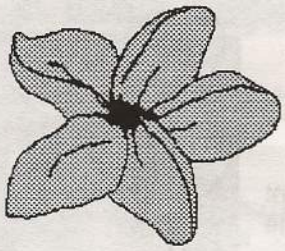

Plumeria Potpourri

The Plumeria Society of America Inc. October 1997

The program for the October meeting of the Plumeria Society of America is ***"Plumeria Around the World."*** Rik Stone, who has been collecting plumeria since 1984, will be presenting a pictorial synopsis of his travels around the world collecting and photographing beautiful and unusual plumeria. Rik has his own business developing and servicing technology in the offshore oil industry. Be at the meeting, you will not want to miss this program.

Message from the President

E.J. Lanik

We appreciate the many letters and comments we have received since our last newsletter, the July 1997 issue of "Plumeria Potpourri." This fall when things slow down a bit, I will answer as many letters as I can particularly those that are specific in nature. We will include as many comments as space permits in the "Quotes and Notes" column. For vendors, care of plumeria, and other general information, please refer to our web page on the internet: http://www.rice.edu/~milton/plumeria/. Those of you who are not internet subscribers, find a friend who is and have them pull this information from our web page for you.

Lee Jacobs, our Past President, organized a field trip to Corpus Christi, Texas to meet with our friends, The Plumeria Society of South Texas. See her article for details. I was impressed with their Plumeria section in the Corpus christi Botanical Gardens, particularly with the French drain set up they have installed underneath the rows of Plumeria plants. Hopefully, Bob Owens, President of that society can provide us with an article outlining this process. It seems to be working very well because the plants look healthy and are covered with blooms and seed pods.

Attention San Diego, California members: We have received several letters from members in the San Diego area requesting a listing of PSA members in that area. It is my understanding that, unless we get the permission of each member, we cannot give out the addresses of the PAS membership. Therefore if you will contact George F. Emerich, 152 So. Stage Coach Lane, Fallbrook, CA, 92028, 619-728-3281, he has agreed to act as your contact person.

We have appointed an ad hoc committee to review the process of establishing Plumeria Society Chapters.

(continued on page 5)

Plumeria Review: *P. Iris Rock's Sunset*

Plumeria Iris Rock's Sunset is a plumeria cultivar that has a very large and colorful flower. The flowers often are in the range of four inches across or more. The petals are oblong and rounded at the tips. The coloration is a mixture of oranges and yellows in various hues. The plant sets seeds readily and branches profusely. It is not uncommon for it to branch 5 and 6 times after flowering. Ms. Rock said that the original plant was purchased as a seedling from a nursery in Corpus, Christi, Texas. It had many branches coming out of the trunk, so for years she called it the "Upside Down Umbrella Plant." The plumeria tends to grow wider that it is tall.

Date: ***Tuesday October 14, 1997***
Time: ***7:30 PM***
Place: ***Hermann Park Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Park Drive***
Program: **Plumerias Around The World**

Future Meeting Dates
March 10, 1998
May 12, 1998
July 14, 1998
October 13, 1998

Emerson's Bits and Pieces - 1997

by Emerson Willis

This has been a fantastic year with many things I want to share with everyone. If my article seems to stagger like a drunken sailor, please bear with me.

Winter was kind. My casualty list was only a couple of lost tips and a few small potted cuttings. Our Galveston Bay Area skipped spring and went directly into summer which meant my trees were a little late but soon caught up and began cranking out blooms and will continue to do so until frost.

Both PSA plant sales were, as always, a blast! Visiting with people and sharing what we know and do is what all this is about. Not to mention, this is what funds our Society. Many thanks to the officials and volunteers for their efforts that enabled our sales and other functions to be so very successful and enjoyable.

This year's tour was an event. As usual, the manicured lawns, gardens and flower beds tempted me to come home and cut grass and pull weeds. Or maybe set fire to the whole place!! What I do is train my eyes to go out of focus at anything below my lowest inflorescence. Frogs really hate this!

This summer, Nancy and I took a 5,000 mile motorhome trip. In Georgia, we visited Richard and Mary Helen Eggenberger, the authors of The Handbook on Plumeria Culture. Their beautiful, multi-level home, is on a private lake, nestled within the foothills that are prelude to three separate mountain ranges. They have created a magnificent terraced garden that definitely has the Eggenberger's signature. Richard had previously mentioned his "retirement home"...yeah, right!!

Much later in the trip, we were camped in booth Bay, Maine, when I remembered Elizabeth Thornton, the co-author of The Exotic Plumeria, had a summer place in this state. We were only twelve miles from her home. The next day we had lunch together and later in the afternoon sat on her front porch watching Maine's nine foot tide rush in while discussing the early days of the PSA and the many seedlings she brought to bloom. The house was originally built in the 1700's .. talk about early American! As far as I know, there are only two books in print devoted to our trees. To visit with the authors of both was an honor.

My friend, Bruce Rankin, baby-sat my plants for me while we were away. Many of my young trees were going to bloom for the first time, unfortunately, after our departure. Several of these were Thornton cultivars I've never seen except in photos. Not knowing our return date and knowing a first-bloom sometimes is the largest, Bruce fast-froze (in plastic baggies with the air purged) each choice floret from many trees. Ingenious!!! Almost every flower was perfectly preserved. *P. Painted Desert* nearly 5" in diameter, the gleaming yellow of *P. Gold dust*, *P. Texas Fiesta* II, and the magnificent *P. Mardi Gras* ... all suspended in time. However, let us not discuss the thawing. Ugh!

In mid September, Nancy and I were proud to have the company of Bud and Vi Guillot of Huntington Beach, California. Bud is, of course, the submitter of the newly registered *P. Guillot's Sunset* and has been raising plumerias since 1950. Several PSA members opened their yards to them and Bud was amazed with the variety of our collections. He was able to see and smell many cultivars for the first time. He was particularly impressed with the scent of the *P. Grove Farm* and he liked the vibrant beauty and the size of the inflorescence of the *P. Kaneohe Sunburst*. However, *P. Lemon Drop* knocked his boots off (he is a transplanted Texan)!!

Thank you for staying with me this far. This is the last newsletter of the year, which tells us the off-season isn't far away. Keep this thought especially next spring. The term "not enough yard" may possibly be valid. The term "too many plumerias" is not.

Plumeria Society WWW Site

You can find additional information concerning the Plumeria Society of America and plumeria culture on the world wide information web at:

http//www.ruf.rice.edu/~miltonp/plumeria/

The Plumeria Society of America has appointed a committee to study the formation of new affiliate chapters around the world. This task force is currently in the process of contacting other societies regarding their processes of developing and encouraging new affiliates. The goal being to work out the logistics of expanding to include as many affiliates as there is need. There has already been interest expressed by several different areas of the country about organizing the plumeria growers in their area into a local society.

Guest Column on Plumeria Propagation

My name is Harry Leuzinger and I became involved in botany because of a love of plants instilled by my mother. My mother kept a section of our yard planted with vegetables and a patio painted with colorful blooms all throughout the springs and hot summers in Wichita Falls, Texas. I was a forced laborer then: I weeded, I repotted, I turned countless bags of mulch into countless feet of flower beds, I raked mountains of leaves, I managed miles of lirope borders, I turned kitchen scraps into compost, and I was pulled behind our mower for many a Saturday afternoon. Memories are funny things and when I look back at my labor, I tend to remember enjoying all that work. But if asked, my mother might tell a different story. Nonetheless, whether I liked it or not, working outside with plants gave me a gift. To this day, flowers fascinate me; I have a deep admiration for plants and I love working with them.

In May of 1990, I graduated from Texas A&M with a degree in Botany. I was young an ambitious and I had taken plant taxonomy, plant physiology, plant pathology, and a dozen other plant related courses. I was pretty sure I knew it all. But there was a whole world of plants, more specifically those from the tropics, that I didn't get to know until I accepted a job with a mail order nursery called 'The Plumeria People.' The nursery was owned by its founders, Richard and Mary Helen Eggenberger, and their partner Paul Tomaso, but they needed a manager. We moved the nursery to Leander, Texas, about 8 miles north of Austin in November of 1993. It was not very long before I discovered that a degree in botany, and a mother's great gift of a love of plants, are rather lacking tools for the job of running an existing mail order nursery. I found myself with a lot to learn in a hurry. Now, four years later, I would like to tell a bit about what I have learned about propagating plumeria and perhaps it will help others.

My first season I rooted 3,000 cuttings in perlite with no soil. I would "gang stick" them in beds made out of 2"x8" treated lumber, with the beds being 8'x4' wide. I found dry perlite a difficult and very obnoxious medium to work with, especially inside a greenhouse. I made a great investment in a particle mask. Then I filled the beds with dry perlite and organized the cuttings alphabetically, readying myself for the labor of sticking. Dry perlite is a very loose and light substance, and I had great difficulty getting the cuttings to stand. I managed to get one bed planted and I rose, dusted myself off, and watered the bed using the finest hose or breaker I had available to avoid upsetting the cuttings. I uttered a few colorful declarative statements when 90% of the cuttings fell over under even the slightest watering. It was like dominoes. It was horrible. When I returned, the perlite was damp and I noticed I could pack it tightly using my knuckles to firm around the cutting. This worked great. I had learned a lesson, wet your perlite first.

But I soon learned another lesson, that if you have an 8'X4' bed with five hundred plus cuttings in it, and you get an order for a rooted *P. Jean Moragne,* it is very difficult to find the plant and to dig it up without disturbing the dozens of plumeria around it. For the slow rooters it was horrible management because they were being disturbed quite often. The bed was too big. The next year I decided to gang stick my stock in 5 gallon buckets with one variety in each bucket. But it was no better than the year before. When I sold a rooted cutting I had to dig it out of a crowded bucket, again disturbing the cuttings around it. Furthermore, we carry 70 varieties of plumeria and while our greenhouse is big, 100 pickle buckets are not easily managed.

I needed a way to have access to individual cuttings, yet room to root them by the thousands. I had always heard that gang sticking was best and I was apprehensive to move away from the idea. I had been told by numerous gardeners and professors that once one cutting started to root, some hormone was let down, and those adjacent sticks were magically kicked into growth by the presence of this rooting hormone. I am no longer convinced that this is true. For the last two years I have been rooting plumeria in 4.5" round geranium pots, one plumeria per pot. I still use 100% coarse perlite, and I always start with it wet. Fifteen pots then sit in a form tray which prevents the pots from falling over. I have over 95% of my cuttings take root, which is significantly better that when I gang stuck. This system is also very manageable: the plants are grown on benches in alphabetical order, and I can pull one plant without disturbing others.

I believe that our rooting successes have increased because the cuttings are not being disturbed throughout the process. But at the same time that I switched to rooting plumeria individually, I began buying my cuttings earlier in the year. We now receive our cuttings in early February. They are cut off the parent stock while the plant is completely dormant. The wood is firm and dark in color, unlike spring wood. This change may well deserve some of the credit for our improvements. One immediately noticeable benefit of taking work in the winter was that we eliminated the presence of the long-horned beetle, which was an infrequent pest on spring and summer wood.

While in the past 4 years I have learned much about plumeria, I know that each season will bring further joy and knowledge. At 34 years of age I am still fascinated by flowers and by the plumeria, that odd plant with such wonderful, almost magical wood, with 5 perfect petals, and with a fragrance indefinable. The plumeria has taken a permanent place in my heart, as I'm sure it has in yours.

Quotes and Notes from Coast to Coast- and Beyond!

This edition of "Quotes and Notes" will give the membership some idea of the activity and interest in the plumeria and in joining the Plumeria Society of America, Inc. (PSA). It looks like the increasing interest for this period goes to California.

Diane Brown of Tomball, TX, In addition to wanting information regarding the PSA writes "I have recently acquired 3 plumerias, all of which have never bloomed. Also, the one I have had for 2 or 3 years has lost 2 of its branches and is not growing any more new ones. Its leaves are 23" long; 6" wide. I'd Like to know what color the flowers will be and how I can promote flowering."

Al Franklin of Gardena, CA writes "I am extremely fond of Plumeria plants and want to gain knowledge of all aspects of plumeria cultivation. I want to share your experiences, knowledge of propagation, culture, classification and identification of various species. I would appreciate receiving the newsletter and any literature or handouts you may have to send a novice and individual desiring to learn more about this plant. I would appreciate some publication showing different varieties and colors. I have the common plants which are yellow or white."

Dina Hallier, Chino Hills, CA sends her check for membership and writes "I am a horticulture student (M.S.) at C. A. Polytechnic University in Pomona, CA. I am looking forward to your plumeria information."

Melvin Fadness of San Jose, CA sends his membership application fee along with those of Margie Izzi, Jennifer Zamudio, and Dee Wigney from the San Jose, CA area.

Peggy Madigan of Fort Myers, FL writes "In their book, Richard and Mary Helen Eggenberger mentioned reports of cuttings blooming a different color the next year. I have had it happen with both yellow and pink cuttings. Are there any reports indicating if these are staying the "new" color, or reverting in future years back to the parent color?"

Carl Herzog of Lakeside, CA responds to the "Quotes and Notes" article in the July 1997 issue of the Plumeria Potpourri regarding Katherine A. Mras, Anaheim, CA asking about the possibility of having affiliated local chapters. He writes "I would like to meet other people interested in the growing and appreciation of plumerias. I live in the San Diego, CA area and have been growing plumerias for 12 years. You have my permission to give out my E-Mail address. c.herzog@worldnet.att.net. I hope others will do the same."

George Slusser of Woodville, WA also responds to articles in the July 1997 issue saying that he too visited southeast Asia, particularly, Malaysia, Indonesia, and American Samoa and saw plumeria trees as big as most oak trees. He reacts to Eileen and Jim Hill's article, ("Fungaway our Friend"), by adding that plumeria are very susceptible to mealy bugs and scale indoors here. Ultra fine oil sprays cause the leaves to die. Mites can be controlled, but not totally eradicated by spraying (misting) the tops and bottoms of the leaves and stems. Strong water sprays slow them down.

Mr. Slusser also refers to the note from Tony Cirricione, East Greenbush, NY about the loss of one of his prize plumerias last winter. George says "I too bring my plumeria in in October; however I slowly, for a week, stop all watering. Our winter temperatures drop into the teens a few times. Once in February, I left one potted plant, no leaves, overnight in 30 degree weather. It survived. One left out with leaves died. I have stored my leafless plants in the basement at 40 degrees F. Most survived, those with wet soil rotted. I've found that my plumeria - brought in in October - kept dry all winter with no leaves have leaf sprouts in February. I mist stems, put them out in July with night temperatures in the 50's and daytime temperatures of 60 to 70 degrees. I've never had rust. I've had black rot when trying to keep the plumeria growing in the winter. There is not enough sun here most of the year to grow plumeria in the winter. An exception would be with artificial lights and warm temperatures. In that very few of my plumeria ever bloom, I'm and example of what not to do; however, I feel safe in saying that misting the stems daily or fractions thereof would help the conditions of plumeria in their dry state."

Henry Dupree, spring Valley, CA is an avid plumeria grower and writes "I actively do three or four hours gardening daily. About twenty years ago I purchased several rooted cuttings in 12 " pots. I never seemed to get any blooms other than small scraggily ones, then about four years ago I visited a friend who had many plants all with gorgeous blooms. He had *P. Singapore,* a *P. Daisy Wilcox* and several *P. Samoan Fluffs*. This friend gave me cuttings and explained how to take care of same and get blooms. He had one seedling for twenty years and no bloom. He dug it up and gave it to me and I began pouring phosphate and got a bloom similar to *P. Pink Shell.*

The Registration Committee met in July and approved three new cultivars. They are as follows:

*Caribbean Sunset, a Kimo type petal with yellow orange colorations.

*Texas Lantern: A large light yellow shell.

*Porcelain Pink: A medium sized pink.

A more complete description will be in the next registration list. These were submitted by Jim and Eileen Hill of Houston.

The registration committee was delighted to be able to present Bud Guillot with his "Certificate of Registration" while he was visiting in Houston.

International Committee Report

by Milton Pierson

Now that we as The Plumeria Society of America, Inc. are on the internet, I as host of the web site get a sizable volume of electronic mail correspondence. These questions and comments come from many areas of the US and indeed the world. In this column, I will attempt to share a cross section of the questions and comments and the answers that were provided. Hopefully the questions raised and answered here will help you further your knowledge of Plumeria care wherever on the Earth you reside. You may direct questions to me via e-mail at miltonp@ruf.rice.edu if answers cannot be found within the pages of our World Wide Web site;

http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~miltonp/plumeria/

Q: "Hello I was just wondering if plumeria can be grown indoors. I live in Toronto Canada so I would think that having one outdoors would be near impossible but in my house a have a very large entrance (25 feet high) with a large skylight and other windows. Any info you have re growing plumeria indoors would be greatly appreciated." - Glen Magder

A: Hi, sorry for not responding sooner. Yes there are people living in Canada who grow plumeria successfully. I think the secret is grow lights indoors in the spring and fall to extend the active growing period to 8 or 9 months. Your entrance with the windows sounds like an excellent place to grow plumeria. The Plumeria can probably only be outside for three or four months in your climate and will need a longer time to produce flowers.

There are accounts of plumeria being grown indoors under lights in the book called the Handbook of Plumeria Culture written by Richard Eggenberger (3rd edition, 1995). This book is available in Houston for about $15. If you cannot find it in Canada, I can try to send a copy to you. I wish you good luck and good growing with your plumeria. I love to hear of others such as myself who love plumeria.

Q: I have a Plumeria planted in the ground that froze this winter. It was a very mature plant with a large root system. Currently, there appears to be no above ground growth. Do you think this plant should be cut to the ground, and will it possible re-grow from the roots? Any advice is sincerely appreciated. - Dan Cocozza

A: Dan, My suggestion is to gently prod the main trunk with a sharp knife at various spots along its length until I found white latex. Then take a saw and cut the

(Continued on page 7)

President

(Continued from page 1)

There is a growing interest in the Plumeria. According to letters and comments, there is a major interest in the registration, the care, and hybridizing of plumeria. Also of particular interest for some is to meet with other plumerians in their area.

We have had a good summer for Plumeria, but it is now time to get serious about preparing our plants for the winter. For the newcomers, please refer to our winterizing care bulletin on the web page or refer to one of the popular plumeria booklets.

We look forward to seeing the Houston area members at our next regular meeting on Tuesday, October 14, 1997 at the Hermann Park Garden Center. For our other members worldwide, we look forward to hearing from you. We will answer as many of your letters as possible and include as many of your comments in the "Notes and Quotes" column in our next issue of "Plumeria Potpourri" as space permits.

If you have articles for publishing in the Plumeria Potpourri. mail those to me or fax them directly to Tom SoRelle, Plumeria Potpourri editor, 409-942-2660, or tsorelle@infocom.net for E-Mail.

Corpus Christi Field Trip

By 8:00 AM on Friday, August 22, twenty members of the Plumeria Society were sailing along on Highway 59 to our destination at the Water Gardens in Corpus Christi, Texas. On our arrival, we were met by Bob Owens, President of the Plumeria Society of South Texas. Bob took us on a tour of the Corpus Christi Botanical Gardens and the plumeria gardens of Don and Barbara Gill and John "Jocko" Taylor.

The Botanical Gardens display of plumeria contained 31 cultivars of very well grown plumeria. The cultivar which generated the most excitement was Bob's *P. Mexican Pink*. A number of cuttings of this variety returned to Houston from the sale. Members of the local society do extensive volunteer work at the Botanical Gardens exhibit.

On Saturday, we were off to the Society's sale at the Padre Staples Mall. Needless to say when we left, at least one third of the bus was occupied by plumeria. Our President E.J. Lanik had the largest, a Samoan Fluff,and he had many offers to ease the difficulties of handling such a large plant by removing cuttings.

Saturday afternoon was left open for tours of the US Carrier Lexington or the Texas State Aquarium which are located next to each other. After a Mexican Dinner, we left for home with our fill of beautiful plumeria and good food. Thanks to our friends in Corpus for a wonderful tour.

Membership Report

The Plumeria Society of America welcomes the following new members from the Houston area: James Myrick, Scott Pratt, Carolyn Stiles, Ross Schwing, Ed and Manon Poole, Janis and Mark Atkins, Gudula and Jim Fisher, Henry Dauman, Helen Wylie, Betty Kelley, Jerry Sloane, Linda Litt, Peggy and Robert Nowlin, Jean Wyatt and Beverly Williamson.

David Long from California Sheila Gore from San Antonio are also new members to the PSA.

Remember that the date on the address label is the date that you paid your dues. Also, please remember that all dues are due next March, 1998. If you have questions of corrections, contact Membership Chairman, Mary Sue Lockler at:

The Plumeria Society of America
P.O. Box 22791,
Houston, Texas 77227-2791

Maui Mango Pie

Here is the recipe that many of you have requested.

Maui Mango Pie

Crust
2 cups flour
1/2 cup flour
1 1/2 stick cold butter

Cream Cheese Filling
1 8 oz. package cream cheese
1/2 cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 8 oz. container Cool Whip

Mango Filling
2 envelopes unflavored gelatin
1 cup cold water
1 cup boiling water
1 cup sugar
1/4 tsp. salt
4 tbs. lemon juice
5 cups ripe mangos, peeled and diced

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a medium bowl, combine flour and sugar. With pastry blender or two knives, cut in the cold butter until the pastry looks like small peas. Press the dough into the bottom of a 9 x 13 inch baking dish. Bake for 20 to 30 minutes. Set aside and cool.

In a medium bowl, mix the cream cheese until it is soft. Add the sugar and vanilla and cream well. Fold in the Cool Whip. spread the mixture over the cooled crust. Chill in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

In a small bowl, pour in the cold water and sprinkle with gelatin. Add lemon juice and stir to combine. Cool the mixture. Add the mangos and chill in the refrigerator until the gelatin begins to set. While still soft, pour the mango gelatin mixture over the cream cheese and return to the refrigerator. Chill until ready to serve.

(Continued from page 5)
limb or trunk approximately 6 inches above the point where latex was found. If no latex is found above ground level, don't give up completely. Simply cut to leave a stump approximately 6 inches above the ground level and wait for sprouts to appear at ground level. The sprouts will appear not from the roots, but from the part of the trunk that was covered with soil. Good Luck."

R: "I took your advice, and cut the plant about 6" from the ground. It now has 3 nice health sprouts. Thanks for the help. Let me know if I can reciprocate." - Dan Cocozza

Q: Probably like many others, I was first introduced to plumeria while on vacation in Hawaii a number of years ago. I brought back a cutting to Kentucky, but promptly killed it with overwatering and improper drainage. While on a walk during a recent trip to San Diego, I noticed a beautiful tri-colored plumeria in someone's front yard. I currently live in Phoenix and would appreciate your opinion on the feasibility of trying to establish a cutting here." - David Lamb

A: David, I'm sure plumeria will grow "Phine in Phoenix", however you may want to provide some protection from the mid-day sun while allowing for a sum of 6 to 8 hours of combined morning and evening direct light. Does this help? Let me know if I can be of more help. Does it freeze in the winter? If so you would need to protect the plumeria from freezing also."

Q: Where can I go for Information on in-house raising from seed? My plant is about 3 feet tall now (after 3 years) but it must be staked up or it would have fallen over the first year. It flowered once and seems to be very healthy otherwise." - Bruce M. St Lawrence, Vermont tropics lovers.

A: Dear BRUCE, I currently do not know of a wealth of information on in-house raising of plumeria from seed. My suggestion is to get the plant(s) as much light as possible during the growing season including Grow lights if the windows do not allow Bright or direct light. The stem(s) should thicken with time with the high light exposure. Many growers in the Northern US and Canada need to use grow lights to extend their plumeria growing season. Good luck with your plumeria. I always love to hear from other tropics lovers such as myself."

Q: Dear Mr. Pierson, This weekend I bought myself a gardening book about plants in containers. My eye fell on this beautiful plant/tree called plumeria. I have a balcony on the southside of my house and I wonder whether the plumeria will grow there. I live in the Netherlands, so we have a moderate sea climate. Perhaps you can tell me if it's worth to try to grow this plant? Thank you in advance." - Maria Poppelaars-Melaard

A: Dear Maria, Thank you for the note. Yes I do think it is worth trying to grow a plumeria or two there. I am not sure of your daylight length, but if you can protect the plumeria from frost, it will probably reward you with beautiful flowers within a season or 2 of growth. The south full sun exposure would be perfect. Good luck to you and your plants."

Q: Subject: Caring for a Plumeria in Northern Minnesota Hello Milton, My wife enjoyed checking-out your homepage & other Plumeria sites on the Web. She recently acquired a Plumeria while down at the State Fair this summer. However, up here in the Northland she is wondering if it can flower indoors & under what environmental conditions or if she would be better off placing the pot outside during our warmer months, (about 3)." - Mark Irving

A: Hi Mark, Thank you for the note. Your plumeria(s) will really enjoy the time outside while the weather permits. Because of your location, inside growing is also recommended under strong grow lights at both ends of the growing period. You will still need to allow the Plumeria to go dormant for a few months in the winter when no light or water are needed. My sister in Red Oak, Iowa has a few plumeria that she puts out for the summer months as does a friend near Des Moines, IA. The natural water of the rain seems to do a world of good as does the natural sunlight. Good Growing!"

Plumeria Society of America Officers 1997

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Vol. 7 No. 1 | Plumeria Care Bulletin | October, 1997

Storing Plumeria for the Winter

By Milton Pierson, Research Committee

Many of us who love to grow Plumeria live in areas where the temperature falls to freezing and below during the winter months. Before this happens, we must protect our Plumeria by placing the plants in a storage area for the winter if we are to have blooms next year. The tender new growths where next year's flower stalks appear are the first part of a plant destroyed by frost. To prevent damage to our plants we must move them to an area that will remain above freezing for the duration of winter. Try to keep it above 40F but the absolute minimum is 32F for most Plumeria. This can be as simple as moving your Plumeria into your living room if you only have a few plants. On the other hand, it can mean a huge job for those of us who have many (maybe too many) Plumeria plants. Plumeria can be stored inside your house, garage, attic, closet, or greenhouse. They require no light while dormant, however if you have a sunroom to store Plumeria, they may break dormancy and flower sooner. The most important factor is the temperature.

If you have only a few Plumeria growing in pots, you can merely bring them inside your house or garage. The leaves will naturally yellow then fall in response to the lower light intensity and shorter day length. If you do not want to be continuously picking up leaves, remove them by snipping the leaf petioles about an inch from the trunk. The remaining stubs will yellow and fall off naturally within a week or two. Plumeria do not need water during the winter rest period. In fact, too much water while the plant is dormant can potentially cause the roots to rot off, leading to the loss of your Plumeria from the bottom up. The stems may shrivel slightly but this is not a problem. These stems will swell and grow when normal watering resumes in the spring when the danger of frost is past and the Plumeria is back outside. You may add a cup or so of water per month to each plant, especially younger or smaller ones, to prevent desiccation of stems. Remember that less is better than more when it comes to water on Plumeria in the dormant season.

For many of us, bringing the plants in for winter is a much more complicated task. Not only are there Plumeria growing in pots on the patio, there are pots of Plumeria sunk into flower beds and Plumeria planted directly in the ground. The first step is usually to remove all leaves by clipping the petioles or simply stripping by firmly stroking the branch tips from top downward. The stripping method is much quicker but may occasionally leave larger scars where tissue is damaged. Bringing in the pots from the patio is basically the same as for above. They can be brought into the storage area and placed as close as possible to each other to maximize space utility. However, the pots sunk into flower beds need to be carefully lifted by slipping a shovel or spade fork under the pot and prying up while balancing the plant. Once lifted from the ground, prune the roots dangling from weep holes and remove excess soil from the outside pot surface. Bring these pots and plants into the storage area and place in an efficient manner.

Bringing in Plumeria planted directly in the ground follows a procedure similar to that for pots sunk into flower beds. First, remove the leaves by stripping or clipping if you can reach them. You may have to remove leaves later or let them fall naturally by themselves. Next, cut into the soil on all sides of the trunk at the desired root ball radius with a shovel or sharpshooter. Then, force the shovel under the root ball and pry up while balancing the plant. Lift the root ball from the soil and gently remove excess soil before pruning the roots to a manageable size. You may want to individually bag each root ball before placing in the storage area to keep soil from falling off. This is not necessary however. You may choose to place as many bare root Plumeria root balls as will fit into a large plastic lined box in the garage, then strap the group together for tidiness.

However you choose to store your Plumeria for winter, there are a few points to remember. Most important is remember to allow yourself enough time to beat the freeze. Also, do not place Plumeria roots or pots directly on the concrete floor of your garage or greenhouse. The cold from the concrete may damage your Plumeria roots and lead them to rot especially if moisture is in contact with the cold roots. This is more likely a problem than the leaching of lime as previously thought. Good air circulation is a must to minimize pests and disease on Plumeria in storage. Watch for spider mites on the growing points especially as spring approaches. Treat as necessary.

The Plumeria Society of America expects that you the consumer will carefully follow manufacturers label directions for all chemicals and tools.