

The Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society

Next meeting Sunday, June 10th , 1:30p.m.
Colony in the Wood – club house
4000 S. Clyde Morris Blvd., Port Orange 32129

June, 2012

The Lazy Days of Summer

President – Rick Ryals 386/679-8700
Vice President – Eretta Morris 386/677-9557
Secretary – Kimberly Ridenour 386/212-2781
Treasurer – Eve Krauth 386/763-2084

It always seems as though there are just too many bromeliad-related events in March and April. It's impossible to go to all that we would like to attend. Nearly every weekend sees either a show or a sale somewhere in the state. May gets a little slower but there are other garden events and the Mother's Day show and sale in Orlando...until we get into June and we can breathe a little easier, we finally get some "free weekends" where we can kick back and spend a little time with our own plant collections instead of charging around the state visiting other places. The lazy hazy days of Summer are beginning and, thank heavens, the pace is a little slower - but that doesn't mean you should just sit back with a drink in your hand and watch the world go by! There's separating and potting to be done. Those bromeliads aren't going to fertilize themselves!...so make the best of these Summer days – it won't be long before Fall is here and we need to start discussing frost protection again!

This month's meeting...

Dave Johnston, owner of 'Exotic Landscapes' will be visiting us this month and will talk to us about "Must-Have" bromeliad species. David is from Pinellas Park and has been growing bromeliads for over 25 years. Active in both the Bromeliad Guild of Tampa Bay (served as president 5 times) and in the West

Coast Bromeliad Society (not as active – only served as president twice!) Dave has focused on the 'species' bromeliads in recent years and will be sharing some of his experiences with us. Join us for what is certain to be a very interesting program! Oh, and by the way - Dave will be bringing plants for sale with him, so this will be a great opportunity to pick up some great species plants at great prices – don't miss it!

Last month –

...many of us car-pooled to Ocala where we spent a truly enjoyable Sunday with the Aldrichs at their nursery "Plants and Things". It was a great day -



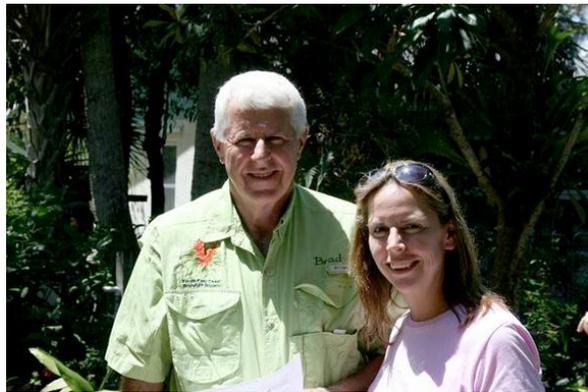
The landscaping was beautiful, we had a really nice lunch, and brought home lots of new bromeliads to add to our collections.



Thank you George and Irene for your very gracious hospitality!

Garden Ramble –

We had a very successful garden ramble last month and here's a few photos by our president to prove it!



Immediate Past President, Brad Rauch and his daughter (and our Secretary) Kim Ridenour enjoying a beautiful day.



A huge thank you to our host and hostesses, Virginia Dornbach, Jane Upham, Eretta Morris, Bill & Tree Hazard and Joan Campbell. Thank you all so very much!

Help Wanted: World Conference - Show Clerks

by Rick Ryals

In less than four months, the Bromeliad Society International will hold its World Conference right here in Orlando, September 24th - 30th at the Caribe Royal Resort. If you want to see bromeliads, and I mean a lot of them, this is the event for you!

A part of this world-wide event is a BSI Standard Judged Show, very similar to those held around the world as Garden Club Shows. Before the doors open and the awards table is set, a dedicated team of over 75 folks will work to make this portion of the conference a 'Show Stopping' success.

It is estimated that perhaps as many as 500 entries or more may be made to the show. It will take a strong group of clerks to make this happen and we are looking for as many as six to eight of our very own FECBS members to volunteer for this show.

When: Thursday, September 27th from 8:30am to 5:00pm at the Caribe Royal in Orlando.

Requirements: First let me say, that no experience is necessary!

Clerks are a vital part of the judging process and will assist the judges during the entire day, from individual judging of each plant/exhibit to the major awards. While there may be some standing for indeterminate periods of time, the Show Chairman has assured me, that everyone will be fed lunch and since we're all working in teams, breaks are certainly acceptable and expected. If you want to participate, the clerks orientation will be a requirement, and will occur Thursday at 8:30am.

Participation the entire day is not necessary, but the morning orientation is. Dress is business casual or wearing our FECBS club shirts would be very nice. I have a more detailed letter from the Show Chairman, Dr. Larry Giroux that I can send to you by email or USPS. This same information will be made available at our next meeting.

I hope you'll consider volunteering for this exciting event and proudly representing our society!

Back to Basics – Part 4

Here's the thing about fertilizing bromeliads – if you are new to this hobby and have just a few plants in your collection, you don't really need to fertilize them! Left in their own pots and potting mixes, most bromeliads will get along just fine. They will grow, mature and bloom without the addition of supplemental fertilizers. Now...having said that, many bromeliads respond very well and benefit greatly from a carefully managed fertilization schedule. How do we reconcile these two, seemingly contradictory statements?

It's probably best to start by saying that unless you know a little bit about the plants that you have in your collection, you may do more harm than good by fertilizing them all at the same rate and with the same strength and type fertilizer. We've all heard the stories about fertilizing a nice *Neoregelia* 'fireball' and having that same plant lose its characteristic bright red color and turning green. This is an example of the effect that nitrogen can have on highly colored *Neoregelias*. A similar problem can result from too much nitrogen applied to members of the Genus *Billbergia* – only in this case, the plants may respond by growing long and lanky leaves. On the other hand, some of the highly decorative *Vriesea* hybrids may disappoint when the next generation of plants produce smaller, less brightly colored and less branched inflorescences *unless* they have been fertilized on a regular basis. What's a beginner to do? The answer is to learn all that you can about the bromeliads that you are growing. Take advantage of the club's extensive library. Talk to some of our more experienced members and ask questions when we have guest speakers – the reason that they are asked to address our group is that they have a wealth of knowledge and experience, so take advantage of each opportunity to increase your own knowledge base. You'll be surprised at how much you can learn from

these sources and you'll also be surprised at the difference that makes in your success in growing bromeliads.

Back to the question of fertilizers – what are they and how do you choose one for your bromeliads? When we speak of fertilizers we are really talking 'nutrients' and we are usually discussing nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium. Most commercial fertilizers express the ratios of the amounts of these constituents as N-P-K somewhere on the label. These are the chemical symbols for these three elements – so a label that shows 6-6-6 would have equal proportions of nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P) and potassium (K) and a fertilizer with a label showing 12-6-6 would have a much higher amount of nitrogen in it. Why is this important? Nitrogen stimulates growth in plants and is what makes your grass develop that rich green appearance after a nitrogen application. When some bromeliads are given large amounts of nitrogen, their growth also is stimulated and they respond by developing green, luxurious leaves – which is fine unless you want them to be compact with bright colors other than green! Excessive amounts of nitrogen also can percolate through soils and eventually contaminate groundwater supplies. High nitrogen levels in drinking water can impede the ability of your bloodstream to carry oxygen, so, loss of color and long strappy leaves aside, it's just not a good idea to overdose your plants with nitrogen.

Phosphorous helps plants develop a healthy root system and contributes to their overall vigor. The downside of applying phosphorous to the landscape (lawns and gardens) is that the excess can be carried away by rainwater run-off and go on to stimulate algae growth when it enters a waterway or receiving stream, which then leads to serious problems in the ecosystem. It's not a good idea to overdose your plant with phosphorous.

Potassium helps regulate many of the complex processes that take place as a plant grows and matures and a deficiency of this nutrient can sometimes be noted in sickly, yellowing leaves and stunted plant growth.

Fortunately, excessive potassium has very little effect on the environment although this shouldn't be taken as permission to apply overdoses of this nutrient to your plants! Just as with nitrogen and phosphorous, *moderation* is the key to effective fertilization.

Now, once you decide that you are going to add a fertilizer to your bromeliads, a basic choice that you are faced with is whether you should use a liquid or a granular, slow-release fertilizer. Unfortunately, as with so many other things, there is no single, best answer to that question. Consider the Genus *Tillandsia* for a moment. Most of the *Tillandsias* that you will see are strictly epiphytic and not typically grown in a potting mix. In this case, granular fertilizers are out of the question, but a regular schedule of applying a weak liquid fertilizer during their active growth periods will reward you with faster growing, more robust plants and possibly even brighter blooms at their maturity. In contrast, although most of the *Aechmeas* also are epiphytic, we typically grow them in pots and when *Aechmea* offsets are potted up, adding a little slow release granular fertilizer is an easy way to provide that extra boost of nutrients that these plants often respond well to.

As far as liquid fertilizers go, there is a wide variety to choose from and I'm not so sure that there is much difference between one brand and another...provided that the brands you are comparing have a similar breakdown of the nutrients that they contain (now that you know what the N-P-K numbers stand for).

There seem to be two main brands of granular, slow release fertilizers for houseplants and there is an ongoing debate regarding which is the better of the two. I've used them both and find them both to be quite expensive! Being the lazy gardener that I am though, I'm pretty happy with the idea of adding a slow release fertilizer to the potting mix when I first pot up my bromeliad pups and being done with it. I've done this for a few years now and am pretty happy with the results. The alternative was trying to

remember when the last time I applied a liquid fertilizer was, when the next time should be, and going through the hassle of mixing up the correct strength of liquid solution ...and then keeping the spray nozzle from plugging up! I still go through this with my *Tillandsias* and my mounted bromeliads, and as a result, I think there is room for improvement with this group in my collection.

June 10th, 2012

FECBS monthly meeting with guest speaker David Johnston who will tell us about 'species' plants that you should have in your collections. What's a species plant? You need to attend this informative program!

July 14, 2012

Quarterly meeting of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies hosted by the Bromeliad Society of South Florida

August 18-19, 2012

Seminole Bromeliad and Tropical Plant Society sale at the Sanford Garden Club. Call 407/539-4314 for details

September 24th-30th

2012 Bromeliad Society International (BSI) World Bromeliad Conference hosted by Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies at The Caribe Royal, 8101 World Center, Orlando, FL 32821 – Check out the BSI website (www.bsi.org) or the Florida Council Website for registration forms and the latest information.

