



# Plumeria Potpourri

The Plumeria Society of America, Inc.

January 2010

The next meeting of The Plumeria Society of America will be held on Tuesday, January 12, 2010, 7:30 p.m. at the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, 1500 Hermann Drive, Houston.

Anyone with an interest in plumerias is invited to attend.

## The PSA Guest Speaker—John Ferguson

January 12, 2010



### The Dirt on Soils: Compost and Mulches

This talk by John Ferguson of Nature's Way Resources applies the USDA "Soil Food Web" model of fertility and soil management to compost and mulches. It explains why some types of mulches attract fire ants and cause plant diseases while others create good soil structure. It covers how to use and apply mulches and compost correctly. Also covered in the talk are the types of compost and mulch products available and the pros and cons of each, and how to avoid the pitfalls of using the wrong type of products.

A brief review of the "Soil Food Web" model will be discussed, then into how mulches and compost solve or cause problems from weeds to insect and disease problems.

For information about Nature's Way Resources, go to

<http://natureswayresources.com/about.htm>

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### President's Corner

Happy Holidays! Winter has arrived in North America with the earliest recorded snowfall in Houston. The first week of December also had a dangerously hard freeze that killed off our annual flowers and tropical plants. Unfortunately, if you had not taken precautions to protect your plumeria, they probably suffered freeze damage. Freeze damage can sometimes hide until later. Gently squeeze the branch and see if there is "give." If the branch is still firm, it is probably OK. But if you feel squishiness and see fluid under the outer layer of bark, your plumeria was damaged by the cold.

The PSA website gets this question all the time. Here is the solution:

- 1) Prune off any rotten or diseased areas with a sterilized instrument at a 45 degree angle. This prevents rain water from collecting in the cut end and causing further rot.
- 2) Cut back until you get clean white wood.
- 3) Be sure to sterilize your cutting tool between cuts with a weak solution of bleach and water.
- 4) Some people like to seal their cuts with pruning paint, but this is not necessary.

If you are not sure your plant was damaged, wait and see. If you see rot travelling down

the branch, you know you have a problem, and you should begin pruning immediately.

The PSA elections will end December 31, and the winners will be announced and installed at our January meeting. I want to thank the current Board for all their help this year, and I am sure the next group will do a great job! It was a pleasure and privilege to be your President, and I thank each and every one of you for your continued support of the PSA.

Sincerely,

*Paula Furtwangler*

PSA President 2008–2010

**Q** I bought a home in San Diego that has a 5-foot plumeria plant. It was doing fine until I left for the holidays to go back east for 3 weeks. Upon my return, all the leaves were off the plant. Is that normal? My neighbor has a much smaller plant and hers has leaves. What do I need to know and do to save this plant if it is in danger? Very upset with its status right now and do not know where to turn.

**A** Plumerias will lose their leaves in the winter. Some cultivars shed leaves sooner than others. Also there are a few plumerias that are considered evergreen. Perhaps your neighbor has an evergreen variety. In the spring you will see that your plumeria will grow new leaves. Do not worry about leaf loss in the winter.

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Plumeria Mink, B. B. Moore



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### Tropic World

by *Bud Guillot, Southern California*

I first saw the plumeria Tropic World when I visited Jim Clark many years ago. I had phoned Jim and made arrangements to visit him at his seven-acre plumeria farm in Fallbrook, California. I had taken Interstate 15 to Fallbrook and turned onto a narrow

Jim's house. As I pulled up to the south side of Jim's house, I saw a large plumeria tree covered with white blossoms as large as my hand. They were a beautiful creamy white with a yellow throat and pink edgings. The blossoms were of the size of Daisy Wilcox

but the petals stood more erect, were a thicker texture and not "flop eared" like a Daisy Wilcox.

I was so excited seeing that large, beautiful plumeria I almost ran over one of Jim's big, friendly watch dogs.

Jim Clark told me this story of Tropic World: There is a nursery on Interstate 15 in Escondido,

California that is called Tropic World Nursery. It was owned and managed by Paul Hutchinson. Paul had retired as a Professor of Horticulture at Berkley. Paul purchased a flat of plumeria seedlings to sell at his nursery. As people purchased the plumeria seedlings they would always pick and choose the largest and strongest. After



Paula Furtwangler (L) and Jim Clark (R) 2007

two lane, poorly-maintained blacktop road that led into the mountains toward Jim's place. Jim had given his address as 1330, and I was checking the numbers on the mail boxes along the road. I saw a wooden post driven into the ground with a black plastic five-gallon plant pot nailed to it, as a mail box, with 1330 in big white letters. I turned onto a narrow dirt road that led to



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awhile all the plumeria seedlings were sold except one scrawny little seedling. The tray had been neglected. Paul came by and picked up the tray to throw that decrepit little plant in the trash. As he was walking



toward the trash, he passed by a container that had planting soil in it. He stopped and scooped a handful of planter mix out of the pot and planted the little plumeria seedling in it, with the comment, "I will give you one last chance." The little plant thrived and grew into a large, beautiful specimen. For several years, Jim kept trying to get the Tropic World Nursery owner to sell him a cutting, but Paul would not sell him a cutting. One day Paul phoned Jim and asked, "Do you still want that big white plumeria plant?" Jim said, "Are you finally going to sell me a cutting of that plant?" The owner said, "No—I am going to give you the tree, so bring your truck." The nursery owner died a few months later.

He must have known he didn't have much time left and wanted to find a good home for that special plant. Jim named the plant Tropic World.

That is the plumeria I saw growing on the south side of Jim's house. When I went home that day, I had made a plumeria friend, and I had a nice multi-tipped cutting of Tropic World from the parent tree.

About six or seven years ago, there was an unusual cold spell in Fallbrook, and it killed the parent tree to its root tips. I took a large multi-tipped cutting from my Tropic World and sent it to Jim to replace the one he lost. Twila White was going to visit Jim, and she delivered it to him. In January 2007, we had a cold spell and the chill killed my Tropic World down to its root tips. Twila told me she had cuttings of Tropic World that I had given her, and she could replace the one I lost. She brought me a nice multi-tipped rooted plant with two inflorescences which are now blooming in my yard.

The Tropic World Nursery is still in business under different management.

### Mycorrhizal Fungi

by Mark Terrill, Texas

In an online forum post, I commented that I was getting roughly double the growth with plumeria seedlings that had an enhanced potting mix inoculated with mycorrhizal fungi. I was asked what was my source of the fungi.

#### Mycorrhiza Basics

Plumeria are mycorrhizal plants as some fungi are mycorrhizal fungi. It's the mutual beneficial relationship that qualifies them as mycorrhizal.

As brilliant as nature is, it should be no wonder that many survival-based alliances can be found in nature between plants, fungi, insects, and animals. Basically it's "I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine," and "don't kill the goose that laid the golden egg."

Mycorrhizal plants such as plumeria exude sugars into the soil. Mycorrhizal fungi colonize these roots to feed off of the sugars. The plant benefits directly in three major ways.

1) These fungi protect their source of sugar by fending off harmful pathogens. Harmful pathogens are after the root tissue; mycorrhizae are only after the excess secreted sugar.

2) Much of the micro nutrients in the soil can be locked up in large molecules that

a plant's roots can neither absorb nor break down into components that can be absorbed. The mycorrhizal fungi colonized on the roots break down these large compounds and deliver the micro nutrients to the roots in a form that can be absorbed.

3) The fungi extend the reach of the plant's ability to acquire moisture and nutrients. The fungi have fast growing and far reaching "root"-like growth called mycelium which increases both surface area and reach for absorption.

Indirect results from these three direct benefits are faster quality plant growth, improved disease and insect resistance, and a small degree of frost damage protection. Fruits and vegetables can be larger, have better flavor, and be more nutritional.

#### Mycorrhizal Products

Organic products tend to be distributed regionally from the point of manufacture. Your local feed stores and large nurseries may have equivalent products under different brand names than Texas. For those living near Houston, Texas these products can be purchased at Southwest Fertilizer on Bissonnet.

#### Mix

The seedling potting mix used Pro-Mix HP compressed in 3.8 cubic feet bags.

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HP stands for high porosity. It is comprised of peat and coarse perlite.

The mix is inoculated with mycorrhizal fungi using a proprietary method and trademarked under the name Mycorise Pro.

The manufacturer recommends using the product within one year of packaging.

The bags are marked with a date. (<http://www.hort.purdue.edu/hort/facilities/downloads/proMixHP.pdf>)



### Inoculum

With seedling potting mix, rooting bags, or rooting tubes, mycorrhizal fungi was added to the Pro-Mix HP with a product by Garden-Ville. ([http://www.garden-ville.com/4429869\\_36600.htm](http://www.garden-ville.com/4429869_36600.htm))



When potting up rooted cuttings or newly established seedlings about 1/4 of a teaspoon of the Garden-Ville mycorrhizal fungi is placed just below the root ball. Keep in mind the benefit is when the fungi has colonized on the roots, so always apply the product on or near the roots or cutting.

### Potting Up

Potting up into any container larger than a 6" pot is a point of departure from straight Pro-Mix HP. With containers No. 1 and larger, I go with a home-made blend for plumeria enriched with a broad spectrum of organic and natural products. However a mycorrhizal product can be sprinkled on and around the root ball.

I usually do not do add mycorrhizal fungi for well-established plants. The inoculate is used primarily to speed the establishment of seedlings and small plants and is especially beneficial when using newly purchased potting mixes.

**Q** We have had several plumeria over the years and have had mixed results with their survival. We currently have a plant that was very soft and wrinkled with wilted leaves. It is a potted plant which is outside in the warm months and inside in the winter months. We thought we might have over watered, so we cut it back. The inside was still milky and white, so we cut it back to the base where it is firm. Now, I wonder if cutting back was needed. Why was it soft and wrinkled?

**A** Cutting back a plumeria will ruin your chance of flowers for a few years. You will need now to wait for new branches to emerge. You do not need to prune a plumeria unless you have freeze damage or insect damage (which is rare).

Some plumeria will shrivel when they are dormant, and this is a normal thing. In the spring they will plump back up again when the root system becomes active and begins to drink up the water, rehydrating the plant.



### The PSA Luau Photos



#### Clockwise from top left:

- Lake and Eulas Stafford's backyard
- Vicki Jenkins and Jerome Bielamowicz
- Mike Janson sniffing the blooms!
- John Balcar, Ron New, Eulas Stafford, Jerry Hurlburt, and Mike Janson
- John Balcar and Ava Jean Mears





## Plumeria Potpourri



### Clockwise from top left:

- Thea Whitenton, Mark Wright, and Judith Hoffing
- Lake Stafford and Barbara Randolph
- Hula dancer
- Barbara Randolph with Jerry Hulbert and Kathleen Bors-Koefoed enjoying the dancing
- Ava Jean Mears with guest of honor, **Hetty Ford**

## Plumeria Potpourri



### Clockwise from top left:

- Judith Hoffing with Ryan Babb, SvenBors-Koeford, and Mike Janson
- Lake Stafford doing the hula with Eulas Stafford and Ammarron Stone looking on
- German Collazos with hula dancers
- Fire dancer
- Ron New with hula dancers



### Plumeria Society Website

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 — 2010

January 12 ..... meeting  
March 9 ..... meeting  
May 11 ..... meeting  
June 8 ..... Show & Sale I (Clear Lake)  
July 6 ..... meeting  
July 31 ..... Show & Sale II (Katy)  
October 12 ..... meeting  
TBA ..... 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 — 2009

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## Plumeria Potpourri

*Photos and text by  
Antonio Butera, Palermo, Sicily*

Palazzo Pancamo, an historic, private palace, is situated in the center of Palermo on Via Libertà Street. The magnificent old plumeria tree shown in the photo in front of Palazzo Pancamo is the *Plumeria Rubra* species form—*Acutifolia* of Palermo mentioned in *Plumeria Potpourri*, July 2009. *Plumeria Rubra* species (Alba-Acutifolia-Bicolor-Tricolor-Lutea-Purpurea-Rosea) was registered at the Palermo Botanical Garden about 200 years ago! Today, the collection of very old *Plumeria Rubra* trees at the Palermo Botanical Garden includes trees in 18 different colors. All the trees of *Plumeria Acutifolia* growing in Sicily (maybe 300 plants) originated from the trees at the Palermo Botanical Garden. The flower is very large, about 14 centimetres, with a very strong, unbelievable essence of lemon vanilla, unique in the plumeria world!



*“Mr. Antonio Butera” is the future name of this pink plumeria which I hope to register. I have three plants at my house. It came from a seed taken in French Polynesia 30 years ago. It is a magnificent plant which is very resistant to cold and has a very strong, incredible fragrance of melon and pineapple!*

