

# FLORIDA WEST COAST BROMELIAD SOCIETY

1954-2020

*Celebrating over 67 Years in Bromeliads*

*fwcbs.org*



## February 2021 Newsletter

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### NEXT MEETING

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**Date:** Tuesday, ~~February 2, 2021~~ CANCELLED

Our monthly meeting was cancelled once again due to the ongoing health concerns associated with the COVID-19 epidemic. The good news is that this month we will have a Zoom meeting and it will take place Wednesday, February 10, at 7 pm. Details on how to access the meeting have been sent to members by email. We hope you will all try to 'attend' this virtual meeting. The speaker will be Dr. Sally Chambers with the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. Her presentation is titled *An Update on Florida's Native Bromeliads and the Mexican Bromeliad Weevil*.

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### HIGHLIGHTS

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#### Thoughts on Removing Pups

Some people prefer to leave pups on the mother plant and allow them to form a cluster, which can be attractive. If you prefer to have single specimens, it is best to remove pups before their leaves get crowded by the mother plant and become deformed. If you want to increase the pup production, it is often the case that removing pups will encourage the mother plant to produce more pups.

Bromeliads have several methods of producing pups or offsets: 1) from the base of the plants' lower leaves (the most common method), 2) from the plant's upper stem (called 'upper' pups), 3) 'grass' pups from the plant's base (such as those produced by *Alcantareas*), and 4) through underground rhizomes to which new plants are attached. A few bromeliads, such as some *Tillandsias*, can only reproduce through seed.

Bromeliads such as some *Guzmania* and *Vrieseas* that have the habit of producing upper pups (i.e., on the upper part of their stem) require special care in removal of the pups to avoid destroying the pup and/or the mother plant. Below is an article by the late Herb Plever that describes his technique for removing upper pups. The article appeared in our June 2014 newsletter and is repeated here, with some editing.

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**HOW TO REMOVE AN "UPPER" PUP** by Herb Plever, published in the New York Bromeliad Society newsletter *Bromeliana*, February 2012, Volume 49, No. 22

A few *Tillandsia* are stingy in producing offsets and will put up only one pup after flowering, no matter how strong they are or how much they are fertilized. But most other bromeliads will produce at least two offsets and usually many more than that. Some, such as *Guzmania sanguinea* and *Vriesea splendens* (and most of its cultivars such as *V. 'Hera'* or *V.*

'Splendret'), if left on their own will produce only one pup after flowering, and it will come up along the side of the inflorescence in the central reservoir. Instead of emerging from a leaf axil or from the base of the parent plant, these "upper" pups come up at the top of the plant. These bromeliads are called "upper puppers", and they are the only two bromeliad genera I know of that have this habit. You can leave the upper pup to grow on the parent plant until the parent dies back or you can remove the upper pup and pot it. If you remove the pup, it might encourage the mother to produce basal offsets.

Removing an upper pup requires care to avoid injuring the plants. The base of the pup is fragile, and it may snap off if outward pressure is applied. So, it is important to be able to see the base before any cutting is done. Note: A very sharp knife is mandatory.

These are the steps I use to remove an upper pup. Please note that in the pictures below the parent's leaves had been cut short when the plant flowered to make room for more plants in the window tray in my apartment. Typically, I leave the leaves intact to have a more vigorous parent after pup removal and to encourage it to produce pups at the base.

1. Orient the pot so that the pup is facing you. Strip the parent's leaves that are covering the pup by separating them in the center lengthwise. Now you will be able to see the entire base of the pup (pictured on right).



Base of pup exposed

2. Make a horizontal cut below the pup base and then make downward vertical cuts on each side of the base to below the base and slightly into the parent. Then place the sharp knife between the pup and the parent with the blade slightly angled toward and slightly into the parent. A smooth downward cut all the way down will free the pup from its parent. Do not apply any outward pressure on the pup while cutting downward.

3. When the pup is free from the parent (pictured on right), the base of the pup and the cut part of the parent are vulnerable to infection from fungus and bacteria. Use a fungicide powder (or Rootone which has a fungicide), to dust the base of the pup and the cut side of the parent. Alternatively, you could swab some alcohol on those areas and then lightly spray them with Safer's Soap solution.



Offset with roots

4. Allow the cut on the pup to harden and callus before potting it. This step will take 3 to 5 days. During this period, I like to suspend the pup in air, so the base is not touching anything. I accomplish this by hanging the pup in a clean container with the leaves hanging over the edge of the top (pictured on right).



Pup suspended in pot

5. When the base of the pup has sufficiently callused, place the pup in a medium to rapidly grow roots. Place pieces of pre-soaked peat or sphagnum moss around the base of the pup to retain moisture there. Place soil firmly around the base to encourage root growth. To keep the pup stabilized during this initial period, I place two strips of masking tape overlapping across the top of the pot to hold the pup firmly in the pot (pictured on right). I remove the tape after the pup has stabilized with roots.



Potted and stabilized pup after 5 days

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## THIS AND THAT

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### Four 'Heads' Better than One?

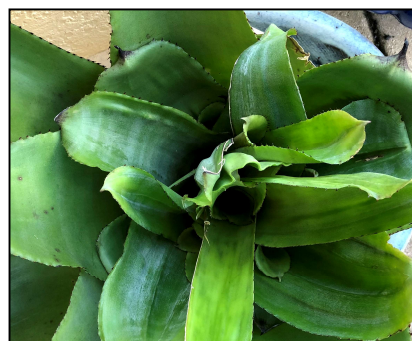
We have a *Hohenbergia leopoldo-horstii* x *burle-marxii* that has grown multiple centers. I got the plant in 2017 and for three years it grew into a nice shape (picture below on left). About six months ago (below, picture in middle) it developed two additional centers, and now has three additional centers (below, picture on right). Someone suggested it needed fertilizer but that appears to have only encouraged the additional centers to increase in size. I am now wondering if each of the centers will produce their own bloom stalk. I would like to see that.



12/2019-one center cup



08/2020-two more center cups



12/2020-four center cups

*Hohenbergia leopoldo-horstii* x *burle-marxii*

### Self-Pollination

Susan Sousa sent the pictures below of one of her bromeliads, unlabeled but likely a *Guzmania*, that had a brown cluster of fine 'threads' nestled among the leaves. Closer inspection revealed they were seeds that had erupted from adjacent seed pods on the plant (seen in the picture on the far right). It turns out, this is a bromeliad that has self-pollinated. Michael Kiehl confirmed the diagnosis and said *Guzmania monostachia* and some forms of *lingulata* self-seed regularly here, although this plant was not likely *monostachia*.



Self-pollinated bromeliad with cluster of seeds and several open seed pods (on far right)

Bromeliads assigned to the sub-family *Tillandsioideae* (such as *Guzmania*, *Vriesea* and *Tillandsia*) have winged seeds with feathery plumes in a dry capsule, like those in the pictures above. These are typically dispersed by breezes until they land on a suitable surface and take hold there.

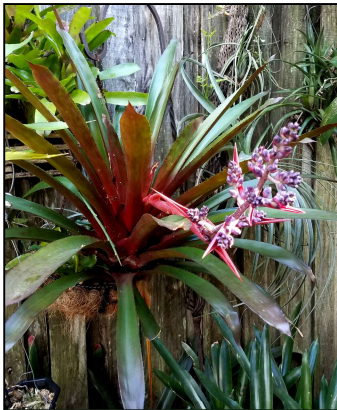
The great majority of bromeliads do not self-pollinate and are typically pollinated by a vector such as insects (like bees, flies, and butterflies), bats, birds, and other animals. Self-pollination occurs when the pollen from the stamen is deposited on the stigma of the same flower, or another flower on the same plant.

Advantages of self-pollination are 1) the plant does not need to spend energy producing pollinator attractants such as nectar and 2) they can grow in areas where pollinators are either rare or absent (such as in the Arctic or at high elevations). The disadvantage is that it leads to less genetic diversity among the plants because the genetic material is all from the same plant. Most plants have developed many ways to avoid self-pollination such as flower features that make it difficult.

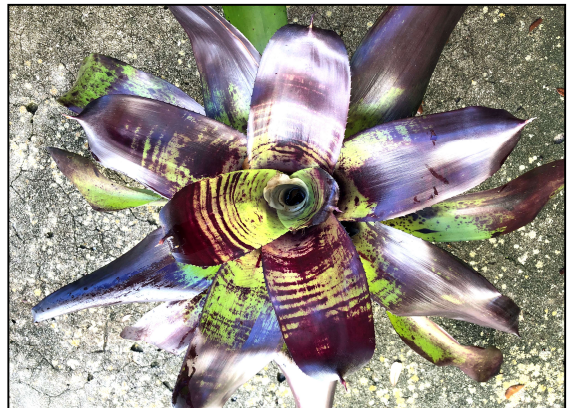
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### IN THE GARDEN THIS MONTH

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*Aechmea* 'Coppertone' (submitted by Linda Ballou,  
Caloosahatchee Bromelaid Society )



*Neoregelia* 'Pitch Black'

#### BROMELIAD AND OTHER PLANT EVENTS, 2021

February 13, Orchid Sale, Florida West Coast Orchid Society, 8-11

Florida Botanical Gardens, 13th from 8-11 am, 12211 Walsingham Road, Largo (fwcos.org)

February 13-14, Edison-Ford Winter Estates Annual Garden Festival

2350 McGregor Boulevard, Ft. Myers

(<https://www.edisonfordwinterestates.org/events/garden-festival/>)

April 10-11, USF Botanical Gardens Spring Plant Sale

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL (<https://www.usf.edu/arts-sciences/botanical-gardens/>)

June 8-12, 2021, 24<sup>th</sup> World Bromeliad Conference, *The Big Show*

Celebrate BSI's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Sarasota

(<https://www.bsi.org/new/conference-corner>)

June 19-20, USF Botanical Gardens Summer Plant Sale

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL (<https://www.usf.edu/arts-sciences/botanical-gardens/>)

October 9-10, USF Botanical Gardens Fall Plant Sale

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL (<https://www.usf.edu/arts-sciences/botanical-gardens/>)

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