



COMPOST PILE

## Bobby Dupont and Family Breed Top-Selling Cajun Hibiscus

On the bank of a sleepy bayou in Plaquemine, Louisiana, lies a thriving industry begun 12 years ago by Bobby Dupont, a retired south Louisiana florist, with Father Robert Gerlich, a New Orleans Catholic priest and Loyola University professor.

At Dupont Nursery, Bobby Dupont tests new hibiscus seedlings from his and Father Gerlich's extensive breeding program. With thousands of hibiscus seedlings evaluated under his care, Dupont carefully chooses the best and the brightest to add to the Dupont Nursery's trademark Cajun Hibiscus collection. One of these seedlings, 'Black Dragon,' was selected as the 2005 Hibiscus of the Year by the American Hibiscus Society. Another Dupont entry came in second place that year.

If these two men provide the genius and passion behind Dupont Nursery, the guts of this extraordinarily successful young business are in the hands of Bobby's two sons, Robbie and Danny, and two grandsons, Robert and Jeffrey Dupont. With backgrounds in various professions and trades, the younger Duponts have helped to develop and run the large propagating and wholesale business that ships out 300,000 plants a year. In addition,

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## New Honorary Member of LSHR Is a Giant in All But Size

At a meeting of the LSHR Board of Directors, October 14, 2007, the selection committee named Aline Arceneaux a Honorary Member of the organization. This pint-sized lady has worked with and for the Louisiana Society for Horticultural Research for more years than even she remembers. For a starter, she served as Treasurer and Membership Chairman from 1992 - 2007. For over ten years, she maintained the records of the annual plant releases, no easy feat. Not one to shirk from work, Aline also has been responsible for

the printing and mailing of the Compost Pile. She is the best recruiter for LSHR, a stalwart supporter.

One need only look to her biographical data to note how active she has been and continues to be in a number of plant organizations. She has served a host of posts in the Society for Louisiana Irises as its Secretary-Treasurer for several years. To date she remains on the committee planning the annual Iris Show. Aline has been the take charge person printing and

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# From the President's Desk



## 2008 Annual Meeting Date And Location Changed

President Leonard Lasseigne has announced that the previously scheduled meeting date and site for the 2008 Annual Spring Meeting have been changed due to conflicts with the Easter holiday. Previously scheduled for March 22, 2008, at the Live Oak Gardens Conference Center on Jefferson Island, the date and site have been changed to March 15, 2008, at the Ira Nelson Horticulture Center in Lafayette. We are fortunate that the designated speaker, Chip Calloway, a nationally renowned garden designer who has specialized in restoration of Southern gardens, was able to adjust his schedule to accommodate the new meeting date.

## Aline Arceneaux Named Honorary Member

At a meeting of the Board of Directors October 14, 2007, at the Ira Nelson Horticulture Center, the selection committee endorsed, recommended and moved to name longtime member, Aline Arceneaux, an Honorary Member in the Louisiana Society for Horticultural Research (please see account elsewhere in this news letter.). Also, nominated and accepted as an Honorary Member of the Board, was Rebecca Moss, past-editor of the Compost Pile.

## Plant Release Reports Discussed

At the same meeting, it was reported that the current system of reporting on plant releases has proved to be unsatisfactory. It was suggested that a plan be adopted for rewarding members who are faithful and timely in reporting.

## Members Encouraged To Improve Quality Of Plants Offered At Auction

At the same meeting, President Lasseigne encouraged members who solicit plant donations for the Auction to emphasize the need for unique and unusual plants, well established in containers. Bedding plants will be auctioned by the flat, in order to stay within the time limits set for the auction.

## OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS OF LSHR

Leonard Lasseigne, president  
Margo Racca, first vice-president  
Albert Durio, second vice-president  
Nancy Anne Rowe, recording secretary  
Ruth LaVaque, treasurer

### Directors at Large

Lorraine Broussard 2005-2006, 2006-2007,  
2007-2008  
Rob Barry 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009  
Cherry Fisher May 2007-2008, 2008-2009,  
2009-2010

### Past Presidents with Current Membership

Richard (Dick) Calhoun  
Mary (Mrs. Arthur) Courville  
Belle (Mrs. Kenneth) Durio  
Dalton Durio  
Barbara (Mrs. Ira) Nelson  
James (Jim) Racca

### Directors of Research

Dennis Wollard, director  
Kenneth (Ken) Durio, associate director

### Honorary Board Members or Other

Aline Arceneaux (past treasurer)  
Ellis Fletcher (membership chairman)  
Ann Justice (current editor, Compost Pile)  
Ruth Sheller (past editor, Compost Pile)  
William (Billy) Welsh (release propagator/  
coordinator)  
Rebecca Moss (past-editor, Compost Pile)



# From the Compost Pile Editor's Desk



Articles, news items, dissertations, advertisements, reminders . . . any contribution to the Compost Pile that relates to the field of horticulture will be pounced on and devoured by the editor, and will appear in the next quarterly issue. Please share your expertise, or challenge the experts, with your questions. My e-mail address is [ajustice@bellsouth.net](mailto:ajustice@bellsouth.net) and phone is 337-233-5733.

## LHSR Members' Photos Selected for 2008

### *Get it Growing Calendar*

Congratulations to Glenda Balliviero and Dr. Ellis Fletcher whose photos were chosen to be included in the LSU AgCenter's 2008 gardening calendar. Ellis's featured photos include a *Camellia japonica* bloom, and rain lilies (*Zephyranthes*). Glenda's photograph of blue morning glories (*Ipomoea tricolor*) was selected to appear on the cover of the publication.

### Members Publish Local Gardening Information

May I remind you that three of our members have recently published books about plants that grow well in Acadiana and the Coastal South? *Botanicals on the Bayou, An Heirloom Guide to Gardening* by Plant Lady Mary Lynch Courville and Dr. Greaux, otherwise known as Dr. Dennis Wollard, is a full-color gardening guide for each month of the year, available from Orchid Gardens Nursery, 1007 Carmel Avenue, Lafayette 70501, or by calling 337-228-7810.

In 2005, with Dr. Fletcher as consultant, I published a collection of questions and answers titled *Ornamental Gardening in Acadiana and the Gulf States*, drawn from *The Daily Advertiser's* "Gardening in Acadiana" column.

This was followed by another collaboration with Dr. Fletcher as consultant, *Blooming Trees and Shrubs of the Coastal South, by Sequence of Bloom*, which highlights flowering trees and shrubs that provide seasonal color in the coastal landscape. Full-color illustrations were donated by local gardeners/photographers. Publication is scheduled as this newsletter goes to press. For information about both books, please visit [www.acadianagardening.com](http://www.acadianagardening.com) or [ajustice@bellsouth.net](mailto:ajustice@bellsouth.net).

## BOBBY DUPONT

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they have created and presently maintain a unique patented greenhouse system that has achieved international prominence.

Eleven greenhouses contain acres of seedlings and cuttings of various bedding plants, as well as the trademark Cajun Hibiscus line. But it is those gorgeous and sometimes gaudy Cajun Hibiscus blooms that have put Dupont Nursery on the world map. Cuttings of carefully chosen selections are presently shipped as propagation stock to plant industries in Italy, Portugal, Belgium and Japan, who in turn, pay a royalty for their use.



It is easy to see that Bobby Dupont personally enjoys his role in the business, which is hands-on inspection of individual hibiscus plants at virtually every stage. Among hundreds of named hibiscus, he recognizes most by name and enjoys discussing their ancestry and commenting on their characteristics. Leading a tour of the facility, he was happy to answer some dirt-gardener questions that might promote success for those of us growing hibiscus at home. Questions included "Do you have a secret formula for your potting mix?" "What kinds of fertilizers do you use? How do you control insects?"

He answers, "About potting mix, we order all of it from commercial sources, who prepare it according to the particular type of plant we will use it for. Presently, the mix includes boiled rice hulls as one of the amendments. No, this is not the rotted rice hulls that many gardeners used to dig up around the mills."

About fertilizer, "We use commercial brands of slow-release fertilizer." On dealing with insects, he sighs and admits, "It's a tough problem. Currently we use commercially produced systemic insecticides."

Among hundreds of hibiscus plants, were there any yellow leaves or insect-chewed foliage? Surprisingly, none. Whatever Dupont Nursery is doing for its plants, including Cajun Hibiscus, the result is gorgeous. The business is in good hands.

## HONORARY MEMBER

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mailing quarterly newsletters, planning the actual annual meeting and taking care of show details. All of these point to someone who is the glue holding much of the important work of the Society for Louisiana Irises together.

One might also look to her activities in the Lafayette Garden Club of which she has been a member for as long as I can remember. She's rolled up her sleeves and been Arbor Day Chairman and Awards Chairman; further, she has been an enthusiastic participant and worker in the Club's many flower shows.

Aline is an active volunteer with the Festivals des Fleurs at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Whatever job needed to be done, Aline seems to be always there, right down to pounding signs into yards to advertise this hallmark event.

Perhaps the least known facet of Aline's work on behalf of horticulture is not listed in her biographical information. To many, she has been associated with the descriptive name of Plant Lady. She has been to generations of University students, friends, and acquaintances a reliable, generous, and inexhaustible source of information about horticulture. Her vast knowledge she has shared with countless novice and veteran gardeners.

Her expertise is legendary and dirty-fingered-earned; the basis of knowledge is rock solid grounded in a long life of reading and personal research. Although horticulture is not her profession, I am continually amazed with Aline's readiness to give the complete botanical nomenclature of a plant along with its colorful and often-varied common names.

Aline holds membership in a wide range of organizations related to horticultural interests -- American Iris Society, Louisiana Project Wildflower, The National Wildflower Research Center, and the Louisiana Native Plant Society.

But, it is Aline's quickness to share her knowledge and plants which endear her so deeply. She is tireless in her generosity; one never knows when she will leave a rare bulb or cutting on your doorstep with a delightful repartee follow-up on cultivation. One might conjecture that she has populated Lafayette and the wide circle of her horticultural friends with her 'finds.'

Aline has done it all; she has written articles and better, seen that we all received them; she has been a speaker at a host of public events related to horticulture; her tireless efforts have been the cornerstone for increasing the knowledge of Society members; and Aline is the epitome of inspiration for this membership. She is a giant among leaders within the plant world of Louisiana.

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## Dupont Nursery's Hibiscus Growing Tips

- Be cautious about placing plants immediately in direct sunlight. Introduce them to full sun slowly, over a period of 8 to 10 days.
- Hibiscus like "even" watering. Don't let your plant get too dry or stay too wet. If dry for too long, the plant can drop its leaves or even go into shock and die, despite renewed watering.
- Fertilize lightly but often. Hibiscus in active growth are heavy feeders, especially when planted in containers.
- Are buds dropping excessively? "Bud drop" is a sign of stress. It is occasionally a problem during excessively hot weather, especially with double-blooming varieties.
- Potted hibiscus enjoy some protection from intense summer sun.
- Hibiscus can normally withstand a light freeze. But if the weather is windy, temperatures as high as 45 degrees can still produce damage. Cold tolerance depends on exposure, wind strength, length of cold, available moisture and slight differences in cultivar tolerance.
- To control severe infestations of mites and/or whitefly, soap sprays are recommended. Use Insecticidal Soap according to the label. Use Palmolive, Dawn or Sunlight soap at one to two tablespoons per gallon to smother the insects on the plants.
- When repotting, plant into the next size pot rather than putting a small plant into an oversized pot. Instead of repotting, another solution is to prune the roots and the top of the plant (about 1/3 of each) and return the plant to its original pot. Water moderately until the root system is well established.



# Nameless, Thornless Louisiana Rose Set in Katrina Fundraiser

*Editor's Note: Many people have asked for the addresses for purchasing Peggy's Rose, maybe better know as the Katrina Rose. This is a reprint of the "Acadiana Gardening" column that appeared February 24, 2007 in The Daily Advertiser.*

## DEAR READERS:

Because I know many of you, and I *feel* that I know *all* of you, I am passing on to you this information that came to me in a press release from Texas A&M University. It is about a rose. A nameless rose. A Louisiana rose. A rose that had no thorns, not one.

The rose came to Peggy Martin as a little cutting from a friend. Her friend had gotten a cutting from a relative who had in turn gotten it from another relative. Peggy planted the rose by an old shed that she wanted to cover — an ugly old shed. And soon enough the rose covered the shed with its beautiful pink clustered blossoms and long graceful canes.

That was 18 years ago. And that's how it stood all those years in Louisiana, showing its beauty to visitor after visitor, standing out as the pride of Peggy's garden — her own little Eden — until 2005.

Peggy and her husband, Marcus, left the nameless, thornless rose that August fleeing from Katrina. When they returned, the rose was the least of Peggy's thoughts. She went home after the hurricane to claim the bodies of her mother and father who drowned after refusing to leave. What's more, there was nothing left of her home, or of her beautiful garden. More than 450 rose bushes and all other plants she had nurtured over the years had washed away. Her garden stood under 20 feet of salt water for 2 weeks.

But when the water receded and Peggy returned once more, there was just a glimmer of green under the muddy remains where the rose bush had been. And ultimately, as the sun continued to shine and rain fell at the right time, the rose bloomed again and again and again.

Now the rose is being cultivated by 5 nursery owners who got cuttings from Peggy's bush. A portion of the proceeds from their sales will fund horticulture restoration programs in New Orleans and other hurricane-damaged botanical and

historical gardens and parks. And the abundant plant now has a name — the Peggy Martin rose.

This came about through Dr. Bill Welch, Texas Cooperative Extension agent, who had visited Peggy's rose at her home in 2003 and, although he didn't know its name, he was intrigued by the thornless bush with flower-loaded canes cascading around the shed. He and his wife rooted a cutting in their yard in Washington County, Texas, where he saw it quickly mature into a vigorous specimen that spans most of the 15 x 4-foot fence, literally covered with clusters of dark pink flowers each spring from mid-March through May, blooming again in late summer until the first hard frost.

Through efforts of the Garden Club of Houston, and with Peggy's agreement, several nurseries were mustered to grow cuttings for sale, with a portion designated for the restoration fund.

Dear Readers, I spoke today by phone to Mike Shoup, owner of Antique Rose Emporium in Brenham, Texas, one of the nurseries listed below, to confirm the story. He explained that the plants are healthy 2-gallon roses that can be mail-ordered for \$16.95 plus shipping (shipping runs between \$4 and \$5). He can be contacted at <http://www.antiqueroseemporium.com>.

Other participating nurseries are:

Chamblee's Rose Nursery,

<http://www.chambleerose.com/>

Petals from the Past Nursery

<http://www.petalsfromthepast.com>

King's Nursery in Tenaha, Texas,

409-248-3811

Naconiche Gardens

<http://www.naconichgardens.com> .



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

### Inside This Issue

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## From the Treasurer's Desk



This is just a reminder to our members that dues statements will be coming out soon. After receipt of dues payments, membership cards will be mailed. Be sure that your dues are paid in time to receive your card by mail before the annual meeting.

Members must present their own current membership card at the annual meeting in order to receive their plant distribution.

Is your name and mailing address correct in our records? Please take a moment to look at the mailing label on this issue. Membership cards will be issued with the name as it is on your mailing label. A name is very personal, and a correct address is important. Please send corrections to me at the return address of the Compost Pile.

We look forward to seeing you at the annual meeting!

Ruth LaVaque, Treasurer

## Reminder . . . Upcoming Events

### January 1, 2008

LSHR 2008 dues due

### January 18, 2008

Arbor Day

### February 16, 2008

*Tres Jolie*, A Floral Design Seminar  
fund-raiser for the Lafayette Garden  
Club.

### February 28, 2008

Last day to pay LSHR 2008 dues

### March 15, 2008

LSHR Annual Spring Meeting