

FLORIDA WEST COAST BROMELIAD SOCIETY

1954-2020

Celebrating over 66 Years in Bromeliads

fwcbs.org



October 2020 Newsletter

NEXT MEETING

Date: Tuesday, October 6, 2020 CANCELLED

Once again, our monthly meeting has been cancelled due to the ongoing health concerns associated with the COVID-19 epidemic and the church campus where we meet is still closed. Monthly meetings will not be held until the church opens their campus and it is safe for our group to meet.

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

PROGRAM

This monthly newsletter features a summary of a program from September 2013 titled *Foliage Vrieseas* presented to our society by member Dave Johnston. He talked about *Vriesea* hybrids that are notable for their foliage, i.e., their color and markings. (Most *Vriesea* bloom stalks are not particularly spectacular but many are prized for their foliage.) On the right is a picture of some foliage *Vriesea* hybrids that Marty Baxley brought to show their variety.



Dave showed pictures of numerous foliage *Vriesea* hybrids made from crosses that include at least one of five common *Vriesea* species-- *fenestralis*, *fosteriana*, *hieroglyphic*, *gigantea*, and *platynema*.

- Species *fenestralis* (pictured below) is native to southeast Brazil and cold tender; its markings tend to carry through into its hybrids, such as *Vr.* 'Franklin Forest' (*Vr. fenestralis* x *Vr. fosteriana*; pictured below) and *Vr. fenestralis* x *platynema*.



Vriesea fenestralis
(Photo by Herb Plever)



Vriesea 'Franklin Forest'

- Species *fosteriana* (pictured below) is native to coastal forests of Brazil, is cold tender, and can be found at about 3,000 feet elevation. Hybrid examples are *Vr.* 'Robert Kautsky' (*Vr. fosteriana* x *Vr. gigantea*; pictured below) and *Vr.* 'Bianca'.



Vriesea fosteriana
(Photo from Olive Hill
Nursery)



Vriesea 'Robert Kautsky'
(Photo from Bromeliário
Imperialis)

- Species *gigantea* (pictured below) is native to southern Brazil and a slow grower, and can grow to about 3 feet tall and 5 feet wide. It has a yellow flower that blooms at night and is pollinated by bats. One foliage hybrid using this species is 'Daintree Forest' (*Vr. gigantea* x *Vr. fosteriana*; pictured below).



Vriesea gigantea
(Photo from Bullis
Nursery)



Vriesea 'Daintree Forest'
(Photo by Ken Woods)

- Species *hieroglyphica* (pictured below) is a finicky grower; it has a narrow temperature range (not too cold, not too hot) and is hard to grow in Florida. Hybrid examples are *Vr.* 'Tiger Lily' (*Vr. hieroglyphica* x *fosteriana*; pictured below) and *Vr.* 'El Supreme' (*Vr. hieroglyphica* x *Vr. fenestralis*).



Vriesea fenestralis
(Photo from fcbs.org)



Vriesea 'Tiger Lily'
(Photo by David Fell)

- Species *platynema* (pictured below) is native to the West Indies and South America. Its leaves have purple tips that tend to carry through into its hybrids. It is somewhat cold tender. Foliage hybrid examples are *Vr.* 'Frost Bite' (*Vr. platynema* var. *variegata* x *fenestralis*; pictured below) and *Vri.* 'Lavender Lady' (*Vr. gigantea* x *Vr. platynema* var. *variegata*).



Vriesea platynema
(Photo by Holger Sachs)



Vriesea 'Frost Bite'
(Photo by J. Koning)

Dave offered the following tips for growing Vrieseas.

- Vrieseas do best in areas with good air circulation. Put them in a basket pot or if potting in regular plastic pots, consider hanging the pots for better air circulation.
- Vrieseas can take a lot of fertilizer, up to a tablespoon of a slow release fertilizer.
- Vrieseas can rot if they are kept too wet. They do best in a well-drained medium such as very loose potting soil with a lot of perlite.
- Signs of rot include brown middle and lower leaves and the plant may appear unstable, or wobbly, in the pot. At the first sign of rot, treat with a fungicide, such as Captan.
- Vrieseas can be very slow growers and often take five or more years to produce a bloom stalk, which even after the wait is often not spectacular. But most folks grow them for their lovely foliage.

Dave owns and operates Exotic Landscapes Nursery, a full-service landscaping company and Bromeliads Galore. He been a member of our society for over 30 years.

THIS AND THAT

Bok Tower Gardens, Lake Wales Donation

Our bromeliad society's goals include promoting cultivation, identification, hybridization, and preservation of bromeliads for both our members and the general public. To aid in achieving these goals, our society makes donations each year to an appropriate organization that works toward these goals. In previous years, donations have included the bromeliad weevil fund for research into combating this destructive insect that is killing bromeliads.

Last year, Karen Mills approached a number of gardens within the state and offered a donation if they could assure that the money would be designated for promoting bromeliads. Bok Tower Gardens responded positively to the offer, and in August 2019 Karen visited the gardens and presented Melissa Tyrone, Director of Philanthropy and Membership, with the donation (picture on the right).



Karen Mills and Melissa Tyrone

Melissa and the gardens' Director of Horticulture Brendan Huggins recently told us that they applied the donation in several ways. They purchased dozens of *Neoregelia* 'Royal Burgundy' and *Neo.* 'Margaret' that they planted in three new beds (example below on the left) along a path that leads to Bok Tower, enhanced several older, established beds of bromeliads such as *Billbergia pyramidalis* (example below on the right), and moved a number of larger bromeliads (e.g., *Alcantarea*) from pots into the ground at various locations within the gardens.



New planting of *Neoregelia* 'Royal Burgundy'



Established bed of *Billbergia pyramidalis*

Last month my husband Brian Corey and I visited the gardens, a first time for us both, even though I am a Florida native. Below is what we learned about the gardens along with some photographs we took there.

Bok Tower Gardens is a contemplative garden and bird sanctuary located at the end of a meandering road, about 4 miles north of Highway 60 where the highway goes through Lake Wales. The gardens are a National Historic Landmark listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The gardens were established in 1929 as a gift from Edward W. Bok, a Dutch immigrant, for the enjoyment of the public. Bok commissioned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. to transform what then was an arid sand hill into a fertile landscape, built on one of the highest points of peninsular Florida, approximately 295 feet above sea level. (Frederick Olmsted, Jr. is the son of Frederick L. Olmsted, Sr. who designed Central Park in New York City.)

The central feature of the gardens is the 50-acre Olmsted Landscape Gardens with paths that meander among large live oaks, sabal palms, magnolias and many other tree types, hundreds of ornamental and edible shrubs and tropical and subtropical plants that include assorted bromeliads. These are some of the bromeliads on display at the entrance and in the Olmsted Landscape Gardens.



Alcantarea imperialis



Tillandsia streptophylla



Alcantarea odorata



Tillandsias attached to wire strands;
Guzmanias in a hanging basket



Tillandsia 'tree'



Aechmea mexicana
variegated



Beds of assorted bromeliads



Vriesea



Aechmea
gamosepala

Within the Olmstead gardens is a 205-foot tall, Gothic Revival and Art Deco-style 'Singing Tower', surrounded by a moat with large-size koi in it. The tower has a 60-bell carillon that is a set of bells played with a keyboard and is used for carillon concerts each day.



Singing Tower
and reflecting pond



Reflecting pond with giant lily pads (*Victoria amazonica*),
a single plant with submerged stems up to 25 feet long



There are a number of other features at Bok Tower Gardens that include a pine forest, oak hammock, wet prairie, wetland, and bog. The Pine Ridge Nature Preserve and Trail is a place of longleaf pine and sand hill habitats with Florida native plants and animals, some rare and endangered. Hammock Hollow Children's Garden provides children an interactive experience with nature. Pinewood Estate and Gardens includes a 1932 Mediterranean-style home and an Olmsted-designed garden.



The garden shop at Bok Tower had an abundance of small Tillandsias for sale that they display in innovative ways, as shown in the pictures below.



IN THE GARDEN THIS MONTH

Peggy Goodale sent the pictures below of a bed of *Billbergia pyramidalis* in her yard. The close-up on the right shows one of the bloom stalks and the red, tube-shaped flowers with violet and yellow highlights.



Billbergia pyramidalis

Barb Gardner sent the pictures below of her garden. She also sent a note about a trick she uses to be reminded to water her Cryptanthus. She planted cuttings of an impatiens plant in each of her Cryptanthus planters and when the impatiens stems and leaves wilt, 9 times out of 10 the Cryptanthus are thirsty too, and it is time to water them.



Cryptanthus 'Elaine'
with impatiens cuttings



Tillandsia 'Sparkler' (*Til. brachycaulos* x *concolor*)



Aechmea 'Morona' (*Aec. pendula* var. *brevifolia* x *rosea*)

BROMELIAD EVENTS, 2020-2021

2020

October 17, 2020, USF Botanical Gardens Bromeliad Bash Sale

10 AM to 3 PM, USF--12210 Pine Dr, Tampa (<https://icause.com/tampa/bromeliad-bash/200020102880128> or <https://allevents.in/tampa/bromeliad-bash/200020102880128>)

2021

March 26-28, 2021, Tropiflora's 21st Annual Spring Festival

Tropiflora Nursery, 3530 Tallavast Road, Sarasota, 941-351-2267
(<https://tropiflora.com/pages/events>)

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, 24th World Bromeliad Conference, *The Big Show*

Celebrate BSI's 70th anniversary, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Sarasota
(<https://www.bsi.org/new/conference-corner>)

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