

The Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society

Next meeting Sunday, November 11th, 1:30p.m.
Colony in the Wood – club house
4000 S. Clyde Morris Blvd., Port Orange 32129

November, 2012

Do We Believe Them?

President – Rick Ryals 386/679-8700
Vice President – Eretta Morris 386/677-9557
Secretary – Kimberly Ridenour 386/212-2781
Treasurer – Eve Krauth 386/763-2084

I've read it in the local paper and I've heard it on the evening news – it's even on the Internet, so it must be true! We are predicted to have a *colder than normal Winter*. Who "they" are who have made this prediction is hard to determine - some years we hear of the forecast made by The Old Farmers Almanac, some years it's the National Weather Bureau, and some years it's someone's solemn statement based on the appearance of those lovable experts in meteorology – the wooly bears. Regardless of who you believe or doubt (my money is on the caterpillars), we would all be wise to have our cold weather protection plans in place before that first blast of arctic cold drops the temperature below freezing. It's been my experience that in Port Orange we can expect at least several occasions each Winter where the temperature will drop below freezing. During those Winters that are referred to as "mild" we still have several nights where the mercury dips below 32 degrees F for a few hours. During those Winters that people call "cold", we have several nights that are well below 32 and those temperatures persist for enough time that tropical plants become severely damaged. So, whether we have a mild Winter or you believe this year's predictions for a severe one, it really doesn't matter –

unless we take some precautions, we're going to have some cold damage (or worse) done to our bromeliads. The only issue is 'what can we do to protect our bromeliads and avoid cold damage that is nearly certain to threaten our plants this Winter?' Fortunately, there's quite a lot that you can do, depending on the amount of effort that you wish to put into it. Probably the first thing that you should do is to identify those bromeliads in your collection that are most likely to suffer when those cold fronts sweep through the state. This isn't necessarily as easy as it might seem. There are quite a number of plants in my collection that have been severely damaged or worse (I like to say that I "lost" them - it sounds so temporary!) at temperatures that friends in other areas tell me have no effect on the same species and then there are those in my collection that have survived temperatures that others say should certainly cause extensive damage unless they are protected. Why the discrepancy? It may be that different clones of the same species exhibit different levels of cold tolerance or the difference may be due to microclimates that exist in some areas of my yard and are responsible for slightly colder or slightly warmer conditions from where my outdoor thermometers are placed. Obviously, the number of hours that temperatures dip

below the freezing point is important, but we might also keep in mind that the exact temperature often is not as critical as the condition of the plant that is exposed to the cold. A bromeliad that has been seeing temperatures in the mid-80's and is being pushed into putting out new growth by being fed large amounts of fertilizer will be damaged by a sudden cold snap more than a similar plant that has experienced numerous days of cool weather, has had fertilizer withheld recently and is consolidating existing growth. It is also often noted that bromeliads that have been well watered before the temperatures plunge below freezing survive better than those that have been stressed by dry growing conditions. Then there are those plants that are simply *unpredictably* more affected by a brief exposure to cold weather than others. That's why there are so many, sometimes contradictory lists circulating that reflect each author's personal experiences with cold weather. What should you do to identify the cold-tender plants in your collection? Start with some generalities. First - None of your bromeliads will tolerate more than brief exposure to below freezing temperatures. Most will be unaffected by temperatures in the 40's (F). It's those in the range of 32 degrees to 39 degrees that we are most concerned with. This doesn't leave much room for error and it means that you either have to place a great deal of trust in your local weatherman's predictions or you should be prepared to put your cold protection plan in place whenever he or she says that temperatures may fall into the upper 30's. Some other generalities: Members of the **Cryptanthus** Genus do not tolerate temperatures approaching freezing very well – protect them. Some will even suffer at temperatures below the mid-40's (F). Fortunately, they are small and don't take up too much room if you decide to bring them into your house. Treat your **Orthophytums** as you would Cryptanthus. They are not quite as sensitive as the Crypts, but I've had

some bad experiences with members of this group that I expected to be a little hardier than they proved to be. **Aechmeas** range widely from cold-tolerant to cold-tender, depending on the species. Some of the biggest, toughest looking Aechmeas develop cold damage at the first hint of cold weather, so ask your fellow club members what their experiences have been with this group before leaving their fate to chance. **Tillandsias** tend to be pretty cold tolerant and will not need heroic measures for their comfort during the passing of a cold front... with some notable exceptions – I can recall some years ago when a club member purchased several *T. xerographicas* and lost them all when temperatures fell to the mid-30's. He left them outside...at the advice of another club member. Many **Vrieseas** survive very cold temperatures quite well and, although they may look similar in appearance when not in bloom – members of the Genus **Guzmania** do not tolerate cold nearly as well. One exception that I've found to this is in the *Guzmania lingulata* minor group. **Dyckias** survive very low temperatures very well - **Hechtias** do not!

There you have it; some very general guidelines to get you started thinking about what you need to do to prepare for Winter weather. Of course there are exceptions to each of these generalizations, but if you start by thinking that you need to protect all of your Cryptanthus and Orthophytums, some of your Aechmeas and all of your Guzmanias and Hechtias you might have a good idea of how much frost cloth you need. Don't know what frost cloth is? More on this next month

Everybody's Flower Show –

Seemed as though it was over too quickly! This was a lot of fun and by any measure, very successful for FECBS, the Halifax Council of Garden Clubs, and for the community. Congratulations to our members who entered plants and received ribbons at the event. I had the opportunity to “shadow” the flower show judges who evaluated the

entries and was pleasantly surprised to hear how impressed they were with the quality of bromeliad section entries!



Everybody's Flower Show at Peabody auditorium in Daytona Beach.

This month's meeting –

As hard as it may seem to believe, another year has gone by and, traditionally, November is when we elect officers for 2013.

A nominating committee was formed at last month's meeting and they have been working to develop a recommended slate of officers for the upcoming year. Please be prepared to vote for your candidates for next year. We'll also try to show you photos taken during the club's recent adventures at Tropiflora, Selby Gardens, and Michaels Bromeliads in Venice.

We're also going to have a special raffle, so please bring some nice plants to donate for this month's raffle-it'll be a little different!

JCT

Last month's meeting –

Dr. Jose Donayre visited us and shared some of his insight into that interesting group of plants in the Genus *Billbergia*. I think we all came away from his program a little better educated in what we should do to grow better looking *Billbergias* and, after viewing his slides, I think we all added some specific representatives of that Genus to our shopping "wish" list.

Birthdays for November:

Bryan Manion
Marilyn Rauch
Jean Hochdoerfer
John Hiatt
Harriet Herrin
Big John
Rob Sedelmyer
Susan Rowley

Name that plant...

This month's photos are as follows:

#1 – This first plant is a Florida native and is threatened by the weevil since it seems to be a favorite food source. The plant is somewhat unusual in that it only reproduces by seed.



#2- Our second photo is the plant in the foreground and was taken at Selby Gardens in Sarasota. This bromeliad is a large one and is in bloom. Notice the red tips to the leaves. In its native country (this is a hint), the entire plant turns this color, but in Florida the color seldom extends more than as seen here.



#3- This plant is seen in a number of different forms. Some produce a peach colored inflorescence, some are yellow, but most commonly you will see the red form.



Last month's "Name that plant" photos were:
1. Tillandsia intermedia – this extraordinary clump was photographed in Nassau, where some outstanding examples of this plant were being grown.

2. As someone who used to live in Mystic, Connecticut, I've always had a soft spot in my heart for Cryptanthus 'Black Mystic'
3. Aechmea serrata is native to the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique and produces a very interesting and unusual-colored inflorescence

How did you do – did you identify them all?

Looking ahead...

December 1-2

Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society sale
Terry Park, 3410 Palm Beach Blvd., Ft. Myers. Call 239/694-4738 for details.

September 21st, 2013

Bromeliad Extravaganza – Hosted by the Florida West Coast Bromeliad Society
Indian Rocks Beach, Clearwater at the Holiday Inn Harborside. Free parking!
For more information, contact Judy Lund at 727/439-7782 glund@Tampabay.rr.com

The following dates haven't been confirmed, but you might want to note them for planning purposes. More details will be provided as they become available:

March 23, 24 2013 - Bromeliad Society of Broward County show and sale

April 13, 14 2013 – Bromeliad Society of South Florida show and sale

April 20, 21 2013 – Seminole Bromeliad and Tropical Plant Society sale

September 7, 8 2013 – SW Bromeliad Guild show and sale in Dallas, TX

2014 – BSI World Conference...Hawaii!!!

