

The Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society

Next meeting Sunday, March 13th, 1:30p.m.
Colony in the Wood – club house
4000 S. Clyde Morris Blvd., Port Orange 32129

March, 2011

Don't forget to re-set your clocks!

President – Bradley Rauch – 386/767-8937

Vice President – Rick Ryals – 386/679-8700

Secretary – Eretta Morris – 386/677-9557

Treasurer – Eve Krauth – 386/763-2084

Don't be an hour late for this month's meeting– it's time once again to “Spring Forward” and set your clocks ahead one hour. That means that when it is 1:30 and time for our meeting, your body will say “nope, it's only 12:30 – you've still got plenty of time to get there!”

This month's meeting –

The topic for discussion this month is Billbergias. These are wonderful plants! Many are quite cold-hardy and they can reward you with outstanding, if somewhat short-lived blooms. If you have Billbergias in your collections, bring them in for Show and Tell and let's have a look at them!

FECBS needs you!...and your plants –

That's right, the Master Gardener's Spring Fair will be on Saturday, April 2nd at the Volusia County Fair Grounds in Deland. This is our one fund raiser each year and for it to be a success we need lots of nice bromeliads to sell and we need a few helping hands to sell those plants. This is also a great opportunity to talk with potential new club members as they select plants to purchase from our booth. It's really a fun event and it's only a half day – so even if you don't feel comfortable helping out at our booth, come on out and browse the many other booths that

usually sell everything from native plants to roses, to fruit trees! As in past years, our rules for the sale remain the same: we want clean, healthy plants with two tags on each one. Be sure to check to see that there is no scale on the plants or they will be rejected for sale! One tag should have the name of the plant and the other must have the price clearly marked, in whole dollar amounts (please, no \$1.99 specials!). You, as owner of the plant, will receive 80% of proceeds if that plant is sold and the club receives 20%. Or, if you would like, you can donate 100% of the sales price to the club – what better and easier way to get rid of your excess plants and show your support for FECBS! Need help getting your plants to the fairgrounds? Ask one of your officers and I'm sure that arrangements can be made to accommodate you. So, mark your calendar now for April 2nd, tell all of your friends to be sure to be there early if they want to buy the best plants and start setting those plants aside now for the sale. If you have any questions or need directions on how to get to the fairgrounds, be sure to ask one of the officers at this month's meeting.

Chester Skotak – hybridizer extraordinaire

It's always interesting to read other bromeliad societies' newsletters. They are

often a terrific source of information but sometimes that information doesn't always spread outside of the readership of the club that has printed the newsletter. Fortunately, most editors are a generous lot and they are more than willing to share their articles for distribution in other newsletters. The following is courtesy of Herb Plever, long-time BSI member, honorary BSI Trustee, former president of the New York Bromeliad Society and editor of their highly respected "Bromeliana" newsletter.

CHESTER SKOTAK'S NEW MINIATURE HYBRIDS

by Herb Plever

Chester Skotak has earned world renown as an outstanding and most prolific hybridizer of bromeliads. For many years he has lived and worked in a huge mountain area of Costa Rica outside of San Jose that was a former coffee plantation. He has a fertile and restless mind and imagination and a great nose for selecting bromel characters to create strong, beautiful plants. He has worked with many bromel genera and bigenerics, and he looks to create compact and light sensitive plants that most bromeliad enthusiasts can grow. He grows an astronomical number of plants and seedlings. In his recent hybridizing Chester has been producing miniature neoregelias and pineapples, and he is now working on creating mini guzmanias. At the 2010 World Conference in New Orleans, Eloise Beach displayed a number of Chester's new miniature neoregelia hybrids. These are true minis that range from 4 to 8 inches tall and 5 to 10 inches wide! I don't have much information at this time about the guzmanias. One of the miniature pineapples was shown recently by Deroose Plants at the Tropical Plant Industry Exhibition in Ft. Lauderdale, FL and got the "Cool Plant Award" (**editor's note: this was Ananas 'Mini-Me' and was shown with photos taken at the exhibit at last month's meeting**). This miniature plant has fruited five small pineapples that Chester says were sweet and delicious. The neo miniatures are

all complex hybrids; they are the results of a number of crosses, selections and recrosses from an original hybrid or hybrids. In later stages of the crosses, a new parent may be added to the mix because it has special characters that Chester wants to be transferred to the progeny. Of course, at this time Chester has not released information on the parentage of the new plants. When a hybridizer has developed a good hybrid with commercial potential, it is typical and understandable that he/she will protect the special formulas from the competition until the plant has been reproduced in quantity. Chester says he intends to register the minis with the B.S.I. Registrar, at which time the parentage will be revealed. In 2008 I took a photo of an unregistered variegated cultivar of Chester's Neoregelia 'Hannibal Lector' that was labeled N. 'Kouchala'. It had broad white margins and also white longitudinal lines of varying thickness running along the length of the green leaves and red cross bands. These matched the markings on adjacent leaves to suggest the pattern on N. *concentrica* cv. 'Tiger', one of the parents of N. 'Hannibal Lector'. It is interesting to note (but likely coincidental) that more than a few of the new miniature neoregelias exhibit similar markings with the exception of the longitudinal white lines. 'Hannibal Lector's' other parent was N. *ampullacea* cv. 'Rafa', a tiny plant whose few upright leaves have strong, dark purple bands. And some of the new minis display that dark banding on their undersides. Of course there are many other tiny neoregelias with similar banding that could be used to reduce the original parents to miniature sizes: neoregelias 'Tiger Cub', *lilliputiana*, 'Wee Willie', the red form of N. *punctatissima* (?) and others. In addition to these plants, there are two hybrids made by Chester that may have been a part of the mini mix: (Neoregelia *carolinae* variegated x N. 'Hannibal Lector') and N. 'Morado'.



Neoregelia 'Morado'

Shown by John Boardman
2003 Mothers Day Show, BSCF

Photo of Neo. 'Morado' courtesy of FCBS website

The former hybrid is variegated rather than consistently albomarginated with strong red markings, and I think of 'Morado' because of the consistent albomargination on all but two of the new minis. The above suggestions are wild guesses that I hazard to make without evidence solely to give the reader an idea of the range of possibilities and the complexities of hybridizing - an art and a skill of great magnitude possessed by the good hybridizers. Nine of the miniature Neoregelias that were displayed at the 2010 World Conference in New Orleans are being grown by Eloise Beach for Chester at the Tropiflora nursery in Tallavast, Florida). You can see their photos and descriptions on line at tropiflora.com. With the exception of two minis, all are albomarginated with varying degrees of purple to red broken cross-banding, spots and dots. N. 'Palmares' has green margins around a broad white longitudinal stripe and has purple markings. As you can see from the photo of N. 'Delirious', its shorter and broader leaves also have green margins around broad or narrow white stripes (it is 6" high by 6" wide), but the undersides of the leaves are dramatically marked with dark purple bars reminiscent of N. 'Rafa'. Michael's Bromeliads of Venice, Florida will have three of Chester's miniature neoregelias listed in its on line Spring Catalog, www.michaelsbromeliads.com.

These are plants that were selected and named by Michael Kiehl in a previous visit to Chester's place in Costa Rica. They have been named N. 'Zeppo', N. 'Groucho' and N. 'Harpo'.



Photo of Neo. 'Harpo' courtesy of FCBS website

The available stock of Tropiflora's and Michael's miniatures is limited, so their prices are high. When greater quantities become available, the prices will undoubtedly drop. Chester still has many mini neos that have not yet been released for distribution. The next batch of these plants will be shown at the 2012 World Bromeliad Conference in Orlando, Florida. Chester says these miniatures should be grown in filtered sun for best color and markings, but as always indoor growers will have to test each new cultivar in different light conditions to determine whether it will color up well indoors. I think they will do surprisingly well in a good east, certainly south and west window - and even close under fluorescent lights. As Reginald Deroose has been growing some of Chester's pineapple minis, we hope that tissue cultures and fruiting plants may become available later.

Editor's note: If you think that you have a difficult time growing bromeliads - Herb grows a wide variety of bromeliads to perfection in his apartment in New York City!

Upcoming Events:

This is a busy month for shows and sales and April will be even more so. Take advantage of this great Spring weather to replace some of your plants that were damaged or killed during the Winter and while you're at it, take in a bromeliad show or two!

March 19 and 20, 2011

Leu Gardens Spring Plant Sale – Free admission at Harry P. Leu Gardens, 1920 N. Forest Ave.
Orlando, Fl. 32803

March 26th and 27th, 2011

The Bromeliad Society of Broward County and the GFWC Plantation Woman's Club – Bromeliad show and sale. 9-5 Sat., 9-4 Sun. at Volunteer Park Community Center, 12050 W. Sunrise Blvd., Plantation, Fl. 33323

March 26th, 2011

Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies' quarterly meeting – hosted by the Broward County Bromeliad Society

March 26, 27th, 2011

Spring sale at Kanapaha Gardens in Gainesville. Gainesville Bromeliad Society will have a booth for plant sales there.

April 2nd, 2011

Spring Master Gardener's sale at the Volusia County Fairgrounds. Be sure to mark this on your calendars – it's a ½ day sale and FECBS's sole fundraiser for the year!

April 2nd and 3rd, 2011

Bromeliad Guild of Tampa Bay Show and Sale in conjunction with Tampa Federation of Garden Clubs Show
2629 Bayshore Boulevard, Tampa, Florida.

April 16th and 17th, 2011

South Florida Bromeliad Society show and sale at Fairchild Gardens in Miami

April 16th and 17th, 2011

Seminole Bromeliad and Tropical Plant Society Spring plant sale

April 16th and 17th, 2011

16th Annual Flower & Garden Expo at the St. Johns County Agricultural Center located conveniently near Exit # 318 off of I-95, Teresa Andrews at St. Augustine. Contact (904) 829-2273, ext. 46 for details.

April 30th and May 1st, 2011

Sarasota Bromeliad Society show and sale at Selby Gardens in Sarasota

May 19-22, 2011

Florida Native Plant Society 31st Annual Conference and plant sale in Maitland. Call 321-271-6702 for details

May 21st, 2011

BSI annual Board of Directors meeting – the Mounts Botanical Garden in West Palm Beach

November 4th, 5th, 2011

Bromeliad Extravaganza "The Art of Bromeliads" hosted by FECBS! The Plaza hotel in Daytona Beach

