

FLORIDA WEST COAST BROMELIAD SOCIETY

1954-2018

Celebrating over 64 Years in Bromeliads

fwcbs.org



February 2018 Newsletter

NEXT MEETING

Date & Time: Tuesday, February 6, 2018; 7:30 pm
Location: Good Samaritan Church
6085 Park Boulevard
Pinellas Park, Florida 33781

PROGRAM

Dave Johnston will present a program titled *Do You Know the Name Has Changed? Making Sense of it All* that is about proposed name changes for many bromeliads. Recent studies using DNA analysis were conducted to examine the relationship among bromeliad genera, and the findings have resulted in different groupings and introduction of several new genera. Dave will tell us why the changes have been made and what some of the changes are.

LAST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

LAST MONTH'S PROGRAM

Vice President/Program Chairman Brian Corey put together a program that was a change of pace from the typical program of a presentation by one speaker about a single topic. For the January meeting, FWC members were invited to contribute to the program with a short (1 to 2 minutes) show-and-tell type of presentation on the bromeliad topic(s) of their choice. Fourteen members took up the challenge and participated with a range of topics that included their most or least favorite bromeliad and why, favorite tools, tricks, or techniques, and problems with specific bromeliads. It was an informative and fun evening and will likely be repeated in the future. Here are the presenters and their topics.

Brian Corey

Brian told us about his favorite bromeliad and his least favorite bromeliad. His favorite bromeliad is *Cryptanthus* 'Elaine', which he likes for its great color. Because his plant (on right) receives less light in the winter season, it lacks some of the brilliant color it usually exhibits in the summer. His least favorite is *Ursulaea macvaughii* because, although it has a lovely bloom stalk (on right), its large and murderous spines make it painful to handle and move about the garden, which his wife asks him to do, often. He put this plant on the raffle table for someone else to enjoy, spines and all.



Cryptanthus 'Elaine'



Ursulaea macvaughii

Karen Mills

Karen showed us an offset of a *Vriesea ospinae* (mother plant on right) she got from a friend when she was visiting him at his home in Ohio. Her friend has a greenhouse there and grows many types of tropical and subtropical plants. This bromeliad is a shy bloomer, and when it does bloom, it has a lovely, long-lasting, yellow inflorescence.



Vriesea ospinae

Mary Sue Beeler

The title of Mary Sue's presentation was *Non-Traditional No- and Low-Cost Plant Care Aids* and it was just that.

1. *Anchoring Tillandsias and other small epiphytes:* Use tiny hair clips, orchid clips, and Tilly Tacker, a waterproof adhesive, to stabilize bromeliads against a stake in a pot. Orchid clips can be purchased in quantity online, 100 for \$7 to \$10. Tilly Tacker is also available online.



2. *Trimming leaves:* Try an Olfa Touchblade razor knife (picture on right). It gives a clean cut, is tiny and easy to carry in your pocket, and can be purchased online in quantity for about \$1.50 each.

3. *Plant labels:* Best ones are plastic tags, which can be purchased in bulk for a nominal per-tag price (ex: 1000 for \$20), and preferably in a longer size with more room to write information. Write the information on both sides of the tag, starting from opposite ends so that if the information above the dirt fades, that on the portion of the tag below the dirt will still be visible. Wood coffee stirrers (usually free) are okay for short term but will decompose. Metal and plastic mini-blinds can be cut into short lengths for labels but the metal ones can rust over time.

4. *Anchoring plants in pots:* This can be done using pieces of a wire hanger two ways.

a) Hook the shorter bent end of a hanger (pictured on right) over the edge of a pot and into the medium and shove the longer end into the ground (pictured on right) to stabilize a wobbly or top-heavy plant. Note: For the wire hangar, one can substitute the galvanized wire Linda showed (described below), which is heavier material and might last longer than the hanger wire.



b) Using the corners and straight portions of a wire coat hanger (in a U-shape), insert the ends through the holes in the bottom of a pot and jam the wire into the ground. This is useful if you keep permanent pots in your garden as receptacles for plants in smaller pots that can be moved around.

5. *Cleaning debris from bromeliads:* Use chopsticks (free), a small, soft-ended bottle brush (about \$2), and/or bamboo shish kabob sticks (cheap). Bamboo shish kabob sticks can also be used to stabilize pups and will not deteriorate like wood stakes.

6. *Stabilizing top-heavy plants:* Set a 4- or 6-inch pot inside a concrete irrigation head ring (pictured on right).



7. *Protecting arms:* Use long cotton tube socks with the toe ends cut out for the fingers. They will fit almost any size arm, require no fasteners and can be easily laundered.

8. *Correcting floppy leaves*: Use a twist tie to hold a floppy leaf in its typical U-shape (pictured on right) and leave it for a few weeks to allow the plant to re-establish the leaf's proper contour. Use a plastic tie and not a paper one with a metal insert because the paper will disintegrate and leave only a rusting bit of wire that will probably cut into your leaf.



Linda Sheetz

I had several of my favorite garden tools to share with the members, 'tools of the trade' as it were, which are described below and followed by pictures of each.

1. A light-weight, durable polypropylene garden tote bag for hauling weeds, mulch, and such. Pull it along behind you as you move through the garden, tossing in dead bromeliad leaves, dead mother plants, and weeds.
2. Rubberized gloves to keep hands (mostly) dry and clean. They are durable and can be purchased online in quantity for \$1.25 to \$2.50 a pair.
3. 9-gauge galvanized fence wire to make S-hooks to use for hanging baskets and plants like Tillandsias. The wire is available in coils of 50 and 170 feet at big box stores like Home Depot and Lowe's. To make an S-hook, cut the wire with a bolt cutter to desired length and bend the ends with pliers. This is quick and easy and cheaper than buying ready-made hooks. The wire can also be used in place of the wire hanger Mary Sue showed in her presentation (above) for anchoring plants and pots.



1. Garden tote bag



2. Rubberized gloves



3. Roll of 9-gauge galvanized wire

Susan Sousa

Susan showed some of her favorite bromeliads from her garden: *Ananas* 'Lava Burst', *Aechmea recurvata*, *Tillandsia cyanea*, a variety of *Aechmea chantinii*, and a blooming *Billbergia*. She also showed us three *Neoregelia* 'Purple Star', each a different color due to the different light conditions in which each was grown in the garden; the one exposed to the proper light was a nice bright purple color.

Dick Dailey

Dick showed us two *Cryptanthus* (pictured on right) that were growing in a product called Grodan Stonewool (aka rockwool) that he had bought at a local hydroponics store. It is made from molten rock spun into cotton candy-like fibers and then compressed into cubes, blocks, or slabs. It is used in hydroculture to grow plants without soil, just water and the mineral nutrients in water. Dick stated the plants have doubled their growth since he put them



in the Grodan product, stay moist for a week, and are more secure in the product than in soil, where they are easily dislodged by wind, rain, and squirrels.

Dick then showed us a reciprocating saw, a small Milwaukee Cordless Hackzall, M12, that he uses to cut pups off and separate clumps. At first it sounded like a bit of overkill, similar to using a sledge hammer to drive a tack. But Dick said that was not the case. This tool is variable speed so you can adjust its strength to the size and hardness of the plant being separated, making a clean and quick cut. It is lightweight, can be used with only one hand, and recharges quickly. It is also a great tool for other uses throughout the yard and in the shop.

Monika Hale

Monika told us the story of how she discovered Mexican bromeliad weevils had infected bromeliads in her yard and her efforts to eradicate them. Her plants exhibited classic weevil symptoms that include feeding marks on leaves, brown damaged leaves, central leaves that pull out easily due to weevil damage at their bases, shredded plant debris from cocoon construction, and slits and holes at the leaf base from weevil tunneling. To eradicate the weevil, Monika did multiple applications of Advanced Bayer Rose and Flower Care, an insecticide that contains imidacloprid, the active ingredient known to be effective in killing the weevil. She added that so far it looks as if her efforts paid off.

Sherran Blair

Sherran is a practiced floral arranger and does both cut flower and live plant arrangements. She showed us an arrangement she made using several live Tillandsias (pictured on right) in a metal container.



Janet Stoffels

Janet also makes floral arrangements and typically uses bromeliad bloom stalks because she likes their exotic look. You might recall her arrangements are frequently on display at the entrance of the St. Petersburg Museum of Fine Arts. Janet prefers to include three shapes in the overall form in her arrangements to transition the eye to the desired focal point. Janet showed us two bromeliad stalks that she will be using in future arrangements.

Barbara Carter

Barbara showed us her *Neoregelia* 'Wild Rabbit' that was in distress because it had been kept in too much water. She was advised to place it in an empty (i.e., without soil) pot to let it dry out. If it does not die and shows improvement, she could either leave it in the empty pot (it is an air plant, after all) or pot it using a well-draining soil and then water only as needed, typically once a week, placing the water in the tank at the center of the plant and at base of the leaves.

Franne Matwijczyk

Franne showed a number of her favorite Billbergias which she likes for their foliage, and how to cut bromeliad leaves using scissors. She also showed us a carpenter's tool belt she uses to hold small hand tools when she is moving about the yard, tending to plants and how she uses some of those tools. She advised using a piece of elastic to hold the belt in place at the waist, if needed.

Larry Sousa

Larry showed four *Neoregelias* that were among his favorites and some of the reasons he likes bromeliads: *Neoregelia* 'Purple Star', *Neo.* 'Tangerine', *Neo.* 'Donna', and *Neo.* 'Magali'.

Barb Gardner

Barb showed us one of the photo albums she uses to keep records of her bromeliads, complete with pictures, labels, and pertinent information about each plant. She also shared a tip she learned from Helga Tarver about using plant labels: place two labels in the pot, one that sticks up above the soil and one under the soil that will serve as a backup should the top label fade, fall out and get lost (how often does that happen!).

Dave Johnston

Dave shared with us more of the hybrids he has made. One of his breeding aims is to produce *Billbergias* with longer lasting bloom stalks. He had examples of three of his *Billbergia* crosses and the varying results he can get from the same cross. Below are pictures that show four different hybrids from the cross of *Billbergia* 'Muchacho' x 'Survivor', three different hybrids from the cross of *Billbergia* 'Tarantella' x 'Muchacho', and multiple plants of the same hybrid from the cross of *Billbergia* 'Crimson Candle' x 'Borracho'.



Billbergia 'Tarantella' x 'Muchacho'-
four different hybrids



Billbergia 'Muchacho' x
'Survivor'-three different
hybrids



Billbergia 'Crimson
Candle' x 'Borracho'-
multiples of the same
hybrid

Protecting Bromeliads from Cold Weather

At the start of the meeting before the program, Dave Johnston gave us a quick tutorial on things we should know about cold weather and how to protect bromeliads in cold weather. It was timely because one of the first real cold spells of the season was slated to come through our area about three days after the meeting.

- Plants do not feel effects of wind chill.
- Frost can happen even when the temperature is above 32° Fahrenheit.
- A temperature below freezing for one night can damage the plants and for more than two nights in a row is enough to kill some plants.
- A clear sky with no clouds and no wind can mean frost.
- Do not depend entirely on weather predictions offered by various media outlets. Know your own yard and locale and refer to a TV station or website that will make prediction using your specific zip code.
- Hydrate the plants to prevent them drying out. Water the ground beneath them to help hold the heat in the ground and put water in their cups.
- A tree canopy can capture some of the heat in the soil, and can keep temperature 2-3° higher than an open, treeless area.

- Frost cloth can also capture some of the heat radiating from the ground. Get the heaviest weight frost cloth you can find and, depending on the weight or thickness of the cloth, can keep temperatures around the plant from 3 to 5° and up to 10° warmer.
- Sheets can also be used to cover plant but do not allow them to get wet.
- Do NOT use plastic to cover plants.
- Use good anchors on any covers you use
- If the day turns hot and/or rainy, remove covers other than frost cloth. Frost cloth breathes, is fast drying, and admits filtered sun, so it can be left on plants during the day.

BLOOMING THIS MONTH



Billbergia 'Poquito Mas'



Billbergia 'Wicked'



X Quesmea Que. edmundoi x Aec. orlandiana



Billbergia sanderiana (slightly withered from the recent cold spell)

UPCOMING EVENTS, 2018

February 10-11, Edison Garden Festival

Edison and Ford Winter Estates, Ft. Myers, FL

(www.edisonfordwinterestates.org/events/annual-events/edison-garden-festival/)

March 10-11, Leu Gardens Spring Plant Sale

Harry P. Leu Gardens, Orlando, FL (<http://www.leugardens.org>)

March 28-29, GreenFest Plant Sale

University of Tampa, Tampa, FL (friendsofplantpark.com/greenfest)

April 6-8, Tropiflora's Spring Festival

Tropiflora Nursery, 3530 Tallavast Road, Sarasota, 941-351-2267 (tropiflora.com)

April 14-15, USF Botanical Gardens Spring Plant Sale

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL (cas.usf.edu/garden)

April 28 and 29, Green Thumb Festival

Walter Fuller Park, St. Petersburg, FL (stpeteparksrec.org/greenthumb)

May 29-June 3, 23rd World Bromeliad Conference, San Diego, CA

(<http://www.bsi.org/new/conference-corner/>)

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