

The Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society

Next meeting Sunday, May 8th, 1:30p.m.
Colony in the Wood – club house
4000 S. Clyde Morris Blvd., Port Orange 32129

May, 2011

May Flowers?

President – Bradley Rauch – 386/767-8937
Vice President – Rick Ryals – 386/679-8700
Secretary – Eretta Morris – 386/677-9557
Treasurer – Eve Krauth – 386/763-2084

I don't think that bromeliads are particularly well known for blooming in May, despite the rhyme "April showers bring May flowers". In fact, I've often wondered about the blooming behavior for many bromeliads.

Some seem to be very regular in their schedules. *Aechmea gamosepala* for example is usually in bloom in my yard in late November or December (9 times out of the last 10 years) although there's always the oddball plant that blooms "out of season" in late April or early May. Curiously enough, the April/May bloomers often seem to have slightly different color to their bloom compared to the November/December bloomers – what's up with that? And then there's *Tillandsia stricta* which always blooms in late July or early August in my yard. Likewise, *Aechmea racinae* has a reputation of being in bloom around Christmas time and, sure enough, my *Ae. racinae* has been in bloom in late December or early January each of the 5 years since I added this plant to my collection.

In contrast, *Vriesea poelmanii* 'Gloriosa' in my collection has begun its bloom at various times in January, March, April, November and December and appears to follow no particular schedule but instead prefers to surprise me with its blooms.

Even less regular is my *Vriesea phillipocoburgii* – also known by some as "the plant that never blooms". This plant has bloomed a grand total of once in the thirteen years that I've had it in my yard...and the variegated form known as "*Raphael*"?... hasn't bloomed yet since I first acquired one of these plants six years ago. Maybe I just haven't waited long enough.

Although I have noticed that some varieties tend to bloom in December, others in January and still others in February, Billbergias as a group tend to bloom in the Winter.

Pineapples (*Ananas comosus*) bloom in the Spring to provide a fruit ready for the picking in the Fall if you are among the fortunate ones. Less fortunate is when the pineapple plant blooms in the Fall – the fruit that matures in Spring is never quite as good and in many cases simply doesn't ripen.

How will you know when to expect your bromeliad to bloom? As always, your own club members can be your greatest resource for this kind of information – just ask them. If you recently acquired a new *Aechmea* or *Billbergia* and want to know more about it, ask around. Chances are pretty good that someone else in our group has grown that plant and can either tell you what mistakes they had made in rearing it or what

success they have had and probably can tell you when it last bloomed.

Also, if you haven't already, consider setting up a spreadsheet (or log book for those who may be less comfortable with computers) with a listing of the bromeliads in your collection and a notation for each when you first noted the development of an inflorescence. This can be very interesting information after a few years when you can begin to see which plants have regular blooming habits and which ones don't. This is also just the sort of information that others in our group are interested in learning, so share the wealth! Do we have any "May flowers" in our collections? Probably so –bring those in for Show and Tell this month and let's hear about your experiences..

This month's meeting –

The topic for discussion this month is the letter D. I'm pretty sure that our members don't have large collections of Deuterochonia, so we'll be working with the Genus Dyckia – a rather spiky group, but one that many bromeliad enthusiasts grow to love. The following excerpts are from the Houston Bromeliad Society's treatise on the Genus Dyckia:

The genus was introduced into Europe during the nineteenth century, and was named for Prince von Salm-Dyck, an early expert on succulents. Although Dyckias have no internal water storage tissue like true succulents, they are xerographic and survive long periods without water by going dormant. Their rosette of thick succulent leaves will eventually wilt, but recovery is rapid when watering is resumed. These plants are tough! They will withstand more neglect than almost any other commonly cultivated plant and still pup and bloom every year. Their only demand is a little water and a lot of sunshine. In the spring they bear multiple red, yellow or orange flowers on a thin stalk that emerges from the side of the plant. The stalk length can range

from about 10 centimeters for a small species like D. choristaminea to more than 2 meters for D. maritima.

Water:

Although they will tolerate drought, they thrive on frequent watering while actively growing, however keep plants on the dry side during cold weather or during periods of reduced light. In the summer time they tend to dry out rapidly; it is helpful to keep them in a shallow container of water.

Medium:

Grow in a heavy mix that contains water retaining polymers and a large quantity of organic matter. A mix similar to what would be used for a Cryptanthus or a Hectia would be appropriate.

Containers:

Dyckias probably do best when they are grown in the ground. Their ability to take temperatures in the 15-20 degree range makes them one of the best Bromeliads to use for landscaping in the Houston area. They should be able to take all but our most severe winter weather with only minimal protection. If you do choose to grow them in pots, use one that will accommodate the plant's large root system. This is one plant that appreciates a pot that is about as wide as or wider than the plant itself. But WARNING: usually the larger the pot and the more the fertilizer the bigger the plant.

Propagation:

Most Dyckia species have leaves armed with sharp spikes that make working with the plants painful. It is often difficult to separate pups from the mother plant. It is helpful to remove the plant from its pot and try to work on it from the bottom. You want to bring out the heavy equipment when dealing with your Dyckia collection. Leather gloves, a sturdy knife, a small saw, and, in extreme cases, a hatchet could all come in handy when it is time to separate and repot large clumps of

plants. When you separate a pup, try to preserve as much of its root system as you can. If it has no roots, treat its base with rooting hormone before potting. In either case pot the plant in a fairly small pot using a well drained mix, and leave it there until the plant has a chance to establish itself. Most pups are slow to root and start growing, but when the plants root system fills the pot, move the plant into a larger pot using a heavier mix.

Thank you Houston Bromeliad Society for your culture tips on this unusual and interesting group of bromeliads!

Last and final Call for Membership Renewals!

Didn't get a newsletter this month? There's probably a reason for that. Check with our Treasurer to be sure that you have renewed your membership for another year!

Our Treasurer reported

on the results of this year's Master Gardeners spring sale at the Volusia County Fairgrounds at last month's meeting. Once again, we had a lot of fun, talked with a lot of potential new club members during the course of the event, and brought some money into our treasury to keep the club solvent for another year. Special thanks to those who participated in this year's sale: Irene and George Aldrich, Alan Bennett, Sudi Hipsley, Mary and Bill McBride, Christoph Cardot and Calandra Thurrott.

Upcoming Events:

May 19-22, 2011

Florida Native Plant Society 31st Annual Conference and plant sale in Maitland. Call 321-271-6702 for details

May 21st, 2011

BSI annual Board of Directors meeting – the Mounts Botanical Garden in West Palm Beach

June 24th and 25th

Tropiflora Summer Sale
Tropiflora Nursery
3530 Tallavast Road, Sarasota, 941-351-2267
<http://www.tropiflora.com/festival.cfm>

August 20th and 21st

Seminole Bromeliad and Tropical Plant Sale
The Garden Club of Sanford (on 17-92, one block south of Lake Mary Blvd)
9:00 – 4:00 Call 407-539-4314

November 4th, 5th, 2011

Bromeliad Extravaganza “The Art of Bromeliads” hosted by FECBS! The Plaza hotel in Daytona Beach

December 2nd, 3rd and 4th, 2011

Caloosahatchee Show and Sale
Terry Park, Fort Myers
For information, contact Dr. Larry Giroux at DrLarry@comcast.net

...and, looking even farther ahead – make plans now for the 2012 Bromeliad Society International World Bromeliad Conference September 24th-30th

hosted by Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies
The Caribe Royal, 8101 World Center, Orlando, FL 32821
Betsy McCrory
FCBS World Conference Chairman
betsymccrory@aol.com
(407) 348-2139

Watch for details in the future!



BROMELIAD SHOW & SALE
36th ANNUAL
MAY 6-8, 2011

Bromeliad Society of Central Florida
Annual Show at **Orlando Fashion**
Square Mall, 3201 E. Colonial Dr.,
Orlando, FL 407-896-1131

Hundreds of bromeliads will compete
for awards. Hundreds more will be
for sale. Come spend Mother's Day
weekend with us:

Fri. May 6 10 am - 9 pm
Sat. May 7 10 am - 9 pm
Sun. May 8 11 am - 6 pm

**SPREAD THE WORD - BRING YOUR
FRIENDS! FREE!**

