

# FLORIDA WEST COAST BROMELIAD SOCIETY

1954-2020

*Celebrating over 66 Years in Bromeliads*

*fwcbs.org*



## May 2020 Newsletter

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### NEXT MEETING

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**Date:** ~~Tuesday, May 5~~ CANCELLED

The FWCBS Board of Directors has cancelled our May meeting due to the ongoing health concerns associated with the national coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic and government-mandated precautions. Our Board of Directors will review the situation later this month and make a determination about the June meeting at that time.

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### LAST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

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#### LAST MONTH'S PROGRAM

There is no program to report for the April meeting because the meeting was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, this newsletter features a description of an August 2014 program by Marty Baxley about growing bromeliads from seed and hybridizing. Hopefully, it will inform our newer, more recent members who were likely not at that meeting and help older, that is, long-time members recall the evening. It is also timely because a number of members have recently expressed interest in growing bromeliads from seed.

From the August 2014 meeting.

**Speaker Marty Baxley's** presentation *Growing Bromeliads from Seeds and Hybridizing*, was thoughtful, well organized, and easy to understand for what can often be difficult topics. As seen in the picture on the right, he was well prepared and had brought along tools and supplies for his seed potting demonstration and visual aids in the form of posters to explain the biology of hybridization. Below are some highlights from the presentation.



#### Seeds

- To acquire seeds, one can either buy them or collect them directly from plants.
- There are three types of bromeliad seeds, each specific to one of the three bromeliads subfamilies as follows.
  - Sub-family *Bromelioideae*, such as *Aechmea*, *Billbergia*, and *Neoregelia*, produce berry-like fruits in their blooms. These are typically dispersed by animals and birds that eat the berries. Bromeliads in this sub-family are the easiest to hybridize.

- Sub-family *Tillandsioideae*, such as *Vriesea* and *Tillandsia*, have winged seeds with feathery plumes in a dry capsule. These are typically dispersed by breezes until they land on a suitable surface and take hold there. They are the shortest lived seeds, lasting at best six weeks.
- Sub-family *Pitcairnioideae*, such as *Dyckia*, *Hechtia* and *Pitcairnia*, have small, wingless seeds, with a hook shape, in dry capsules that settle and grow on soil.



*Bromelioideae*:  
berry-like seeds



*Tillandsioideae*: winged  
seeds, feathery plumes  
in dry capsules



*Pitcairnioideae*:  
wingless seeds in  
dry capsules

There are multiple methods used in the bromeliad world for growing from seed and Marty demonstrated the basics of his preferred method for growing the fruit-like, berry seeds from plants in the *Bromelioideae* sub-family.

#### Planting and Growing Seeds

- When the seed pod (ovary) is ripe, squirt the seeds out of it and wash them. Then spread them onto paper, fold the paper to retain the seeds and let them dry there for a couple of days. Write the name of the plant from which you got the seeds on the paper, to record the source plant. If you are not going to plant the seeds right away, you can freeze them for up to six months and they will still be viable.
- Newly planted seeds need an environment with 100% humidity. Place a medium appropriate for growing seeds that will retain moisture into a small pot and then place seeds on top of the soil.
- Water the seeds using a spray bottle (picture below on left) that also contains fungicide. Seal the pot in a bag (picture below on right) and place the bag in an area that gets only indirect sun.

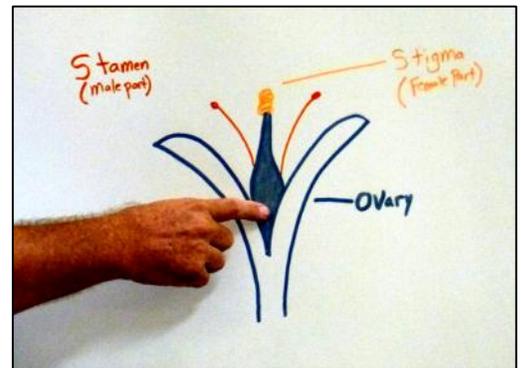


- Within approximately 30 days, seedlings with tender leaves will appear in the pot. The length of time for this to happen depends on the type of bromeliad being grown.
- Once the seedlings have sprouted you can remove the cover and check on them, but continue to keep them covered until the seedlings have 2 or 3 leaves. When you are confident the bromeliads are healthy and growing well, you can begin hardening off the seedlings, which is to say gradually exposing them to more open air and some direct light (picture on right).
- Methods for growing the three seed types are similar but vary slightly because each type needs different germination media to allow them to adapt to different environments. For example, *Dyckias* grow on top of soil in a pot or other container with or without a cover and will germinate quickly, within two to three weeks. *Tillandsia* seeds need constant moisture and are best begun in a misting house on a fine mesh, which is hard for most hobbyists to achieve.



### Hybridizing

- All bromeliad flowers have three sepals, three petals, six pollen stamens (male parts) and one pistil and stigma (female part). The process of hybridization begins with removing pollen from a stamen in one plant and placing it on a stigma in another plant.
- One should determine the time of day when the flowers are fully open and at optimum stage for collecting and placing the pollen. Marty suggests that is typically before 11 am. If the two plants you want to cross bloom at different times, you can freeze the whole flower from the father (pollen) plant until the mother (seed) plant is ready to bloom and then defrost the seeds and proceed with the cross pollination.
- Using long tweezers, pinch pollen from a stamen on the father plant and place it onto the stigma of the mother plant. The ovary, i.e., seed pod, in the mother plant will swell overtime with seeds. You can then harvest the seeds from the seed pod.
- Not all bromeliad flowers are constructed in a manner that allows for easy hybridization. In some it will be more difficult to obtain pollen from a stamen and/or to place pollen on a stigma. In *Cryptanthus*, for example, the stigma is deep inside the flower and hard to reach and you will need to jam the pollen into the bloom.




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## THIS AND THAT

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### Janet Stoffels

As most of you know, member Janet Stoffels passed away in late March at the age of 86. Janet was a member of FWC for the past six years and a member of the St. Petersburg Garden Club for a number of years beyond that. She had a long life in the world of plants; she had run a floral shop for about 20 years. She was a volunteer at the Museum of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg for over eight years where she was a member of the Stuart Society, a support organization that did fund



raising, presented lectures and put together field trips. Using her floral shop talents, she made numerous floral arrangements for the museum that they put on display in the museum foyer, on a dedicated pedestal that bore her name. Most of the arrangements incorporated bromeliad bloom stalks, as shown in the pictures below.



*Vriesea* hybrid



*Aechmea* hybrid



*xAndrolaechmea*  
'O'Rourke'



*xAndrolaechmea*  
'Dean'

### **Creative Ways to Mount/Hang Bromeliads**

President Barb Gardner submitted the pictures below that show some of the creative ways she displays bromeliads, sometimes using unexpected items as the mount or hanger.



Tillandsia mounted on an old tennis racket press and hung from a cactus arm.



Tillandsia firmly rooted on a plastic bird bath base.



Neoregelia set on a tomato plant trellis.



Bromeliads hanging in a Simpson's stopper tree.



Tillandsias in a wire rooster and a bottomless wire basket.



Neoregelia in bottom picture placed in the wire hanger shown in the upper picture.

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### IN THE GARDEN THIS MONTH

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*Tillandsia ionantha* 'Druid', an ionantha with peach-colored leaves and white flowers, not the usual reddish bluish leaves and purple flowers.



*Tillandsia hammeri*



*Tillandsia juncea* forma *Juncifolia*

These pictures and comments were submitted by Barb Gardner.



*Vriesea sandersii*. Frosty olive-green leaves with speckled raspberry spots; saffron-colored inflorescence with stamens and pistils are shorter than petals.



*Hechtia tillandsioides*, a spineless Hechtia

Dick Dailey submitted these pictures from his garden, along with some comments.



*Neoregelia* 'Hapa Haole'



*Neoregelia* 'Ambrosia'



*Neoreglia* 'Tatiana'



*Neoregelia* 'Star Wars' in a row with its pups



*Neoregelia* 'Arctic Blast'  
Plants with this much white are typically hard to grow well.



*Aechmea caudata* cv 'Blotches'  
Blotching will increase with summer sun.

### UPCOMING EVENTS, 2020

To date, it appears events such as shows and sales typically scheduled for spring and early summer have been cancelled or postponed. This section will be updated as more current information becomes available.

### 2020 FWCBS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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