

The Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society

Next meeting Sunday, October 10th, 1:30p.m.
Wm. A. Finney Memorial Garden Center
837 N. Oleander Ave., Daytona Beach 32118

October, 2010

2010 is Drawing to a Close!

President – Jay Thurrott – 386/761-4804

Vice President – Jerry O’Keefe – 407/767-2442

Secretary – Audrey Hayes – 407/421-4026

Treasurer – Eve Krauth – 386/763-2084

That’s right, we only have a few months left until we start the next decade. 2011 is just around the corner and it promises to be an exciting year for FECBS. Work is already underway in planning for the Extravaganza next November and we’ll need your participation to make this a success so please, agree to help out when you are asked to work on one the committees. We will be forming these soon and looking for volunteers. If everyone helps a little, the hard work will be done.

Last month’s newsletter contained not one, but two articles submitted by club members – thank you Rick and Bill for your contributions! I’d like to encourage everyone to try their hand at writing articles for the newsletter – we want to hear what experiences you’ve had with growing bromeliads. Send me your manuscripts as an email, typed on lined paper, hand written in cursive, or jotted down in lipstick on the back of a cocktail napkin – whatever format you prefer to use. I’ll see that they get added to the newsletter.

This month’s meeting –

Last year our group went on a bus trip to Tropicflora and, although it was a rainy day,

we all had a wonderful time touring the nursery and purchasing plants to add to our collections. This year you don’t have to spend hours in a bus to be enthralled by the many treasures of Tropicflora – owner Dennis Cathcart will be visiting us and sharing some of his experiences in developing bromeliad gardens in Singapore. He will be bringing plants for sale as well, so I suggest that you arrive early to be assured of a seat. By the way, please park at an angle around the Garden Center to make room for as many vehicles as possible..and look out for those signs prohibiting parking in certain areas. Parking is always difficult and we’re liable to have a full house for this event!

Epiphytes

Now, there’s a word that doesn’t usually come up in casual conversation and if you make it known that you have *epiphytes*, you’re liable to notice people taking a few steps away for fear that they may contract *epiphytes* also if they’re not careful. My on-line Merriam-Webster dictionary defines epiphyte as “a plant that derives its moisture and nutrients from the air and rain and grows usually on another plant”. That may be technically correct, but I think I prefer the definition at www.yourdictionary.com which

says that an epiphyte is “a plant that grows on another plant **but is not a parasite** and produces its own food by photosynthesis, as certain orchids, mosses and lichens; air plant”. I like that definition better since many bromeliads are epiphytic in nature and, although they may be called ‘parasitos’ in some regions of S. America, these plants really take no nourishment from the host plant. We tend to grow our bromeliads in pots, since that’s usually what we are familiar with. Most of my plants are in pots for convenience but still, I like to mount bromeliads on pieces of wood and personally, I favor driftwood. I frequently paddle my canoe around the Intracoastal Waterway and it’s relatively easy to find pieces of driftwood among the flotsam and jetsam along the shoreline. At the same time however, I realize that not everyone has access to driftwood and that’s why I found Bill McBride’s article in last month’s newsletter so interesting since he pointed out a number of other materials that you might not have considered to use for mounts. I’ve also found a number of interesting materials that serve quite nicely as substrates for mounting bromeliads and thought that I might share the following observations regarding some of these.

1. Weathered wood – this can include a wide range of woods that have been exposed to the elements long enough give them that rustic, aged look. In particular, I like to use roots of trees that have toppled over, either by storms or developers. **Pine trees** often have twisted and gnarled roots that can provide an interesting contrast or compliment to your epiphytic bromeliad. Look for land that has been cleared where pine trees have been pushed over and the roots are exposed. Where trees have been on the ground for quite some time look also for knots that remain after the surrounding wood in the pine tree has decayed away. These are the “lighter knots” that are saturated in sap and when fresh, were often used to help light camp fires. After long periods of weathering these become as hard as rock and resist rot for many years. They’re not usually very large,

but they make a good choice for mounting smaller bromeliads.



Ae. ‘By Golly’ mounted on pine tree root

Cedar trees often have extensive, wandering root systems that protrude above ground where they become exposed to the weather. Cedar makes an exceptional mount with a satisfying gray color, smooth surface and as a bonus, resists decay for many years. Fallen branches can be set upright in concrete and used for “bromeliad trees” by mounting multiple bromeliads on each branch. **Oak** has a very nice tight grain and when weathered can provide a very interesting substrate for mounting bromeliads. In particular, I have found that fallen branches of oaks, if not already rotted, can last for long periods of time without decaying. **Lyonia** is found extensively in Central Florida and is often harvested and shipped to Japan and China where it is used in making artificial trees (there’s something a bit ironic about that!). Lyonias rarely develop much girth, but have an interesting spiral growth pattern and the wood is extremely rot-resistant. **Grape wood** isn’t something you’ll necessarily find while you’re out walking your dog. We don’t grow many grapes around this area, but grape wood can be purchase in pet stores, ordered over the internet, and is often available for sale in

bromeliad nurseries. The wood is usually cleaned of bark and sold as small, interestingly twisted and gnarled pieces – perfect for mounting a small bromeliad or two. *Cholla cactus* wood isn't found around here either, being native to the Southwestern part of the country and into Mexico, but also it is available for purchase through a number of sources.



Cholla cactus "wood" is very porous and provides a good anchor for bromeliad roots

Highly decorative in appearance as well as highly porous, this material is close to ideal for mounting bromeliads. You'll find that roots quickly penetrate Cholla and wrap in and around the wood to firmly anchor your plant. Woods not to use: those treated with creosote (telephone poles, dock pilings, railroad ties, etc.) or pressure treated lumber (The jury is still out on new pressure treated products. Older woods were treated with copper arsenite – both of which are toxic to bromeliads).

2. Coquina stone – pieces of this sedimentary rock can be found throughout the state and although they are quite heavy to move around, that's a good thing since epiphytic plants like to be stable before developing roots to be permanently anchored.

Strong winds and inquisitive wandering pets are not likely to dislodge a well mounted bromeliad set on coquina. The consistency of the rock favors good root attachment and a single plant can soon develop into an impressive multiple display.

3. Miscellaneous – you're only limited by your imagination in what can be used for

mounting bromeliads. I've seen old garden



This old garden trowel has seen better days, but serves as a nice mount for a small Vriesea

tools used as substrates for mounting, pieces of discarded decorative metal (no copper though, please), plastics (be careful to select those that have ultraviolet light inhibitors or the plastic will soon break down from exposure to sunlight). An old favorite for mounting epiphytes is cork – the outer bark layer of tree grown in the Mediterranean area. It's rot resistant and some epiphytes attach themselves quite well to cork.



Catopsis morreniana attached to a cork slab

I have a clump of *T. bartramii* mounted on a short section of galvanized electrical conduit and have even seen a bromeliad mounted on a bowling ball as well as one mounted on glass.

Try your hand at mounting bromeliads for interesting effects. There's a wide range of

materials that you can obtain to work with at little or no cost and there's something very satisfying about creating your own bit of horticultural artwork from discarded materials.

In future months we'll cover more on how to use these materials to mount your plants and how to care for them once you've created your masterpiece!

What's in Bloom

A suggestion was made at last month's meeting that we should have a column in the newsletter sharing information on what is currently in bloom in members' gardens. Of course, you'll have to let me know what's in bloom in your collection, but I'll start things off this month - ...not much. A few *Vrieseas* are currently blooming: *V. 'Asahi'*, *V. rodigaseana* with its nice step-ladder arrangement of yellow flowers, that old hybrid *V. 'Marieae'* - named for the wife of the early explorer Andre. This month seems to be the month for *Catopsis* as well. *Catopsis morreniana*, *C. sessiliflora*, and an unidentified *Catopsis* that I suspect is *C. minima* are all currently in bloom. Not many *Tillandsias* blooming this month, except my old reliable *T. vernicosa*. It blooms every year at the same time and it's right on schedule with its bloom spike. Oh, and I almost forgot - the bloom of my *Ae. blanchettiana* is presently at its peak in development and color with a bloom spike of roughly 2 meters in height!

Upcoming Events:

October 1-3, 2010

Fall Festival Open House at Tropiflora
3530 Tallevast Rd., Sarasota

October 2, 3, 2010

Orchid show and Fall plant sale at Kanapaha Botanical Gardens, 4700 SW 58th Dr., Gainesville. Call 352/372-4981 for details.

October 9th, 2010

Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies quarterly meeting. Hosted by the Seminole Bromeliad and Tropical Plant Society at the Garden Center in Sanford.

October 9, 10, 2010

USF Fall plant sale at USF Botanical Gardens. 4202 E. Fowler Ave., Tampa

October 11th, 2010

First meeting of the year of the Council of Garden Clubs of the Halifax District at the garden center. 9:30am social, business meeting at 10:00am.

October 23rd, 2010

Judges school in Ft. Myers

October 29-31, 2010

Tampa Orchid Club show and sale at USF Botanical Gardens. \$5 admission

November 12-14, 2010

Fairchild Botanical Gardens 'Ramble' Plants, garden accessories, antiques, food, music, etc. 10901 Old Cutler Rd., Coral Gables.

December 4th, 5th, 2011

Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society Plant Sale (no show this year)
Terry Park, 3410 Palm Beach Blvd., Ft. Myers

April 16th, 2011

South Florida Bromeliad Society show and sale at Fairchild Gardens in Miami

April 30th, 2011

Sarasota Bromeliad Society show and sale at Selby Gardens in Sarasota

