup>th</sup>, at the farm of Dr. Bryan Brunner in Maricao, to discuss possible ways that we can participate in the conference preparations.

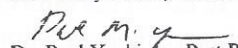
Cordially,  
HSPR Officers

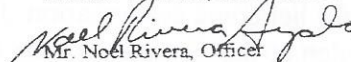
  
Mrs. Emilia Ballester, President

  
Dr. Bryan Brunner, Vice President

  
Mrs. Miriam I. Mercado, Secretary

  
Mrs. Mary Strow, Treasurer

  
Dr. Paul Yoshioka, Past President

  
Mr. Noel Rivera, Officer

cc: HSI Board of Directors and Officers

## President's Corner

### *In Memoriam: Bonnie Kline de Oliver (June 8, 1950 – November 6, 2002)*

I met Bonnie shortly before Hurricane Georges devastated both her farm and mine on September 21, 1998. Someone had told her there was going to be a meeting of rare plant lovers at my place – a bi-annual meeting that takes place on the Sunday closest to the Summer or Fall Equinox, by a group called “*Equinoccio*”. Bonnie had other commitments that day, but nevertheless she called, and we spoke for hours without even having met personally. We talked about the rare fruit trees I grew, and about the coffee varieties she had, among many other things. That was the beginning of a close and special friendship that lasted until her untimely death three weeks ago.

Bonnie was just 52 when she died last Tuesday, November 4, after a short but fierce battle with lung cancer. A native New Yorker, Bonnie learned to love the tropics when she moved to St. Thomas to live with her grandmother. Full of energy and an immense love of life, she worked for some time as an airline stewardess. Through her airline job she often visited Puerto Rico.

When Bonnie met Guillermo Oliver in San Juan one day through a mutual friend, little did she suspect her life would take a very interesting turn. They fell in love and married, and some years later an only child, María Adela (Coco) was born to fill their lives with happiness.

Guillermo's family had a huge, old coffee plantation called “*Hacienda La Delfina*” and, two years into their marriage, they moved into the farm. Bonnie was still connected to the airlines, teaching courses in San Juan, Arecibo and Mayagüez several times a week, through a Community College. But she decided to quit and work fulltime in the farm with the coffee production. That was the beginning of an intense pursuit into the right crop to plant, the best varieties to grow. By that time, she had also started a series of beautiful formal gardens around the historic farmhouse. German Charrón gave Bonnie her first heliconias: on every visit to *La Delfina* he would bring and plant dozens of rhizomes for her. I gave her fruit trees and orchids. Felipe Osborne brought rare fruit and flowering trees. Bryan Brunner brought other rare plants.

When Hurricane Georges struck, Bonnie and Guillermo lost their coffee crop and their precious house plus lots of valuable art. Unable to fully recuperate from this loss, Bonnie thought about growing orchids. She called René Colón, and he advised her well. Bonnie was an excellent student, and learned fast. “*Orquideas Delfina*” was born. Soon she was making crosses. She insisted “on reds”. Red and yellow Cattleyas were her favorite. Business was great. She built more greenhouses. Dr. Rafael Sobrino gave her excellent counseling. She started selling in different fairs across the island. Ruth Miller helped her get into Aibonito's famous Flower Festival. Soon she went wholesale. I had never met a person so energetic, so determined.

Then the bad news. On July she felt very sick and, thinking she had pneumonia, went into the hospital. Then it was a bacterial infection brought from a recent trip to France. Then it was...lung cancer. She hated to be in the hospital, but that didn't stop her. She was on the phone all day, taking orders, making decisions. Would this incredible

woman ever stop? She was confident she was going to make it. But God had other plans. We are still in awe for the suddenness of her departure.

Bonnie was the energy that moved many of us, showing with her example that you can't be fearful of trying new things, new ideas. "What if you lose? You try again".

German Charrón says: "Her great strength in life was to fight every problem and win. When we heard about her sickness, we hoped there would be a happy ending. We were not expecting such a tragic development. We should remember Bonnie as she was in life: a person who cared, who loved people, who loved life. She was a *hell of a good lady*."

May you rest in peace, Honey Bonnie. We will always remember.

### Horticultural Notes

We have a new hybrid heliconia at *Vivero Anones* in Las Marias. It seems to be a cross between what Bob Lankford called '*Mexican Gold*' (a heliconia he found years ago growing in Mexico for which there is no known species name) and *H. champneiana* '*Splash*'. The mother plant was the '*Mexican Gold*', and the offspring came out strong and tall like the mother, with the new leaves featuring the purplish underside common of the *H. champneiana* '*Splash*'. The flower is a beautiful coral-guava color, has wide bracts like most *H. champneiana* cultivars, and the only problem I see is that, to be used as cut flower, it would have to be cut in its early stages, as it tends to twist a bit like a *rauliana* when it gets older. I decided to call it '**Coral Surprise**'.

Please let us know about your new hybrids, you all!

### Announcements

Our dear friends Bob and Marta Lankford left Puerto Rico last November 6 and established new residence in Ocala, Florida. We will surely miss them. Bob was past President of HSPR, and Martita held the position of both Secretary and Treasurer. They did an excellent job. They were members of the Board in those first few years that for every organization are the hardest. We wish the best for them, and hope to keep in touch.

With the help of the Treasurer, Mary Strow, I'm updating the member's list. If you don't receive an invitation to the March 2003 meeting, it means you owe your dues for a year or longer! Please take a moment to talk to Mary or myself at the Christmas meeting or send a check in care of HSPR to Mary's address (Box 672, Maricao, 00606).

For the Christmas meeting, we will provide a hearty holiday lunch, but we will NOT buy alcoholic beverages with HSPR funds. However, anyone wishing to bring their own is welcome to do so. Please don't forget to bring your chairs

For those who can't come, MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!

## Observations on the Germination of Heliconia Seeds and its Practical Applications. \*

By: Sergio Tejedor, Heliconia Enthusiast

**Hardness of Seed-** seed hardness protects the seed embryo. Each seed has a white soft spot at one end intended for sprouting. This is the connection of the embryo with its environment. It is the receptor site of the seed for heat (sunlight) and humidity. When planting seeds take time to identify this **spot** and always position it facing direct sunlight. In addition, barely cover the soft spot with planting medium.

**Heat and Humidity-** heliconia seeds thrive in a hot and humid **medium** necessary to sprout or germinate. To ensure a humid medium use water holding professional germinating mix. Keep it constantly moist, however, avoid over watering. Besides a humid medium, the seeds need a hot and humid **environment**.

Plastic covered trays or open trays placed in a green house create close to ideal environments. A greenhouse effect can be created by placing open trays under a plastic covered tent, or by placing trays under a tree or on a deck with direct sunlight, avoiding shaded areas.

**Germination Intervals-** seeds of the same specie under close to identical conditions present different germination **Intervals**. Which, I believe, are genetically intended to assure survival. Some seeds have **short** germination periods, some have **intermediate** germination periods, and some have **long** germination periods. Different species have different germination intervals, which could expand from weeks to many months.

For example, Chartacea Sexy Pink, behaves as follows; In a one hundred seeds tray, approximately 20% of seeds sprout within one month to a month and a half from planting, another 20% within three to four months from planting and yet another 20% sprout within seven to eight months from planting, short, intermediate and long germination periods respectively. According to my observations the remaining seeds, 40% do not sprout within a year from planting. Figures shown were collected from observation and data recording of five independent samples of one hundred seed trays over an interval of three years.

**Germination Cycles-** different **species** have different germination **cycles**, which I am incline to believe correspond with each blooming period. For example, if the blooming period of the specie goes from February to July, the first seeds (fruit) could be expected by April and the last by August. This particular germination cycle will go from April to August. If seeds are planted after the cycle is over, germination will come to a halt until next blooming season, an eight months delay (February to April); Plus the term period of germination for that specie (refer to germination intervals section). Therefore, if the short term of germination is two months, add these months to the eight months delay, it will take ten months for the short germination period to occur. Year round blooming species are always viable for sprouting.

**Seeds Hydration-** heliconia seeds are kept hydrated within the fruit. To keep these seeds viable after the fruit is picked from the plant it is necessary to keep them hydrated. For easy skin removal soak the fruit in water overnight. After the skin is removed keep seeds soaked in water until planting. To avoid fermentation replace water frequently. Plant seeds as soon as possible.

**Rules to Follow-** be patient. Perseverance is a must. Keep proper heat and humidity conditions. Exert your observation power and develop your own concepts and techniques.

\* These findings are solely based on observations. They do not presume nor imply scientific evidence.