

FLORIDA COUNCIL
of BROMELIAD
SOCIETIES INC.
Newsletter

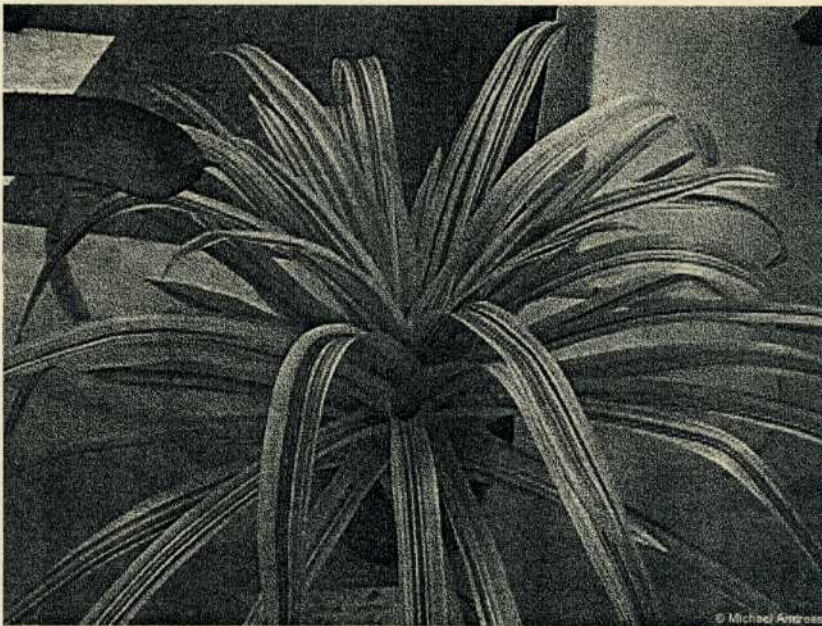


This is just one of the native bromeliads found in Florida.
Wouldn't you like to grow this from seed and return it back
to the wild?

Well you can.

Help save our native bromeliads

This picture is from fcbs.org
<http://fcbs.org/pictures.htm>



© Michael Andreas

Guzmania monostachia var. *variegata*

Entered by Carolyn & Ron Schoenau
1999 Mothers Day Show, BSCF

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Chairman's message

By now I hope each society has begun to discuss seed collection. The FCBS is now contractually obligated to conduct this task. Mike Andreas has worked very hard to put together all the material on the website. Carolyn Schoenau and Dr. Frank and Mike have had many e-mails back and forth. Carolyn has agreed to be the Chairman for the Grants Committee. That means she is responsible for the two reports required by the state. Dr. Frank and I submitted a proposal to a group called Fund for Wild Nature the end of July. Upon their receipt of the proposal, I was informed the group neither funds at the level requested nor to organizations being funded by state money. Needless to say our request for funds was declined. Looking forward to a positive FCBS meeting in October.

Ed Hall

Bromeliads on Sanibel Island -Trouble in Paradise?

By: Jay Thurrott
Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society

My family recently vacationed on Sanibel Island, which, if you are not familiar with it, is the closet thing to a tropical paradise you're likely to find without leaving the country. Actually this is one of two small islands, Sanibel and Captiva, linked by causeway to Fort Myers, FL. These islands are world-renowned for the variety and quantity of seashells that can be found on their beaches. Sanibel is also well known among bird watchers who flock (no pun intended) to the Ding Darling Wildlife Preserve to observe a truly remarkable variety of wildlife. Fishermen also are familiar with the tarpon tournaments hosted off Captiva at the Boca Grande pass and inshore fishing in San Carlos bay is nothing short of superb. An interesting place to visit!

Sanibel also has a wonderful

network of bicycle paths crisscrossing the Island (can you believe that drinking fountains are provided every few miles?) and it was while exploring some of these trails that I began to notice large numbers of native *Tillandsias* in the trees. I decided to see how many different species I could identify on the Island. *Tillandsia usneoides* (Spanish Moss) and *Tillandsia recurvata* (Ball Moss) were well represented, as you might expect, but it was only after scanning the trees for signs of other bromeliads that I began to notice areas where fallen *Tillandsia utriculatas* littered the ground-fallen prey to the weevil *metamasius calzone*? Inspection of a fallen plant showed damage to the bases of the leaves resembling short knife slashes. When I peeled away a number of lower leaves, there was the tell-tale cocoon formed from plant debris-identical to that pictured in articles about the weevil in the BSI journal. This was my first encounter with damage inflicted by weevils and it was a certainly a sobering sight.

Numbers of fallen plants ranged from several per tree to easily a dozen or more. In some areas trees could be seen with either dead *Tillandsias* still on the branches or dead plants on the ground and nothing but roots and a few lower leave in the tree itself. The devastation was not complete however, for there were also very healthy communities in other areas - often as close as opposite sides of the street from trees that were obviously heavily infected. Large numbers of small seedlings could be found virtually everywhere on the Island, although I had to wonder whether this ensured a future healthy population of *T. utriculata* or, instead of ready source of food for the weevils. Time will tell.

On some parts of the Island I found groups of *Tillandsia flexuosa*, clinging to what seemed impossibly small twigs in shrubs and small trees. Didn't they realize that these twigs could easily

break away and send the plant to an early end? Some of these were in bloom at the time and many seedlings of various sizes could be seen close by. Often small branches contained a mix of mature plants, seedlings and seed recently released, just beginning to show the green of the first leaves-an encouraging sight after viewing so many dead *T. utriculatas*. I had to wonder why these plants didn't appear to be attacked like *T. utriculatas*. Perhaps the weevil favors the larger food source available in the *T. utriculata* and will move on to *T. Flexuosa* after it exhausts the population of its first choice in food.

Another bicycle trip took me through a relatively small wildlife preserve named for one of the pioneer settlers on Sanibel. Now that I was in the habit of looking for bromeliads in the trees, it wasn't long before I noted a small colony of *Tillandsia paucifolia* in a large oak tree overhanging a drainage canal. In the

same tree was a very large *Tillandsia fasciculata* in bloom-the only plant of this species that I was to see during my stay on the Island. The "Don't feed the alligators" signs posted on the edge of the canal discouraged me from getting any closer to see if other trees in the area held more plants.

Continuing on my bicycle tour I spotted a colony of *Tillandsia balbisiana* rather high in the trees just off the walkways meandering through the Ding Darling Park. One of these had put up quite an impressive bloom spike and others appeared to be nearly mature plants. No fallen plants were visible around the trees, so I am hopeful that the weevils hadn't decided to dine on these...at least not yet.

Quite new to the Island is a commercial native plant nursery where plants are propagated and can be purchased for landscaping around homes and businesses. Walkways around this nursery led to ob-

ervation areas where wetland vegetation was identified, a butterfly garden was tended and a small group of native bromeliads was mounted on a display board with identification tags (some more correct than others), but even here some plants appeared to have been attacked by weevils. Large trees surrounding the display bore the remains of dead plants and plants that looked to be in severe decline. Dead plants would probably have been seed on the ground if the grass hadn't been recently mowed.

Unfortunately, our week's vacation passed all too quickly and we were on our way back to Port Orange. Along the way we saw some truly impressive colonies of *Tillandsia fasciculata* in trees overhanging secondary roads around the town of LaBelle. Healthy clumps of these plants totally covered every tree limb reaching out over the road and, although it's hard to say with any certainty when you are driving by at 55 mph, weevils did not appear to

have staged their attack...yet. Soon we were back on the interstate with our shells collected from the beaches, pictures to be developed in the camera and memories etched in our minds of a tropical paradise. But along with these pleasant memories there is a certain uneasiness-how much longer will visitors to Sanibel Island be able to enjoy the sight of Florida's bromeliads in their native habitat?

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 20th-22nd

**Bromeliad Guild of
Tampa Bay**

Show & Sale

Tampa Fed. Of Garden Club Circles
Garden Center
2629 Bayshore Blvd
Tampa, FL
Fri. 2:00-5:00
Sat 9:00-5:00
Sun 9:00-4:00

