

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO



January 2007

NEWSLETTER

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, January 18, 2007** at 7:30 PM
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park,
San Francisco

January Program

Bromeliad Adventures in Bolivia – Part 1

In November last year **Peter Wan** and **Carl Carter** made a two week trip to Bolivia. It was supposed to be a combined cactus and bromeliad exploratory trip, but most of the stops concentrated on cacti. Nonetheless, Peter and Carl got enough photos to comprise a two-part show for us.

Peter will be showing digital slides this month of the Tillandsias and cultural scenes of the parts of Bolivia that they covered. Carl will provide a show later this year on the many Puyas found at the high altitudes of Bolivia.

Carl is providing some collected plants for our plant table raffle this month: *Tillandsia australis* (a monocarpic plant with a spectacular spike), *T. argentina* (also found in Bolivia), and *Puya assurgens* (a small Puya with a two-foot body and a two-foot flower spike). Photos of these plants are included in the newsletter this month.

Don't miss this meeting. Bolivia is not a country that gets many visits from plant people.



Here is **Peter Wan** taking a picture of a small cactus in Bolivia.

2007 Dues are Due

Our annual dues are now due: \$15 (single) and \$20 (dual). Please pay at the meeting or by mail to **Harold Charns** (address on last page of newsletter).

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Cultural Tips: Winterizing 2004 - Tips

This article by Odean Head of Houston, Texas is reprinted from the November/December 2004 newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Houston. Considering the very cold evenings that we have been having this winter, you may have to plan on moving more of your plants indoors than you would in a normal Northern California winter.

Now is the time to make the preparations necessary to protect our plants for winter. How did we do last year? Can we repeat the same procedures? Chances are good that we have more plants to protect this year and we must determine if we can accommodate them by better utilizing our existing space or if we need to add some more. Let's look first at better utilization of space.

Vertical Growing – Since some of our plants do not require as much light as others, we can grow at different levels without sacrificing too much quality growth. First, we can build some multi-level shelves to increase usable capacity. Then we can put up poles and attach rings that will hold plants at different levels. You will be surprised at how many more plants you can put in a space with these methods and still maintain good air circulation around them. There always seems to be a lack of good light. You can hang poles above your walkways to use that light and still have floor mobility. Of course, you may know from the beginning that you will need more space.

More Greenhouse Space – You may have existing greenhouse space that can be added to but we will discuss getting the new space by building a new structure. This can be either a stand-alone or a lean-to structure. The location to be used will usually determine the type that will best fit. I prefer to use galvanized pipe for the structure after having to tear down a rotted wooden one recently. This type structure also facilitates the building of poles and shelves. The stand-alone structure is pictured using 60 degree

angle clamps on the posts and top to form the elevation of the roof [picture is not included here – Ed.]. Shelves can be supported by attaching them to the posts of the structure. The conduit stretched across the top is used to hold the shade cloth and the plastic. The conduit can also be used to attach the poles that hold the plant rings. The lean-to structure can utilize clamps that will not restrict the angle desired from the top to the outer post. Lean-tos are usually used next to the house or garage but do not have to be attached thereto. The posts and rafters can also facilitate the attachment of shelves and poles. You may have a covered patio that can be enclosed for the winter by building some removable panels or just enough structure to cover it with some 4 mil plastic.

In organizing my collection for winterizing, I separate the plants into several groups. I want to consider their light requirements first. Since I never have enough space to accommodate all the plants that need good light I must prioritize according to desirability and stage of growth. The most important group is the special plants that will be reaching their prime in the next year or two and the clumps that have already formed. These plants will have top priority and will be placed as near as possible into their respective best light. The newly removed pups will come next and so on until the remainder of the plants, regardless of their needs, gets put into whatever space is left over. This is when I apologize and tell them that I hope that they won't have to stay there too long. Disposition of the mothers will depend on how special the plants are, whether they have pups or not and if I desire to further propagate them. Mothers that are still attractive will be included in the display area (but not necessarily in the best light). Leaves on most of the other others that I keep will be trimmed so they take up less room. Some of the mothers that have pups of sufficient size, and I have enough pups already, may be removed completely to give the pups more room.

Bromeliads need good air circulation and we should provide some additional fans for air movement during these crowded times.

Frost Care from San Francisco Botanical Garden

Placement of plants by size of plants by size can help to reduce crowded conditions. We also have many warm days during the winter causing extreme heat buildup in our closed structures. We need doors and windows or panels that we can easily open and close to reduce the heat. Without some added air circulation this heat and light combination can cause burning on the plant

Crowded conditions can also lead to scale and fungus problems, so be sure to check closely before placing them and treat if needed. I try to seal my structure as tight as I can using 4 or 6 mil plastic with one-year UV protection. I have three large forced air, natural gas heaters and keep the thermostats set on 50 degrees. The thermostats are about 5 feet off the ground so the green house does not stay that warm. In fact, the temperature can be at least 10 degrees colder on the ground so I am careful about what I leave on the ground level.

Watering is more difficult when the plants are crowded but is required less frequently. How frequently will depend on the temperature. Maybe once a week when it is warm to hot and only once every two weeks or more when temperatures are cool to cold. I grow drier and never fertilize in the winter in an effort to prevent leggy growth. Remember also that the plants do not like to stay wet so it is best to water in the morning and give the plants a chance to dry before night.

Be sure to guard against hiding prize plants. Try to keep them in view so that their needs are not overlooked. Also determine which plants in your collection are the most cold-sensitive so that you can take extra precautions during extremely cold days.

As you've probably heard, we're in for some cold weather. This could be the worst cold spell in the Bay Area since 1989, when we lost a lot of plants in the Botanical Garden. Downtown San Francisco is predicted to get down around 33 degrees. We're predicting a low of 22 degrees at our nursery, so staff and volunteers have been busy getting frost cloth over everything that needs it and moving as many of our nursery plants as possible up the hill toward the Children's Garden, where it will be a little warmer.

If you have outdoor plants like us, you should probably prepare them for the cold. Here are some basic steps to take before a potential frost and after:

Cover tender plants with frost cloth. Hopefully it hasn't sold out everywhere at this point. Check your local nursery or garden supply store for availability. Using an old sheet is better than nothing, but frost cloth is preferable.

Most plants could benefit from a small watering as part of your preparation, but NOT cactus and other water-retaining succulents. As you know, water expands when it freezes. If the cells of your succulents are full of water, they will burst when the water freezes, killing the plant. If they're a little low on water when the cold arrives, there's a chance the cell walls will be able to stand a little expansion and won't burst.



Here is the small *Puya assurgens* from Bolivia that will not take up much space in your collection. Photo is by Len Harrison and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

Bring as many of your container plants inside as possible. If they don't fit inside, placing them against an outside wall of your house or apartment, particularly if there's an overhang, can make a big difference.

What do you do after a freeze? **Be patient.** The cold spell in 1989 was tough on our plants here at the garden, but more made it through than we originally thought. The initial survey after the freeze showed us that 80% of the plants in our Cloud Forest Garden had died. Yet the roots of many of these plants survived, and in the spring, it looked like actually only 40% had died in the big freeze. By summer, the number went down to 20%. We still lost some great plants, but not nearly as many as it looked right after the freeze.



This spectacular photo of *Tillandsia australis* in an Argentinean rainforest is taken by Joe Quijada

San Francisco Flower and Garden Show

The Bromeliad Society of San Francisco will have about 500 square feet of display space at the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show March 21-25, 2007.

This is a great opportunity for the Society and is a large undertaking led by **Casper Curto** with the assistance of **Tom Vincze**, **David Feix**, **Dan Arcos** and **Daryl Ducharme**.

The theme of our display naturally is bromeliads but more specifically Bromeliads for the Bay Area Landscape. We aim to demonstrate the wide variety of bromeliads and tillandsias that can be grown throughout the Bay Area from Puyas to Neoregelias. This is where the general membership is asked to help.

What are your favorite and hardest bromeliads in the landscape? We want to hand out a list and post it online.

Can we borrow any of them for installation at the show?

Please complete the form (go to Bromeliad Society of San Francisco website: <http://sfbromeliad.org/top10broms.html>)

even if you are not able to help out with your plants or time. This form is being sent to [Dan](#) via email. Your name will be kept confidential.



This is the slow-growing *Tillandsia argentina*. Photo is by Joe Quijada.

Cold Sensitive Bromeliads

This article is reprinted from the November 2004 [The BROMELIADVISORY](#), newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of South Florida. This list may not represent cold-tolerance in California.

This list of cold sensitive plants and the temperatures at which damage occurs was compiled by bromeliad expert Nat DeLeon and others.

Probably the most cold-sensitive broms grown in our area (South Florida) are *Navia igneosicola* and *Tillandsia dyeriana*. They should be protected when temperatures drop below about 50 degrees F.

At about 40 degrees F:

Most Cryptanthus
Aechmea fulgens and its forms
Aechmea mexicana

High to mid-thirties:

Aechmea brevicollis
Some hybrids of *Aechmea fulgens*
Aechmea magdalenae v. *quadricolor*

Aechmea germinyana
Aechmea mertensii
Neoregelia eleutheropetala
Neoregelia mooreana (or *Neoregelia peruviana*)
Most of the Amazon *Neoregelias*

Mid-thirties:

Aechmea chantinii and its various forms
Aechmea corymbosa
Aechmea melinonii
Aechmea moorei
Aechmea nallyi
Aechmea politii
Aechmea servitensis var. *exigua*
Aechmea tessmanii
Ananas (all species)
Bromelia humilis
Guzmania bracteata
Guzmania donnell-smithii
Vriesea splendens (its varieties and some hybrids)

Survival Bromeliads:

The following is a list of bromeliad plants that were exposed to approximately six hours of 18 degree weather two nights in succession, with temperatures not exceeding 30 degrees for at least 48 hours.

No Damage Observed:

Aechmea Burgandy
Aechmea comata
Aechmea recurvata
Aechmea recurvata v. *variegata*
Aechmea blumenavii
Aechmea triangularis
Neophytum Ralph Davis
Neoregelia chlorosticta
Neoregelia Vulkan (F2)

Very Little Damage:

Aechmea disticantha (all varieties)
Dyckia (all)
Hechtia stenopetala
Canistrum triangulare
Quesnelia humilis
Nidularium fulgens

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 3rd 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.

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