

FLORIDA WEST COAST BROMELIAD SOCIETY 1954-2014

Celebrating 60 Years of Bromeliads

floridabromeliads.org



October 2014 Newsletter

OCTOBER MEETING

Date & Time:

Tuesday, October 7
Doors open at 7 pm; meeting starts at 7:30

Location:

Good Samaritan Church
6085 Park Boulevard
Pinellas Park, Florida 33781

Program

Speaker **Jay Thurrott** will talk to us about *Bromeliads – Are They Better in the Bahamas?* As a Bromeliad Society International-accredited bromeliad judge, Jay has judged bromeliad shows both nationally and internationally, including in the Bahamas where he had the opportunity to see firsthand bromeliad types, growing conditions, and challenges the Bahamians experience. Jay is a frequent speaker to our group and his 40-plus years in bromeliads provide him with many experiences and much knowledge to share with us.

Plant Sales

All members are welcome to sell bromeliads at the meeting.

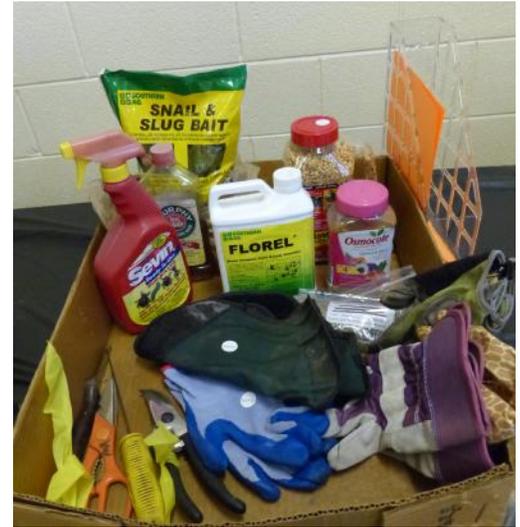
SEPTEMBER MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Program

The subject of last month's program, *Bromeliad Speed Learning--Celebrating 60 Years of Bromeliad Experience in 30 Minutes*, was bromeliad basics for eight commonly grown genera. Franne Matwiczzyk organized the program to provide information for our newer, perhaps less experienced but nonetheless enthusiastic, members and others who might have wanted/needed a review of the subject. Fran set up long tables to display the plants members brought in for the program, and had additional displays with examples of soil mix types, mounting materials, tools, fertilizers, and insect control products, horticulture information, and handouts about sun-and cold-tolerant bromeliads.



Tables with plants from each of the eight genera covered in the program.



Displays showing examples of soil mix types, mounting and potting materials, tools, fertilizers, and insect control products.

Dave Johnston, in his best speed-talk style, raced through each of the genera, explaining how to recognize bromeliads by physical characteristics and how to grow them in the best environmental conditions for each. He packed a lot of information into the short program.



Dave Johnston and his speed presentation, covering a lot of information.

The level of experience among our membership ranges from those who are still discovering and learning about bromeliads to those who have long-term experience, vast knowledge and world-wide recognition. On this basis, programs are designed to offer a range of topics and levels to interest all members. The bromeliad basics presentation appears to have been popular with the general public because we had a record number of visitors that evening who said they had seen the meeting information in local papers. We hope these visitors enjoyed what they learned, found their enthusiasm for bromeliads enhanced and will return for future meetings.

Show and Tell

Because the evening's program was essentially a show and tell of its own, with members supplying their plants for the program, there was no additional show and tell for the evening.

THIS AND THAT

21st World Bromeliad Conference, *Bromeliads in Paradise*

In early September members Susan and Larry Sousa and Judy and Gary Lund attended the World Bromeliad Conference held in Honolulu, Hawaii, and early reports indicate it was a great conference. We are hopeful we will get a story or two and some photos from the Sousas and Lunds for the November newsletter issue.

Mexican Bromeliad Weevil

As most of you are aware, bromeliads are being invaded and decimated by an exotic insect, the Mexican weevil *Metamasius callizona*, that are thought to have immigrated to Florida on a shipment of bromeliads in the late 1980s. They were first reported in 1989 in Dade County and since then have migrated to most of the counties throughout the southern half of the state, including counties in our area, Pinellas and Hillsborough counties.

The following is an excerpted version of a series of articles on the weevil that Jay Thurrott (our speaker for the October meeting) wrote for the Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society newsletters in. (Jay is a member of FECBS). He was prompted to write the articles after the weevil had been confirmed in their area, in Port Orange.

Mexican weevil found in Port Orange!

(From Jay Thurrott, FECBS newsletters, November, December 2013, March 2014)

Here's something you don't want to hear: the presence of the Mexican weevil – the “evil weevil” has been confirmed in a fallen *Tillandsia utriculata* in Port Orange. This is the first time that the invasive weevil (*Metamasius callizona*) has been positively identified in Port Orange. What does this mean to you? It means that you should keep an even sharper eye on your collection to look for evidence of the weevil before it ruins your plants. Fortunately, the weevil is relatively easily controlled and the same systemic pesticide that you may have used for control of scale on bromeliads will also protect your plants from the weevil. This also means that you should be very careful in picking up any fallen *Tillandsias* – they may harbor weevils and you may inadvertently bring them into your or your friends' collections.



Adult Mexican weevil showing relative size

Dr. Teresa Cooper, researcher with the University of Florida, subsequently visited the site where the weevil cocoon was found and more evidence of the presence of this menace to bromeliads was noted. Although no actual weevils or cocoons were found during her visit, several fallen *Tillandsia utriculata* exhibited the tell-tale signs of being attacked by the weevil. (See picture on right.) Most noticeably, the central leaves of some of the fallen plants could be pulled out when tugged on gently (sort of like the central leaves on a ripe pineapple). Those same leaves had raggedy bottom edges where they were chewed on. Others had browned areas where they were chewed through and in some we found cocoons where the beetles had emerged.



Guidelines for detecting the bromeliad weevil:



If you tug at the central leaves of a bromeliad and they come free to show what looks like chewed bases of the leaves (photo on left, note also the brown cocoon), you may have a weevil.

If what looks like a small cocoon (photo on right) falls out of those central leaves of a bromeliad you may have a weevil.



(Photograph by J. L. Castner,
University of Florida.)

If you have a black bug with a “Jimmy Durante” nose and yellow or orange markings like the one on the left, you have a weevil.



Jay has added this post script: “I ended up “hatching” a weevil and keeping him in a peanut butter jar for about 6 months. Fed him bromeliad leaves and he seemed to get along just fine until one morning he was upside down with all of his feet up in the air. Dr. Theresa [Cooper] says that’s about typical lifespan for a male weevil. Later, I hatched another one and along with additional pupae, sent them on to Theresa for the research weevil colony. They’re always looking for wild collected weevils to strengthen the colony. Two weevils arrived and she pronounced them both females. So now I’ve hit on a new way to control the weevil population - collect them and mail them to Theresa Cooper!”

Note: For more information about eh Mexican bromeliad weevil can be found on the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies website fcbs.org, under “Weevil Information”.

UPCOMING EVENTS, 2014

October 3-5, Tropiflora Fall Festival and Plant Sale

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

October 11-12, USF Botanical Gardens Fall Plant Sale

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

November 7-9, Sarasota Bromeliad Society Annual Show and Sale

Southgate Community Center, 3145 Southgate Circle, Sarasota (Theresa.Bert@MyFWC.com)

December 6-7, Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society Show

Terry Park, 3451 Marion Street, Fort Myers (bpreattpcc@aol.com)

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