

FLORIDA WEST COAST BROMELIAD SOCIETY

1954-2018

Celebrating over 64 Years in Bromeliads

fwcbs.org



July 2018 Newsletter

NEXT MEETING

Date & Time: Tuesday, July 3, 2018; 7:30 pm
Location: Good Samaritan Church
6085 Park Boulevard
Pinellas Park, Florida 33781

PROGRAM

Marty Folk will give a presentation titled *Bromeliads in the Landscape*. He will cover such topics as where to use bromeliads in the landscape and how to install them along with options for designs. He will show examples he has made in residential and commercial applications and will also offer a few tips he has learned based on years of trial and error. Marty is a member of both the Bromeliad Society of Central Florida and the Seminole Bromeliad and Tropical Plant Society. He began his long-time hobby of growing bromeliads 27 years ago and today has several hundred varieties and several thousand plants in his bromeliad collection. He also grows other tropical plants such as orchids, gingers, and heliconias but bromeliads are his favorites.

LAST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

LAST MONTH'S PROGRAM

Marty Baxley, owner of Jungle Gems Nursery, and **Dave Johnston**, owner of Bromeliads Galore Nursery, each talked about how they became interested in bromeliads and the paths they took in developing their present-day businesses.

Marty's talk was a salute to the many people who helped him, encouraged him and shared a love of bromeliads with him. He had a lot of people to thank, many familiar to us and some from the earlier days of FWCBS that many of us did not know. He acknowledged that he could not name all who had helped him over the years but wanted them to know he was grateful for their help.

Marty was first introduced to bromeliads in 1986 by his next door neighbor, who at that time was a member of FWCBS and introduced him to the then-president of FWCBS, who in turn invited him to attend an FWCBS meeting. By 1987 he was collaborating with Michael Kiehl growing bromeliads on wooden pallets. Within the next several years, they met Dennis Cathcart and Wally Berg and then went on a collecting trip to Costa Rica where they visited

Chester Skotak. His network of bromeliad folks grew quickly to include Carol Johnson, Alton Lee, Grant Groves, Dave Johnston, Nat DeLeon, Herb Hill, and Morris and Helen Dexter.

In the 1990s, he and his father Bernie Baxley bought several rental properties where they built a landscaping nursery—Jungle Gems—which they soon converted to growing bromeliads exclusively. They both did this while still employed fulltime in other jobs. Over the years, they expanded the nursery, buying more properties adjacent to the existing nursery. In 2002, his father retired and went to work fulltime at the nursery until he passed away in 2012. Today Marty has seven commercial greenhouses and three fulltime employees. He has been hybridizing for many years, he says, thanks to help from Andy Price, Chester Skotak, and Nat DeLeon.

In the early days his only outlet for selling bromeliads was at the annual Florida State Fair. Today, he also sells bromeliads at a number of local plant sale fairs and provides Neoregelias and Billbergias to the Marie Selby Gardens plant shop in Sarasota.

Dave emphasized the love, fever, and passion he has for bromeliads and discussed some of the challenges to consider when developing a bromeliad nursery business. He came to Florida in 1985 and was then working for a bank. He soon discovered bromeliads, buying them at the few places he could find them. In 1988 he bought a house where he had a 10-by 10-foot landscape box that he filled with bromeliads. Within six months he needed more space and expanded that. It was inevitable that he would need more space still so he built a greenhouse on his then-mother-in-law's property, first a 10- by 20-foot, then 20- by 30-foot, and then 20- by 50-foot with a steel frame. He discovered quickly that using wood for a greenhouse was useless because termites would eat the wood.

In the 1990s he moved into his current home where he built greenhouses for his bromeliads. He then quit his bank job to work fulltime at his passion for bromeliads and started a landscaping business—Bromeliads Galore. He expanded the greenhouse square footage several times but over the years had a series of tussles with local municipality requirements and codes for greenhouse construction that impeded expansion of his collection. Here are a few of the bits of advice he had for the crowd.

- Growing bromeliads requires acquiring and maintaining sufficient space for the inventory.
- Be aware of your city or county rules and codes such as set backs and building strength requirements. For example, the City of Pinellas Park where Dave lives requires his structures be able to withstand a Category 4 hurricane.
- Understand your buyer. For example, green species don't sell, only 'flash and show' sell well.
- Vary stock to keep longtime buyers interested.
- Understand there is a lot of competition from websites such as eBay, with bromeliads that are overpriced and often mislabeled.
- Decide what type of nursery businesses you want to run.

- A commercial business that grows a lot of only a limited variety of plants is wholesale only, chemically induces plants to bloom, and sells to interior-scape companies.
- A collectors nursery that sells retail to bromeliad collectors by mail order, maintains a good and current website, knows the ins and outs of mail order packaging and posting, and can deal with endless emails.
- A nursery that does offsite sales, selling plants at plant fairs and conferences and at events where you are the invited speaker.

Dave ended with a challenge to us to think about how we can instill and maintain the fever and passion for bromeliads that our members have.

MEMBERS WANT TO KNOW ...

This section presents questions regarding bromeliad cultivation that members submitted in writing to the Program Chairman to be read at the meeting. The questions are followed by answers or comments from the group at the meeting.

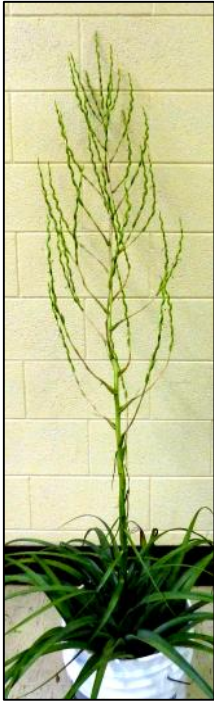
Question: My Florida native *Tillandsia utriculata* is approaching bloom. How do I pollinate it?

Answer: *Tillandsia utriculata* is self-pollinating. This question was timely because a specimen of this species with a large bloom stalk was presented in our Show and Tell segment that someone has offered to maintain to potentially collect seeds and donate them to the Save Florida's Bromeliads Conservation Project. See the discussion in the next section.

SHOW AND TELL

Mary Sue Beeler	<i>Tillandsia utriculata</i> with bloom stalk (picture and comments below)
John Edwards	<i>Neoregelia</i> 'Predatress' <i>Tillandsia capitata</i> red form (picture below) <i>Tillandsia streptophylla</i>
Barb Gardner	<i>Tillandsia</i> on wind chimes (picture below)
Franne Matwijczyk	<i>Acanthostachys strobilacea</i> <i>Neoregelia</i> hybrid
Nicole Matwijczyk	<i>Aechmea tillandsioides</i> <i>Vriesea warmingii</i> (picture below)
Barry Reese	<i>x Vriecantarea</i> 'Inferno' (picture below)
Linda Sheetz	<i>Aechmea</i> 'Brasilia' (picture below) <i>Vriesea warmingii</i>

SHOW AND TELL PLANTS



Tillandsia utriculata (picture on left) is one of Florida's native bromeliads that are being killed in large numbers by the invasive weevil *Metamasius callizona*. It is a slow-growing, large, tank bromeliad and is monocarpic, which means it reproduces by seed only. It previously occurred in dense populations throughout central and southern Florida but the weevil has significantly reduced its number such that it is now fairly rare and in danger of extinction.

Dr. Teresa Cooper, founder of the Save Florida's Bromeliads Conservation Project, has been working with her group in the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary in Brevard County to conserve the population of *Til. utriculata* that once thrived in the forest by collecting seeds and growing seedlings to replenish the declining population.

Mary Sue is leaving for Maine for the summer and was looking for someone to take her plant and harvest any seeds that its large stalk might generate. It was her thought that they could be given to Dr. Cooper for her propagation project. Phil Monnig stepped up and agreed to take the plant and attempt to collect seeds and send them to Dr. Cooper. We look forward to his reports on how the project progresses.



Tillandsia capitata red form



Tillandsias and wind chimes



Vriesea warmingii



x *Vriecantarea* 'Inferno'



Aechmea 'Brasilía'

Report on the 2018 BSI World Bromeliad Conference

By Dick Dailey

The Bromeliad Society International's World Bromeliad Conference is held every two years in various parts of the world. This year it was held in San Diego, California, May 29 through June 3 and eight members of the Florida West Coast Bromeliad Society (FWCBS) attended this event. Greeted by chilly May California weather were Kathy Risley, Steve Littlefield, Gary and Judy Lund, Nancy and Dick Dailey, and Dennis and Linda Cathcart.



Judy and Gary Lund and
Kathy Risley

Dennis and Linda own renowned Tropiflora Nursery in Sarasota and Dennis was honored to be the featured speaker at the conference banquet. He began his bromeliad interest as a member of the FWCBS and since beginning that interest, he has traveled with Linda to 28 countries and made hundreds of bromeliad trips and expeditions. Dennis' topic was on creating a nursery business and making this passion for bromeliads and other tropical plants his way of life. He and Linda are now passing this love on to their children so Tropiflora will move into a second generation.

The World Bromeliad Conference features many outstanding speakers with unique qualifications. Li Ping, the Chief Horticulturist at Shanghai Chenshan Botanical Gardens, gave a presentation on the important role the gardens there played in developing bromeliad interest in China. Tropiflora and Florida played an instrumental role in developing these gardens when Li Ping selected former FWCBS member Harry Luther to join her and the team in Shanghai and to help develop the gardens and grow bromeliad interest in China which continues to multiply today. Unfortunately, Harry passed away of an aneurism before his first five-year contract was completed. He is still recognized today as one of the leading authorities in taxonomy for bromeliads in the world and his name was mentioned frequently during many presentations.

Also in attendance was Wesley Schilling, now 84 years of age and still a vendor at the bromeliad conference. Wesley was a member of FWCBS from 1960 to 1965 and led the development of the very first bromeliad conference that was held at a Clearwater hotel back in 1964. Because Wesley dates back to the early years of FWCBS, one of the first bromeliad societies in the U.S., he offered insight into the early days and agreed to spend time with us recalling those early days so that members down the road will know the challenges they faced over 60 years ago.

The big news from the World Bromeliad Conference was in the judging of 20 plus tables of bromeliads. Kathy Risley entered five plants in the Decorative Container (BSI show level Division DC), one of which was a BSI medallion Section winner that earned an 'Award of Merit'. That display was her off-white bathtub-like bonsai container that held two miniature *Neoregelia* 'Toy Tiger' twins (picture on right), one at either end of the tub along with a pup (that could not yet be removed



because it was too small) 'floating' in the tub. She also received four blue ribbons in the same category, awarded to: 1) a pinched pot containing multiple *Neo. 'Lilliputiana'*; 2) a metal bird with five *Neo. 'Midget'* arraying the bird's back; 3) a ceramic creamer pot with *Neo. 'Alleycat' x pauciflora* with one pup extending out of the creamer as if it were being poured out; and, 4) a container of stone with *Neo. 'Dartanion'*. Stephen Littlefield also displayed a mezzotint print entitled *Xerographica* and a linocut block print of *Quesnelia 'Tim Plowman'*. Although the BSI host society show committee determined not to judge this year's art exhibits, his display of these two pieces of his artwork enhanced the exhibit tables.

Pot Hangars

Here are two examples of ways to use the pot hangars we sold at the meeting last month to display your plants and save space.



Barb Gardner's pot hangars display



Susan Sousa's pot hangars

Deuterocohnia brevispicata Addendum

Herb Plever, New York Bromeliad Society newsletter editor, provided this tidbit about the continued blooming of inflorescences in species such as *Deuterocohnia* (like the *Deuterocohnia brevispicata* pictured in last month's newsletter), *Dyckia* and some *Hechtias*. He says the continued blooming occurs when the inflorescences come up in lateral leaf axils and not from the center growing point and the plant keeps growing despite flowering.

BLOOMING THIS MONTH



Aechmea chantinii
hybrid by Patricia Bullis



Ananas bracteata
colorful pups



Aechmea haltonii

UPCOMING EVENTS, 2018

August 18-19, Seminole Bromeliad & Tropical Plant Society Sale
Sanford Garden Club, Sanford, FL (407-539-4314)

August 26, USF Botanical Gardens Bromeliad Bash Sale
University of South Florida, Tampa, FL (cas.usf.edu/garden)

October 5-7, Tropiflora Nursery Fall Festival
Tropiflora Nursery, 3530 Tallavast Road, Sarasota (tropiflora.com/events)

October 13-14, USF Botanical Gardens Fall Plant Festival
University of South Florida, Tampa, FL (cas.usf.edu/garden)

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