

The Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society

Next regularly scheduled meeting Sunday, March 9th, 2003 – 1:30p.m.

March, 2003

Let's Get Ready For Spring!

President – Mike Fink – 386/673-5450

Vice President – Linda Stagnol – 386/760-6842

Secretary – Calandra Thurrott - 386/761-4804

Treasurer - Ted Nuse - 386/673-2648

I know, *officially* we have a little longer to wait - March 21st according to my calendar. But the days are getting longer, the danger of a killing freeze is pretty slim (but not impossible!), and new growth is starting to burst out everywhere in the landscape. Everywhere that is, in those plants that survived this winter's cold weather. There's no doubt about it, it's been a cold winter. Even the weather man has confirmed it – December and January's average temperatures were considerably lower than normal in our area. Damage to plants has been relatively minor though and the speculation is that *because* it was so cold in December and January plants outside had a chance to harden themselves. They became dormant so that when the sub-freezing temperatures in January showed up, damage to the plants was nowhere near as severe as it could have been if the cold weather had been preceded by much warmer temperatures. Maybe we need to rethink our usual Fall hopes for a mild Winter. A cold Winter may actually be less harmful to our bromeliads... it's just a thought.

Before leaving this topic of Winter weather - I came across a letter from a bromeliad enthusiast in Orlando recently that was written over 25 years ago. You think this past winter has been cold? In 1977 temperatures below freezing were recorded in Orlando...at noon...for 5 consecutive days! The letter doesn't even say how low the temperatures dropped at night, but you can certainly imagine that if it was still below freezing at noon, it got much colder at night. That was the freeze that killed all of the Australian pines in our area and so damaged the coastal mangroves that today they are just now approaching $\frac{1}{2}$ the height they had reached prior to that freeze. Than, as if that wasn't enough – in 1980 another hard freeze struck with temperatures that dropped to 20 degrees in the Mount Dora area. In a Central Fl. Bromeliad Society newsletter from March of 1980 Glenna Simmons reported much damage in the bromeliad community. All Ananas (pineapples) except those growing in heavy shade were killed as were all Hohenbergias and Porteas. Surprisingly, she also stated that all Tillandsias except T. usneoides (spanish moss) and T.

recurvata (ball moss) were killed. And don't forget the "Christmas freeze" of 1986 - another one that took many people by surprise – including the power companies, who ended up creating the term "rolling brown-outs" (which sounded much nicer than "there's not enough electricity to go around, so we're cutting your power off for a while!"). So take heed, we occasionally find ourselves on the receiving end of some pretty severe weather and we will surely see killing freezes again in the future. It's not too early to begin making your plans for next winter. Next year we may not be so lucky!

Everyone's Flower Show –

This will be running from March 13th through the 16th at the Ocean Center in Daytona Beach. This is a great opportunity for us to introduce the public to bromeliads, so please, please enter at least one of your plants in the show. We will have plant entry forms available at this month's meeting and can help you in filling out each entry. Need help getting your plants to the show? Let us know and we will make arrangements. We still need additional volunteers to serve as hosts/hostessess so please donate your time to help watch over the horticulture entries (you'd be amazed at how many people try to pinch leaves off of the show plants!). This is really an easy job and gets you free entry into the show, so please add your name to the list that our president circulated at the last meeting.

March/April in the bromeliad garden

What should you be doing now that the weather is beginning to warm up, new leaves are appearing on the trees, and the oak and pine pollen is so thick that you have to put the wipers on to see through your car's windshield? There is so much work to be done in the Spring -where should we begin? Let's start by examining each of the bromeliads in your collection. Of course, if

you didn't protect your collection from the cold, this first step may not take too long!

Pick up each pot and examine the plant for scale and any other insect pests. If scale is getting started, treat the plant with an insecticidal soap(for mild infestations) or systemic insecticide(for more serious scale problems). Be sure to follow the instructions on the container for preparing the solution. The old adage "if a little is good, more is better" doesn't apply to preparing pesticides, so don't try to improvise. A more concentrated solution may actually be less effective in controlling scale. **Read the label and follow the directions!**

Now take a garden hose and thoroughly flush out all of that debris that has built up through the winter...or through the fall and winter...or, if you are a serious procrastinator like me – through last summer, fall and winter. Lower leaves looking a little sad? This is the time to remove them using the old trick of splitting the leaf down the middle and then pulling each half away in opposite directions. Keep removing any torn or browned leaves until you have a nice, symmetrical group of good leaves remaining. Don't get too carried away with this. You don't want to split and remove the last damaged leaf only to discover that there are no more leaves left on the plant! Keep in mind that most bromeliads in their natural habitat have a number of damaged leaves – and the plant is just fine with that. It's only when bromeliad enthusiasts start getting involved that leaves are removed to improve the plant's appearance.

Next, look at the potting mix. Is it breaking down? Has it compacted so much that it no longer retains any water? If so, knock the old material away from the plant and repot with a fresh mix. What sort of mix should you use? Well, that's up to you. Everyone has their favorite, but the truth of the matter is that practically any commercial mix will work just fine for growing bromeliads as long as it doesn't

retain too much moisture. Remember - most of these plants are epiphytes and they don't really care much about what they plant their feet in. Repotting will also give you an opportunity to examine the roots of the plant.

If the roots have grown so much that they completely fill the pot, use your shears and remove a large portion of them. Don't worry – you're not hurting the plant, it will grow more. Repot and you're back in business.

Finally, after you have cleaned up the plant and repotted it, take another critical look at both the plant and its pot. Together are they proportioned well or is the plant too large or too small for the container? If either is the case, repot into a more appropriately sized pot.

Now look at your plant again. Are the leaves long and strappy? Are they plain green instead of the color that you want to achieve? You may want to consider moving this plant to a brighter location or perhaps you've been a little heavy handed with the fertilizer and need to cut back. Are the leaves pale yellow or straw colored and shorter and more compact than they should be? Think about finding a location with a little less direct light for this plant.

With a little effort (generally, very little effort) this Spring you can have a healthy bromeliad - ready to enter its most active growing period and, providing that it doesn't suffer any mishaps (we'll talk about 'mishaps' in a future newsletter) you should have a good candidate for a blue ribbon or maybe even a 'best in show'.

Upcoming Events

March 13th – 16th Everybody's Flower Show at the Ocean Center in Daytona Beach

March 15, 16th Selby Botanical Gardens Spring Plant Fair.

March 16th Fourth annual Bromeliad Bonanza at Blossom World Bromeliads 9am to 5pm.

March 22nd, 23rd Leu Gardens Spring Plant Sale, Leu Gardens, Orlando 1920 Forest Ave. 9am to 5pm. Bromeliads, cacti, orchids, and more. Admission to the gardens is free! 407/246-2620

March 22nd,23rd Kanapaha Gardens Spring Garden Festival, Gainesville (Go to Orlando on Saturday and Gainesville on Sunday!)

March 22nd and 23rd Palma Sola Botanical Park Spring Garden Festival in Bradenton. 9800 17th Ave., North West, Bradenton Fl. Call 941/761-2866

March 29th, 30th Greenfest 2003
Plants, herbs, flowers, garden accessories, workshops at Historic Plant Park, U of Tampa, 401 W. Kennedy Blvd. from 10am to 4pm.

April 5th Volusia County Master Gardeners 5th Annual Plant Faire. 8:30am to 12:30pm at the Volusia County Fair Grounds.

...and, for anyone who can be in three places at the same time – April 12 is the weekend for you!...

April 11-13th, 2003 - 23rd Annual Sarasota Bromeliad Show and Sale.
"Bromeliads On the Net", This is a standard bromeliad show and features exhibits, sales, food, rare plant auction at world-renowned Selby Botanic Gardens, 811 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota, Florida. Hours are 10:00 am-4:00 pm. For details call 941-955-7531 ext., or Idolatow@tampabay.rr.com. or Rob Branch - show chairman 941-358-4953. Plant sale only on April 11th. Show and sale 12 & 13th. Reduced admission to the gardens. (Selby Gardens is always a treat.

Through in a bromeliad show and sale and it makes the long trip well worth it!)

April 12th, 13th Seminole Bromeliad Society's Annual Spring Bromeliad Show/Sale 9am to 5pm. Sanford Garden Club. (This one is so near by that there aren't many excuses for missing it!)

April 12-13, 2003

Bromeliad Society of Broward County Show and Sale at the International Fishing Hall of Fame in Dania Beach, Florida. You can see it from I-95. (If you're in the neighborhood – I've been to this one before. You can make it there and back in one day if you leave early enough in the morning and while you're there make sure you try the chowder at the Islamorada Fish Co. This is an outstanding show in a terrific location – well worth seeing!)

May 3rd, 4th Bromeliad Society of South Florida Show and Sale at Fairchild Tropical Garden, 10901 Old Cutler Road, Miami. Karl Green, show chairman.

May 3rd, 4th International Cryptanthus Show hosted by the Greater New Orleans Bromeliad Society, Lakeside Mall, Metairie, La. For info. call Free Ross at 504/891-9301.

May 9th, 10th Central Fl. Bromeliad Society's 28th Annual Mother's Day Bromeliad Show/Sale. Florida Mall in Orlando. 8001 S. Orange Blossom Trail. Hours are from 10am. to 9pm on Friday and Saturday, noon to 6pm on Sunday. (What can I say about this show? Calandra and I have been going to it for years – terrific show, nice location, and always a great bunch of folks from the Central Fl. club to talk to. If your spouse or family aren't crazy about bromeliads, turn them loose in the mall while you enjoy the show!)

Bromeliads on the Web –

I know we've talked about this before, but if you don't already have access to a computer and the internet, you are missing out on a terrific source of information about bromeliads. Consider this – by visiting a single internet site (the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies' web site: www.fcbs.org) you can view not just a few, not just hundreds,...but thousands of pictures of bromeliads – both species and hybrids – all correctly named. You can peruse articles from publications about bromeliads. Read of discussions concerning misnamed bromeliads. You can learn about the Mexican weevil threatening our native bromeliads and the project that we, along with all of the bromeliad societies in Florida have sponsored in hopes of developing a biological control. You can find listings of contacts for other bromeliad societies throughout the state, keep track of upcoming sales and shows, read about growing techniques, read reviews of books about bromeliads currently available, and even find where to purchase bromeliads to add to your collection...and this is all at just one site! It's truly mind-boggling and, if you haven't used a computer before, more than a little intimidating. But computers today are very easy to use and there's lots of help out there. Don't worry, if you get stuck, you can always ask your neighbors' 10 year old to help you out! Prices have never been lower so, if you are still waiting to test the waters – go ahead, dive in – you'll be glad you did!

