

# Nerium News

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL OLEANDER SOCIETY



May 2024 Newsletter

INTERNATIONAL OLEANDER SOCIETY

## 2024 Officers

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Coggeshall

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Marcy Moloy

### Newsletter:

Heidi Coggeshall  
- email if you  
have an article

Dear Members,

Exciting things have been happening for us this year! Our membership continues to increase and more members are getting involved and participating in meetings, garden maintenance, propagating, outreach and festival planning!

The Oleander Garden Park is thriving and provided a beautiful, relaxing venue for our 2024 Oleander Festival in April. We would like to thank the Texas A&M Galveston Aggies for volunteering to help Van, Marcy and the Nerium Nippers get the Garden Park in shape for the Festival. I want to thank the Board for all their hard work planning the Festival, GUS for playing the ukulele music and the Ball High School National Honor Society for providing volunteer hours. We had a huge turnout of visitors attend and they enjoyed visiting the vendor tables, listening to the Ukulele Society and choosing Oleanders to purchase. I am very excited that we sold almost 200 Oleanders (propagated by our members) because that is 200 more Oleanders going out into our community which helps promote Galveston as The Oleander City!

We love hearing from the descendants of our Founders. Thank you Nancy and Genie from the Dyer family for sending the raffle basket, Jenifer from the Betty Head family for the Oleander books and the raffle donations and Liz and Amanda, also from Betty Head's family, for working at the Festival.

In an effort to encourage more input and involvement from our members, we are inviting all current members to attend our monthly Board meetings. Keep an eye on your email correspondence from IOS for details.

Have a great Summer! Please plant an Oleander (we still have some for sale)!

Peace Love & Oleanders,

Amber J



## Volunteer Board Member Spotlight – Stephanie Tong

Stephanie joined us when Amber's enthusiasm rubbed off on her convincing her to run for Treasurer.

Stephanie was born and raised in Galveston County, graduating from Ball High and UHCL. She lives in Galveston with her boyfriend and their 18 mo. old son. She works at UTMB as a grant analyst and her hobbies include gardening and yoga. With all that going on in her busy life, we are thankful she is donating her skill set and time to the IOS!

"I am excited to be part of IOS!" and we are excited to have her on board!

## The WILD OLEANDER With Pink Blossoms

*This is an excerpt (Part 2) from an article written January 2019 by Irmtraud Gotsis with translation by James Nicholas and located in the Oleanderhaus website. (We will continue to add to the story each Newsletter):*

"Like the blue sky and the sea, the hot sun, the scent of wild herbs and the shrill song of the cicada, the bright pink blossoms of the oleander have also been a component of the beauty of the Mediterranean landscape for two thousand years. But only in the 20th century did the appreciation for them enter into people's consciousness. It was at that time, after the end of the Second World War, that mass tourism to the Mediterranean began. The South beckoned tourists with its light and color. 'Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühen . . .' 'Do you know the land where the lemon trees bloom...' [Goethe]. One hundred and fifty years ago, this journey to the south was only possible for the privileged bourgeois. They wrote of their impressions, raved about the beauty of the landscape, its flora and fauna, and thereby drew much attention to the pink-flowered oleander. However, the actual inhabitants of this region, who for thousands of years made their living by herding sheep and goats, feared the toxicity of this plant and destroyed it wherever they saw it in the landscape. And yet the plant survived the millennia."

"As with so many other plants of these regions, it hovered in the area between cultivation and wild stands; that is, once brought here, it was able to help itself and took on the appearance of a free child of Nature". That is how even Pliny regarded it; at first he considered the small tree as native to Italy, but upon reflecting on the name, which is Greek: 'Rhododaphni' or 'Rhododendron' . . ."

"And then it spread throughout the countryside, as goats and donkeys (which usually leave nothing alone) avoid it, and from then on the oleander roses, like reddish gashes, illumined both banks of the watercourses streaming down the mountainsides of Southern Europe."

(The quotations are from 'Kulturpflanzen und Haustiere in ihrem Übergang aus Asien nach Griechenland und Italien sowie in das übrige Europa' ['Cultivated plants and Domestic Animals in their transition from Asia to Greece and Italy as well as to the rest of Europe'] by Victor Hehn, Erstauf.



With curiosity, we wonder when the ancient Greeks became acquainted with their „Rhododaphni“ (Rose laurel). As the writings report, neither Homer nor Alexander the Great were familiar with the oleander. But as Alexander and his army crossed the sandy expanses of Baluchistan, the Greeks encountered a plant which was similar to their 'Daphni' (laurel or bay). And then catastrophe ensued: the draught animals ate the plants and died.

Science later named this plant *Nerium odorum*, the oleander which adorned the wadis of the desert with bright pink, fragrant blossoms, but is extremely poisonous! This story, which has been handed down to us, gives evidence that the Greeks at that time were not familiar with the wild oleander in their homeland. After the establishment of his empire, Alexander left his reports in the imperial archive in Babylon. Original documents were donated there to the learned world, but sadly these valuable pieces are lost. Evaluations thereof cannot be found in any literature either. An exception is Theophrastus' History of Plants, which through the centuries has been the cornerstone of botany. For this reason, Theophrastus is also called "the Father of Botany". The oleander appears here under the name "Oenothera" and is listed as a poisonous plant.

## Continued...

"The development of plant geography is one of the most significant scientific results of Alexander's campaigns. Alexander the Great discovered for the old Western world a new one, the Eastern world; and plant geography, which depends so much on a survey of the most varied types of landscapes, was imbued with new life. What is invaluable is that Alexander himself, in the noble spirit of research, made sure that scientific descriptions of this new world would be recorded." - Excerpt from the book „Botanische Forschungen des Alexanderzuges“ (Botanical Research of Alexander's Campaigns), by Dr. Hugo Bretzl, Leipzig 1903.



As was later recorded. The oleander in ancient Greece stood on the banks of rivers and seacoasts. There, where homage was paid to the sea god Nereus and his 50 daughters, the rose-like blossoms of the Rhododaphni were left as offerings on the altars of the nymphs and used in floral garlands.

Pedanius Dioskurides lived in the first century and was a Greek physician and pioneer in pharmacology. He was educated in Tarsus, the most significant center for botanical and pharmacological research in the Roman Empire. Contained in the oleander's poison are toxic glycosides (cardiac glycosides). "Materia Medica" by Dioskurides lists approximately 1000 pharmaceuticals. (Vienna Dioskurides Codex, Vienna Dioskurides Codex in the Austrian National Library).

Around 40 AD, the Romans built their western administrative center of Mauretania on the ruins of a Carthaginian city. The population consisted of Berbers, Jews, Greeks, and Syrians, who until the arrival of Islam spoke Latin and were Christians. The name of the ancient city VOLUBILIS is related to the Berber word „Oualili" for oleander - the OLEANDER FLOWER that is common in the region. (Oualili, Volubilis - UNESCO World Heritage Site, History of Volubilis).

It's fascinating to think that the oleander with its pink flowers wandered over mountains and valleys in the often desertlike landscape of North Africa, and for some thousands of years. Water sources lying deep below the surface played an important role in this.



However, in mid-millennium – the year 1547 – the Frenchman Pierre Belon traveled in Crete and the Greek mainland. He documented flora and fauna; they are the first research chronicles in Greece. He was a pharmacist and was searching for medicinal plants. On Mount Ida, near the village of Kamaraki, Belon found an oleander with white flowers. This discovery was a sensation in the scientific world, as until then only pink-flowered oleanders were known.

Belon's records are located in Paris today. Here is a translation from the original text:

"The Nerion with white flowers blooms in April on a mountain path near a village by the name of Chamerachi on the road from Candia. It is quite difficult to climb the mountain path on the western side, as the slopes are steep, almost as straight as a ladder. There at the foot of the mountain lies a village from which the steps begin; one counts 7,000 to

reach the peak. It seems that the eastern part is milder than the other one, as the soil is very rich and moist all around the base of the mountain, where there are also a great many villages, and all sorts of things can grow well: fruit trees, grapevines, and olives; and in the fields all sorts of vegetables and grains are planted. ""

(continued in the next newsletter or full article on Oleanderhaus.at)



## Oleanders in Egypt



*Oleanders can be found throughout Egypt. Hassan Osama posted this photo in the Neirum Oleander Appreciation FB page. It shows a huge swatch of oleanders in Egypt.*

Jim Nicholas advised on the type: "With these generic double pinks, all of them clearly related closely to each other genetically, all you can say of them is that they are of the "Splendens" type - that is the European term for all of these double pink, rose-like, strongly fragrant flowers, frequently showing white streaks on the petals. "Mrs. Isadore Dyer" is a typical Splendens type.

"Oleander" in Arabic is "al dafla", "the laurel". الدفلى.

One of the several Spanish terms for the oleander is "adelfa", which is a corruption of the Arabic word. Presumably this was a legacy of the "Moorish" occupation."

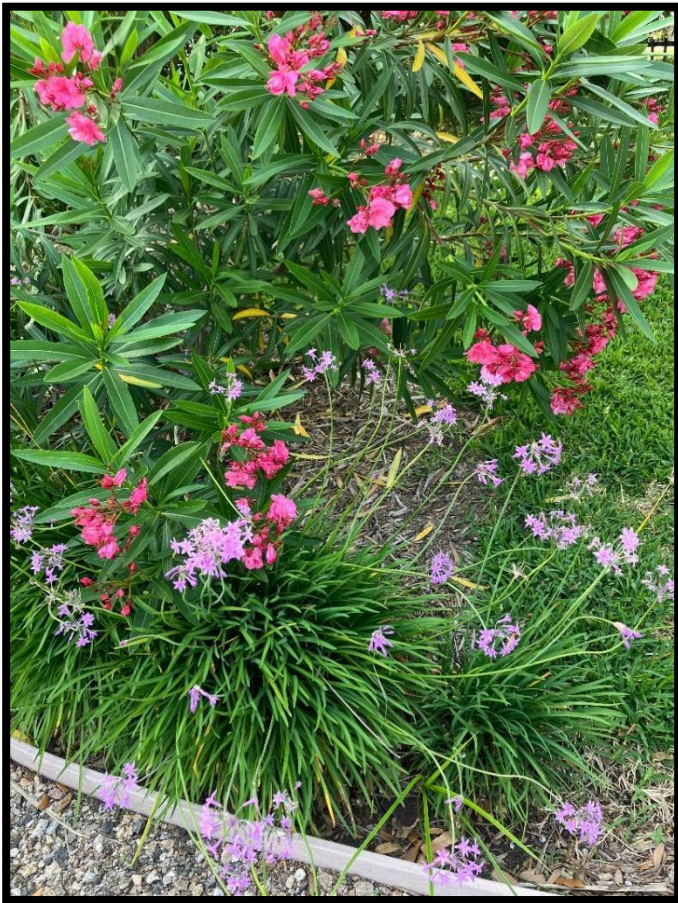
*Below is a photo with oleanders from the Temple of Karnak, which is a vast ancient Egyptian temple complex located on the east bank of the Nile River in Luxor, Egypt. It was a place of worship and pilgrimage for over 2,000 years. The complex covers more than 100 hectares and is one of the largest religious complexes in the world. It is a UNESCO World Heritage site along with the Luxor Temple and the Valley of the Kings.*





## Oleander Festival – April 2024

A great Festival! Perfect weather! And with no major freezes, the plants were in bloom. Thanks to the Galveston Ukulele Society for playing again and to all our great vendors!



Isador Dyer surrounded by Society Garlic



Oleanders and the Galveston Ukelele Society



Sealy entrance to the Park



Propagating the Bob Newding oleander with Bob N.





# WWW.OLEANDER.ORG

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

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Oleander Society



Any questions: [international.oleander@yahoo.com](mailto:international.oleander@yahoo.com)

## To Join, You May:

1. Venmo: @Amber-Jenkins
2. Cash App: \$AmberJS
3. Email [International.oleander@yahoo.com](mailto:International.oleander@yahoo.com) with your phone number and we will call you for credit card information.
4. Send a check made out to "International Oleander Society" to:

International Oleander Society  
PO Box 3431  
Galveston, TX. 777552

Please advise your membership choice below and include your name, address, phone number and email.

### Renewable Annually

- |               |       |
|---------------|-------|
| 1. Individual | \$20  |
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