



# Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico: The Early Years

By Roberto L. Castro, HSPR President

Next year the Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico will be celebrating its 20th anniversary. I have tried to put together a brief early history of its foundation, evolution and changes during these 20 years.

The Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico was founded on February 11, 1996. The founders were: Arnaldo Astacio, Angel Ayalon, Kelly Brooks, Susan Brooks, Bessie Ceinos, Rafael Crespo, June del Castillo, Nelsie Flores, Endre Guttman, Jannette Harris, Robert Lankford, Martha Lankford, Juan Marques, Judy Nelson, Juan

Rivero, Eneida B. Rivero, Celeste Rodríguez, Canita Secola, Paul Yoshioka and Beverly Yoshioka.

The first meeting was held on February 11, 1996. The interim board was composed by:

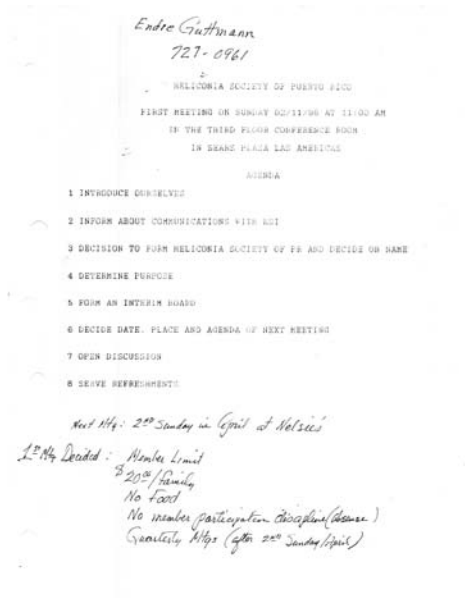
- President Endre Guttman
- Vice President Robert Lankford
- Secretary Nelsie Flores
- Treasurer Juan Marques
- Vocal Canita Secola

The purpose of the society was:

To exchange knowledge, experience, seeds, rhizomes and plants among our membership and among other Heliconia Society chapters worldwide and learn from each other.

To experiment, learn and publish our results in the Heliconia Society International bimonthly publication.

To participate in and learn from Heliconia related activities worldwide and give the benefit of our experience and learning to Puerto Rico, the Botanical Garden of the University of Puerto Rico and to our neighboring Caribbean islands.



Notes from the first (February 11, 1996) Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico meeting.

They agreed upon five ground rules:

1. We will meet four times a year

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### Dates to Remember

- HSPR Meeting, 10:00 am, Sunday, December 13, 2015. Marin Alto Farm, Patillas, PR.

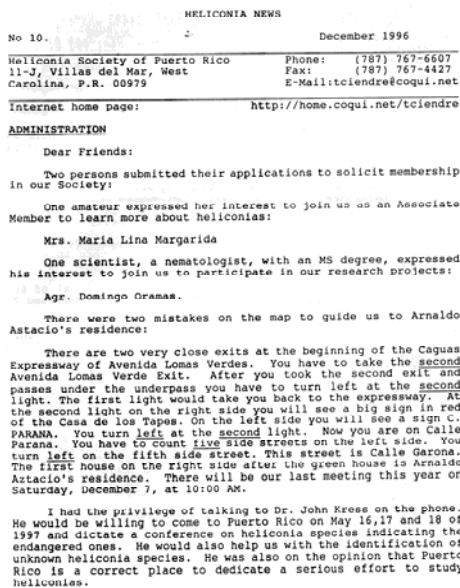
# Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico: The Early Years (continued)

- (they met every month in 1996).
2. We will pay yearly dues of \$20.00 per family.
  3. There will be no sanction for not attending a meeting.
  4. We will publish a newsletter.
  5. The language will be English or Spanish as needed.

In July, 1996 Judy Nelson, Roberto Sacket, and Celeste and Endre Guttman represented the HSPR at the HSI conference in Miami, Florida.

The first By Laws were adopted on December 1996.

The first volume of the newsletter, called "Heliconia News" was published in 1996.



The first official volume of the "HSPR Newsletter" was published in 1998.

## THE HSPR NEWSLETTER

Published by the Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico  
1998, No. 1

### FROM YOUR BOARD

First, we wish to extend to all our very best wishes for 1998 and hope that you have an enjoyable and productive year. May the Green Thumb be with you!

The Board held its first meeting on 24 January, 1998. The main thrust of discussions was aimed at strengthening our Society and identifying actions which would benefit the membership. Although the major points discussed by the Board will be reported at our next regular meeting on 14 March at Sherry Ballester's finca (see Meeting Announcement), there are two points which should be introduced now.

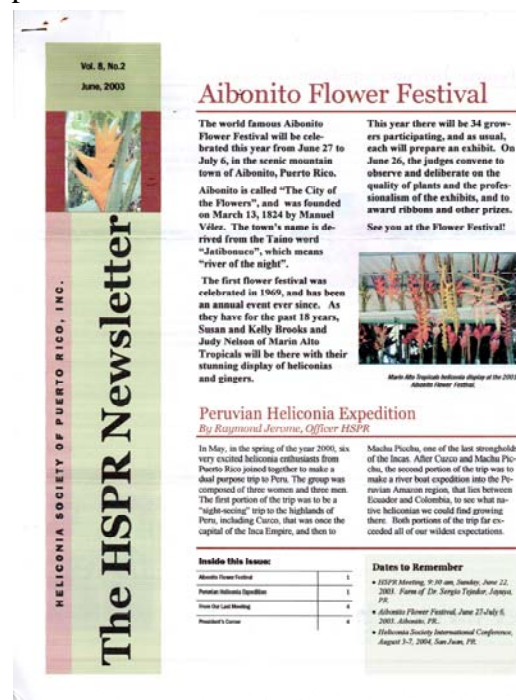
One pertains to the proposed Membership Directory. Questionnaires requesting addresses, telephone/fax contacts and comments or suggestions were attached to the last Newsletter. To date, only 10 have been returned. Please take time to fill out this questionnaire and bring it to our next meeting, or mail it to the Secretary, Martha Lankford, P. O. Box 3162, Mayaguez, P. R. 00681.

A second point refers to two types of classified ads which will be included in future Newsletters. Ads which offer plants or products for sale will be published at the rate of \$5.00 per 25 words or less. Make checks payable to Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico. Short non-commercial classified ads, announcements or worthwhile requests will be published without charge. All ads and applicable payments should reach the Secretary at least two months prior to any quarterly meeting.

For your information, the newly elected Board of Directors follows:

President	Dob Lankford	833-8821
Vice President	Bryan Brunner	899-1530 (Office)
Secretary/Treasurer	Martha Lankford	833-8821
Counselor	Emilia (Sherry) Ballester	827-3121
Counselor	Rafael Benitez	733 7760
Counselor	Judy Nelson	808-2040

The first color copy of the Newsletter was published in June 2003 and was printed on a color office printer.



# Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico: The Early Years (continued)

The first full color press quality Newsletter started in December 2006.



## Heliconia 'Mexican Gold' and its Hybrids

By Emilia (Sherry) Ballester, HSPR Member

**'Mexican Gold': A Well Known Heliconia Without An Official ID!**

'Mexican Gold' is a beautiful golden yellow heliconia that well known heliconia collector and past President of HSPR, Dr. Robert Lankford, brought to Puerto Rico back in the 80's from a trip to Mexico (Fig. 1). Lankford, a close friend of the late Fred Herry (co-author of *Heliconia: An Identification Guide*), for many years sought to find the correct species name of this particular plant, but not much information was available.



Figure 1. Beautiful golden yellow inflorescence of Heliconia 'Mexican Gold'

Many collectors believe that 'Mexican Gold' is just another *H. latiparula*, and base their positions on the small rusty orange-red "spots" that the plant sometimes displays on the stems (Fig. 2). One particular characteristic of this plant is the

purplish shade seen on the border of the newly emerging leaves, on the underside of the leaf (Fig. 3).



Figure 2. Rusty orange-red "spots" on Heliconia 'Mexican Gold' stems.



Figure 3. Purplish border on the underside of a Heliconia 'Mexican Gold' leaf.

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### Dates to Remember

• HSPR Meeting: 10:00 am, Sunday, December 17, 2006. Home of Bryan and Tanya Ballester, Hwy. 120, Km. 18.9 Int., Maricao, PR.

There have been nine presidents since the origin of the Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico:

Endre Guttman  
 Robert Lankford  
 Paul Yoshioka  
 Sherry Ballester  
 Raymond Jerome  
 Hector Méndez Caratini  
 José Abreu Deliz  
 Jorge Matta  
 Roberto L Castro

The Society has gone thru many changes in terms of membership, coverage, content and availability. We have had members from the U.S., Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, New Zealand, Australia, France, India, Reunion Island and many other countries. Its membership has been as high as 125, and fluctuates between 75 and 100. Some of its members regularly attend the Heliconia Society International conferences.

The Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico has contributed to the large collections of *Heliconia* species present in the island, estimated around 300, which constitutes one of the largest conservation centers on the planet.

The Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico has had an online presence since 2003.



The Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico, Inc. was founded in 1996. The objectives of the society are to stimulate and promote the enjoyment and understanding of *Heliconia* and related plants of the order Zingiberales through education, research and communication, and to interact with the Heliconia Society International and other institutions which share similar interests, purposes or objectives.



Our native *Heliconia caribaea*

We meet four times per year, in March, June, September and December, at member's homes and farms. Highlights of our meetings are conferences on different aspects of heliconias and other Zingiberales, and our plant raffle.



Tour of HSPR member's farm

We also publish a quarterly newsletter, and welcome contributed articles, stories and photographs. Annual membership dues are \$35 for families, \$25 for individuals or international members, and \$20 for students.



Marin Alto Tropicals heliconia display at the Albonito Flower Festival



**HELICONIA SOCIETY OF  
PUERTO RICO, INC.**

www.heliconiasocietypr.org

**President:** Mr. Roberto L. Castro  
**Past President:** Mr. Jorge M. Matta  
**Vice President:** Dr. José Abreu Deliz  
**Treasurer:** Mr. Reily Rodríguez  
**Secretary:** Ms. Gildreth M. González  
**Officer:** Ms. Saily Rodríguez  
**Officer:** Ms. Aixa Morales  
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**Assistant Editor/Webmaster:** Dr. Bryan Brunner  
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**HSPR**

*Promoting Zingiberales in  
Puerto Rico since 1996.*



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## From Our Last Meeting

Our autumn meeting was held at the beautiful Jardín Botánico de Caguas. President Roberto Castro welcomed everybody to the meeting. Ms. Carmen Vicente, Administrator of the Jardín Botánico, talked about their facilities and encouraged everybody to enjoy them. Members donated heliconia plants and rhizomes for the Jardín Botánico.

Treasurer Reily Rodriguez gave his report and informed a balance of \$8,534.00. During the Show and Tell section, members Jorge Corredor, Hector Méndez and Edgardo Valera shared beautiful and different heliconias from their collections.

Members agreed to include in the newsletter commercial announcements and promotions related to heliconias and zingiberales. The cost will be \$50.00.

Hector Méndez informed that the Heliconia Society International Conference will be held next year at Uvatubo Brazil, more information on the HSI web page. Ray Jerome gave a photographic presentation on beautiful cactus flowers. Members brought lots of plants for the traditional raffle.

I would like to thank the HSPR members for the opportunity of serving as Secretary for the last two years. It was my pleasure!

Gildreth González  
HSPR Secretary

## President's Corner

The December meeting will be my last activity as president of the HSPR. It has been a wonderful experience to work with such a diverse and dedicated group of people that share the same interests. Also, it has been a great opportunity to contribute with new ideas, procedures and visits to new farms around the island. My intention has been to show the diversity and beauty of our island. I hope that I have met the expectations that the society's members deposited in my election.

I would like to thank all the members that one way or another contributed to the success of our activities, as well as the support of the Board of Directors. Special thanks to those who kindly hosted the quarterly meetings in their farms, giving us new insight and ideas on Zingiberales cultivation. I encourage you all to keep that support for the next President and Board of Directors that begins in January 2016.

Our December meeting will take place on Sunday, December 13 at 10:00 am at the Marin Alto farm in Patillas, P.R. There we will have our traditional Fiesta de Navidad with all the goodies of the season... including a lechón roasted on the site. Please remember that guests will be charged \$10.00 as agreed by the membership. Remember to bring plants for the raffle.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2016!  
See you in Patillas,

Roberto (Bob) Castro  
President, HSPR