

# BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO

---



February 2010

## NEWSLETTER

---

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, February 18, 2010** at 7:30 PM  
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park,  
San Francisco

---

### February Program

#### **Tillandsias and a New Book**

Our speaker this month will be **Paul Isley**. Paul is a partner with Jerry Robinson in Rainforest Flora, the tillandsia nursery in southern California. For those of you who have been involved in this hobby for many years, you are probably familiar with Paul's 1987 book *Tillandsia* that has an excellent overview of the Bromeliad family with an emphasis on the tillandsia genus.

Paul will provide a show about tillandsias and tillandsia hybrids he has made and introduce us to his new tillandsia book – a revision on the 1987 book. Copies of the book will be available for sale.

It is likely that Paul will be selling plants and may provide the plant table. This may be your chance to get the orange-flowered *Tillandsia crocata*.

#### **February Refreshments**

**Darold Petty** and **Craig Riser** signed up for refreshments this month.



#### **Dues are Due**

A new year has begun and dues are due: \$15 for a single membership and \$20 for a family. Pay Harold at the meeting or mail check to Harold. See back page for details.

## January Meeting

Last month **Peder Samuelsen** treated us to a great slide show on the World Bromeliad Conference 2008 in Cairns, Australia. **Marilyn Moyer** and Peder were the only members of our society to attend the conference. We got to visit much of the environs north of Cairns including sand crabs with their unique patterns in the sand, kangaroos, koalas, and many birds. The plant show was very large for the space provided at the hotel so Peder could not get many shots of individual plants – either because of too many people in the room or inability to zero in on a single plant. We did get to see many of the beautiful displays scattered around the hotel lobby as well as the top award winners. Another highlight of the conference was the garden tours; there were five, ranging from small to huge. The largest grounds were wired with hidden speakers, lots of night lighting, and a crocodile (a fake one whose mouth periodically opened). It was a wonderful slide show Peder and thanks for sharing it with us.

## Uncommon Bromeliads

This article is reprinted from the December 1983 newsletter of the Bromeliad Study Group of Northern California.

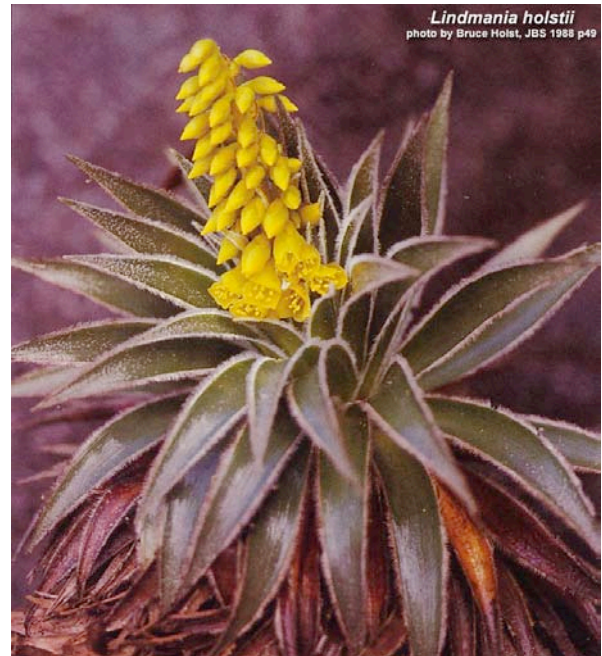
Very few persons have been privileged to see a *Cottendorfia*. Little is known of this monotypic (one plant in the genus) genus. The plants have narrow grass-like leaves and a branched inflorescence of very small flowers. *Cottendorfia florida* is the only known species. It grows in the state of Bahia, Brazil.

The *Lindmanias* also have a rather grass-like appearance, but with wider, spineless leaves. They have a central inflorescence with small white flowers. They are found from Mexico to Argentina although there are only a dozen species known. *Lindmania penduliflora* has been in horticulture for many years and is a graceful but not spectacular bromeliad that would add interest to any collection.



*Cottendorfia florida* in Chapada Diamantina, Bahia, Brazil

This is *Cottendorfia florida* found in Chapada Diamantina, Bahia, Brazil. Photo is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



*Lindmania holstii*  
photo by Bruce Holst, JBS 1988 p49

Here is *Lindmania holstii*, named after Bruce Holst and found in Venezuela. Photo is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

## Pitcairnias are Water Guzzlers

This article by Herb Plevier is reprinted from the May 2002 newsletter of the New York Bromeliad Society. This genus is becoming much more popular and they are often seen in Bromeliad Shows.

Our last two plant orders listed a few *Pitcairnias*, but not many of us ordered them. I ordered *Pitcairnia flammea*, *P. smithiorum* and *P.*

*flammea* x *P. smithiorum*. The plants that were shipped were not in great shape, with only a few hard, brown leaves and very little green showing. I cut back the dried roots on the three plants and potted the plants wick-watered in 4 ½ inch pots. A month or so later I put them out on my terrace for the summer where they received moving air, bright light, good humidity and they got rained on. They were seated on quart yogurt containers which I use as reservoirs for the wicks.

In a short time all three plants broke out with new growth in the center and a few new plantlets from the side. After a while when I checked the containers for water I noticed that they were bone dry even after one week. This should have alerted me to repot the plants in larger containers but, as always, I was too busy with other things and I ignored the warning. I contented myself with filling the containers every week.

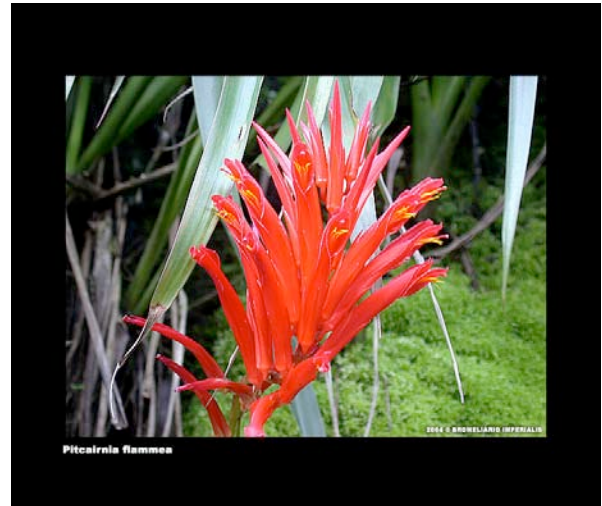


This is *Pitcairnia smithiorum*. Photo is by Ken Marks and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

When I brought the plants indoors in October, I placed them on a fiber glass tray on an east window sill, still wick-watered. They got good light and humidity and put out more new plantlets. Some time went by when they emphatically repeated the original warning message. I had tried to shift them to make room for another plant on the tray but could not move them. On checking to see why, I found that they had sent enormous roots down the wick and drain holes and had not only wrapped around the plastic egg crate I use for a shelf but had also put a huge mass of roots into the water.

I have now repotted the plants, two in standard 5 ½ inch and one in a standard 6 inch pot. The

standard pots are 5 ½ inch and 6 inch high in contrast to the 3 ½ inch height of a 5 inch azalea pot. Clearly the Pitcairnias make large masses of roots, searching for water. They will become pot bound very quickly, so be prepared to pot them into standard pots of a large size. (You can't find 4 ½ or 5 ½ inch pots anymore. I have been recycling my pots for the past ten years or so. They are of a much thicker plastic and cost me a fraction of the prices charged for thin plastic pots today.)



This is the flower of *Pitcairnia flammea*. Photo is by Bromeliario Imperialis and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

To get some insight into the rooting habits of Pitcairnias, I surveyed the habitat material on the Pitcairnias in the Dr. Lyman B. Smith's monograph on subfamily Pitcairnioideae. I found they are widely distributed throughout Central and South America, generally at altitudes of from 500 to 2,000 feet. Most species grow terrestrially or saxicolous (on rocks) **on or near stream banks**. Even when rarely epiphytic they grow in wet areas.

This is certainly consistent with my experience with them. The six varieties of *Pitcairnia flammea* grow saxicolous or terrestrially on or near river banks and *P. smithiorum* is found growing terrestrially on the banks of the Rio Napa in Peru. With such cultural habits I suspect that they need to be fertilized, yet they don't have cups to hold water and my potting mix has no soil in it. Therefore I added slow release 13-13-13 pellets to the mix when I repotted the plants, and when I

remember I foliar feed them with a spray of fertilized water. My aim is to get them to more quickly reach maturity and flower.

## Harry Luther is Leaving Selby Gardens and the BIC

This article is taken from website for the Bromeliad Society International.

(Sarasota, FL, January 27, 2010): **Harry E. Luther**, director of the Mulford B. Foster Bromeliad Identification Center and Curator of Living Collections at Selby Gardens, has accepted the position of Assistant Director / Horticulture at the Gardens by the Bay, National Parks Board in Singapore.

In 1978 Luther was hired by the first Gardens' director, Dr. Calaway H. Dodson to develop the Mulford B. Foster Bromeliad Identification Center. In 1980, he was named Curator of Living Collections. Tom Buchter, CEO of Selby Gardens commented, "Luther's vast contributions to the collections and expertise at Selby Gardens over the past 32 years have been invaluable. This is a great opportunity for Harry and he will be missed."

Luther is recognized internationally as an expert in the horticulture and botany of bromeliads, and he is one the leading experts on the systematics of the bromeliad family. He has described more than 100 bromeliad species new to science, and has authored more than 200 scientific and popular publications.

Luther is active in local, national and international bromeliad societies. He is an honorary member of the Brazilian Bromeliad Society and the Japanese Bromeliad Society, and he is an honorary trustee of the Bromeliad Society International. Luther serves on the editorial and scientific advisory boards of several organizations in the Unites States, Costa Rica and Brazil.

The Bromeliad Identification Center is renowned for bromeliad identification service and research. Selby Gardens will begin a search for a replacement to continue the work of the Center.

## Bromeliads thrive and uncertainties grow at Selby Gardens

This article by Thomas Becnel is reprinted from the 7 February Sarasota Harold-Tribune website.

**Harry Luther**, a world leader in bromeliad research, thought he would finish his career at Selby Botanical Gardens.



Instead, frustrated with garden management, he is leaving for a new botanical project in Singapore.

"I'll just start over," says Luther, 58. "It'll take awhile to get back where I am, but it's doable."

The future of research at Selby does not look so bright, according to scientists across the country. Last year, the debt-strapped gardens laid off the last two researchers in its orchid identification program. Now the nonprofit loses a bromeliad expert described as "irreplaceable."

Botanists still talk about research at Selby, but they use the past tense.

"It was a world-class organization, top of the list," said Robert Magill, director of research at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis. "They had a core group of people that was just outstanding."

John Kress, curator of botany at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., worked at the Sarasota gardens in the 1980s. Now all he hears is bad news.

"Are there any scientists left at Selby?" Kress asked. "I'm serious."

At the University of Florida, botany professor Norris Williams also was surprised that Luther would leave Selby.

"That's a pretty big loss; he was sort of Mr. Bromeliad," Norris said. "It's hard to know what's going on down there. For the last few years, it's been going downhill, it seems to me."

Thomas Buchter, Selby chief executive officer, says research remains a vital part of the botanical gardens. Hard economic times have forced management to make tough decisions.

## Weeds and Bromeliads

This article by Gene McKenzie is reprinted from the May 2004 newsletter of the Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society.

Bill Timm sent me a delightful pun on "Attention Deficit Disorder" that his son sent him. I wanted to share it with you, but it was too long for my space. So, I wanted to write a short "pun" about weeds and bromeliads. Hope you can see yourself in some of it.

It was a lovely spring morning and I decided that the bromeliad bed in the front yard was way past some concentrated effort to weed and divide some of the bromeliads. I went to the potting shed and got the paint pail with all the thing-a-ma-dos that I use for my weeding and cutting and lugged it around to the front yard.

I decided I had better get rid of the weeds first so I could see the bromeliads. My gloves were not in the pail. Must have left them in the potting shed. On my way to the shed, the telephone rang; so I rushed in the house hoping a friend was calling. No, just someone wanting me to vote their way.

I went into the kitchen to get a glass of water. I remembered I was looking for my gloves. The water could wait, but the gloves I really needed. Back at the shed, I thought, "What did I go to the kitchen for?"

Well, never mind, the gloves were the thing! I wondered why they were in the potting mix. Gloves on, I got back to the weeds. I should have gotten the little stool usually sit on when pulling

weeds. So, where was it? I didn't see it when I went for the "what?" When I thought of gloves, I realized I really should have a shirt with long sleeves. Bromeliads bite. Better go find one. When I went through the kitchen, I noticed that I had not unplugged the coffee pot. Better do that!

I looked around the kitchen and wondered why I had gone there. The weeds – got to get back for the weeds. Oh, and get a glass of water. I stumbled over the stool. Well, what in the world was the stool doing in the kitchen?

I drank the water, I think. I picked up the stool and returned to the front yard. I happen to look at my watch and it was past time for lunch. Maybe that was what I went to the kitchen for. I had better eat something, and then...well, maybe take a little nap. It had been a busy morning.

## Welcome New Member

Welcome to new member **Darold Petty**.



This is *Lindmania paludosa*. Photo by Francisco Oliva-Esteve and is courtesy of the BSI website.

---

**BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO (BSSF)**

---

The BSSF is a non-profit educational organization promoting the study and cultivation of bromeliads. The BSSF meets monthly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday at 7:30 PM in the Recreation room of the San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. Meetings feature educational lectures and displays of plants. Go to the affiliate section of the BSI webpage for information about our meetings.

The BSSF publishes a monthly newsletter that comes with the membership. Annual dues are single (\$15), dual (\$20). To join the BSSF, mail your name(s), address, telephone number, e-mail address, and check made payable to the BSSF to:

Harold Charns, BSSF Treasurer, 255 States Street, San Francisco, CA 94114-1405.

---

**BSSF 2010 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS**

PRESIDENT	Carl Carter	510-661-0568	carl.carter@ekit.com
VICE PRESIDENT	Bruce McCoy	510-835-3311	bruce.mccoy@gmail.com
SECRETARY			
TREASURER	Harold Charns	415-861-6043	Harold@States-Street.com
DIRECTORS:			
	Roger Lane	650-949-4831	rdodger@pacbell.net
	Marilyn Moyer	650-365-5560	MarilynMoyer@comcast.net
	Peder Samuelsen	650-365-5560	Pedersam@comcast.net
	Peter Wan	408-500-2103	peterkwan@earthlink.net

---

**BROMELIAD SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL**

---

The Journal is published bimonthly at Orlando, Florida by the Bromeliad Society International. Subscription price (in U.S. \$) is included in the 12-month membership dues: single (\$28.), dual (2 members at one address receiving one Journal -\$30). Address all membership and subscription correspondence to: Membership Secretary, Dan Kinard, 6901 Kellyn Lane, Vista, CA 92084, USA, membership@bsi.org

---

BROMELIAD SOCIETY  
OF  
SAN FRANCISCO

Roger Lane  
Newsletter Editor  
551 Hawthorne Court  
Los Altos, CA 94024-3121



---

**Our talk this month will be on Tillandsias!**

---