



**FLORIDA COUNCIL
OF
BROMELIAD SOCIETIES, INC.**



Aechmea mexicana

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This newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies

FCBS TAX DEDUCTIBLE RECEIPTS

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Cover Photograph: *Aechmea mexicana*
Photo by Carol Wolfe

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I Love Bromeliads...

By Carol Wolfe, Editor

Catching Up and Staying Even is an impossible task with bromeliads as there is always weeding, cleaning, potting and photographing so I decided to abandon Carol Johnson's catchy title and replace it with a less demanding one! I had been thinking about replacing the title with names such as Bromeliads in Paradise, Heavenly Bromeliads, Florida Land of Bromeliads, or etc., but finally decided to give it up the search and simply say, "I Love Bromeliads!"

When I attended my first Bromeliad Guild of Tampa Bay meeting (1975), there was a large crowd in attendance and I was intimidated because I knew nothing about these plants and had just learned the proper pronunciation of bromeliad. Although, I enjoyed Tom's beautiful backyard, hundreds of bromeliads, a slat greenhouse, a waterfall and fish pond, and bromeliads hanging on the lanai, that was the extent of my interest. Before we were married, Tom invited me to BGTB meetings but I insisted that it was his hobby, not mine!

We had been married a couple of months when Tom persuaded me to attend a monthly meeting with him. As I observed the crowd, wondering how so many people could be excited over a plant, a sweet older lady came up to me and said, "When did you fall in love with bromeliads?" Since I hadn't fallen in love with bromeliads, I responded with, "I didn't, I fell in love with Tom."

The BGTB meeting was held in the Beach Park Women's Club in Tampa and the meeting was long and dull (probably only to the disinterested), the wooden chairs very uncomfortable, refreshments were delicious, and I was one happy person when the meeting was over. It wasn't my intention to attend again but month by month, Tom convinced me to go with him. Then it became the norm for us to attend picnics, Christmas parties, the Florida State Fair, Extravaganzas, and bromeliad shows.

So when did the transition to loving bromeliads happen? Perhaps it was watching a *Bromelia balansae* bloom and seeing the magic of it changing daily? Or seeing Herb Hill's unbelievable beautiful bromeliads growing in the largest greenhouse I had ever seen? Or being surprised when repotting a *Vriesea* that produced 10-12 pups? Or was it the people that you met at meetings who became your friends? Or winning your first blue ribbon? Or attending a world conference? Or taking pictures early in the morning with dew drops still on the foliage? Or visiting the Everglades and feeling the peace and tranquility of standing in a bayhead surrounded with trees full of *Guzmania monostachia*?

I'm not sure when I fell in love with bromeliads but I am grateful God made bromeliads part of His creation and gave us eyes to behold them. He made bromeliads with such beauty and diversity in the colors, textures, sizes, shapes, foliage, and blooms that He knew we would fall in love with them.

Would Carol Johnson mind if I changed the name of the column? I don't think so as she was truly a 'bromeliad lover'. The last time she visited our home, she told us the story of being diagnosed with cancer, received chemotherapy and when she was able to return to work in the greenhouse, she started to heal. She said, "bromeliads saved my life!" She said it with such passion that you would never forget her words! At the time of her death, she had survived cancer for 37 years. We still miss her and her famous nursery, Pineapple Place, but she will always have a place in the history of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies as well as within our hearts.

A heartfelt 'Thank-You' to all the fine contributors to this Newsletter from Patty Gonzalez, Secretary of the FCBS for the minutes of the last meeting, Jay Thurrott for his challenging article on bromeliads, "Windii or Theodore L. Mead?", Tom Wolfe for detailed information on "*Puya Laxa*", "*Aechmea Mexicana*", "Fires in Bolivia", Karen Andreas informative article, "*Catopsis—A Quiet Bromeliad*" and survey, "Dirt on Bromeliads", and Theresa Cooper, PhD., very interesting report on the on-going Mexican bromeliad weevil research. THANK YOU!



Teresa M. Cooper, PhD

MEXICAN BROMELIAD WEEVIL REPORT MAY – AUGUST 2016

Teresa M. Cooper

Entomology and Nematology Department
University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

Thirty of the garden structures for growing young giant airplants (*Tillandsia utriculata* L.) in the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary have been placed in the Gardens in the forests. Presently, there are 6 Gardens in the Enchanted Forest, and 15 garden structures will be placed in each Garden, for a total of 90 structures. Tiny giant airplants (longest leaf length 5 - 15 cm (2 - 6")) and small giant airplants (longest leaf length 15 - 30 cm (6 - 12")) are being tested on 2 types of garden structures (Shallow Box (Figure 1A) and Hardware Cloth Round (Figure 1B)) and small plants are being tested on another type of garden structure (Deep Box (Figure 1B)). In all, 900 tiny and 486 small giant airplants will be rescued and put on the structures. The giant airplants are doing well on all 3 types of garden structures and in all of the Gardens. The plants are regularly checked and watered (Figure 2A-B). Several more structures are ready to go into the Gardens and the remaining structures are being built. The larger giant airplants in the cages at the Enchanted Forest are doing well (Figure 2C). The seeds are still developing and should be ready to disperse next spring. Data collection has been refined and is working well at the Enchanted Forest (Figure 2D-E). Forms for collecting data and spreadsheets for inputting data are being created and will soon be available online.

The Mexican bromeliad weevil infested a small, wild population of large giant airplants that was being monitored at the T. Mabry Carlton, Jr. Memorial Reserve. Volunteers at the Carlton Reserve rescued the plants. Figure 3A shows the before picture of the tree hosting the giant airplants and Figure 3B shows the tree after the plants were rescued. The plants were sprayed with insecticide (Figure 3C). Plant sizes ranged from very large to medium (Figure 3D). The plants were placed in the cedar and plastic cages that were built by volunteers in March 2016 (Figure 3E-F), as well as on a fence (also constructed by volunteers; Figure 3G). The plants on the fence will have to be removed, sprayed with insecticide, then returned to the fence every 3 or 4 months to keep the plants safe from the weevil.

In November 2014, I brought giant airplants from Belize to Florida to study in the laboratory. Last year, I took Jay Thurrott the few remaining plants that I had and asked him to propagate the seeds, and he accepted the task (Figure 4A). This year, the plants began releasing seed (Figure 4B) and Jay has spread the seed on cloth stretched across trays (Figure 4C). The seeds have germinated, but are extremely small. This will be a slow process, but in time, will provide plants for further studies.

Jan Dawson at the Indian River Research and Education Center has been collecting data from the Mexican bromeliad weevil colony that also came from the November 2014 trip to Belize. She is testing the growth of the weevil on pineapple leaves at different temperatures and on whole pineapple tops, to compare with data already collected on the Florida form of the Mexican bromeliad weevil. Preparations are being made to study entomopathogenic fungi for controlling the Mexican bromeliad weevil.

Save Florida's Bromeliads Conservation Project

For more photos and videos, visit the Save Florida's Bromeliads Conservation Project on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/SaveBromeliads/>.

Figure 1. Three types of garden structures are being tested at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary for growing young giant airplants in the Gardens; they are A) Shallow Box, and B) Deep Box (in the background) and Hardware Cloth Round (in the foreground).



Figure 2.

Young giant airplants growing in gardens in the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary are regularly tended by volunteers

- A) Rachel Freier and
- B) Martha Pessaro and Madison Giuntoli.
- C) The cages are checked weekly and kept free of debris.
- D) Rachel Freier enters data into one of 3 notebooks used by the volunteers for collecting data.
- E) The cages are checked weekly and kept free of debris.



Figure 3. Volunteers at the T. Mabry Carlton, Jr. Memorial Reserve rescued giant airplants from a small, wild population that had become infested by the Mexican bromeliad weevil. A) shows the plants on the tree before they were rescued and B) shows the tree after the plants were removed. C) The plants were sprayed with insecticide. D) shows volunteer Donna Day and the rescued plants, which ranged in size from medium to very large. E) The plants were put in a plastic cage, F) a cedar cage, G) and on a fence.



Figure 4. Jay Thurrott A) holds 2 giant airplants, each with an inflorescence, that came from Belize. B) The plants are releasing seeds and C) Jay has been propagating the seeds.



Dates	Calendar of Events
September 10-11, 2016	Sarasota Bromeliad Society 31st Annual Standard BSI Bromeliad Show & Sale Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota, Florida 34236 Contact: (941) 955-0875
October 29, 2016	FCBS Quarterly meeting, hosted by Bromeliad Society of Central Florida
November 11-13, 2016	The Ramble at Fairchild Tropical Gardens 10901 Old Cutler Road, Coral Gables, Florida, 33156 http://www.fairchildgarden.org

Cryptanthus 'Stephen Hoppin' entered in the 20th World Bromeliad Conference in Orlando by Terrie Bert.



Photo Carol Wolfe



Patty Gonzalez
Secretary

Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies Minutes June 25, 2016 (Draft)

The meeting was hosted by The Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society at the residence of Michael Kiehl in Venice, Florida. The meeting was called to order by Council Chair Vicky Chirnside at 1:10pm. In Attendance: Vicky Chirnside (CBS, FCBS Chairman) Tom Wolfe (BGTB), Carol Wolfe (BGTB, FCBS Newsletter Editor), David Johnson (SBS), John O’Steen (SBS), Sudi Hipsley (SBTPS, FCBS Treasurer), Calandra Thurrott (FECBS), Jay Thurrott (BSI Director), Rick Ryals (FECBS) Gregory Kolojeski (SBTPS), Ashley Graham (FWCBS), Betsy McCrory (BSCF), Carolyn and Ron Schoenau (GBS) Barbara Partagas (BSI Director) Teresa Cooper (UF), Mike Michalski (BSSF), Patty Gonzalez (BSSF, FCBS Secretary), Nine societies were represented.

Reports and Updates

Secretary: Minutes from the February meeting were accepted. Motion by Carolyn Schoenau and second by John Osteen.

Treasurer’s Report: Sudi Hipsley presented the financial report and Betsy McCrory reported she audited the books and found everything to be in order.

Newsletter Report: Carol Wolfe was congratulated for doing an excellent job and she asked that everyone continue to send her photos or any interesting information.

Weevil Research: Dr. Teresa Cooper reported that the Weevil project at the Enchanted Forest is going well and she continues to work with volunteers. At the Carlton Reserve they have built a cage and another was contributed. The cages are safe keeping the plants until they seed. Teresa has been speaking at different societies throughout the state. She gave a talk in South Florida in April and Sarasota in May. At Naples Botanical, Jan Dawson is testing with pesticides. Kay Schulman, employee at Naples Gardens, Teresa would like to reimburse for the supplies used in testing with the weevil project.

Tom Wolfe submitted the Al Muzzell Memorial Weevil Fund Committee report for June 25, 2016. The committee recommends that the Council allow the use of its 501(c)3 not for profit status to enable Dr. Cooper to apply for grants that require the not for profit status.

Standing rule was submitted to the Council for its consideration and approval giving Dr. Cooper permission to apply for grants under FCBS non-profit 501(c)3 status. Accepted by Rick Ryals and second by Carolyn Schoenau, motion passed.

BSI News: Jay Thurrott reported, that BSI met at the World Conference in Houston. Jay led the meeting as outgoing President. The new President is Lynn Wegner from South Africa and Vice President is Rick Ryals from Florida East Coast. Next World Conference, San Diego May 29-June 2, 2018. BSI Journal- trying to get this on a timely manner, will be online very soon.



Michael Kiehl at his nursery sharing his bromeliads with FCBS members

Continued FCBS Minutes (Draft)

Very hard for international people to become judges. Australia has three new accredited Judges, now they have a judging school. BSI funds have gone down due to decreased attendance at World Conferences and membership fees do not cover cost of journal. BSI has started a fund raiser called BSI 66 Fund. Rick Ryals suggested that the council donate \$1000 to the BSI 66 fund, second by Ashley, motion passed.

Old Business: Ashley asked that everyone read the by-laws and send comments within 30 days. Betsy McCrory and Karen Andreas reviewed rules for speaker reimbursement, after some discussion motion by Rick Ryals to table until next meeting, Tom Wolfe second.

Tom Wolfe reported the Extravaganza 2017 will be at the Sheraton Tampa East Hotel, room rate \$99 with free parking, July 22-24, 2017. Registration fee is \$100, includes a barbecue on Friday night and banquet on Saturday night. Discussion; should the contract be signed by the council? Tampa has a member that is a contract lawyer so they feel confident but they liked the idea.

New Business: Vicky met with BSSF board members in April to discuss the clubs concerns with FCBS. Lack of communication and misunderstandings. Members were not getting newsletter. Mike and Patty agreed to make sure that members are receiving the newsletter and any Council updates.

Society News:

FWCBS: George Aldridge, Terri Bert

GBS: April – workshop 3 speakers, growing cold hardy Bromeliads.

SBS: They moved their meetings from Selby to Sarasota Garden Club.

CBS: Marty Folk, Alton Lee, Auction very successful

BGTB: Covered dish picnic

FECBS: FECBS is on Facebook. April - Beekeeper Jack Dunlop gave a presentation called “Honey Bees, the Great Pollinator”.

May - Steve Hoppin gave a talk on “Growing Quality Cryptanthus”. June- Bromeliad Bingo led by Rick Ryals.

SBTPS: Speakers- Marty Folk and Jay Thurrott, April plant sales.

BSSF: April Plant show and sale and speaker Dennis Cathcart on his trip to Brazil. In May- Chip Jones on Hectias, June- Presentation with pictures of plants entered in the show.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00p.m. The next meeting of the FCBS will be Saturday, October 29th hosted by Bromeliad Society of Central Florida. Prepared by Patricia Gonzalez, FCBS Secretary



Pictures taken on the beautiful grounds of Michael and Donna Kiehl's nursery in Venice, FL

Plants That Repel Mosquitoes Naturally

Grow your own herbs for pest control and never buy bug spray again

Science claims that mosquitoes are attracted to body odor and it must be true. At a picnic one person may be aggravated by mosquitoes bites while other person will not get any bites? We don't want to use chemical sprays on our three year old granddaughter so we lavish her with Avon's skin-so-soft and it works to keep the mosquitoes off. If we get a bite, we immediately rub Shakely Basic H full strength on the bite. I used the Shakely Basic H product when my children were small to treat fire ant bites. If used right way, it is effective in neutralizing insect bites. Bug repellants such as Buzz Spray and Bite Blocker are organic choices and can be purchased online from internet stores such as Amazon.

Alternately certain strong unpleasant smells can both hide your scent and dissuade mosquitoes from getting close enough to bite you. Oils and leaves from herbs, plants and trees with strong scents can help to mask your smell and keep mosquitoes away. To get the maximum effect from these plants, crush the herb leaves to release the perfume and then rub the leaves and oils over your skin.

Here are suggested herbs that work and can be planted in pots near a door, or anywhere outside:

Citronella: Citronella is one of the most natural mosquito repellants and grows well on patios and decks and can be planted in containers and placed anywhere outside. It is nicknamed the Mosquito plant for its natural mosquito repelling oil in the leaves. This oil can be placed directly on the skin to act as a mosquito repellent, or mixed with other oils and liquids to make repellants.

Lemon Grass: Citronella is a natural oil found in lemongrass, an ornamental that can grow up to 4 feet tall and 3 feet wide in one season. It does well in a pot or in the ground in a sunny, well-drained location. Yes, it is the same lemon grass leaves used in chicken and pork dishes and to flavor soups and salad dressing.

Basil: Essential oil from this delicious herb is toxic to mosquito larvae. The oils that can be extracted and used as a spray to repel mosquitoes. It has also an effective repellent when grown near a door or patio to repel mosquitoes.

Catmint: Catmint is effective in keeping mosquitoes away and some people claim it is even better than commercial bug sprays. To make a spray, cut off the flowers and boil.

Catnip: This fragrant mint cousin contains a chemical called nepetalactone, which is both a feline attractant and a useful insect repellent. One of its main active ingredients, nepetalactone. In a recent study it was found to be 10X stronger than DEET.

Cedars: Many repellent products contain cedar oil as one of its active ingredients to repel mosquitoes as well as other insect pests.

Clove: A natural mosquito repellent plant you can use as a planting around the yard or use the oil from the clove to repel mosquitoes quickly. Oil of cloves can be purchased in the grocery store.

Floss Flower: *Ageratum* – Coumarin, which is secreted by *ageratum*, is found extensively in the manufacture mosquito repellents. Mosquitoes find the odor offensive. Grows well in partial or full sun.

Garlic: Did you know? There are no mosquitoes in garlic fields? [That's why Master Gardeners and farmers have been using garlic sprays for years.](#) You can make garlic into a spray for your yard. Garlic can be mixed with natural aromatic oils to create a mosquito repelling body spray.

Lavender: This beautiful, potent, and lovely-smelling flower not only repels mosquitoes but keeps moths and flies away. The flower's perfume is well-known, and it's most effective when actually rubbed on skin. Lavender repels mosquitoes because they dislike the scent. It can be planted in gardens or made into oil and applied to the skin or mixed with other oils to keep mosquitoes away.

Mint: Repels mosquitoes. The leaves are commonly used to flavor minty iced tea. The aromatic properties found in the leaves are also present in the stems and flowers. With a little work, the plant's aromatic oils can be extracted and combined with apple cider vinegar and cheap vodka (or witch hazel) to make a mosquito repellent. Containers of mint strategically placed in the garden or on the patio will help keep nearby plants insect free.

If you want more information, research the internet as there are many more mosquito resistant herbs and plants listed there. If purchasing plants from a Garden Center, ask for recommendations for mosquito resistant plants that grow best in your zone.



Puya laxa

By Tom Wolfe



I grew this *Puya laxa* in my greenhouse under fifty percent shade cloth and the irrigation system came on for ten minutes three times a week. Although it is known as a drought tolerant bromeliad and loves full sun, it grew very well under existing greenhouse conditions. The *Puya laxa* came into bloom several months ago and I'm pleased to say that the inflorescence lasted in good shape for two months and is producing several pups.

This Bolivian *Puya* is an extremely unique and attractive species. *Puya laxa* is said to be found near Pulquina in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The word *laxa* comes from the Latin word *laxus* meaning loose, slack or relaxed referring to the open rosettes of reflexed leaves. A tough terrestrial growing in arid well drained alkaline soils in full sun or light shade. *Puya laxa* is drought tolerant as well as cold tolerant.

The foliage is heavily covered with trichomes which give off a silvery, bluish appearance. Leaf margins have small sharp recurved spines which grab you when trying to work with this plant. This was especially true during photographing the plant as it does not have any flexibility in the leaves. The three to four feet tall red to pink inflorescence scape is loosely branched and sports widely spaced flowers which are 3/4 inch long with indigo blue to black petals. There are 218 *Puya* species listed in the BSI binomial list under Pitcairnioideae subfamily. Only a handful are commonly grown in cultivation.



All Photos in this article by Carol Wolfe





A yard stick measuring the height of the growing *Puya laxa*.



Puya laxa full bloom. Rocks had to be placed in the pot to keep the heavy bloom from toppling over.

FIRES IN BOLIVIA On August 11, 2016, the Reuters News Agency reported fires sweeping across Bolivia. Bolivian authorities struggle to contain the worst outbreak of forest fires in a decade, as high winds and a thirty year drought lead to fires that threaten several national parks and burned over 9.9 million acres. They're the worst in ten years and local volunteers are helping firefighters

The fires have shut down flights and are threatening several national parks, including the Tunari National Park in Cochabamba. Cochabamba Governor Ivan Canelas says they are fighting the wind. "This wind you are seeing today has helped bring back the fires and spread it to more regions."

Intentional fires set to clear land between June and August this year, chiefly in the provinces of Santa Cruz, Beni and Pando, bordering on Brazil and Paraguay, choked Bolivia's main cities with smoke and forced several airports to suspend flights.

Recorded up to now have been "47,835 centers of combustion and we're close to 4 million hectares (9.9 million acres) burned," making it the nation's "worst drought season ever," Bolivian Forest and Lands Authority president Cliver Rocha told state media.

"The drought has kindled these massive, widespread blazes and estimates tell us they will continue in Bolivia until December. It isn't possible to quantify the damages, which are irreparable," Rocha said.



***Puya laxa* is said to be found near Pulquina in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.**



Windii or Theodore L.Mead?

By Jay Thurrott

One of the good things about today's technology is that nearly everyone has a cell phone capable of taking pictures. Unfortunately, the quality of those pictures isn't always what you would like it to be.

Take this photo for example:



This was sent to me along with a request to help identify this unknown *Billbergia* that had come into bloom. The photos accompanying the request were extremely small and when I tried to enlarge them, the resolution became so low that this could have been a photo of Bigfoot for all I could tell!...actually, though, that photo did resemble a plant in my own collection enough to spur me into continuing a search into the name of my plant that had begun some time ago.

Back in 1996 or so I acquired a *Billbergia* at an Earth Day event held at Washington Oaks State park in Flagler Beach. Of course there was no name tag on it, so it remained unnamed until one of the owners of the Pineapple Place bromeliad nursery in Longwood took one look at it and pronounced it as *Billbergia* 'Windii'. Descendants of that plant have bloomed faithfully ever since with a very distinctive inflorescence and I never had occasion to give much thought to it or its name...that is, until a few years later when I received a similar plant from Al Muzzel of Gainesville, but this plant's name tag read "*Billbergia* 'Theodore L. Mead'". The plants looked nearly identical. Both were obviously from that group of *Billbergias* known as the "helicooides" due to the curious way in which the flower petals coil like a watch spring when open. Were these really two different plants or was one of the name tags incorrect?...and if so, which one? I had high hopes that a visit to the Florida Council website (fcbs.org) would shed some light on this puzzle, and photos of both are readily accessible. 'Windii' is listed as a cross of *Billbergia nutans* with *Billbergia decora* while 'Theodore L. Mead' is shown as the result of crossing *Billbergia decora* with *Billbergia nutans* – one apparently being the reverse of the other.



My plant with a nametag, *Billbergia* 'Theodore L. Mead'



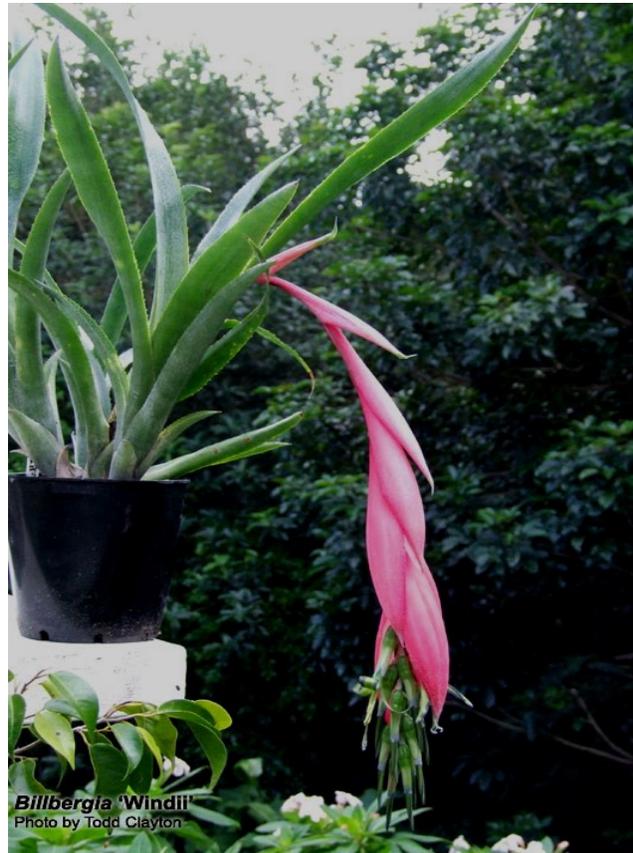
***Billbergia* ‘Windii’ bloom in my backyard. Note how the flower petals coil backward.**



***Billbergia* ‘Theodore L. Mead’ - a recent bloom, also in my backyard, but with the same coiled floral petals**

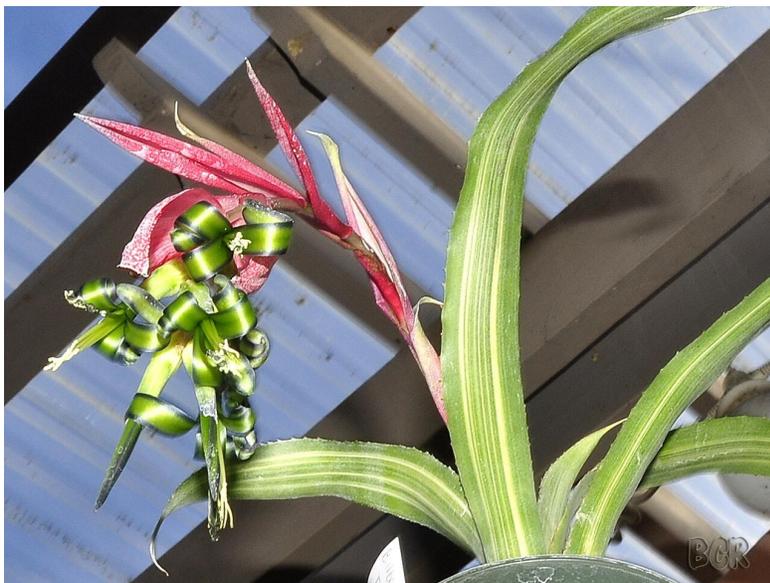
This was interesting, but was it true... and are there any differences that can be seen in the two plants?

Next, I turned to the BSI Cultivar Registry (bsi.org) to learn more about these two look-alikes. Here I learned that not only are the two plants “identical in most respects”, but that ‘Theodore L. Mead’ was listed as the result of crossing *Billbergia nutans* not with *Billbergia decora*, but with *Billbergia zebra*! ‘Windii’ is shown as having parentage of *Billbergia nutans* and *Billbergia decora* (like the FCBS website listing), but also has a note that ‘Windii’ was *mistakenly* renamed ‘Theodore L. Mead’ in the United States at some point in the 1950s. The Cultivar Registrar goes on to note that the DeRoose nursery reintroduced *Billbergia* ‘Windii’ commercially in the ‘80s – which is likely where the plant originated that I obtained at the Earth Day celebration. Al Muzzel, on the other hand, had always paid very close attention to the names of the plants in his collection – even if that record was only in his memory, he was meticulous in learning and maintaining plant identities. So, although they came from two different sources and have different name tags, 1) are my plants both the same plant? 2) is my plant that is labeled as ‘Windii’ really ‘Theodore. L. Mead’? or 3) is my plant that is labeled as ‘Theodore L. Meade’ really ‘Windii’? I may never learn the truth, but I’ll keep looking... but meanwhile I strongly suspect that the blurry photo that was sent to me with a request for an ID is *Billbergia* ‘Theodore L. Mead’...or *Billbergia* ‘Windii’...or maybe it’s a photo of that elusive Big Foot.



Billbergia 'Theodore L. Mead' on left, *Billbergia* 'Windii' on right. Courtesy of FCBS.org website.

Do these two photos look like they could be of the same plant? Hmmmm... they sure look like twins that only a mother could tell apart!



And here's the Cultivar Registry's photos (in the same order). In this case the 'Theodore L. Mead' is variegated, but note the same "watchespring" type petals and same form of inflorescence.



Finally, I must add that during a recent visit to the National Botanic Gardens in Dublin I noticed a pot of *Billbergias* in bloom that looked strangely familiar. The name tag? *Billbergia* x 'Windii'...

Dirt on Bromeliads

By Karen Andreas

Are you having potting soil/mix issues?

Have you noticed that your favorite commercial *Cryptanthus* potting soil has recently changed formulas and now dries as hard as concrete?

What is a grower to do?

What are you using as a general potting mix for non-terrestrial bromeliads?

Inquiring minds want to know.

Send your woes and/or solutions to:

karen@fcbs.org

and look for a report on bromeliad dirt in the next newsletter.



AECHMEA MEXICANA

By Tom Wolfe



Aechmea mexicana
Photo Carol Wolfe

Aechmea mexicana, grown in Florida, is much like the description by Victoria Padilla in her book, *Bromeliads*. The *Aechmea mexicana* pictured on the front cover measures about the same, 3 feet in diameter, and full shade produces a darker green leaf as opposed to full sun which produces a lighter green leaf. In habitat, Mexico, the leaves turn completely red. In Florida, the tips of the leaves turn red ranging anywhere from 3 to 12 inches making it a striking plant to observe. The white berries and stalk take on a purplish tint several months after blooming.

The natural habitat has elevations of 800 to 5,000 feet is in contrast to Lutz, Florida's elevation which ranges from 57 to 69 feet. However, container grown in the greenhouse under 50% shade cloth, still produced a plant very similar to the original description by Padilla.



Aechmea mexicana Photo Carol Wolfe

AECHMEA MEXICANA Baker, 1879

(mex-i-ka'na) (Native of Mexico)

Epiphytic in forests from Central Mexico to Ecuador. Grows in dense shade as well in open areas in full sun at elevations of 800 to 5,000 feet.

A large handsome plant, measuring 3 feet or more in diameter. Its broad, firmly textured, light green leaves, up to 2 feet in length, are lightly mottled with dark green. In full sun, the plant turns bright rose. The stout, erect flower stalk, 1 to 1 1/2 feet high, bears a panicle of tiny rose colored flowers covered with a white fuzz. The beauty of the inflorescence is in the pearl like berries, which are borne in a dense cluster and last for many months.

Excerpt from *BROMELIADS* by Victoria Padilla,
Crown Publishers, Inc., New York, 1973, Pages 22-23

This *Aechmea mexicana* 'Marginata' is growing in my greenhouse and is almost fully grown and will soon flower.

The marginated leaves are light green and about the same dimensions as the *Aechmea mexicana*.

This bromeliad began appearing in the marketplace several years ago and I am not sure of its history or where I purchased it.

It will be interesting to see it bloom and to compare its characteristics to the *Aechmea mexicana*.



Aechmea mexicana 'Marginata'

Morning Coffee and Bromeliads



Aechmea miniata var. *discolor*



Ananas nanus x
Ananas lucidus

When the coffee is brewing and the sun rises in the eastern sky, where is your favorite place for drinking a cup of joe? Tom and I share our coffee on the screened lanai while admiring the triple blooms on the *Aechmea miniata* var. *discolor*. The coffee table, a gift from a friend, is a cross section slab cut from a cypress tree and a perfect place to display blooming bromeliads! Below is another favorite spot on the lanai for coffee drinking and family breakfast is the table adorned with a *Ananas nanus* X *Ananas lucidus*. The beautiful multi-colored vase is perfect for displaying all kinds of bromeliads.

Share your favorite coffee spot by sending a picture for the next issue of the Newsletter!



Photos by Carol Wolfe

Catopsis – A Quiet Bromeliad

by Karen Andreas

Not as flashy as other bromeliads, *Catopsis* is easy to grow and, because some are native to Florida, deserve a place in our collections.

First described in 1864, these bromeliads are often found growing epiphytically (as air plants) and sometimes saxicolously (on rocks) with *Tillandsias* and *Vrieseas* in Florida, Mexico, the Greater Antilles, the West Indies, Trinidad, Central America and northern South America.

The leaves are soft, spineless and often described as waxy with “chalky” scurf (the powdery substance often visible on bromeliad leaves). The flowers are white or yellow; the inflorescences are simple or branched, erect or pendant. The seed capsules of some *Catopsis* turn yellow or orange and stay in color for some time.

Catopsis generally grow in dense shade in forests but will grow well in filtered light; this genus sometimes is found in full sun. *Catopsis* can be mounted as well as potted. If grown in pots, make sure this bromeliad is in well-aerated, well-draining soil. *Catopsis* likes a high level of humidity (perfect for Florida!) so in dry winter months, you may need to mist to keep humidity levels higher.

Catopsis berteroniana is found in southern Florida, the Greater Antilles, southern Mexico to Venezuela and eastern Brazil, growing in shade but also found in full sun, even on telephone wires. Dr. Howard Frank suspects that those *berteroniana* growing in full sun may actually be trapping insects for its diet. Its leaves are about 12-16 inches; the inflorescence grows up to three feet high, with fragrant white flowers.



Photo by Peter Franklin

Catopsis floribunda (left) is also found southern Florida, generally on trees in dense shade (bottom right). This

Catopsis is a medium size bromeliad with many leaves forming the tank. Its leaves grow 8-16 inches long. The inflorescence may grow as tall as 24 inches and bears many white flowers.



Catopsis berteroniana
Photo by M. Asmuss



Photo by Ken Marks

Catopsis nutans, another Florida native, grows in thickets and open woods. This is a small *Catopsis*, growing only to about 7 inches high, with leaves that may reach 10 inches in length. Its inflorescence is about a foot high, is generally simple in structure; branching is rare. The flowers are yellow.



Catopsis nutans. Left photo by M.Asmuss. *Catopsis* gone to seed. Photo right by Ken Marks.



Catopsis morreniana comes from forests in southern Mexico and Central America. Baensch notes that this *Catopsis* flowers easily and is easy to grow.

Photo by Michael Andreas



Catopsis sessiliflora, from southern Mexico and the West Indies to Peru, is a small bromeliad with a simple inflorescence, or one with only a few branches, and white flowers.

Photo by Michael Andreas



Catopsis hahnii is found in Belize, El Salvadore, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua. This picture was taken by Andrew Smith in the Merendon Mountains in northwest Honduras.



Catopsis subulata, found from Mexico to Honduras, has light green leaves with silver scurf on the underside. Photo by Jarka Rehak

The name '*Catopsis*' comes from a Greek word meaning 'view'. Victoria Padilla speculated that it was so named because of how these bromeliads look when they are in bloom in the trees. They may be the quiet bromeliads but their airy inflorescences and yellow or white flowers will add interest to your collection.

All photographs in this article are from the Photo Index of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies at fcbs.org.