

The Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society

Next meeting Sunday, April 10th, 2016 1:30pm.
Colony in the Wood – club house
4000 S. Clyde Morris Blvd., Port Orange 32129

April 2016

Time to Get Busy!

President – Bill Hazard 386/882-3850
Vice President – Rick Ryals 386/679-8700
Secretary – Calandra Thurrott 386/761-4804
Treasurer – Eve Krauth 386/871-1041

That's right – now is the time to get your hands dirty! The days are warming, birds are singing, and those bromeliads are not going to separate and pot themselves up so get to work. We talked a little bit about separating and potting plants as well as potting mixes and appropriate pots to use at the last meeting. Now is the time to use that knowledge.

For those bromeliads that send out their offsets on stolons (those woody, twisting arms that extend off from the base of the plant), nothing could be easier. Just snip off the pup, center it in a pot, add potting mix and you are done.

For those bromeliads that produce offsets close to the base of the plant, it's a little more nerve-racking. Either pull the pup away from the parent (assuming it's an appropriate size relative to the mother plant) or use your garden shears to snip the connection at the older plant. I always like to peel away a few of those tiny browned immature leaves at the base first, but you don't have to. Again, center it in a pot, add potting mix, and away you go. If roots are showing on the pup, that's nice but it really doesn't seem to matter much. Give your newly potted bromeliad a drink of water, set it somewhere that's not in full sun and not in heavy shade, and it will have a good start on life.

The really tough ones are those bromeliads that form pups from the center of the parent plant (like *Vriesea* 'splendide'). If you are

a bit of a gambler, you may be able to rock the offset back and forth until it separates from the parent but you may also find that the pup breaks off at the base so high up on the new plant that it doesn't survive. Your other choice is to rip all of the mother plant's leaves off until you completely expose the base of your pup and then carefully use your shears to remove it from the parent. You may then find that the parent only produces that one pup and if you are trying to increase the number of plants in your collection you are not going to find yourself up to your earlobes in this particular type of bromeliad.

Have we said it before?... tailor your selection of new bromeliads to not only match your interest, but also to suit the growing conditions that you are prepared to provide. If you would like to grow high-altitude Puyas, that's fine but you're going to have to provide an environment that is very different from what we find outside in east central Florida. The same advice applies to those delicate, warmth-loving varieties that decline when the temperature dips below 50F. You can grow them, but you'll have to provide some protection in our Winter months. Do you have heavy shade in your yard? Then don't select those bromeliads that need bright light to develop their best colors. No shade at all in your yard? Don't try to grow a lot of *Guzmanias* unless you like that bleached out and shriveled look.

Watering – in most of Florida watering restrictions are in effect year-round and limit

your irrigation frequency to once a week in the Winter months and 2 times a week in the Spring and Summer. While this is intended to curtail the sometimes irresponsible use of water on lawns, the concept of watering less in the Winter and more in the Summer is very reasonable and can also apply to bromeliad culture. Since we are now entering that time of year when we should begin increasing the amount of water we provide to our bromeliads, I thought the following short article on watering from a 1982 article in the BSI Journal might be of interest:

Watering Bromeliads

PATSY LOU WORLEY

Of the major growth requirements which affect bromeliad culture, water is the one that often receives the least consideration. When growers are asked about their watering schedules, one often hears answers such as "Oh, I water once a week", or "every day", or "twice a week." The answers they give seem straightforward and complete and since their plants are most beautiful, one is tempted to blindly follow the same regime. Fortunately, bromeliads are forgiving plants so it might be a month before they begin deteriorating. The question of how to water suddenly becomes urgent and much more complicated than it may have seemed.

*First of all, consider what people mean by watering. A person who waters every day and another who waters once a week may be giving their plants about the same total amount of water. How can this be? Well, some use a mister and give their plants a light sprinkling each day and call that watering. Others take their plants, pots and all, and soak them in a tub of water once a week and call that watering. On the other hand, two people who both water with a hose may be providing very different total amounts of water. For example, in our household, I do not spend much time watering our bromeliads. Approximately once a week, I spray each plant lightly, put water in the cup and on the potting medium. Plants that require more water have been moved outside the greenhouse where nature can help with the watering. My husband, on the other hand, loves to water and will happily stand around for hours with a hose, spraying everything and everyone within range. His method is the probable reason our ferns were so beautiful. It also probably explains why *Tillandsia xerographica*, which unfortunately hung near some of the ferns, suddenly began to rot. It definitely explains why he is barred from entering our*

bromeliad greenhouse when he has a hose in hand. In my opinion, few bromeliads regularly like being drenched.

The second consideration concerning watering has to do with the type of bromeliad being grown. The species in the Bromeliaceae come from a wide range of habitats, encompassing everything from rain forests to dry, rocky beach areas. Consequently a rigid pattern of watering, such as with an automatic sprinkler system, will not be uniformly effective unless all the plants are compatible with regard to their water requirements. If the watering pattern is selected to favor those species which are found in nature in wet situations, then those from arid habitats will surely suffer, and vice versa.

A third factor to take into account when choosing a watering method is the growing medium. Naturally a plant mounted on a piece of driftwood will require more moisture than the same plant grown in soil. I prefer to use less rather than more water, so I use a potting medium of about 2/3 regular soil to 1/3 Perlite. For good drainage, stones are put in the bottom of the pot and a small amount of sphagnum is put on top of the stones. Since the soil retains moisture, the amount of watering required is reduced. A lighter mixture of peat, pine bark and Perlite dries out more quickly and therefore requires more frequent watering.

Another factor to consider relates to geography and location. I am fortunate to live on the Gulf Coast of Florida where the sea breezes are laden with moisture. In the dry Midwest or the desert areas of Texas, or inside an air conditioned or heated home, watering requirements will be very different. It is advisable to keep these differences in mind when reading articles about the care of plants. Sometimes the author's place of residence reveals why a particular watering schedule is recommended over another; so a mental comparison of the author's and your growing conditions is recommended.

The last consideration to take into account is the time of year. Obviously the water requirements of most species will be different in the wet spring than in the hot, dry summer or cold, dry winter.

Many growers recommend that water be kept in the cups or centers of most bromeliads at all times. I have found, however, that this will promote center rot or fungus growth, especially in the hot summer months. I fill the cups when watering, but only once a week, so the cups have usually dried out before the next watering. I find it occasionally necessary to fill the cup

completely until it overflows so that murky, stagnant water will be washed out.

Proper watering is not as simple as at first it may seem; fortunately, most species seem to be more forgiving of too little rather than too much water.

Bradenton, Florida

This month's meeting –

It's time we had a little talk about the birds and the bees...ok, we can leave out the birds. Bees are fascinating miniature production workers and much of the produce that we enjoy today reflects the handy work of these little guys. Their incidental transfer of pollen from one flower to another can result in new and interesting hybrid features and then of course there is the honey that they produce. This month our own resident bee-keeper Jack Dunlop will share some of his knowledge on benefits to both the bee keeper and the environment that can be realized by raising bees with his program "**Honey Bees, the Great Pollinator**". This is sure to be an interesting program, so be(e) sure to mark it on your calendar.

President's message –

We are the Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society - I hate that word "society"! For me it conjures up an air of aristocracy, being stuck up, snobbish and uppity. "Don't forget to drink your tea with your finger extended thusly. Chin up, shoulders back, a proper way to do things. Well, newcomers to our meetings will see none of the above, fortunately. I am so proud to be part of a "society" where we let our hair down, kick our feet up and leave the porch door open to all with an interest in bromeliads. We laugh at ourselves, we make all feel welcomed, we have members who are extremely knowledgeable but don't look down on those who are not. I don't believe anyone is embarrassed about asking a "stupid" question. In short, this is a great bunch of fun loving friends who are passionate about

learning the ins and outs of growing our favorite plant - Bromeliads!

Case in point, our last meeting (in my humble opinion) was the best I can remember....and we have had many wonderful meetings! Things ran smoothly, the food was tasty and plentiful, the raffle was well stocked and highly bid upon. The one thing that stood out for me was how not only interesting Jay's "Bromeliad Basics" presentation was, but how engaged the close to 60 people were! The questions from the group kept coming. Jay responded to many of them but others, like Rick and Bryan also contributed. I had wanted to talk about more items in the business portion but our meeting would have gone well over 3 hours so we will address them at a later date which is fine. A 3 hour meeting sounds long but it sure didn't FEEL long. I guess the old saying is true...."time sure flies when you're having fun"!

Bill

Birthdays for April:

Irene Aldrich	Jayne Molnar
Roberta Sappington	Michelle Kelley
Eretta Morris	Rose Vincel
Steve Provost	Hedy Quirk
Virginia Whiting	

Out and about –

Last month we made a brief visit to St. Petersburg to visit the Dali museum – something we'd been meaning to do and finally got around to it.



...and wouldn't you know it. Right at the entrance was a massive display of bromeliads.

The mass of colors would have made Salvadore Dali proud!



Bromeliad covered wall at Dali Museum

Send in your photos and articles about bromeliad events, blooms in your garden, or newspaper and magazine articles that may be of interest to our members. Email to:

cajat@aol.com or mail to Jay Thurrott, 713 Breckenridge Dr., Port Orange Fl. 32127

Looking ahead:

April 9th, 2016

Volusia County Master Gardeners Spring Sale
Volusia County Fairgrounds, ½ day only! This is the perfect opportunity for you to get rid of those extra bromeliads in your collection so that you can make room for some new ones. And the best part is that you will get 80% of the proceeds from any of your plants that are bought by the admiring public during this event!

April 16-17, 2016

Bromeliad Society of South Florida
Annual show and sale at Fairchild Botanical Garden 9:30a.m. – 4:00p.m. Even if you're not interested in bromeliads (?what's wrong with you?) the *visit to Fairchild Gardens* is worth the trip south!

April 16-17, 2016

Seminole Bromeliad and Tropical Plant Society
Spring plant sale at the Sanford Garden Club

April 30, 2016

Garden Club at Palm Coast Spring Expo and sale. Trinity Presbyterian Church, 156 Florida Park Dr.

May 8th, 2016 Volusia County Fairgrounds

Mothers Day Show and Sale by the Volusia Orchid Society. Once again we have been invited to make a bromeliad display for this event. Can you spare a few of your showiest bromeliads to loan for the weekend? This is a great opportunity to show off our finest!



Ron and Jack work on last year's 2015 display

June 13-19, 2016

Bromeliad Society International World Conference. Hosted by the Houston Bromeliad Society in Houston, Texas
Don't miss it!

June 24, 25th, 2016

Tropiflora Summer Sale. You know them, you love their plants. Here's a chance to add to your collection!

