

Bromeliad Guild of Tampa Bay Newsletter



www.bromeliadguildoftampabay.org

June 2020

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE JUNE, 2020



NO BGTB MEETING FOR JUNE 2020

Hello Folks,

I'm sorry to say that Christ the King Catholic Church will be closed for meeting for another month. We surely hope to have our July meeting there.

We all need an evening of fun and fellowship. I hope all of you are well as I have not heard of any of our members or their families getting the virus.

Most of the Florida Bromeliad Societies have been unable to hold their monthly meetings. However, the Seminole Bromeliad and Tropical Plant Society had their May meeting and also had a plant sale and auction. They meet in the Seminole Garden Club building and had a large crowd attending their sale. They had 38 members at their May meeting.

The recent rain has caused all plant life to flourish including the bromeliads.

Looking forward to seeing all of you at the July meeting.

Cheers,
Tom



Social Distancing Versus the Love of Bromeliads.
By Jay Thurrott
June 2020 Newsletter Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society

Risk vs. benefit. I've always been a fan of the poet Robert Frost and lately I've thought about these two lines of his:

“Have I not walked without an upward look of caution under stars that very well might not have missed me when they shot and fell? It was a risk I had to take-and took.”

We may not be consciously aware of it, but each day of our lives we weigh the risks vs. benefits of our actions. How much risk are we willing to take? Some risks, of course, are more serious than others. When we are very young (or maybe even now?) we may be faced with the decision of the risk involved in getting caught while stealing a cookie from the cookie jar versus the benefit of eating that delicious cookie. When we're a little older it may be the risk of crashing while riding a bicycle with “no hands” vs. the thrill of pedaling without holding the handlebars.

Unfortunately, we find that as adults, not all risk vs. benefit evaluations are so easy to make and we sometimes find ourselves agonizing over our decisions. In Mr. Frost's scenario the risk of being struck by a falling star is infinitesimally small (when was the last time you heard of someone being struck down by a meteorite?) and the benefit of ignoring that small, but still theoretically possible risk is peace of mind in his everyday activities...an easy decision to make. Life's choices are not all that simple however.

Currently we find ourselves faced with making health-related risk vs. benefit choices regarding the Covid-19 virus pandemic. Do we risk exposure to infection by this virus or do we proceed with our daily routines as they existed prior to the outbreak? And which daily routines are riskier than others? Do we go to the grocery store for our basic food needs knowing that in all likelihood at least some of the customers or employees may have been infected with the virus and we may pick up that same virus as we pass them in the grocery aisles or at the checkout counter? We know that we can reduce the risk by taking a few precautions such as wearing protective face masks, 2 The Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society June following social distancing guidelines between us and the other shoppers and employees, and using hand sanitizer at every opportunity. The question we are faced with then is “have we sufficiently reduced the risk to warrant pursuing the benefit?”...and that depends on each individual's situation. If you are under 65 years old, in good health and really need to bring home some groceries, the answer for you is probably “yes”. If, on the other hand you are over 65, have some health concerns and your children or friendly neighbors are more than happy to make the trip to the grocery store for you, then the answer for you is probably “no” – stay home.

Now we get to that grey area where the risk/benefit decisions are not so easy. Do the benefits of taking part in a social activity (like attending your book club or class reunion...or FECBS meeting) sufficiently outweigh the risks involved in being in the same room with people who may be carriers of the virus and not know it? Once again, the answer would likely be different for each individual's personal situation. The risks in this case are very similar to those faced when deciding whether to go to the grocery store or not. The health status of others in the room will be unknown to you. Do you feel comfortable putting yourself in this situation? Does the benefit to you outweigh the risk, not only to you but to your family as well if you suddenly contract this illness? These are decisions that only you can make and I'm afraid that until a vaccine for Covid-19 is widely available we'll be frequently forced to make them until we can 'walk without an upward glance of caution under stars that might well not have missed me when they shot and fell..."

***Aechmea* 'Little Harv' By Dr. Larry Giroux**

The Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society's Meristem
July/ Aug 2017

When my *Aechmea* 'Little Harv' bloomed this month, I decided that I would feature it in this issue of the Meristem. Although I had some basic knowledge of the plant, I decided to investigate it a bit more.

I knew that the plant had originated at Bullis Nursery in South Florida over 30 years ago. It had been my impression that it was a sport of *Aechmea chantinii*. This meant that it was a spontaneous mutation from the *Aechmea* species. The mutation mostly involved the foliage. Instead of any intense barring of the mother species (see picture on page 9), this new cultivar appeared to be a solid blue green color with heavy silver scurf, but with a similar *chantinii* inflorescence.

To my surprise, many of the Internet reporters of this plant claim it was a hybrid of *Aechmea chantinii* and *Aechmea rubens* and that it was a "polyploid select cultivar" of this hybrid.

For many of us who don't know what that means let me summarize the gist. In the commercial horticultural world, both for food crops and ornamentals, sometimes when a cross is made a resultant plant will retain more than one set of chromosomes making them polyploid. Often the disadvantage is that there will be less flowers and sometimes sterile flowers and they don't get to make a lot of seeds.



The first of the triad of the *Aechmea* 'Little Harv' collection discovered and distributed by Harvey Bullis, Jr. consists of 'Little Harv'. This was discovered before 1982 at the Bullis Nursery in South Florida. (Photos by Dr. Larry Giroux.)



The second is the variegated sport of 'Little Harv' that was discovered about 1987 and patented by Bullis as *Aechmea* 'Loie's Pride' in 2001 (above photo by Dr. Larry Giroux.)

The advantage is that the flowers, seeds and fruits, which they do make can be larger and the foliage (which provide energy to the plant) can be more robust. Larger inflorescences and fuller foliage can be a good thing for bromeliads, and since growing bromeliads from seeds is not always easy, growing by producing offsets (which are usually perfect clones) or growing in tissue culture for commercial purposes is preferred.



The third addition to the collection is the plant pictures above.: Aechmea 'Harvey's Pride'. Again this plant was discovered at Bullis Nursery either among a batch of tissue cultured 'Little Harv's or as a vegetative offset of the original 'Little Harv'. On the back cover of this issue is a closeup of the offset of the 'Harvey's Pride' seen above. The pink blush toward the center of the plant is more evident. The inflorescence tends to have more red colored bracts than those salmon colored bracts of 'Little Harv'. This is also a patented plant by Bullis, regis-tered about the same time as 'Loie's Pride'. Photo by Larry Giroux.

Regardless of the origin of 'Little Harv', which was first discovered and propagated by Harvey Bullis, Jr., we now have a nearly full sun loving plant to grow in our gardens. At least this is what I thought up until these last couple of years. 'Little Harv' usually enjoys partial shade up to full sun. For the last three years I have brought my 'Little Harv's out of my shadehouse and into the sun on my driveway in pots. I knew that I had to adapt them to the greater light; however, I didn't expect it to be a problem since they only received a limited amount of full early sun from about 10:00 AM to about 1:00 PM. I wish they made sunscreen for plants! Finally this year I began to accept the moderate bleaching of the leaves and it seemed that each consecutive offset tolerated the obvious change in our heat and intensity of the sun here in Southwest Florida. Last week the long anticipated blooming for the new year occurred. This event is on the front cover of this issue. The two pictures show the emergence of the bloom. Hoping for the bright salmon colored bracts, I went out this morning to find that at 10:30 AM the bracts were all burned. Sunny Florida has turned into a hell for my tropical and sub-tropical plants. But some of it is my own fault, I gave in to my neighbor next door and cut down two of my 30 year old oak trees to alleviate the deluge of leaves three times a year and the cracking driveways from their roots. When I told my neighbor about the effect of losing the shade from the trees, he told me that I was smart enough to switch over to sun tolerating bromeliads! I went back into the house and cried.

I've included some pictures of cultivars of 'Little Harv', namely the two patented cultivars 'Harvey's Pride', the albo-margined sport and 'Loie's Pride', the variegated sport. It is reported by some sources that 'Harvey's Pride' was discovered in a batch of tissue cultured plants of 'Little Harv', while 'Loie's Pride' was a vegetative sport of 'Little Harv'. Other sources (the BCR of the BSI) state both are vegetative sports. Like any newly released unusual cultivars, these two plants were initially in high demand and low in supply. Today they are readily available at a good price and are recommended for addition to your collection. Be careful if you buy on the internet, mis-labelling seems to be common!

This Harvey Bullis, Jr's collection of three plants, although listed as full sun to partial full sun plants, should be adapted to your specific micro-environments within your property. Let's just hope that they don't have to continuously adapt to the so called "non-existent" drastically changing climatic upheavals.



There are many different cultivars of *Aechmea chantinii*. However, given the appearance of *Aechmea* 'Little Harv' with its basic underlying lime green color and its intense thick silvery scurf, which gives the plant its unusual blue-green appearance, the plant from which it probably sported was a form like the one pictured here. The inflorescence shape of *chantinii*, 'Little Harv' and its sports are very similar; the colors vary somewhat from pink to salmon to red. Photo by Larry Giroux.



June Birthdays: Happy Birthday to Phil Elting, Eileen Hart, and Kenneth Stokes



Sunshine Greetings

Please notify Verna Dickey of any illness, surgery, birth of a child, death in the family, or other concerns you or another member may have. Call 813-685-1055 or email vernauld@verizon.net.

Officers for 2020

President: Tom Wolfe 813-391-1542 bromscape@outlook.com

Vice President: Steve Byram 813-361-4035 byramsteve@gmail.com

Treasurer: Rick Hunter 813-657-2305 rg.hunter@verizon.net

Secretary: Marcia Hunter 813-657-2305 rg.hunter@verizon.net

Newsletter Editor: Marilyn Byram 813-563-1532 bgtbnewsletter@gmail.com

Directors:

Verna Dickey 813-685-1055 vernauld@verizon.net

Mark Victor 727-271-0497 chermar75@yahoo.com

Carol Wolfe 813-376-5251 bromscape@outlook.com



Heathcote Botanical Gardens
Fort Pierce, FL

Bromeliads Online

Bromeliad Guild of Tampa Bay www.bromeliadguildoftampabay.org



Look for us on Facebook Bromeliad Guild of Tampa Bay

Bromeliad Society International— www.bsi.org

Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies— www.fcbs.org

Marie Selby Botanical Gardens— www.selby.org

Bromeliads Online - <http://www.bromeliads.co.nz/index.html>

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The Bromeliad Guild of Tampa Bay, Inc. was organized in 1963. BGTB is affiliated with the following: Bromeliad Society International, The Cryptanthus Society, Inc., Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies, Inc., and Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, Sarasota, FL.

When: Meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of every month.
Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Where: Christ the King Catholic Church, McLoughlin Center Room C, 821 South Dale Mabry Highway, Tampa

Informative programs, workshops, Show & Tell, plant sales, door prizes, raffle & refreshments
Visitors welcome!

**NEWSLETTER OF THE
BROMELIAD GUILD OF
TAMPA BAY, INC. 21535
Northwood Dr. Lutz,
Florida 33549**