

The Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society

Next meeting Sunday, April 13th, 2014 1:30pm.
Colony in the Wood – club house
4000 S. Clyde Morris Blvd., Port Orange 32129

April 2014

A Good Time to Start in the Garden!

President – Jay Thurrott 386/761-4804
Vice President – Bill Hazard 386/882-3850
Secretary – Jillian Ragia 386/801-2500
Treasurer – Eve Krauth 386/763-2084

Last month's meeting –

Last month we had a really good group discussion of 'tools, tricks, and tips' that we have picked up while learning to grow bromeliads. There was something of interest to everyone and I know I picked up some useful information that I wasn't aware of. This is what a bromeliad club is all about – helping each other avoid mistakes and passing on miscellaneous tricks that have worked well in growing these interesting plants!

This month's meeting –

Tom Wolfe has been involved with bromeliads both as a hobby and commercially since the 1960s - joining the Bromeliad Guild of Tampa Bay in 1965. In the years to follow he has held many positions in the Guild including serving as President six times. Since its humble beginning, Tom has been a long-time supporter of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies and has served as Chairman to that organization three times. At the national level, he served on the Bromeliad Society International (BSI) Board of Directors for 14 years serving as Director, Secretary, 6 years as Vice President and 6 years as President. While Vice President, Tom was General Chairman of the successful 1992 World Bromeliad Conference, "Bromeliad Safari", hosted by the Bromeliad Guild of Tampa Bay.

Tom became an accredited BSI Bromeliad Judge in 1982. He has judged numerous bromeliad shows throughout the country and is now a Master Judge. Not content to be involved in just bromeliads, Tom has played an active role in garden clubs in the Tampa area and, most recently, in orchid societies.

Tom and his wife Carol grow tropical plants on their 2.5 acres of land and greenhouses in Lutz – in the Tampa area. In his years in the landscape business, he has become an expert on the best bromeliads to use in particular settings, small and large, sunny and shaded. He has designed and installed many residential and commercial landscapes featuring bromeliads. He is in demand as a speaker throughout Florida and the United States presenting programs on bromeliads to garden clubs, bromeliad clubs, and at the University of South Florida Botanical Gardens.

Tom will be visiting us and sharing some of his knowledge of bromeliads in a program of "**unique ways to utilize bromeliads in the landscape**". Tom will be bringing plants for sale as well, so don't forget your wallets, purses, checkbooks, and paper bags full of money. I don't think he barter for his plants, so please, leave your chickens and livestock at home.

April showers...

don't necessarily result in May flowers when bromeliads are involved, but any rains in

April are certainly appreciated as we get into our dry season! And, speaking of the dry season, how many times have you heard the advice – “bromeliads tolerate drought conditions very well, so don’t worry if it doesn’t rain too often”? Unfortunately, that statement is a bit too general to apply to all bromeliads and for anyone growing the small Neoregelias like *Neo. liliputiana* and its hybrids or seedlings of other Genera may find that they have difficulty keeping these plants looking good, or in some cases, even keeping them alive once their roots dry out. The problem is that those cute little ampule-like Neos. simply can’t hold much water in their leaf axils like their larger relatives, so once they get dry...they really dry out. And, because of this, this group of plants relies much more on taking in water through their roots than other bromeliads. Once the roots get dry, the plant suffers. A similar situation exists in the case of bromeliad seedlings – when they’re small they can’t retain much water in their leaf axils and quickly dehydrate if not provided with sufficient moisture. Keep a close eye on these during the dry season. Once we enter the rainy season and we have those frequent afternoon showers we are all so familiar with, we can relax and let nature take its course with the small Neos. and our young bromeliad seedlings.

Plant Profile – Neoregelia compacta

I’ve always been partial to those varieties of bromeliads that don’t draw blood when I brush against them. Unfortunately, that leaves out most of the Genus *Neoregelia*, which includes at least one species which has such prominent spines that it shares the Genus name for the great white shark (*carcharodon*). Even without looking at it, that’s obviously a *toothy* bromeliad! Fortunately, there’s always an exception to the rule when dealing with bromeliads and one such exception is *Neoregelia compacta*, a nice, well-behaved and spine-free species from Brazil.

First of all, let me just say that *Neo. compacta* fits the rule of thumb that ‘most bromeliad species found in Brazil will grow quite nicely in the Central Florida area’. This plant is quite cold-tolerant, heat tolerant and, in fact, pretty much tolerates any sort of abuse that you can heap onto it – my kind of plant!

First described in 1939 by Lyman Smith, *Neo. compacta* is a medium sized (leaves typically less than 10” long), green leaved bromeliad that flushes an intense red in its center leaves at maturity. Offsets resembling tightly rolled cigars are on the ends of stolons that can reach out well clear of the parent plant.



Neoregelia compacta offset.

If the parent plant happens to be near a fence, boulder, or tree trunk these offsets will attach roots and begin climbing vertically. As they mature, the leaves on the offsets develop in the typical way of other *Neoregelias* and form a low, spreading rosette of very symmetrically arranged leaves. The next generation of offsets continues the climb with the end result of a nice clump of plants not only surrounding a tree trunk, but climbing up it as well.

Now, if you like the look of *Neo. compacta* but prefer larger bromeliads, *Neoregelia McWilliamsii* (also a ‘species’- the name is capitalized because it is named for the plant’s discoverer) is the plant for you! Often described as a ‘giant Neo.



Neoregelia compacta – demonstrating its tendency to climb compacta’, Neo. McWilliamsii also is spineless and also develops that nice flush of color in its center leaves like its compacta cousin, although in a somewhat different shade of red. The most notable difference here is in its size – with a wingspan frequently exceeding three feet, you will need a little more room to effectively display this plant.



Neoregelia McWilliamsii
Stolons on Neo. McWilliamsii can be quite long, easily twice the length of those of Neo. compacta and when it rains, this plant can hold a significant amount of water so be careful brushing against this plant after a thunderstorm or you will wind up with a boot full of water!

Noted Hybridist Visits South Florida-

Every now and then an unexpected event comes up that you just have to drop everything and go to. Hawaiian nurseryman and hybridizer David Shiigi and his wife were invited to present a program for the Bromeliad Society of the Palm Beaches and

when Rick Ryals asked if I wanted to go, I couldn’t say ‘no’. Rick, Francisco Cardoso, and I headed south to the Mounts Botanical gardens in West Palm Beach for a 7:30pm meeting and were treated to a terrific program by David Shiigi, an opportunity to purchase some of his outstanding hybrids, and a chance to visit with some of the club members from that area.



David Shiigi entertains an audience of over 100 bromeliad enthusiasts at the Mounts Botanical Gardens

This also was a bit of a “sneak preview” of what to expect at the upcoming World Conference in Hawaii in September. There will not only be an opportunity to see some fabulous plants, but there will also be tours of the nurseries that produce some of these outstanding hybrids!



Amazing colors and leaf patterns characterize the Shiigi hybrids.

Birthdays for April:

It’s been our practice for the past few years to encourage everyone to help out with

providing refreshments for our meetings. One way to accomplish this so that everyone participates but they only have to do this once a year, is to have those with birthdays falling in a particular month, bring refreshments to the meeting on that same month...sort of a 'Happy Birthday, now give us some cake' kind of thing!
Happy Birthday this month to:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Irene Aldrich | Jayne Molnar |
| Michele Kelley | Eretta Morris |
| Steve Provost | Rick Peters |
| Hedy Quirk | Roberta Sappington |
| Rose Vincel | Virginia Whiting |

Just kidding about the cake – anything that you can contribute toward refreshments for our group is greatly appreciated!

Thank you – Rose Vincel

for volunteering to help with the coffee for our meetings! The club provides the coffee and cups, but it's nice to know that there is someone ready to put things together so there is coffee, ready for our members...and by the way Rose's coffee last month was really excellent!

Looking ahead:

April 5th, 2014

Volusia County Master Gardeners Spring sale at the Volusia County fairgrounds, Deland. ½ day sale that FECBS has participated in for many years! 8:30am to noon only. Bring your plants for sale at the FECBS sales area!

April 5th, 2014

Sugar Mill Gardens Spring Event – SOS "Save Our Sloth": a fundraiser to repair the sloth statue in the gardens. Music, raffle, and plants sale
950 Old Sugar Mill Rd., Port Orange



Past Master Gardeners sales at the Volusia County Fairgrounds have always been a lot of fun!

April 26th, 2014

Council of Garden Clubs of the Halifax Area garage sale fundraiser

Finney memorial garden center at the corner of Jessamine and Oleander Avenues

April 26, 27 2014

Seminole Bromeliad and Tropical Plant Society Spring Sale—Saturday and Sunday, 9am – 5pm both days at the Garden Club of Sanford, located at 200 Fairmont Drive off 17-92 (Orlando Avenue), one block south of Lake Mary Boulevard, Sanford, Florida
Signs will be posted near the Garden Club
Free admission, free parking.

September 8-14, 2014 – BSI World Conference. Ala Moana Hotel. 410 Atkinson Drive. Honolulu, Hawaii 96814. Go to www.bsi.org for the latest information.



Like the looks of this T shirt? There will be many just like it at the BSI World Conference. It's not too late to register now!