

# BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO



## August 2010

# NEWSLETTER

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, August 19, 2010** at 7:30 PM  
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

### August Program

#### Veracruz and Beyond

**Kelly Griffin** will be our speaker this month. He will provide us a show on his journey to the Mexican states of Veracruz, Puebla and a side jaunt to Oaxaca that he made in October 2009. So much to see and share: Bromeliads, Echeverias, Agaves, and more. Something there for every plant lover and a few neat surprises too. Probably most of you remember his visit to us last year on another trip he made to Mexico. Kelly is a superb photographer and we know in advance that his show will be memorable.

For those of you who do not know Kelly, he is the Curator at Rancho Soledad Nurseries in Rancho Santa Fe. He has a penchant for all plants but is probably most known for making some interesting succulent plant hybrids. You can check out his nursery online and also check out [Xericworld.com](http://Xericworld.com) which is a great plant forum with many great photos and great information exchange.

In addition to our regular plant raffle, Kelly will be bringing plants to sell, so remember to bring your checkbook.

#### August Refreshments

**Casper Curto** and **Daryl Ducharme** signed up for refreshments this month.

If someone else can contribute, they will appreciate it.



Here is a photo of **Kelly Griffin** with *Aloe helenae* 20 km northwest of Fort Dauphin, Madagascar. Photo is courtesy of the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society.

## July Meeting

Last month we did not have a monthly meeting but did have our annual garden tour that covered gardens in Marin County. Since your editor was unable to go on this tour, there is no article about the garden tour this month. We will try to get one of our members to contribute an article for our newsletter next month.

## Gorgeous Guzmanias

This article by Karen Andreas is reprinted from the April 2005 Orlandiana, newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Central Florida

Named for naturalist Anastasio Guzman, the genus *Guzmania* was first described in 1802. Its range extends from Florida, the West Indies, and Central America to Brazil but is mainly found in Columbia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, and Panama. When Padilla wrote about the *Guzmania* species in 1973, she lamented that, “despite their beauty and desirability, comparatively few are to be found in cultivation.” Twenty-one years later, Baensch made the same observation. While we are all familiar with the eye-catching good looks of *Guzmania* hybrids, it is worth taking a look at the species which are, of course, the sources for these man-made beauties.



*Guzmania sanguinea* var. *brevipedicellata* Shown by Jackie Johnson  
14th World Bromeliad Conference, San Francisco, California June 26 - July 5, 2000

*Guzmanias* are found in the damp and shady habitat of rainforests where it generally grows epiphytically (as an air plant) in trees and bushes. Larger species mostly grow as terrestrials (in the ground) on the rainforest and jungle floors. *Guzmanias* have smooth leaves – no spines – and the leaves grow upright to form a water tank. Baensch notes, “Fine reddish brown longitudinal stripes are particularly obvious at the bases of the leaves and typical for many species of this

genus.” This is often a defining characteristic that distinguishes *Guzmania* from *Vriesea* when not in bloom. The bracts are often brightly colored with shades ranging from yellow to orange to flaming red with flowers that are generally white or yellow. The inflorescence is especially long lived, making *Guzmania* and its cultivars so popular for the inflorescence.



Do not over pot these bromeliads. Use a shallow pot just a bit larger than the existing root ball. The potting mix should be well draining but still retain some moisture. These bromeliads especially do not want wet feet in the winter because this can lead to rot. During winter, water plants early in the day. Not only can watering late lead to wet feet and rot, Steens warns against “cold burn” from wet leaves during low temperatures. During our hot summer months, do not water during the heat of the day as this can also burn the leaves; watering early to mid morning is best. If your water is hard, alkaline or salty, consider flushing your *Guzmanias* with rainwater or bottled water. If you want to fertilize this bromeliad, use a low strength solution once a month during the warm growing seasons and not during the winter when the *Guzmania* rests. When grown indoors as a houseplant, mist two to three times a week.

*Guzmanias* like light shade to semi-shade conditions. In my yard, they get morning sun filtered by oak trees (and a lot more light these days than before last year’s hurricanes). While *Guzmania* species do not tolerate cold well, the hybrids are a bit hardier. All the *Guzmanias* in my yard have been exposed to temperatures in the low forties and survived with some foliage damage. Still, it is best to protect *Guzmanias* from cold temperatures, cold wind and frost which will damage the leaves.

*Guzmania gloriosa* in habitat, Bogota Colombia cloud forest

photo by  
Ignacio Moreno



There are more than 200 species of Guzmanias. You can find more pictures of this gorgeous bromeliad in the Photo Index of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies website: fcbs.org, the source of the pictures in this article.

*Guzmania conifera* grows both as a terrestrial and epiphyte in rainforest habitat in Ecuador and Peru. Its cone-like inflorescence stays in color for months.

*G. gloriosa* is found in Ecuador in dry sandy regions as well as in forests in Columbia and Peru. This large Guzmania grows 3-5 feet high. The green leaves have dark red stripes at the base.

*G. lingulata* is the base for many hybrids; *G. lingulata* v. *minor* is the most commonly grown form. It's an excellent beginner Guzmania. *G. lingulata* v. *minor* is both epiphytic and saxicolous (grows on and between rocks) in forest habitat. There are five varieties of this species, all having the star-shaped inflorescence. It pups generously.



*G. monostachia* “has the greatest geographical range of the genus,” wrote Padilla. It grows epiphytically in the Everglades and is found in the West Indies, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Brazil. *G. monostachia* v. *variegata* is Florida’s native Guzmania, with green and white leaves.



*G. remyi*, found in Ecuador, is easy to grow in a warm shady spot in your collection.

*G. sanguinea* v. *sanguinea* and *G. sanguinea* v. *brevipedicellata* have brilliantly colored foliage and they flower in their centers. They grow

epiphytically in Costa Rica, Columbia, Trinidad, Tobago, and Ecuador. Both are stingy with pups, generally only yielding one for variety *sanguinea* and two for variety *brevipedicellata*.

*G. sprucei* grows epiphytically although sometimes it is saxicolous in the forests of Panama and Columbia.



## Overgrown

This article by Sam Smith originally appeared in the July-August 1988 issue of the Journal of the Bromeliad Society and is reprinted from the fourth quarter newsletter of the BSSF.

Being a relative newcomer to the world of bromeliads, I'm still learning some of the key words that apply to bromeliads and bromeliad culture. During 'show and tell' at one of my first meetings I heard someone whisper in a derogatory tone, "overgrown". To me the plant in question seemed large and beautiful. Later, at my first show, I again saw large and beautiful plants with red or yellow ribbons. When I turned the score card over, there was that dreaded word:

"overgrown". The explanation given was that the plants were too large.

For months I have pondered this question losing great amounts of sleep trying to solve this apparent anomaly. First, I consulted the standard books of Padilla and Rauh. Nothing listed in the index. Reading through the section on culture one learns how to grow bromeliads, but not how to overgrow them. Maybe it's a disease? Fusarium fungus is mentioned as are mealy bugs, a Gymnapsis and a couple of Diapsis, but no "overgrown". Since the show was sanctioned by the Bromeliad Society, Inc., perhaps the answer lay in the cultural handbook.

Instead of "overgrown" I find and I quote: "Better coloration, larger plants, more rapid propagation, timely flowering, and that robust and handsome health so much admired by all who grow plants, will be the reward of any good supplemental feeding program faithfully attended to."

After receiving no help from A Bromeliad Glossary and Walter Richter's Bromeliads, I could no longer put off reading David Benzing's formidable Biology of Bromeliads. Having thoroughly comprehended this work, I am left with one conclusion: a bromeliad may be well grown, but NOT "overgrown".

There are many factors that control the size of individual plants. If the plant does not receive sufficient nutrients, it will be stunted. Improper light also causes stunting or deformity, the long strappy green leaves we are all familiar with. In epiphytes, the stability of the mount can cause variation in plant size. I have two specimens of *Tillandsia utriculata* from the same gene pool, grown under identical conditions except that one was attached to a 1cm twig while the other was attached to a 30cm live oak trunk. The plant sizes are proportional to their supports. The maximum size a plant can achieve is controlled by its genetic makeup. In isolated populations there is considerable intraspecific variation in genetic makeup. For example, the Florida *T. pruinosa* is a rather small plant; however, its Mexican counterpart is several times larger. The Jamaican *T. bulbosa* is likewise several times larger than its Mexican cousin. Individuals in some species vary considerably even in the same population.

There are many ways in growing plants to obtain a desired effect. One can vary the soil pH to control flower color in some plants. One can limit the available nutrients to obtain the desired results, bonsai being an obvious example. A well

grown 30-year old pine tree would not be bonsai, but lumber.

To grow these enviable plants referred to in the cultural handbook several ingredients are required. Light is necessary for all bromeliad growth. Too little, and the plant tries to compensate by elongating its leaves and getting rid of extra pigment except chlorophyll. Too much, and the leaves burn. Supplemental nutrients help the plant grow to its full potential. Too much fertilizer concentrated either in the cup or about the roots will dehydrate the plant and frequently cause death. A firm mount is important particularly for epiphytic growth. No bromeliad can grow without water. If good air circulation and well drained medium are provided, most plants can take a surprising amount of water.

What about “overgrown”? After learning only the very basic plant genetics and growth physiology, I can now sleep at night knowing there is no such bogeyman.

### Summer Gardening Fair

On Saturday, August 7<sup>th</sup> our society had a table with bromeliad information and a few sale plants at the San Francisco Botanical Garden Summer Gardening Fair. We wish to thank the people in our society who worked at this event

### Orchids in the Park 2010

We have had successful fall bromeliad sales in the past and this year we will also be having a sale and display of plants. This sale is being coordinated with Orchid Fest. Mark **11-13 September** on your calendar and set some time aside to help. We will be setting up the display and sale on Friday in the Gallery with the orchid vendors (the same room that we used in June) from 3 to 8 PM. The show and sale will be from 9 AM to 5 PM on Saturday and Sunday.

If you wish to sell plants, you will need to barcode your plants. Harold Charns will be making the barcodes. **The ones you had for the June sale WILL NOT WORK.** Contact Harold as to your needed prices. Harold will be able to mix prices on a single sheet. Please notify Harold as soon as possible about your price needs, so he does not have to print the sheets at the last minute. There will be a **75-25** percent cut as in our other sales.

We need a colorful display of your plants. On our last fall sale, you outdid yourselves! We need an equally fine display this year. Let’s show the orchid fanciers how beautiful our plants can be and how well they work with orchids.

We will not be having a monthly meeting before this sale, so there will be a signup sheet at this month’s meeting. We will need help running our cash register, help in selling the plants, help in educating the public about bromeliads, and lots of boxes, newspapers, and paper bags. **Start saving your boxes.** This sale is very important for our treasury because our June sale did not turn out as well as most of our sales.

**WE NEED HELP FROM ALL OF YOU TO MAKE THIS SALE A SUCCESS!!!!**

## **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 Charms, BSSF Treasurer, 255 States Street, San Francisco, CA 94114-1405.

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## **BROMELIAD SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL**

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**We will see Bromeliads of Mexico this month !**