

The Plumerian

VOL. III, ISSUE 2 THE PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF SOUTH TEXAS JUNE, 1995

Notice of Next Meeting

Date: July 1, 1995, Saturday

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Place: Corpus Christi Garden Center
5325 Greely Drive

Program: "Some Thoughts on Growing Plumerias" by Weldon Mayes,
Plumeria Society of America, Inc., Houston, Texas.
Weldon will have some cuttings to sell, besides.

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The President Speaks:

Would you believe as I am jotting down my thoughts for this newsletter, June and I are actually traveling across New Mexico heading for our vacation in Colorado. I don't believe the plumeria could survive the hostile environment on these high plains. Meanwhile, I am excited about the growth in membership PSST is experiencing this year. Our paid dues members now stands at 31 which includes new members -- Bob Lacy, Lola Lord, and Dianne McCauley. WELCOME ABOARD!

Bob Owen, President

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BOTANICAL GARDENS PLUMERIA PROJECT

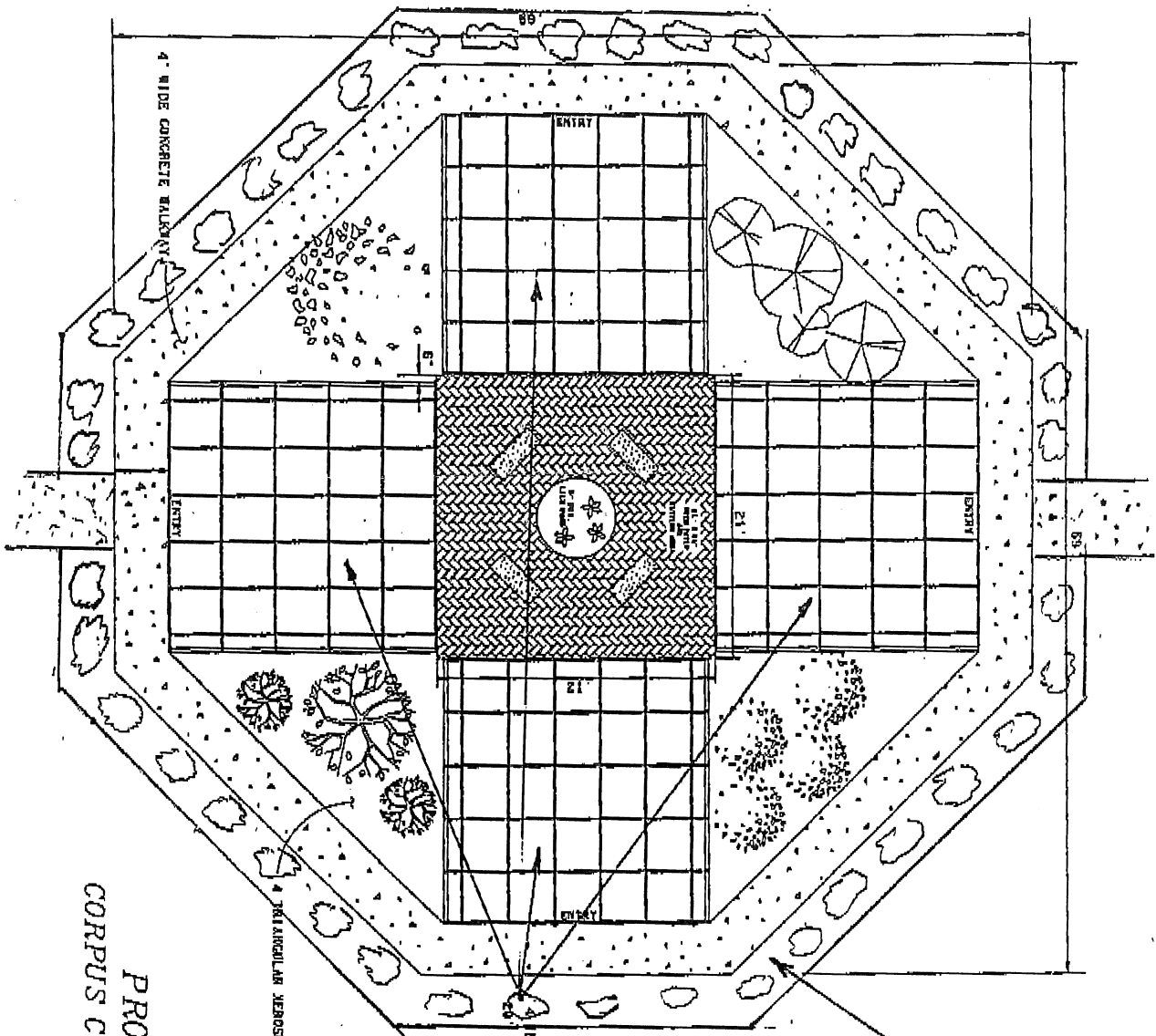
At the May, 1995, meeting Jocko Taylor surprised all of us with a check for \$500.00 from the Beautify Corpus Christi Association as funding for the PSST's Botanical Gardens Plumeria Project. A hearty thanks is extended to Jocko Taylor for being alert by convincing BCCA to help us out. The BCCA was certainly excited about the project. The Botanical Gardens committee has wasted little time in getting started on the project. First

of all, Jocko Taylor has "volunteered" to head up this committee. First order of business was to present our proposal to Hank Brennecke, President of the Board of Directors, Corpus Christi Botanical Gardens. He liked the idea and as much as approved it on the spot before presenting the proposal to the Board. By the way, Hank Brennecke grows plumerias! Next, Jocko and I went to the Botanical Gardens and met with the chief gardener, Paul Thornton. Paul was gracious enough to give us a tour of the new 180-acre site for the Botanical Gardens, which is across Staples Street from the present location. Again, we found Paul was enthusiastic about PSST planting plumerias at the Gardens. Paul showed us any number of areas that he would approve for a Plumeria Garden, as long as PSST was adequately funded and took good care of the plumerias. He implied we could do as much or as little as we could prudently handle as long as it was compatible with the Master Plan. Quite frankly, Jocko and I went away with a good feeling about the favorable reception we received from the key personnel at the Botanical Gardens.

So, moving along quickly, on Saturday, June 17, 1995, PSST members Jocko Taylor, Ann Yeager, Judy Henderson, Fred Allon, Leatrice Koch, & I met with the Botanical Gardens architect, Sam Jones, to discuss the "how, when, and where" a collection of plumerias could be placed. A lot of good ideas flowed freely, but one consensus idea stood out in my mind and that was to plant plumerias around the Lath House Exhibit Area perimeter, which can be seen as an octagon-shaped area surrounded by a walkway on Plat "A" enclosed herewith. The Exhibit Area is now under construction and should be ready for planting plumerias by the first of September or possibly earlier. This leaves us with a short season this year, I'll admit, but we can make it work by burying mature plants in containers in a raised bed. We need a large supply of plumerias for this project as the circumference of a bed around the perimeter walkway measures approximately 300' around. This could accommodate as many as 100 plumeria plants! In this regard, the committee is soliciting the membership for mature plants, preferably of registered varieties in bloom or common varieties that are in bloom, on a loan basis or as a gift to the collection. For gifted plants, the Botanical Gardens could issue a receipt with a value amount for tax return use. Another source for plants, according to Ann Yeager, is from Jim Little Nursery in Hawaii. Ann recently wrote Jim Little a letter and requested plant donations. Jim Little responded by telephone and informed Ann he would ship a supply of cuttings of unusual registered varieties as a donation. If this in fact happens, we certainly want to give him ample credit and publicity.

I take it that the unanimous vote to approve this project in the April meeting meant that everyone is willing to work on the Botanical Gardens project? Good!, then we have work to do. To place a collection at the Botanical Gardens, PSST must do a first class job. It will take man/woman power to construct the flower beds and the sprinkler (or soaker) systems, funds for materials (proceeds from plant sale can help here). Then

PLAT "A"



Raised Plumeria Bed

INDEPENDENTLY BUILT
X 24' EXHIBIT GREENHOUSES

TANJANGULAN MENSCHAPED BEDS

PROPOSED EXHIBIT AREA
CORPUS CHRISTI BOTANICAL GARDENS

SCALE 1" = 4'

PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF SOUTH TEXAS

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Plumeria Society is for those who enjoy the lovely Plumeria and who want to participate in learning more about the aspects of propagation, culture, classification, research, hybridizing.

Meetings are held four times a year on the fourth (4th) Wednesday of the months of March, May, July and October at 7:00 P.M. at the Corpus Christi Garden Center, 5235 Greely Drive. Four Newsletters per year are included. Membership dues are \$10.00 per year per member.

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Your Name _____

Address _____

Telephone No. _____

Make checks out to the Plumeria Society of South Texas and mail to:

Membership Chairman
Plumeria Society of South Texas
1107 The 600 Building
Corpus Christi, Texas 78473

Soil conditions for Plumerias (Frangi-pani)

Relative to pH values and attaining correct acidity.

BY: FRED ALLON

In the native environment Plumerias grow in volcanic soils which are very acidic and while I have not been able to find any specific figures it is my opinion that the range must be close to 5.5 to 6.5.

Because of the tenderness of the plants they are usually planted in pots so they can be moved when the weather, the temperature, approaches 40° F indoors either inside the house or in a greenhouse or at least a Garage.

The critical temperature is quoted as 37°F but again there is no time stated and I have had my plant outside all winter in 1993-4 with only a minor dropping of some leaves.

Anyway let's assume it's in a pot, and so being should have been potted with a good quality potting soil, which should be acid. The story one hears continuously is that my plumeria flowered beautifully the first year I had it and has not flowered at all this year. If this is true of your experiences then consider all the alkaline water you have been putting on it each time you watered it with Corpus Christi City supplied water.

Now lets examine the condition of the soil and check the pH. There are several ways in which this can be done and the easiest and probably the best is to sample the soil from the pot your plant is in and send a sample to the County Extension Service in Robstown and have them check it.

The other ways involve some work on your part as well as the purchase of some equipment.

The simplest are some pH papers which can be obtained from a Laboratory equipment source, mine were from Micro Essential Lab. Inc., 4224 Avenue H, Brooklyn, NY 11210. They are also often included in children's chemistry sets so you could try the toy shops in the malls. These are a roll of paper specially treated and react when pressed to wet soil and show a colour which varies with the pH of the soil.

When you are testing soil pH make sure the water you are using is neutral distilled water and not tap water.

The next method involves the purchase of a pH test kit which can be bought in Corpus Christi at the pet store near the corner of Williams and Staples opposite the Frost Bank.

With this you will need some distilled water (test this yourself) and some filter papers and a funnel.

Shake the soil up with some distilled water and filter enough for the test and test it with drops of the solution supplied and compare with the colour chart provided.

Before you start the test run distilled water through your filter and make sure you do not have any contaminants.

The kits are for testing fish tanks and can be obtained with varying pH ranges the one I have is from 6.0 to 7.6 and if its under 6.0 it's O.K. They cost something less than \$5.00. I use a piece of Coffee filter to filter in a small plastic funnel.

Next there is a pH meter Manufactured by Environmental Concepts of 710 Northwest 57th Street, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309. available at some of the local nurseries and mine cost me \$20.00.

Make sure the soil is moist (use distilled water prefferably) and stick in the cleaned probes allowing 30 seconds until it stabilizes before reading the scale. Range 4-10 .

Next is an "Instamatic pH meter" made by the Ami Medical Electronics inc., P.O. Box 148, Ronkonkoma, N.Y. 11779. This is a bi-metallic probe with a meter from 3.5 to 9.0 and is much easier to read than the other pH meter the cost is about \$18 and it was from one of the local nursery outlets but I forget which one.

Having established what your pH is, assume it is 7.5 and you will want to change it to bring it down to 6.0 which is a decrease in the pH but an increase in the acidity.

The attached table will tell you that using soil sulphur you will need to add (using the sandy soil table) 11 lbs soil sulphur for a 1000 square foot area to bring it down to 6.5 and beyond this it takes less to bring it down to 6.0.

It will require some experimentation to adjust the pH to the desired figure and remember to have patience these changes do not occur immediately the process is the breakdown of the sulphur to sulphuric acid using the water and oxygen in the soil.

Also on the table is a reproduction of a chart from the Garden Club Garden Book, which incidentally has a good article on soils. This shows that with pH's above 7.5 very little of the Phosphorus in the soil is available to the plants and at 6.0 and lower the availability of the element is much extended. Thus if the pH is above 7.0 there is no use loading the soil up with Phosphorus by means of additions of say BR61 as the plant can't use the nutrient which is necessary to promote the flowers.

There are many elements that are necessary for plant growth and health. One of these Magnesium which can be added as Magnesium Sulphate which will help in lowering the pH, and can also be added as a foliar feed and is much more efficient than Iron and will help to prevent leaf scorch.

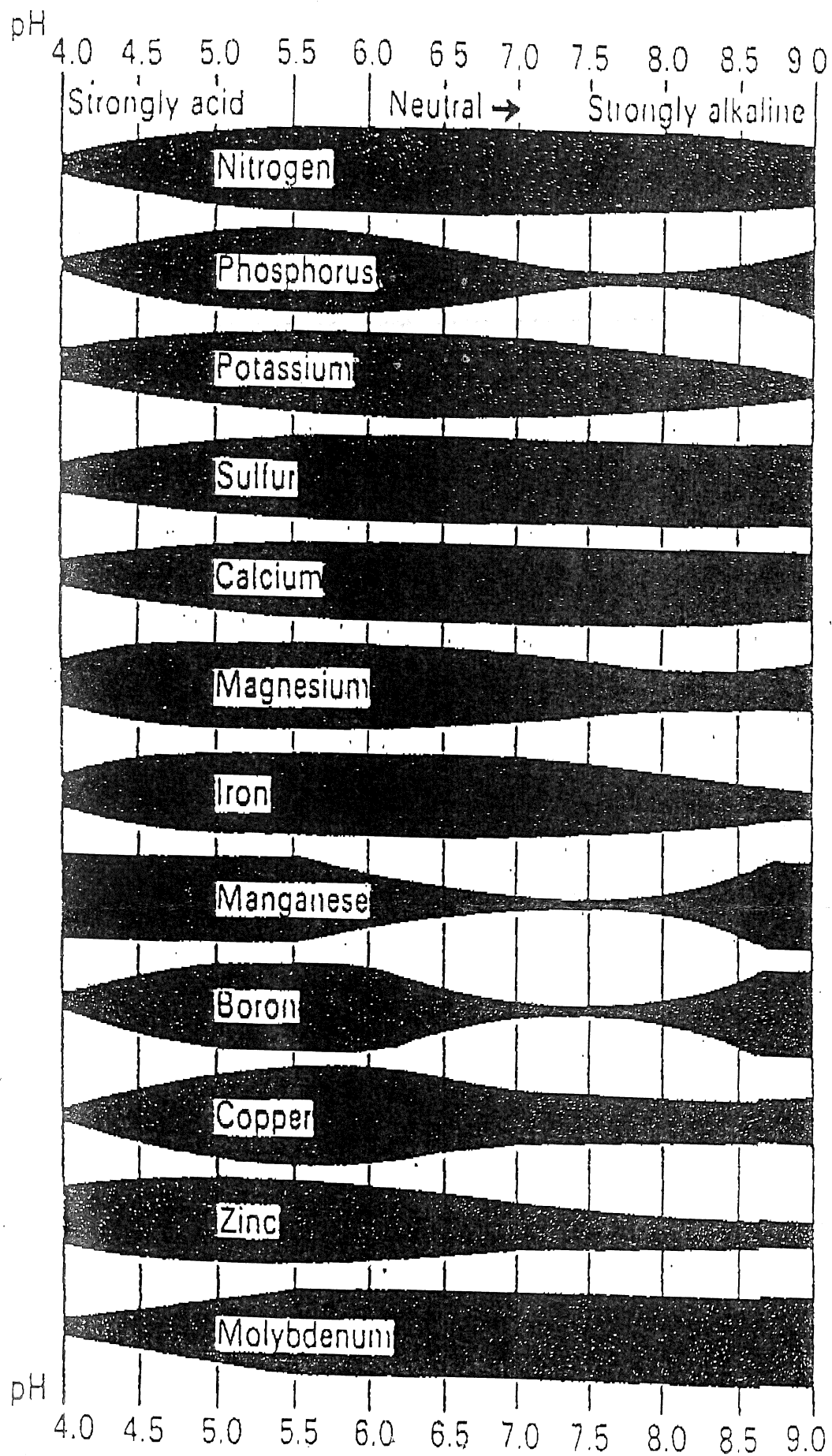
Magnesium is the central core of the Chlorophyll molecule and is a resonator for the photosynthesis process.

One teaspoonful of Epsom salt ($MgSO_4$) per gallon of water can be applied either at watering or feeding time.

Plants should be repotted if they show tendency to be rootbound. Proper fertilizing is the key to successful flowering and the more room the plant has to make roots the more it's ability to take in nutrients. High Nitrogen fertilizer should be avoided as this tends to promote new leaves at the expense of flowers.

Plumerias must have full sun but they tend to leaf scorch so if you can manage give them full morning sun and filtered light from about 1.00P.M. Remember they will not bloom without sunlight and only some cultivars are subject to scorching by the very hot sun here in Corpus christi.

How Plant Nutrient Availability Varies With Soil pH



Soils.

Generally when we talk of Container Plants we are considering the type of soilless mixes that have made Container Gardening so popular. These mixes are made up from Peat Moss, Perlite or Vermiculite, and sand. The mixture should be fast draining but will retain moisture which includes the nutrients. Many such mixes are available at our Nurseries and you need to make some trial purchases until you find one that suits your requirements. An alternate is to make up your own and this has the advantage that you always get the same quality and you can make changes as you learn. Remember when you mix up your own it must be free of weed seeds, insects, and pathogens, it maybe advisable to sterilize your ingredients which can be done in a moderate oven on a tray to heat to 160°F which will kill most weed seeds and insect eggs.

You may find as your Plumeria grows bigger and requires more space in a bigger pot that you want to switch to a mix made up of Compost either from your own compost heap or from purchased material mixed with sand and good garden sand and there is nothing wrong with this as long as you remember to sterilize if necessary, and this is not as necessary for grown plants as with cuttings or seedlings. You should always remember to adjust the pH and make sure your mix has all the necessary additives for complete supply of all the nutrients.

Here is a mix that originated from an expert Indian gardener, Sri Parichand, and quoted in the Handbook of Plumeria Culture, by Richard and Helen Eggenberger;

50% well rotted cow manure
25% leaf mold
25% good garden soil
1 handful bone meal per 12" pot

A mix with a high percentage of compost and completely organic to which is added composted manures, blood meal (in small percentages) rock phosphate. Perlite, Vermiculite & Peat moss in large quantities are not recommended for Plumerias as they tend to hold too much moisture. (Large quantities would be over 15%)

Planting plumerias directly in the soil is questionable in Corpus Christi unless you live in the area where there is sandy soil as in the clay soils water stagnation and subsequent root rot will kill the plant. In addition the watering in the ground with City water will tend to overload with salts.

GROUND LIMESTONE: AMOUNTS TO RAISE SOIL PH

(Pounds of Ground Limestone per 1,000 Square Feet**)

Change in pH Desired	Sandy	Sandy Loam	Loam	Silt Loam	Clay Loam
4.0-6.5	60	115	161	193	230
4.5-6.5	51	95	133	161	193
5.0-6.5	41	78	106	129	152
5.5-6.5	28	60	78	92	106
6.0-6.5	14	32	41	51	55

SOIL SULFUR: AMOUNTS TO LOWER SOIL PH

(Pounds of Soil Sulfur per 1,000 Square Feet)

Change in pH Desired	Sandy	Loam	Clay
8.5-6.5	46	57	69
8.0-6.5	28	34	46
7.5-6.5	11	18	23
7.0-6.5	2	4	7

** In the southern and coastal states, reduce the application, by approximately one half.

comes the fun part -- providing care for the plants to the flowering stage. For winter storage, the Botanical Gardens has offered space in one of the existing green houses across the road. I am really excited about this project. It offers PSST the opportunity to fulfill its purpose and at the same time we can do something for the community.

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For PSST, this is turning out to be an active summer, what with the Botanical Gardens Project and the August 26 plant sale. Speaking of the latter, I have discovered a way to make the plants earmarked for the sale to look lush and healthy. On my brick patio, I have placed the plumeria plants where they get 2 to 3 hours of morning sun and mostly shade (about 5% filtered sun) in the afternoon under large fruitless mulberry trees. By feeding them root stimulator and Peters 20-20-20, alternating weekly, will produce dark green, large leaves. However, this method will not produce blooming but will make the plants look good for the sale. Use a photo of the flower if you know the variety for the sale.

Refreshments at the May meeting were provided by Lois Millard, June Owen, and Barbara Howard. Thanks you ladies!

Have a great summer.

Happy Plumeria-ing!

Bob Owen

NOTICE:

The committee for the Botanical Gardens Plumeria Collection is compiling a list of all the varieties grown by the members of PSST. Please make a list of the plumerias that you have and send it to Leatrice Koch, 3706 Pope Drive, Corpus Christi, Texas 78411, or bring it to the July 1 meeting. If you have any questions, please call Leatrice at 853-3110.

