

# The Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society

Next meeting Sunday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1:30pm.  
Colony in the Wood – club house  
4000 S. Clyde Morris Blvd., Port Orange 32129

November, 2013

## Say “Goodbye” to the 2013 Hurricane Season!

**President – Rick Ryals 386/679-8700**

**Secretary – Jillian Thurrott 386/801-2500**

**Treasurer – Eve Krauth 386/763-2084**

...and hello to the 2013 Holiday Season...although after seeing Christmas displays in some stores in September, I'd say that we are already well into the holiday season. At any rate, at the risk of being premature (the season isn't *officially* over yet), I'm going to say that we have made it through this year's hurricane season virtually unscathed! Whether it's due to La Nina/La Nino, dust storms from the Sahara desert, or the collective prayers of all of the good people in Florida, I think that we can breathe a sigh of relief that we have been spared the destructive effects of any hurricanes this year.

Now that our “wet” season is behind us, keep an eye on your potted plants as drier air becomes the norm. This is a tricky time of the year where you need to balance the moisture need of your bromeliads against the possibility of their roots becoming wet for too long and encouraging rot organisms to establish themselves. Your plants don't need anywhere near as much water now as they did a few months ago, but that's not to say that they will appreciate becoming too dry either. What's a hobbyist to do? Look at your plants frequently – you'll see when the mix stays wet too long...or is too dry.

**Last Month's meeting...**

That was quite a raffle last month! Table after table with beautiful plants and the proceeds were donated to Bill McBride with FECBS's best wishes for a speedy and complete recovery. Bill was also presented with a plaque signifying him as FECBS's first Honorary Trustee. He will certainly be keeping involved with the club and we all look forward to seeing him at our upcoming meetings. Bill was spotted recently in Hedy's neighborhood at the Venetian Bay craft show where he was quickly picking up a new language and communicating with some visiting alpacas!



Bill McBride accepting his award – photo by Calandra Thurrott

Once again, Hedy and John came up with a terrific theme for the refreshments in October with each table sporting a miniature potted 'spooky tree' complete with ghosts, skeletons and cobwebs.



John, Hedy, and their family-- Photo courtesy of Calandra T.

Hedy, we can't thank you enough for your clever designs and arrangements. You manage to surprise us each month!

### **This Month's meeting...**

There's a bromeliad out there for everyone. Some people like the Neos. With their colorful foliage, some like Tillandsias and their amazing ability to thrive without benefit of a potting mix, and still others admire the spiky ones – the terrestrials. This month Ray Lemieux visits us from the left side of the state, Sarasota. He'll be talking to us about his favorites with his program: "Tearing up Terrestrials". This group of plants respond to a type of care that is quite different from the epiphytic varieties, so make sure that you don't miss this program – it's sure to be very informative and entertaining!

### **Birthdays for November:**

Harriet Herrin	Bryan Manion
Marilyn Rauch	Jane Sedelmyer
Ray Trzeciak	Big John

Happy birthday everyone!

### **Plant Profile: The Genus *Ananas***

If you are looking for "unusual" in bromeliads, this group definitely has it. This is the only member of the Bromeliaceae family that produces a commercially valuable fruit. This fruit would have to be called *compound* since it is composed of a number of what have been referred to as "fruitlets" (a 1949 publication by J.L. Collins discusses the history and biology of the pineapple in detail). Together, they form what has been described as one of the world's finest fruits and the example that most people associate with the word "bromeliad".

Quite a small Genus with less than half a dozen species, these bromeliads have been cultivated in the wild for quite a long time. In fact, I hope everyone took time to celebrate Columbus Day this year, because not only did Columbus "sail the ocean blue in fourteen hundred and ninety two", but on either this or the next year (his second, less well known voyage), upon his return he presented a pineapple to Queen Isabella and quite rapidly this fruit came to be a favorite in the royal court. I don't know if this was much of a return on her investment in Columbus's explorations, but it probably helped keep him out of prison...at least for the next 7 years – but that's another whole story altogether. The point is, the pineapple has been known to much of the civilized world for well over 500 years, making it the first bromeliad grown strictly for its commercial value and evidence suggests that despite Chris's claim to "discovering" the pineapple, it had already been grown as an agricultural crop, selectively improved, and distributed among much of the tropical Americas long before the first European set sail in search of fame and fortune.



The Genus name of this group in itself is somewhat unusual. Where most bromeliad Genera names are derived from those of early botanical scientists or supporters of their explorations (*Dyckia* is from Prince von salm-Dyck and *Hechtia* honors Julius Hecht, councilor of Potsdam) or from Greek or Latin references to a group of defining characteristics (*Aechmea* is from the Greek for 'spear point'), *Ananas* is taken from a native tribe of Brazil's word, although it's unclear whether that word 'anana' referred to the taste of the fruit or its fragrance. Although *Ananas* satisfied the taxonomists of the day, Europeans didn't care to use the word and instead thought that the fruit combined the appearance of a pinecone with the flavor of an apple and, so the term 'pineapple' came into widespread use. Growing your own pineapple can be a fun and rewarding (make that 'tasty') project that anyone in our area can do. Start by obtaining a pineapple from the store that is not overly ripe. Test this by trying to pull out one or two of the central leaves from the tuft of leaves on the top of the pineapple. If they pull free, try again until you find one where they don't. When you get home, cut the top off the pineapple, leaving an inch or so of the fruit below the base of the leaves. Eat the pineapple (enjoy!). Let the pineapple top dry for several days before placing it on top of your bromeliad potting mix in a 6" pot. That's pretty much all you have to do for the next several months. Just water the mix occasionally and soon the pineapple top will root into the mix. Once this happens, begin

fertilizing your new plant on a regular basis. Pineapples are strictly terrestrial and very heavy feeders. During their active growing period they will benefit greatly by frequent addition of fertilizer – either a liquid or granular form. Now you should begin looking for roots poking out of the bottom of your 6" pot. Once you see this, you can either plant the pineapple in the ground or repot into the next larger size and keep fertilizing! Repot again if you see roots emerging from your new pot in a few months. Protect your pineapple plant from any frost or freezing weather, but otherwise you'll find the plant to be quite hardy.



The miniature, known as *Ananas nanus* (now the name has been changed to *Ananas comosus* var. *ansanosides*) produces a miniature pineapple fruit after flowering.

Eventually, you will have a potted plant that is quite large (often 5ft. or more from the tip of one leaf to its opposite side leaf tip) so be sure to make plenty of room for this. If all goes well, your plant will produce a very attractive bloom in the Spring, which will then produce a fruit that will ripen in the Fall. The fruit will begin to turn a golden color from the bottom to the top and, in the process, will produce a wonderful pineapple fragrance. Keep in mind that your local menagerie of wild animals will also be monitoring the ripening process and may decide to harvest the fruit before you, so you may want to move your potted pineapple (that's why keeping it in a pot may be preferable to planting it in the

ground) to a secure area once it begins to ripen. I may not be entirely unbiased in this, but it seems to me that a home-grown pineapple, picked when it is a rich golden yellow is so superior to store-bought fruit that you may not believe they are the same fruit! Give it a try, you may have some setbacks (very cold weather will slow the growth cycle of the plant by up to 1 year or more), but the rewards are certainly worth the effort!



The Thurrott's pineapple plantation with 7 different varieties of Ananas



A variegated form of *Ananas comosus* var. *bracteatus*. It's very cold hardy, but produces a fruit that is decorative only.

### The Garden Ramble in Palm Coast...

took place on an absolutely beautiful day, the gardens couldn't have been nicer, and it was capped off by a nice barbecue lunch at Bing's Landing! What could be finer? Transportation worked out very well with some car-pooling from Colony in the Wood and the last minute addition of Eretta's garden to the itinerary provided a perfect end

to the day. Thank you Homer, Doreen, Jane, Judith and Eretta for opening your gardens to the club!



The Garden Ramble began at the home of Homer (holding the potted bromeliad) and Donna Stroike.



Beautiful *Neoregelia* 'Lou Wilson' in Doreen's garden



Candy corn? Unusual garden decoration noted in Judith Davies' garden. Finally identified as Hedy's Halloween toenails!

### Mexican weevil found in Port Orange!

Here's something you don't want to hear: the presence of the Mexican weevil – the “evil weevil” has been confirmed in a fallen *Tillandsia utriculata* in Port Orange.



Cocoon found in *T. utriculata* leaves in fallen plant

This is the first time that the invasive weevil (*Metamasius calazone*) has been positively identified in Port Orange. What does this mean to you? It means that you should keep an even sharper eye on your collection to look for evidence of the weevil before it ruins your plants. Fortunately, the weevil is relatively easily controlled and the same systemic pesticide that you may have used for control of scale on bromeliads will also protect your plants from the weevil. This also means that you should be very careful in picking up any fallen *Tillandsias* – they may harbor weevils and you may inadvertently bring them into your or your friends' collections.



Mexican weevil – showing relative size of the adult

The fallen *T. utriculata* shown in the photo above was found approximately one block

east of the intersection of Dunlawton and Spruce Creek Rd., west of the railroad tracks. The weevil hatched from a cocoon collected from another fallen plant noted on a lawn along Canal View Rd.

If you find evidence of the Mexican weevil in your neighborhood, don't panic. Instead, treat the plants in your collection with a pesticide to protect them and notify one of your officers in FECBS. They can put you in touch with the University of Florida scientists who have been working on the development of a biological control for this invasive weevil.

### The Seminole Bromeliad and Tropical Plant Society...

meets at the Garden Club of Sanford building and recently helped that club celebrate its 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a tribute to some of the bromeliad “pioneers” who lived right there in central Florida.



Steve Provost talks with Barbara Whittier at the Garden Club of Sanford

Barbara Whittier spearheaded educational displays that focused on Mulford and Racine Foster, Henry Nehrling, Julian Nally, Edgar Ensign and O.C. VanHyning, their achievements and some of the bromeliads that they were associated with. The public was welcomed with refreshments and club members were strategically placed to field questions as they wandered through the displays. This was an excellent opportunity to educate the public about bromeliads and

some of their early history in central Florida.  
Kudos to Barbara and to the Seminole club!

### Looking ahead

#### **December 7-8, 2013**

Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society show and sale. Terry Park in Ft. Myers. 9am-4pm Saturday, 10am-3pm Sunday.

#### **February 28-March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014**

Bromeliad Society of South Florida show and sale at Fairchild Botanical Gardens, Coral Gables.

#### **March 22-23, 2014**

Bromeliad Society of Broward County show and sale.

#### **March 28-30, 2014**

Everybody's Flower Show at the Ocean Center in Daytona Beach

#### **April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

Volusia County Master Gardeners Spring sale at the Volusia County fairgrounds, DeLand.

#### **April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

Council of Garden Clubs of the Halifax Area garage sale fundraiser. Finney memorial garden center at the corner of Jessamine and Oleander Avenues.

#### **September 8-14, 2014 – BSI World**

Conference. Ala Moana Hotel. 410 Atkinson Drive. Honolulu, Hawaii 96814. Register now for what is sure to be an unforgettable event!

