



The Leaflet

Vallarta Botanical Gardens AC



September 2011

Curator's Corner

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Dear Friends of the Gardens,

Vallarta Botanical Gardens continue to be recognized beyond the borders of Mexico. We were just featured in a "Stewardship and Preservation" article in the August issue of *Orchids* magazine, the bulletin of the American Orchid Society (Vol. 80, No. 8, p. 454). The article specifically noted the "Orchid Conservation Plan for the Cabo Corrientes Region" Vallarta Botanical Garden's Board Member Dr. Justin Williams from Sam Houston State University alongside late Mexican Botanist Raymundo Delgadillo conducted this first ever in-depth study of the regions diverse orchid species. A photo of the Gardens' Hacienda de Oro Visitor Center appears in the article, along with other pictures showing a part of our orchid collection. A special thank you to the American Orchid Society for sponsoring this important research.

An article and photos about the Gardens' founding will appear in an upcoming issue of the monthly newsletter of The American Public Gardens Association (APGA).



Native *Vanilla inodora* in bloom at the Gardens

As much as we appreciate international recognition, we are dedicated to the work we do right here in Mexico, and thank all of our local supporters. For those of you in Vallarta, please help us during the summer season by inviting someone to the Gardens who has not yet experienced our magical creation. For those of you in other places, please keep Mexico in your hearts.

From the Gardens
Bob Price, Curator & Founder

Why do the seemingly neglected hibiscus I see along street curbs bloom better than my pampered patio plants?



Ah, the gardener's lament: our neighbors' plants always appear to trump our own! But in this case, there may be a reason. Let's compare the situations in terms of light, water and nutrients.

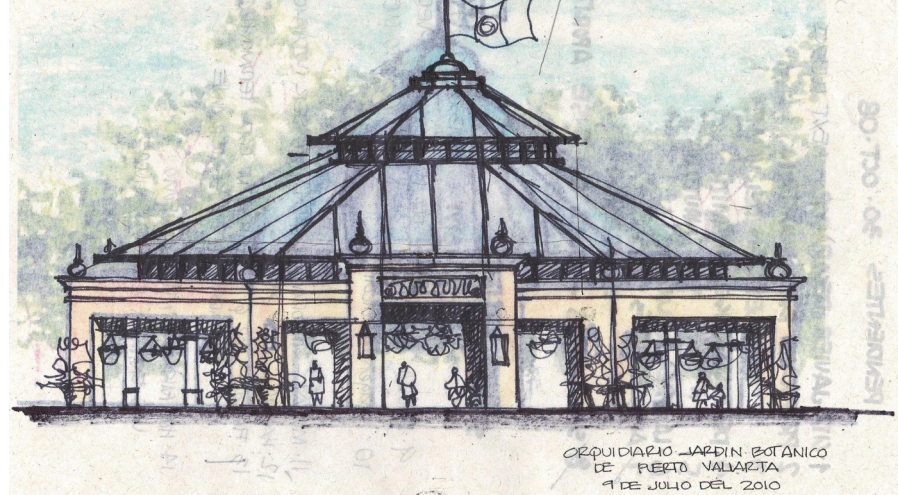
Hibiscus is both the botanical genus name and the English common name for *H. rosa-sinensis*, the plant known in Mexico as *Obelisco*. First of all, are your hibiscus receiving four or more hours of sun a day? The *obeliscos* along the streets probably are, as they're out from under awnings and eaves. Hibiscus need abundant light and warmth (no problem here!—though hybrids will drop their buds in extreme heat). The ideal, in our climate, is full sun until about 3:00 pm and then shade from that hottest point on. (These tropical beauties can thrive in shade with reflected light, but they will bloom far less.)

Second, are your potted hibiscus receiving consistent applications of water? Yellowing and dropping leaves can be a sign of stress caused by uneven irrigation. Evenly moist soil is best, though with more water in summer than winter. You might think those plants out on the street lack such care, but remember that they're naturally exposed to higher rainfall in the hot months, and the lower angle of the sun in the winter reduces their irrigation needs then. In-ground plants' roots are also better insulated by the quantity of soil surrounding them, enabling them to withstand fluctuations in irrigation. And they may enjoy better drainage than do plants in pots, which can become waterlogged or completely filled with roots toward the bottom.

Third and most important is the nutrition factor. Streetside plants may be surrounded by concrete, but their roots are deep in the rich soil of our coastal lands. Your patio plants have a limited source of nutrition, which must be supplemented. But if you've been "pampering" them with a superbloom-type fertilizer, stop right now! Such formulas are high in phosphorus (the P in the N-P-K ratio), which might typically show on the package as 3-12-6 or even 0-12-0. Unlike many flowering shrubs, *obeliscos* need moderate amounts of nitrogen, very little phosphorus, and quite a lot of potassium: something like a 17-5-24 ratio. Hibiscus also crave micronutrients, particularly minerals such as iron, copper and manganese—so look for fertilizers or supplements providing them. Liquid iron, well diluted, is a good foliar-spray corrective if your leaves are looking chlorotic (yellowing, especially with green veins showing). Finally, the pH of your fertilizer should be on the acidic side, between 5.5 and 7.

If you're already following these guidelines and still feel envious... chalk it up to human nature!

An artist's sketch of our much-anticipated orchid conservatory, Please donate today!



Acineta barkeri

Native Mexican Orchid



Acineta barkeri is found in the Mexican states of Oaxaca and Chiapas, in cloud forests around 1,000 to 2,000 meters high, as a medium-size, warm-growing epiphyte carrying fragrant flowers that open simultaneously. This is just one of more than 200 orchids found only in Mexico. (Many thanks to Vallarta Orchid Society President T. J. Hartung for his information from his publication "Orchids Found ONLY in Mexico," available in the Gardens' Gift Store.) We continue to seek sponsors for this conservatory, and will soon post more details on our website about this and other important VBG projects.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

September is traditionally the month of our most intense rains. The Gardens—including our trails and plant collections—will remain open to the public and our members at this time. We will, however, have a reduced menu offering in the restaurant during this month. We will feature neither tours nor programs, but they are scheduled to resume in October. September is an exciting time for storm watching from the Visitor Center, and butterflies are showing up in great numbers too, so we hope you will continue to come out and visit us. Remember, something new is always in bloom in our cultivated areas and our native forest—so don't miss out on what September has to offer here!

October 25–30 Butterfly Festival

Have you ever noticed how many butterflies are in the area around the end of October? We're taking advantage of this time of great butterfly abundance and diversity to showcase these colorful creatures. Our daily 1 pm tours during this week will focus on these fluttering friends, and we'll show you our favorite spots for viewing them. We'll also help you identify the species we've learned to spot so far.



Saturday, October 29 (2 pm) Vallarta Orchid Society

Join us for another exciting lesson on orchids. Vallarta Orchid Society President T. J. Hartung tackles a different topic each month—from how to grow your own orchids at home to specific orchids native to our local forests. Check out this month's lecture topic on www.pvorchids.com. A tour of the Gardens' orchid micro propagation laboratory is part of the meeting.

A great way to keep posted on the garden events is by "friending" us on:



Click here to join us on Facebook

Have you visited the Gardens lately? Please write a review of your visit on:



Mission Statement

To create Mexico's foremost botanical garden for the propagation, study, conservation and display of Mexican native plants for enjoyment by Puerto Vallarta's residents and our visitors.

We sincerely appreciate our entire family of friends, volunteers, staff, members and all of those who support the Gardens. A special thank you is due to our Copa de Oro Corporate Members:

- McCall Family - Villa Los Arcos
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www.vallartabotanicalgardensac.org
Closed Mondays