

**FLORIDA COUNCIL  
of  
BROMELIAD SOCIETIES INC.  
Newsletter**

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Make checks payable to:

Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies

Mail to:

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VOLUME XIII    ISSUE II

JUNE 1993

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CATCHING UP - STAYING EVEN

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY-- Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society. The newly formed Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society brings to thirteen the number of bromeliad societies in Florida. At present, two of the societies are not members of the Florida Council. They are Northwest Florida Bromeliad Society and Broward Bromeliad Society. Northwest Bromeliad Society meets in the Pensacola, Fort Walton Beach area which makes the distance between us prohibitive. We share newsletters and keep in touch. Broward Bromeliad Society was one of the founders of the Florida Council, but withdrew their membership several years ago. It would be nice to have them back. The new society was formed by Art Hyland, who is this year's Florida Council Secretary. There are 17 initial members and they meet on the fourth Sunday of each month, 2:00 PM, at Sugar Mill Gardens; Port Orange, Fl. Port Orange is midway between Daytona and New Smyrna Beach. Dues are \$7.50 individual, \$10.00 family. The society plans to apply for membership in the Florida Council at the July meeting.

IN MEMORIUM--Once again our bromeliad family has lost a loyal friend and mentor. It was a great shock to hear of the death of Victor Yingst of Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society. Victor was for many years ornamental horticulturist for Lee County, a charter member of the Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society, a long-time bromeliad promoter and a certified bromeliad judge. He was a member of the Bromeliad Society of Central Florida way back in the 1970's when I was doing their newsletter. Until we finally got some "Z's" he was for many years the last name on the Florida roster. It is difficult to imagine him gone, but we will remember him for all the good times.

NEXT ISSUE of the Newsletter will be the annual roster edition. Please check you name, address and 'phone number on your local printed roster. That is where I get my information. If there is anything wrong, please let me know. Zip codes are critical. The Newsletter is third class mail, so is not returned to sender. If you are not getting it, we will never know. Society annual dues and Newsletter assessment will be billed on August 1.

Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society raised \$1,193.00 for the Weevil Fund at their rare plant auction in April. This is their second annual Weevil Fund auction and brings to almost \$3,500.00 their donations by individual members. The rest of us aren't doing so good. Next issue will carry an up-date on the weevil situation.



Bromeliad growers seldom get together to talk about roots. Mostly, the subject is color, size, or bloom. Perhaps, like me, the whole subject is somewhat of a mystery. Bromeliads are mainly epiphytic plants, yet we have given their root systems a whole new function. Since it is possible to foliar feed nearly all bromeliads, then the potting process is merely for the convenience of the grower. Right? Well, not really. The plants we grow in pots and soil are a far cry from what is collected in natural habitats. With soil and fertilizer (in judicious proportion) it is possible to get large, healthy, as well as beautiful specimen plants. At any rate, we all strive to get our offsets to root and that process is the purpose of this article. Let's start making roots---

Rooting in Perlite. The Florida Federation of Garden Clubs held their Florida State Flower Show in Orlando earlier this year and I was asked to classify the bromeliad entries. Among the entries were two baskets of Neoregelia fireball. One basket had nice, red leaved plants. The other basket contained well grown, healthy green plants and the entry tag said "Neo. fireball, green form". There is only one Neo. fireball and it is red or green according to the treatment of the roots, plus good light, of course. Good, red Neo. fireball offsets, rooted for about a month in a tray of moist perlite will seldom lose the red color in the process, whereas putting them directly into soil nearly always makes the plants turn green and often produces excessive growth. Hint: When potting from perlite, do not shake all the perlite off the new roots. Offsets rooted in perlite prior to potting will usually maintain foliage color and this is important, especially for the small Neoregelias, as many of them lose color thru at least one blooming when potted directly into regular mix.

Bottle-neck Rooting: Often a parent plant is almost gone and there is one small offset remaining. The offset is getting no help from the host, and will surely die. There is a way-- Fill a small-necked glass bottle (a 6 oz. coke bottle is ideal, but scarce nowadays) about 2/3 full of water--just water. Put the offset into the neck of the bottle above the water, not in the water. If the offset falls thru, the bottle neck is too big. The stub end of the pup reaches for the moisture and in the process forms roots. It works. Sometimes very, very well. I once had to break the bottle to get the roots free. Results are best with bromelioideae species, but try it with Vriesea and Guzmania also.

Empty Pot: It is possible to grow perfectly beautiful bromeliads in an empty pot. Why not? That is the way Mother Nature designed them. For many years I have grown Vriesea fosteriana Red Chesnut plants upright in empty pots. The species has a very poor root system and during our hot, very humid Florida summers it became a losing battle--root prune, repot. Pull off dead lower leaves, repot. Seedling Vriesea Red Chesnut plants seem to be ok in soil. But, when the base gets big and solid it is time for the empty pot. No leaf drop, very little root

development, but the plants do grow, and bloom. It is best to use heavy clay pots for the big plants. *Vriesea guttata* does well in soil thru the winter months, but unless I bare-root them and grow them thru the summer in empty pots, the plants are just barely alive come Fall. Some *Neoregelias* of the *concentrica* type do very well in empty pots. Roots of *Canistrum lindenii* regularly push out onto the soil surface and the plants do very well in empty pots.

Rooting Season: Many years of observation have convinced me that all plants respond to lengthening and shortening days. This has been proven in the production of other plants, but no real study has been made of the bromeliaceae. Some growers are convinced that bromeliads have an inherent blooming instinct. Example: a *Vriesea* native to Brazil which blooms there in September (Spring) will bloom in Florida in September also. Actually, nearly all of my *Vrieseas* from south of the equator begin the bloom cycle in February (lengthening days) and are through before Summer. But, we are discussing roots. It is a real temptation during our warm October and November days in Florida to take and pot offsets from those plants which have finished blooming and are busily reproducing. This past Winter was a good example. But, very few of the offsets taken and potted during that time made any appreciable growth until the lengthening days of February and March. Plants dependent on strong light, such as *Neoregelia*, were the slowest to respond. What I am really trying to say, simply, is do not expect offsets to root well during short days.

Root Pruning: Lower leaves of many bromeliads regularly go bad and drop off (or must be pulled off), leaving a gradually growing trunk-like stem. Species *Neoregelia carolinae*, *concentrica* and *carcharoden* are good examples. Generally, the shy bloomers. I once judged a *Neo. carolinae tricolor* which was deliberately grown with an 8 inch bare trunk. It was attractive and our judging panel was put to the test, but we finally gave the plant a red ribbon and a notation that we did "not want to encourage this type of exhibit". Such plants can be cut off anywhere along the stem, repotted, and they will produce new roots. The plant usually alters it's growing habit after such repotting, so many growers simply cut off most of the roots and repot in a deeper or bigger pot.

Pot Size: Those of you who grow bromeliads from seed know that the more often you step up a seedling, the faster it grows. That is why seedling bromeliads seldom have good form until the second generation. It takes that long to get rid of the baby fat (extra roots). The usual rule is, underpot to control size (fewer roots), overpot and feed for maximum size (abundance of roots).

Mounted Plants: Plants bare-rooted for shipping or mounting which have been grown in pots, may as well have their roots trimmed way back. The new habitat requires new roots and new growth habits.

Plants communicate well. If you are doing something wrong, be sure they will tell you so.

# Reaction of Three Bromeliads to High Humidity During Storage<sup>1</sup>

by R.T. Poole and C.A. Conover<sup>2</sup>

Bromeliads are relatively easy to grow specimen plants that provide a long period of effective display when placed in interior environments. Central Florida producers think bromeliads could command a bigger share of the foliage plant market if certain shipping problems were eliminated. During shipping, healthy leaf tissue sometimes develops necrosis on some or all plants within a shipment. Necrosis most often occurs at structurally weak points such as the arched area of the leaf.

Several experiments have been conducted over the past few years in an effort to discover the production or shipping conditions which lead to this damage. In most experiments damage was not produced under test conditions. In the following two experiments, damage was produced on one of three bromeliads tested from the genus *Aechmea*.

Experiment 1 was a 2 x 2 factorial test with 2 replications per treatment initiated on July 12, 1992. Two local growers supplied a number of excellent quality ready-for-sale *Aechmea* 'Friederike' and *Aechmea fasciata* 'Morgana' to CFREC-Apopka. Excellent quality ready-for-sale *Aechmea fasciata* was obtained from two other local sources. Plants were placed in a greenhouse where maximum light intensity at plant level was 2000 ft-c and air temperatures ranged from 70 to 90°F.

On July 16, 1992, plants were sleeved, boxed and moved to dark air-tight coolers where air temperature was 65°F and relative humidity (RH) was either 90 ± 10% or 50 ± 10%. Plants were watered either three hours or three days before storage. Center vases and foliage of bromeliads watered three days before storage treatments began had dried when plants were placed in coolers. Vases of bromeliads watered three hours before storage were emptied when plants were sleeved and boxed although foliage was still wet. Leaves were checked for signs of developing necrosis after two hours, one day and three days in storage coolers.

Experiment 2, a 2 x 2 factorial test with 3 replications per treatment, was initiated on July 30, 1992. Locally grown ready-for sale *Aechmea* 'Friederike' and *Aechmea fasciata* 'Morgana' were given the same greenhouse, irrigation and cooler treatments as plants used in experiment 1. Plants were sleeved, boxed and placed in 65°F coolers on August 3 and moved back to the greenhouse on August 6, 1992. As in experiment 1, number of necrotic leaves was counted two hours, one day and three days after storage began.

Results of the two experiments were similar. *Aechmea fasciata* 'Morgana' and *Aechmea fasciata* were not affected by test treatments of pre-storage irrigation or storage humidity. High RH (90 ± 10%) during 65°F dark storage damaged leaves of *Aechmea* 'Friederike' (Table 1). In experiment 1, few necrotic leaves were detected after

two hours storage. *Aechmea* 'Friederike' plants with more necrotic leaves after three days in coolers were those in high humidity or watered three hours before storage.

In experiment 2, necrotic areas were detected on foliage within two hours of placement in coolers. When number of necrotic leaves were determined again after three days of storage, numbers had increased only slightly from when first counted.

Growers report that locally shipped plants in transit for two hours or less sometimes develop the same type of necrosis as produced in these experiments. A combination of wet plants or high air temperature and inadequate ventilation around plants in transit could quickly create a very humid environment. Results of these experiments indicate lower humidity during shipping could be beneficial for *Aechmea* 'Friederike'.

1CFREC-Apopka Research Report RH-92-26

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Plant Physiology and Professor, Environmental Horticulture and Center Director, Central Florida Research and Education Center, 2807 Binion Road, Apopka, FL 32703, respectively.

RARE PLANT AUCTION: Will follow the program. Each society is obligated to furnish six rare or semi-rare bromeliad plants (three per council rep). More will be gladly accepted, but not less. This is the only fund raising event of the year for the Florida Council. Your support will be appreciated.

PLAN TO COME FOR A DAY OF FELLOWSHIP, GOOD TIMES AND TALK ABOUT GUESS WHAT!

DINNER RESERVATION

Mr. Art Hyland; 2200 Pine Hill Pl.; Orange City, Fl. 32763

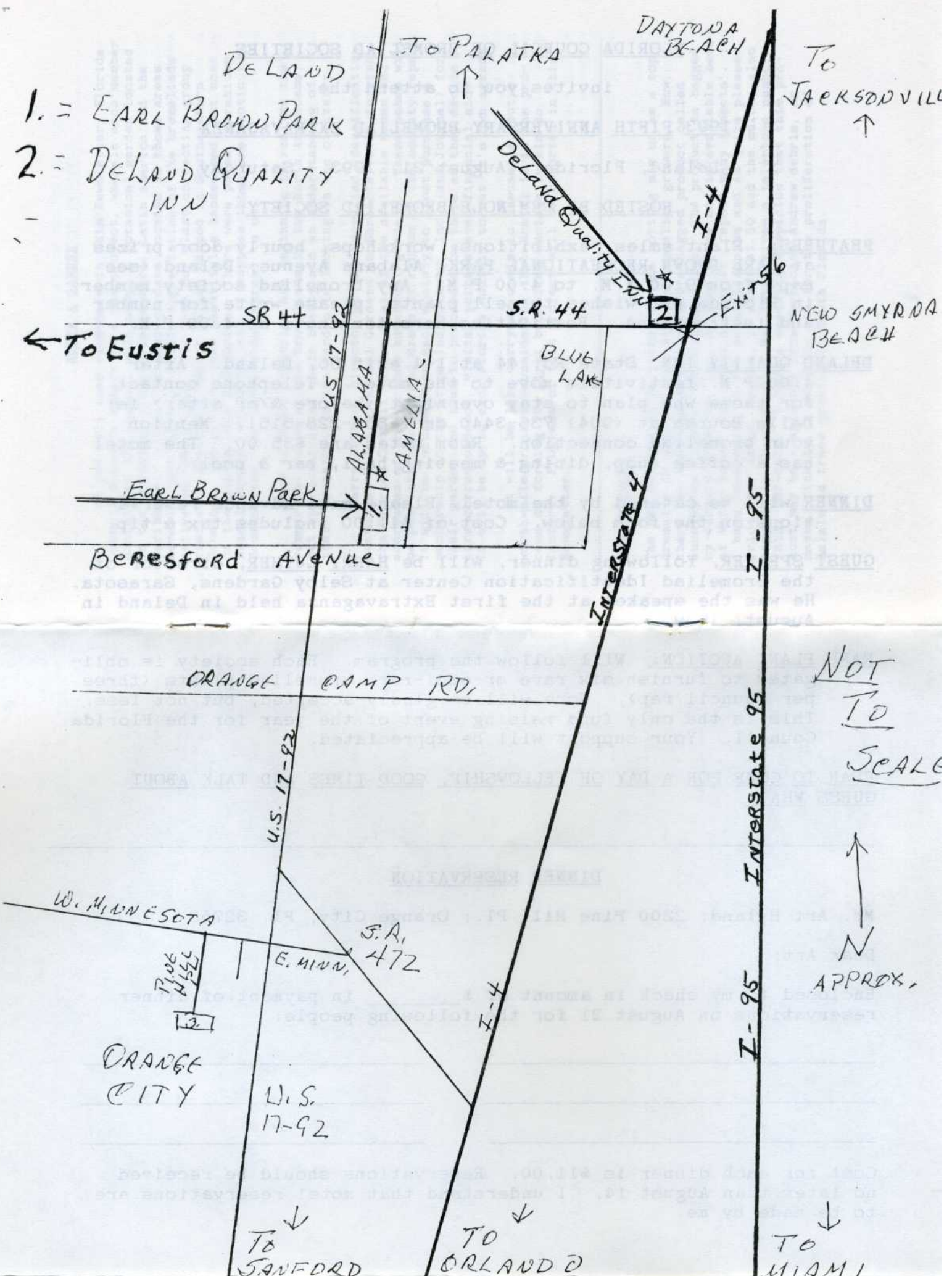
Dear Art:

Enclosed is my check in amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in payment of dinner reservations on August 21 for the following people:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cost for each dinner is \$11.00. Reservations should be received no later than August 14. I understand that motel reservations are to be made by me.

- 1. = EARL BROWN PARK
- 2. = DELAND QUALITY INN



FLORIDA COUNCIL OF BROMELIAD SOCIETIES

invites you to attend the

1993 FIFTH ANNIVERSARY BROMELIAD EXTRAVAGANZA

Deland, Florida - August 21, 1993 - Saturday

HOSTED BY SEMINOLE BROMELIAD SOCIETY

FEATURES: Plant sales, exhibitions, workshops, hourly door prizes at EARL BROWN RECREATIONAL PARK, Alabama Avenue; Deland (see map) from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. Any bromeliad society member in Florida who wishes to sell plants, please write for number and instructions. Festivities here terminate at 4:00 P.M.

DELAND QUALITY INN, State Rd. 44 at I-4 exit 56, Deland. After 4:00 P.M. festivities move to the motel. Telephone contact for those who plan to stay overnight (before &/or after) is: Della Bourke at (904) 736-3440 or 1-800-228-5151. Mention your bromeliad connection. Room rates are \$35.00. The motel has a coffee shop, dining & meeting hall, bar & pool.

DINNER will be catered by the motel. Please make advance reservations on the form below. Cost of \$11.00 includes tax & tip.

GUEST SPEAKER, following dinner, will be HARRY LUTHER, director of the Bromeliad Identification Center at Selby Gardens, Sarasota. He was the speaker at the first Extravaganza held in Deland in



