

The Plumeria Society of America, Inc.

October 2011



## Plumeria Potpourri

*The next meeting of The Plumeria Society of America will be held  
Tuesday, October 11, 2011, 7:30 p.m.  
at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park  
1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, Texas.  
Anyone with an interest in plumerias is invited to attend.*



Come to the meeting October 11<sup>th</sup> for a discussion on what went wrong this summer, what we learned from it, and how to prepare for fall care and winter storage. There will be opportunity for questions and answers.

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## President's Corner

by **Mark Wright, Texas**  
*email:* wright5447@sbcglobal.net

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As far as I know, plumeria have no feelings. They do not possess the ability to think or reason. When things go bad, they suffer. When things are worse, they die.

After all the floods, drought, heat waves, locust infestations, and other natural disasters, they are better off than we are. Plumeria never have to worry about who to vote for!

As long as there are people like us, plumeria will flourish for a long time.

Uncertain times confirm one thing to me. It is best to enjoy what you have and to do what you can to reach your goals.

The PSA will send out the election ballots in December. As long as you are a paid member, you will receive your ballot in the mail. If you would like to run for an office, please contact our secretary, Karen Babb, and your name will be given to the Nomination Committee.

Our last group function of the year will be on October 15, 2011. The annual Fall Social and Luau is fun for everyone.

This is also the last *Potpourri* of the year. This has been a great year, and I know next year will be even better!

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## Lay Down Plumeria

by **Dan Teel, Texas**

I had a call the other day from my brother-in-law. I got him interested in growing plumerias about five years ago, and he is very proud of the three really nice plumeria plants that I have given him. He said he went out on his patio the other day, and two of his beautiful plumerias were laying flat on the concrete looking like they had laid down and gone to sleep. I immediately asked him if he was over watering them. He said he was watering them as usual. I told him I was not sure what was happening to his beloved plants.

Then, about a week ago, two of my plants that the previous day were standing tall and looking great were laying flat on the ground. I rationalized that maybe they were too dry, so I drenched them with water. The next day they still lay there flat. All week I kept waiting for them to stand tall once again—didn't happen.

So I took one of my laid-down plumerias to an expert plumerian. I got the plant out of the car and showed it to him and explained what had happened. I then asked him if he knew what made this happen. He said he didn't know. He told me that he had several of his plants do the same thing. He said he took one of those plants and cut it open, and instead of being white and creamy on the inside, the plant was sort of dry and chalky looking. He blamed it on the hot, dry summer that we have been having. He said he had other bizarre things happening to some of his plants.

So the only thing I can think to do is put a stake in the pot, and tie the plant so that it is standing up straight. Maybe next spring when hopefully things become normal the plants will recover. Wish I had a better answer other than hang in there and wait.

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## Reasons and Suggestions

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by **Mark Wright**

Dan, I am sorry about your problem. There are several reasons for this condition.

I have sold machines to cut grass and weeds for 35 years. The only time I have complaints is in the summer during rapid growing conditions. This year, the complaints have been much fewer. The grass has mostly died, or not grown at all, thanks to record heat and a prolonged drought.

During periods of rapid growth, cells keep growing so fast that the walls of the cells don't thicken. Too much fertilizer and water compound this problem. The tree outgrows its ability to support itself.

Container-grown trees are very prone to this condition. They wilt, and we respond by watering. Any temperature over 95°F means watering twice a day. If you miss one watering, they wilt. If you miss two or three, they implode.

Here are some ideas to consider:

- Plant your larger trees in the ground in beds with good drainage. In the winter, they can be dug up and stored in a protected area.
- Plants that wilt rapidly may need to be repotted in larger pots. Root bound plants require more frequent watering.
- Some plumeria do better in pots than others. Try to choose dwarf or compact varieties to grow in pots.
- After a plant is older (three to four feet tall), go lighter on the fertilizer. Use a balanced fertilizer with no number higher than 8.
- Only water when you must. Plumeria need more water in the summer, but too much water leads to a dependence, resulting in a crash.

I wish I could say we won't see these conditions again, but I think we will. We must adapt or learn to grow Organ Pipe Cactus.



*Bangkok Fire (with much heat)*



*Bangkok Fire (with less heat)*

## Really Large Cuttings

It is doubtful many plumeria people ever wonder how one takes intact really large cuttings from the top of huge 20 feet-plus trees. Those of us who raise plumerias in pots, plunge pot, and/or bare root (removing before frost) probably never even think about it.

In the Florida Keys, when I lop off a high limb with a pole saw, smashing it to the ground, my usual reaction is to run around in a circle crying, “Oh, big cuttings, small cuttings, stem cuttings!” Obviously, I use banana boxes for carrying cuttings.

While Nancy and I were visiting the Plumeria Legend, Bud Guillot, and his wife, Vi, last spring, Bud demonstrated how he has been taking these large cuttings for various people which would fit in no banana box except maybe King Kong’s.



*A very long pole with a rope, pulley, and a taped open loop (lasso).*



*The lasso on a 10-foot, light aluminum pole. Note the pulley at the end of the retrieving pole.*



*Select a branch and lasso it.  
Bud is a transplanted Texan, you know.*



*Nancy holds the pole as Bud makes the cut with a long chain saw. I don't know what he does when she isn't visiting. I suppose Vi does the holding.*



*The lift and lowering of the large plumeria cutting.*



*And there it is—California Sally all in one piece!*

Of course, we left for home with it laying on the back patio. I won't say for whom it was destined, but his initials are Mark Wright.



## Thinking Outside the Pot: Bonsai—Part 1

by *Jim Little, Hawaii*

This will be the first of a three-part series.

Elizabeth Thornton, the Queen of Plumeria, was told by many admirers that her attempts to grow plumeria in pots could not be done. Thank goodness for her persistence, or we would not be where we are today.

I was told that plumeria would not grow in a bonsai pot. I persisted, and it worked.

The bonsai culture started over a thousand years ago by the Chinese and was later adopted by the Japanese who took it to new levels. I started experimenting with the



concept about ten years ago. I used different dwarf plumeria and new JL dwarf hybrids to determine which varieties would adapt best to bonsai pot culture. The photos show plants which are approximately 5 years old.

While most bonsai growers work with proven tree forms, there are many tropical plants that you could be the first to explore. Here is the information that will get you started.

First, you need to develop true dwarf starter plants in 2-inch pots, usually around 4



to 8 inches long with multiple branch tips (the more the better). Use only cuttings from some dwarf trees. Not all dwarf types will adapt to bonsai culture. Use a potting mix that has superior drainage. I use a mix of cinder and peat moss sometimes mixed with a little perlite or/and Big R. The different types of dwarfs will be discussed in Part 2.

Once rooted, transfer the cuttings to a bonsai pot of your choice. The rooted cutting can be laid at any angle in a bonsai pot. After it acclimates to its shallow confinement, you will be able to adjust its growth configuration as it matures. There are many beautiful bonsai pots to choose from, and your choice will be dictated by the size of your rooted cutting. Once the starter cutting is planted in the bonsai pot, it is best to let it develop in the same pot without uprooting or transferring it to a different pot. There is no reason why you cannot root the starter cutting directly in the bonsai pot. I choose not to.

I found that I did not need to trim the roots until after about five or six years. Even then, I was very judicious in my efforts depending on what miniature or dwarf variety I was growing. Some did not require root pruning. The beauty of working with a dwarf or miniature plumeria is that you can do a pre-hardened cut on the branches as they are growing in the bonsai dish and create multiple branch configurations. You can wire, pre-cut, (see *Growing Plumeria in Hawai'i and Around the World* for pre-cut information) use weights,



or whatever to satisfy your creative instincts. The beauty of this endeavor is that as you train your plant, the more beautiful it becomes with age!

Determining which stage of growth to prune the tree depends on the variety and how

you want to shape it. For every cut, you generally will see develop a new branch or two or three, depending on the time of the year and where you made the cut on the branch.

Fertilize and water less than a regularly growing plumeria. My bonsai plants are so easy and fun to care for. The plants enjoy a mist spraying anytime you want to give them a refresher. Because many bonsai plants lend themselves to less watering, you do not have to be as attentive as with some plants. The best part is that your plant will be a novelty show piece that can be placed anywhere in the house and easily moved about as the yearly weather dictates.

I hope this opens a new world of experimenting for you. It did for me, and I find it so satisfying. In Part 2, I will discuss the growing and flowering habits of the true dwarf plumeria.

*Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)

More information will be available through my new associate, Hawaii/Kara. If you are interested in future information, you may contact her at: [kgorgonio@gmail.com](mailto:kgorgonio@gmail.com).



## Plumeria Seed Viability Study

**Scope:** To determine how long seed would continue to be viable.

**Description:** In 2004, several seed pods were taken from a *Slaughter Pink* tree, placed in a plastic bottle, and labeled.

**Storage:** This bottle was placed on a shelf in the house.

The study consisted of planting ten (10) seeds every year to determine how long they would stay viable.

Year 1—2005 All 10 seeds were planted and all of them came up and survived.

Year 2—2006 All 10 seeds were planted and all of them came up and survived.

Year 3—2007 All 10 seeds were planted and all of them came up and survived.

Year 4—2008 All 10 seeds were planted and only eight of them came up and survived.

Year 5—2009 **Group 1:** All 10 seeds were planted and only eight of them came up but only six of them survived after six weeks.

Year 5—2009 **Group 2:** All 10 seeds were planted and only six of them came up and they all survived.

Year 6—2010 All 10 seeds were planted and only five of them came up and all but one survived.

Year 7—2011 All 10 seeds were planted and only one came up and survived.

This concludes the study.

**Method:** Every year the seeds were planted in the same potting soil and were placed in the same spot in the greenhouse. They were kept moist, but not wet, until the germination was complete. After they were two inches tall, we started to water and feed them.

**Conclusion:** Without any special care, seeds appear to be viable for five to six years.

**Alternatives:** The seeds may last longer if they are refrigerated.

This study was conducted by Eulas Stafford, member of the PSA Research Committee.



*Yard tour in Corpus Christi*



*Emerson Willis entertaining the waiting shoppers at the Katy, TX sale*



## PSA Luau Invitation

Plan now to attend our annual luau on **Saturday, October 15, 2011**. As usual, it will be held on the gorgeous grounds of **Lake and Eulas Stafford** at **2301 Primrose, Pasadena, Texas 77502**.

Arrive early at 6:00 PM to tour their garden and chat with friends. Dinner will be served at 8:00 PM, and the Hawaiian dance program will begin around 9:00 PM.

There will be a \$10 charge per person this year, and you must reserve your spot by October 11<sup>th</sup>. Due to the fact that the food will be catered this year, there will be no tickets sold at the door. Call 281-438-3653 or email **wright5447@sbcglobal.net** to make reservations. Checks may be mailed to **Sharon Wright, 2819 Carnoustie Dr., Missouri City, Texas 77459**.

There will be drawings and contests for door prizes.

Remember, reservations must be made by October 11<sup>th</sup>.





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### The Plumeria Society of America Web Site

Additional information concerning The Plumeria Society of America and culture of plumeria plants may be found on the World Wide Web at the following address:

**<http://www.ThePlumeriaSociety.org>**

A listing of currently registered cultivars — Research Committee Bulletins — PSA By-Laws  
Plumeria Care Bulletins — Photos from past events — Map links to meeting and sale sites  
Photos of plumeria plants and flowers — past color insert pages in PDF format

#### Purpose of The Plumeria Society of America

- (1) Promote interest in and increase knowledge of plumeria hybridization, propagation and culture of plumerias.
- (2) Share this knowledge with hobbyists interested in plumerias.
- (3) Provide a register for recording, identifying and classifying by name new types and varieties of plumerias.
- (4) Encourage and unite plumeria enthusiasts around the globe, throughout America and across the seas.

*Copy this page for all your friends who love plumeria or just want to know more about them.*

#### The Plumeria Society of America, Inc.

P.O. Box 22791

Houston, TX 77227-2791, USA

Dues are \$25 per year

#### PSA Calendar — 2011

- January 11 .....meeting
- March 8 .....meeting
- May 10 .....meeting
- June 11 ..... Show & Sale I (Seabrook/Clear Lake)
- July 12.....meeting
- August 13.....Show & Sale II (Katy/Merrell Center)
- October 11 .....meeting
- October 15.....Fall Social

- All regular meetings are held at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, 1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX. Meetings begin at 7:30 p.m., workshops begin at 6:45 p.m.
- Bring your blooms. Bring your friends.
- Bring plants, cuttings, etc. for door prizes!! These can be anything, not just plumerias.
- Visitors are invited and encouraged to attend.

#### PSA Officers/Committee Members—2011

- |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Mark Wright                            | wright5447@sbcglobal.net       |
| <i>President</i> .....                 | 281-438-3653                   |
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| <i>Director and Webmaster</i> .....    | 409-767-8135                   |
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| <i>Membership</i> .....                |                                |
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| <i>Research</i> .....                  | 713-728-2413                   |
| Sharon Wright                          | wright5447@sbcglobal.net       |
| <i>Social</i> .....                    | 281-438-3653                   |

#### volunteer position available

- |                          |                                 |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
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| <i>Plant Sales</i> ..... | 713-896-5500 x2539              |
| Irene Jones              | ijplume@sbcglobal.net           |
| <i>Newsletter</i> .....  | 760-436-6885                    |



**Top** (L to R): *Vera Cruz Rose*,  
*Saigon Moon*

**Middle** (clockwise L to R):  
*Red Santa*, *Mary Robinson Foster*,  
*Heirloom*, *seedling (Mark Wright)*,  
*Thornton Lemon Drop*, *Purple Jade*  
*Dragon*

**Bottom** (L to R): *Pretty Princess*,  
*Hurricane*

