

FLORIDA WEST COAST BROMELIAD SOCIETY

1954-2018

Celebrating over 64 Years in Bromeliads

fwcbs.org



September 2018 Newsletter

NEXT MEETING

Date & Time: Tuesday, September 4, 2018; 7:30 pm
Location: Good Samaritan Church
6085 Park Boulevard
Pinellas Park, Florida 33781

PROGRAM

Dr. Terrie Bert will be the September speaker with a presentation titled *Sun, Sand, and Sea: Bromeliads that Rise to the Occasion*. She will tell us about a number of bromeliad species that can withstand high levels of sunlight, salty air, and dry conditions found at and near a coastal environment. The topic is relevant to those of us who look for plants that can withstand the salt air and bright sun in a coastal environment. Even people who live some distance from the coast can experience these conditions.

Over the years, Terrie has been a repeat speaker to our group and presented informative and entertaining talks. She has given over 150 presentations on bromeliads to U.S. and international bromeliad societies and at international bromeliad conferences and has an impressive background in bromeliads that supports her expertise. She is a longstanding member of the Sarasota Bromeliad Society and the Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society. She is a Bromeliad Society International (BSI) certified Master Judge and chairs the annual Sarasota Bromeliad Society show. She cultivates more than 2,000 different bromeliads in about 30 genera and has won multiple top awards in local bromeliad shows and BSI world conferences.

LAST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

LAST MONTH'S PROGRAM

Ben Sill gave a humorous and entertaining, as well as highly enlightening, presentation titled *A Blue Collar Bromeliad Love Story* about his history with bromeliads and his hybridization work. He and his wife Lois visited us from South Carolina where they have lived for the last 42 years. He says he met his first bromeliad, an *Aechmea fasciata*, in 1968, and from there his passion for bromeliads grew. He built his first greenhouse in 1973, and in 1977 he created his first hybrid. Over the years he has had five greenhouses and hybridized



and registered over 60 bromeliads, both Billbergias and bi-generic Billbergia-Neoregelia crosses. Below are some highlights of his growing and hybridizing methods, which he refers to as 'blue collar', meaning nothing fancy or expensive, but along with diligence and patience, it works.

Blue Collar Potting Medium

For his potting mix, Ben uses materials that are easy for him to find in South Carolina, inexpensive, and with good drainage. His 'blend' consists of Miracle-Gro Potting Mix with a slow release fertilizer, perlite, a soil conditioner, and fine white, 'play' sand. The soil conditioner he uses is Evergreen Soil Conditioner, which is made of finely chopped pine bark with wood milling by-products. The formula for his mix, by volume, is 10 parts potting soil, two parts perlite, two parts soil conditioner, and one part sand. Beyond the time release fertilizer in the potting soil, Ben does not fertilize his plants.

Blue Collar Billbergia Hybridization

A. Harvesting

1. Squeeze the contents of the seed pod into a jar of water.
2. Cover the jar and shake it. The good seeds will sink and the bad ones and any trash will rise.
3. Pour off the water, bad seeds, and trash.
4. Fill the jar half-way with water.
5. Add a few drops of chlorine bleach and shake the jar.
6. Let the mixture rest for a few seconds, and then pour off the water.
7. Pour the good seeds and any remaining water onto a paper towel and let the seeds dry overnight.

B. Blue Collar Soil Medium and Seed Planting

1. Spread a 1-inch-thick layer of the potting mix into a small tray or flat container.
2. Sprinkle a thin layer of sand over the soil and wet thoroughly.
3. Place the seeds on the medium surface.
4. Sprinkle the seeds with a little water and cover the container.
5. If the seeds appear to need water as they germinate, pour a little into the corner of the container.

C. Seed Germination, Growth and Repotting

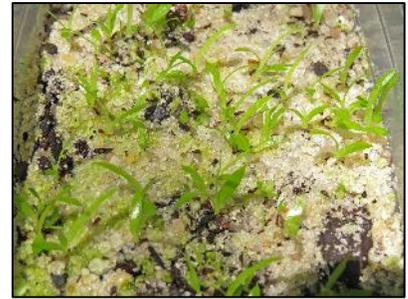
1. Keep the container covered as the seedlings grow in order to maintain the needed high humidity (Picture 1 below).
2. Once or twice a day, open the container and blow fresh air over the seeds, to stir and refresh the air.
3. Do not expose the container to too much light.
4. In a few weeks, seeds will germinate (Picture 2 below).
5. After the seedlings are about an inch or so tall, they can be removed and potted (Picture 3).
6. Because of the sand layer, the seedlings will be easy to remove from the medium.
7. Plant the seedlings in small peat pots using the standard soil mixture (Picture 4).
8. Be sure to tag the potted seedlings to keep track of them (Picture 4).
9. As the plants grow, they will need to be repotted several times into larger pots (Pictures 5 and 6).



Picture 1. Seed container with cover



Picture 2. Seeds germinating



Picture 3. Seedlings ready to pot



Picture 4. Potted seedlings with tags



Picture 5. Repotted young plants



Picture 6. Larger plants repotted

D. Selecting the Best of the Grex

Select the best plants from the grex (the group of offspring) and discard the others. Many of the offspring will be too similar to others while others can be quite different, such as the three plants in the photo on the right that all came from the same parents. Now wait; be patient. From start to finish, the process can take several years to determine if a new hybrid will pup true to the parent.



Ben Sill's Plant Giveaway

Ben brought with him about 150 of his hybrids that he donated to members at the meeting, each receiving three to take home, with the leftover plants added to the raffle table. His primary motive was to get his hybrids out to people who could care for them and then ultimately share them with others. His secondary motive was to clear out space in his greenhouses for more bromeliads! This is similar to the donation he made to our members at our August 2013 meeting when he gave about 50 of his plants to our members. Below are pictures of some of his hybrids that he brought to share with us.



Billbergia 'Mary'



Billbergia 'Brut Rose'



Billbergia 'Red Aplenty'



Billbergia 'Pink Aplenty'



Billbergia 'Dave's Delight'



Billbergia 'Lois Special'



Billbergia 'Brian Weber'



Billbergia 'Mary Louise'



Billbergia 'Allison Sill'



Billbergia 'Dawn Supreme'



Billbergia 'Ben's Blotches'



Billbergia 'Millie's Cup'



XBillmea 'Weirdo'



XBillmea 'Casper'



XBillmea 'Rosebud'



XBillmea 'Buttons'



XBillmea 'Sangria'



XBillmea unnamed

SHOW AND TELL

Franne Matwijczyk

Tillandsia 'Heather's Blush' (*Til. brachycaulos* x *exserta*; photo below)

Tillandsia 'Rio Hondo'

Karen Mills

Neoregelia 'Yang' (photo below)



Tillandsia 'Heather's Blush'



Neoregelia 'Yang'

Nicole Matwijczyk

Vriesea erythroductylon

Wittmackia (formerly *Hohenbergia*) *caymanensis*; Nicole showed us a photo of the plant, a copy of which is below, with notes about the plant.

The species *Wittmackia caymanensis* is endemic to Grand Cayman and classified as Critically Endangered because of its small and declining habitat. It is only known from undisturbed forest and scrubland fragments in southern George Town. For more information about its endangered status, go to this link:
<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/56499801/0>.



Wittmackia caymanensis (photo by Nicole Matwijczyk)

THIS AND THAT

New Members

Two people joined our society at the August meeting. They are Collette Dilley and Brunilda Wicker. We look forward to having them at our events and meetings.



Collette



Brunilda

New File Cabinets

We now have two, new (at least to us), much-needed file cabinets, thanks to two of our members. At the August meeting, Eva Collins brought us a four-drawer file cabinet and Mike Petryszak brought a two-drawer file cabinet. We needed additional storage for our expanding library and the various bits of meeting equipment we store in the church's out building.

IN THE GARDEN THIS MONTH



Guzmania 'Limonas'



Billbergia 'Kyoto'



Aechmea 'Spring Beauty'



Neoregelia 'Mendoza'
Submitted by Peggy Goodale



Frog in bromeliad
Submitted by Peggy Goodale

UPCOMING EVENTS, 2018

October 8, Sarasota Bromeliad Society Hosts a Celebration for Linda and Dennis Cathcart Selby Gardens, Great Room by the Bay, 811 So. Palm Avenue, Sarasota, Florida, 6:30 pm (Marian Kennell at mmkennell@verizon.net; 941-544-1412)

October 13-14, USF Botanical Gardens Fall Plant Festival
University of South Florida, Tampa, FL (cas.usf.edu/garden)

October 26-28, Tropiflora Nursery Fall Festival
Tropiflora Nursery, 3530 Tallavast Road, Sarasota (tropiflora.com/events)

November 12, Sarasota Bromeliad Society Bromeliad Fall Auction
Selby Gardens Great Room by the Bay, 811 So. Palm Avenue, Sarasota, Florida, 7:00 pm (Marian Kennell at mmkennell@verizon.net; 941-544-1412)

December 1-2, Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society Sale
Araba Shrine Temple, 2010 Hanson Street, Fort Myers (bprevattpcc@aol.com)

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