

# Nerium News

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL OLEANDER SOCIETY



April 2021 Newsletter

INTERNATIONAL OLEANDER SOCIETY

## 2021 Officers

### President

Amber Jinkins

### Vice President

Heidi Coggeshall

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### Internet/ International Correspondent

James Nicholas

### Garden Chairperson

Marcia Moloy

### Historian

Barry Landry

### Membership

Rachel Louviere

### Community Outreach and Education Chairperson

Russel Rac

*Newsletter:  
Heidi Coggeshall  
(please email if  
you have an  
article to write)*

Dear Members,

It has been a tough spring between the pandemic and then the devastating freeze significantly damaging the landscape in Texas. Our garden has suffered but we remain optimistic on its full recovery, with some tender care and probable replacement required for some plants. However, we are going to still celebrate the Oleander and move forward with the Oleander Festival on Saturday, April 24<sup>th</sup>. I hope you will either volunteer or stop by the Park!

I am pleased to introduce our three new volunteer board members and thank them for contacting us of their interest:

Community Outreach & Education Chairperson – Russell Rac – a BOI with a degree in horticulture from Texas A&M. He is currently at Earth Creations as a Landscape Design Consultant and has a personal interest in all aspects of plant growth and development.

Membership Chairperson – Rachel Louviere – lived in Galveston for 10 years and is part of the finance team for the Resource and Crisis Center for Galveston. Oleanders were the first plants she grew here and they continue to be a favorite of hers.

Historian – Barry Landry – moved to Galveston four years ago and is a landscape architect spending 30 years in Austin, including operating his own practice. His personal interests include plant classification, nomenclature, botanical history and illustration and plans to archive the varieties and older remaining specimens of oleanders of the island.

We also want to thank Mike Bailey for his over 15 years of service, including creating and upgrading our website, helping build our Park through the years and maintaining a dedicated section of the garden. Although he leaves the Board for other personal commitments, he plans to remain an active member and still help with the garden.

This is going to be an exciting year for the International Oleander Society and we are excited for our new Board members.

Thank you for your continued support of the International Oleander Society.

Peace, love & oleanders

Amber Jinkins

175 Years of Oleanders

## End of the line? - Time to Preserve – the ‘Altini’ – Strongly Fragrant!

As of January 2021, we are only aware of one Altini in the US: the home of Jim Nicholas in Connecticut, our International Correspondent and an oleander gardener himself. Jim writes that “this is another keeper and as far as he is aware, he has the only specimen in the USA. There isn’t even one at the Oleander Haus in Austria.” He provided the following history on the variety:

‘Altini’ was introduced, along with a whole series of others, by Jean Rey in 1973. Jean Rey was a nurseryman in southern France/ Cote d’Azur who introduced a large number of new oleander varieties in the early 1970s, and also sold a number of old classic varieties but with new names (Alsace, Mont Blanc, Rosée du Ventoux (the latter is really Mrs. George Roeding). The focus of his hybridizing activities had been on compact and dwarf varieties. The nursery is no longer in business.



Oleanders at the M. Koch Edouard villa in the Cote d’Azur

Mariann Hámori (a Hungarian oleander expert) kindly sent Jim a rooted plant’ from Hungary a few years ago. This is a really great variety – although born on a different continent, it is virtually like the twin brother of ‘Calypso’. Like ‘Calypso’, it’s intermediate in growth habit, it has similarly fairly short but broad-ish leaves, the flowers open with a white throat which then darkens with age, it sets many seed pods, and, like ‘Calypso’, it is one of the most strongly fragrant single-flowered varieties. Upon opening, the flowers are bright red (as in red-white-and-blue red!). One difference is that it is not as cold-hardy; on Olivier Filippi’s flower hardiness scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the most cold-hardy, Altini got a 2.2 whereas Calypso is somewhere between 4 and 5.

We have a Calypso in the Oleander Park and Jim plans to send us an Altini this year.

**Note: if you aware of an oleander not in the Park, please advise us of the location so we can preserve its history/location and possibly propagate a clipping for the Park. For example, we are hoping to locate the Barbara Bush oleander.**

*Altini: Single, bright-red. Throat light pink with red stripes. Fragrant. Origin: France, Jean Rey, 1973*



Altini growing in Jim’s house in CT



Calypso – note the throat with stripes



## Aloha!!! Plumeria and Leis



We have been cooped up inside and I have been wanting to fly away to a tropical vacation to Hawaii!!

I dedicate this article to the plumeria, which is a **cousin of the oleanders** and used in Hawaiian leis.



I wrote the Hawaiian Lei Company located in Honolulu to understand when plumeria is used in leis. They were quite helpful and wrote back: "Plumeria is VERY aromatic. It is sweet! Orchids have light to no fragrance, of course, depending on the type of orchid. The plumeria lei is fragrant, vibrant, and perfect for any occasion. They even make wedding bouquets and head hakus with Plumeria.

Because plumeria is prolific in Hawaii, most locals do not consider Plumeria as a prestigious flower (compared to orchid, ginger, pikake, or tuberose) for leis. However, in the last ten years, there has been a rise in demand for Plumeria for shipping to the Mainland... It is not commonly used for weddings or special events (in Hawaii) but tourists/returning locals seek the nostalgic and fragrant plumeria the moment they set foot on Hawaii soil!"

Per the "The Handbook on Plumeria Culture", plumerias are indigenous to the New World Tropics, from southern Mexico to northern South America, especially in the Caribbean islands. They have been introduced into all tropical areas of the world and one can see more varieties in Singapore, India and Hawaii than in their native habitats. Because their cuttings can survive for weeks, they have been transported around the world. For example, Jim Nicholas explains that the plumeria was brought to Sicily in the mid-18th century, by either the Spaniards or the British, depending on to the source. It is the official flower of the city of Palermo, where it is commonly grown not only in the ground but in containers on balconies as well. Because cuttings can survive many weeks (and in fact several months, from Jim's multiple personal experiences!), it was brought to India (and other countries) early on and was found growing there abundantly by the later 18th century.

The flowers will not tolerate much cold but have been known to tolerate hurricane winds. Plumeria fragrance is most strong in the evening and morning but faintest during the heat of the mid-day. Different cultures have used them for medicinal purposes. For example, from the Dictionary of the Economic Products of India "the sap is employed with sandalwood oil and camphor to cure itch, and is used as a counter-irritant ant to cure rheumatic pain." Here are some of the many varieties from Jim's gardens:



*Celadine*



*Waimea*



*Kimo*

## Betty Head Oleander Park

**OLEANDER FESTIVAL**  
**Sat. April 24, 2021**  
**10 am – 4 pm**



Contact us to Buy a Named Brick! - \$50

### TEXAS A&M SERVICE DAY:

We had 14 students from Texas A&M (referred to as Aggies) helping us on March 26<sup>th</sup> on 2 projects: 1) Revitalizing Kewpie's Corner for our Oleander Trail and 2) Painting the benches at the Betty Head Oleander Park.

Since its introduction in 1982, The Big Event has become the largest one-day, student-run service project in the nation. Aggie students have participated in this annual event to show their appreciation to the surrounding community.

**Kewpie's Corner** is located on the corner of 37<sup>th</sup> and the Seawall to honor the work of Kewpie Gaido preserving oleanders on the island. A historical marker was dedicated in 1990 for her. We plan to rejuvenate the space including planting additional Kewpie's oleanders named in her honor.



*Kewpie's Marker*



*Lots of branches removed!*



*Our service Aggie's!*

Born a fifth-generation islander (1916-1995), Maureen Elizabeth Gaido (nicknamed Kewpie) learned a love of oleanders from her father, a local restaurant owner and worked her whole life to create a love for the flower in Galveston, the country and the world.



Per Elizabeth Head upon clarification for Jim Nicholas on the history of Kewpie's oleander: "I know something about the Kewpie... The Kewpie was found by one of the charter members of the society--Ethyl May Koehler (deceased) who was a great gardener and garden writer. She was the secretary and wrote the first newsletters until she died quite a while ago. I took over from her and have been a member since about 1969 or 70. She found it on the easement in front of a house not too far from her home. It was growing next to (if I remember right) a Mrs. Trueheart (lt. pink, single). She called it Kewpie in honor of Kewpie Gaido (her good friend and co-founder of the Society). Kewpie promptly purchased it from the owner of the property and moved it to her large garden. Her family owns the very popular Gaido's restaurant here in Galveston and at that time the large area behind the restaurant (one whole block in size) was her "garden" and she also had a large greenhouse. We used her facilities for our propagation and growing..."

*Kewpie: Extraordinarily unusual cultivar; pinwheel-shaped large flowers variegated pink and white, with widely-separated, spiraling petals.*



*Kewpie's in the Park*



**The Park: The General TAKES THE LEAD:** The Aggies helped spruce up the Park by painting the benches and light weeding. The Park had much freeze damage but we have started to see a few buds in the General Pershing variety. So, stay tuned as we see how the Park recovers with the General in the lead!!!

*General Pershing (double, deep red, sometimes with white stripes). Vigorous shrub with unusually large and long leaves.*



*Aggies at the Park*



*General Pershing buds at the Park*



# WWW.OLEANDER .ORG

Visit our website to learn more about us and the flower!



And follow us on Facebook: International Oleander Society



Any questions: international.oleander@yahoo.com

## SAVE THE DATE

### Meetings:

May 20 – 6 pm  
Aug 19 – 6 pm

### Events:

Oleander Festival – April 24 – 10 to 4 pm  
Fall Luncheon - TBD

And a big thank you to our business members!

MCDONALD CONSULTING



You may sign up on our website [www.oleander.org](http://www.oleander.org) via PayPal or mail your membership or donation to the address below:

International Oleander Society  
P.O. Box 3431  
Galveston, TX 77552-0431

Please indicate the membership of your choice and include both your mailing address and email address.

Renewable Annually

- (1) Individual \$20.00
- (2) Family \$30.00
- (3) Lifetime \$300.00
- (4) Business \$100.00

(Business members will receive a certificate to display in their business, listing in our newsletter and on our website)

\_\_\_\_ Or donation of any amount is appreciated.

**THANK YOU**