

FLORIDA WEST COAST BROMELIAD SOCIETY

1954-2017

Celebrating over 63 Years in Bromeliads

fwcbs.org



May 2017 Newsletter

NEXT MEETING—ANNUAL BROMELIAD AUCTION

Date & Time: Tuesday, May 2, 2017, 7:30 pm
Location: Good Samaritan Church
6085 Park Boulevard
Pinellas Park, Florida 33781

Program

As usual, our May meeting will be turned over entirely to our Annual Bromeliad Auction. The auction will be in two parts: a Live Auction and a Silent Auction. Auction items will consist of bromeliads – typically terrific specimens and often unusual or hard to find – and bromeliad-related items, such as artwork, posters, ceramics, and books. Bromeliads donated should be clean, disease- and pest-free, clearly labeled, and of a quality that you feel you would want to bid on yourself.

There will be **no** business meeting, show and tell, questions and answer session, member plant sales, or raffle.

Refreshments

The auction evening is always a social event with plentiful, good food. If you do not remember what food type you signed up to bring, contact Susan Sousa. As usual, the Society will provide the beverages.

LAST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Program

With his talk *Billbergias are Awesome* **Dave Johnston** lived up to the presentation billing and delivered plenty of pictures of species (from *Bil. alfonsi-joannis* (Brazil) to *Bil. zebrina* ‘Lucas Coelho’ (Brazil)) and hybrids (from *Bil.* ‘Afterglow’ to *Bil.* ‘Moulin Rouge’). He hinted that he might have a second part of the talk at a later date to finish the alphabet of hybrid names, from M through Z. He also showed pictures of four of his own hybrids.



Dave gave credit to Billbergia hybridizers of note, most of whom did their work in the 1980s and 1990s: Don Beadle, Liza Vinzant, Jim Irwin, and Bob Spivey and two from Australia, Vic Przetocki and R. Holzheimer. One of Dave’s good friends, Ben Sill from South Carolina, is an active Billbergia hybridizer and spoke to our group a few years ago.

Dave summarized the appealing features of Billbergias as these:

- Their growth pattern is attractive: tubular, compact, and upright, with few leaves.
- They have colorful foliage and/or blooms.
- They take up very little space.
- They look good when grown in clumps.
- They are a great plant for mounting.
- They are fast growing and blooming.
- They are easy to hybridize.

He offered these growing tips:

- They are best grown in good quality soil with a time-release fertilizer.
- They can be sensitive to water quality.
- They should not be allowed to dry out, because they may die quicker than most other bromeliads.
- They bloom in cool months in Florida--November through March.

Questions and Answers

Here are the bromeliad care and feeding questions posed at the last meeting's Q&A session and answers suggested by various members, primarily Dave Johnston.

Question: What is the best method for fertilizing our plants, especially the epiphytic types and Tillandsias? Foliage feeding by spray?

Answer: If you are going to fertilize bromeliads, for true epiphytes such as Tillandsias, use a foliar, water-soluble spray product. If you are going to fertilize epiphytes that grow in soil, use a time-release feed, preferably a 360-day time release product. To promote root growth, place about one tablespoon of pellets on the soil under the plant. Pellets placed on or near the top of the soil can encourage weeds to grow there. Do not put time-release fertilizers in leaf axils. Some prefer to grow their plants 'hard' and fertilize them only when they are potting a pup for the first time.

Question: I read recently that when fertilizing, you should not use a slow-release fertilizer that lasts longer than the growing period of a plant, i.e., 9 months, since getting fertilizer after being fully grown might adversely affect color, shape and blooming. That said, we've had Nutricote 360 recommended for here. Is a 360-day product too long lasting?

Answer: While one should not use a time-release product that is for a time period greater than the growth cycle of the plant, most bromeliads take a year or more to mature, so a 360-day time release formula is appropriate. For bromeliads with a shorter growth period, one can still use the 360-day time release, just use a smaller amount than the one tablespoon suggested above.

Question: I have a lot of my bromeliads under a live oak, and between the leaves dropping and now the pollen/male flower bits dropping, a lot of debris has been caught in my bromeliad cups and leaves. I try to keep the debris clear (I do want to see my bromeliads, after all), but is it critical that I keep them clear?

Answer: It is a good idea to keep leaf litter and grass clippings out of bromeliad tanks, especially Neoregelias. There were a number of suggestions for methods and tools to use to remove the debris—a hose to flush the debris out and/or remove it with wet-dry shop vacuum (avoid one with a strong suction that can damage plants), long tweezers, a teaspoon, wood skewers (for kabobs and such), and a small brush.

SHOW AND TELL

Reviewed by Helga Tarver

- Alton Lee *Tillandsia* 'Antonio' (photo below); a Chester Skotak hybrid; similar to *Tillandsia* 'Creation'
- Linda Sheetz *Guzmania*, possibly 'Candy' by Skotak (photo below)
- Tillandsia recurvata*, cluster with seed pods and a small wasp nest (photos below)

Show and Tell Plants



Tillandsia 'Antonio'



Guzmania, possibly 'Candy'



Tillandsia recurvata cluster (left) with close-up of seed pods with seed hairs (center) and a small wasp nest (right)

University of South Florida Fall Plant Sale

We are grateful to members Dave Johnston, Nicole Matwijczyk, and Franne Matwijczyk who sold plants in our sales booth at the recent USF Botanical Gardens Spring Plant Sale. Dave did double duty, stepping in for Sales Chairman Marty Baxley who could not be there. They handed out a number of our bromeliad horticultural brochures and fielded occasional questions about mosquitoes in bromeliads.

New Members

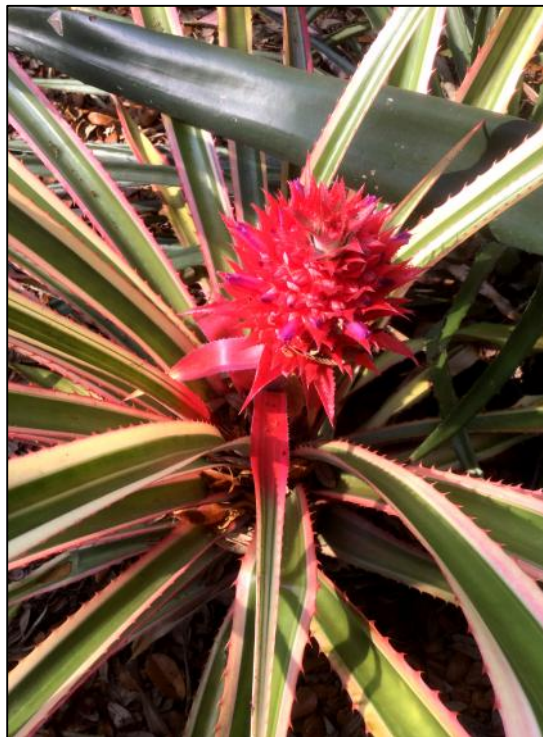
At the April meeting, former member Phyllis Steil rejoined our group after several years of absence. Also joining at the same time was her daughter Kathleen. Welcome back, Phyllis, and welcome to Kathleen.

BLOOMING THIS MONTH

Aechmea floribunda,
submitted by Nicole Matwijczyk



Ananas bracteatus variegata, submitted by Nicole
Matwijczyk



Dyckia brevifolia, submitted by Gary Lund



UPCOMING EVENTS, 2017

April 29-30, Mounts Botanical Garden Spring Plant Sale

Mounts Botanical Garden, West Palm Beach, FL (mounts.org/eventcalendar/)

August 4-6, 2017, Bromeliad Extravaganza[®], 'Bromeliads by the Bay'

Clarion Hotel, 4710, 2701 E. Fowler Ave., Tampa, FL; Hosted by the Bromeliad Guild of Tampa Bay, Tampa, FL (<http://www.bromeliadguildoftampabay.org/news>)

August 19-20, Seminole Bromeliad & Tropical Plant Society Sale

Sanford Garden Club, Sanford, FL (407-539-4314)

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