

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO



February 2007

NEWSLETTER

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, February 15, 2007** at 7:30 PM
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park,
San Francisco

February Program

What Happens When a Plant Nut Goes to Florida!

Tom Vincze will provide a slide show on various plant nurseries he has visited in Florida. These include Tropiflora, Selby Botanical Gardens, and Michael Kiehl's nursery. For the last few years, Michael has provided our plants for the holiday pot luck. For those of you who know Tom, he is quite an expert on aroids and he will supplement the bromeliad slides with shots from an aroid show at Fairchild.

February Refreshments

Your editor forgot to pass out a signup sheet for refreshments at the January meeting. I know that someone will come through with great refreshments!

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).



Here is **Tom Vincze** at the World Bromeliad Conference in San Diego last year. This photo is by **Peter Wan**.

January Meeting

Last month's meeting was Part I of a trip that **Carl Carter** and **Peter Wan** made to Bolivia last November. Peter provided the show that concentrated on the tillandsias and cultural aspects of the areas they visited. Peter's photography was superb and we were treated to these photos using the ProGold software.

Carl had donated some plants collected in Bolivia that were put on the silent auction and the bidding was intense. Our treasury was helped a lot thanks to Carl and the enthusiastic bidders. Thanks also to **Marilyn Moyer** for providing a fantastic plant table.

How to Take Better Bromeliad Photographs

This article is based on a talk given by Andrew Steens at the New Zealand Bromeliad Society monthly meeting, May 25, 2004. The article is being reprinted from the October 2004 [The Bromeliadvisory](#), newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of South Florida.

As well as being an established commercial grower of bromeliads, Andrew is the author and photographer of the very successful book "**Bromeliads for the Contemporary Garden**," launched in July last year. Andrew spoke about the demands of photography for his book and he gave members some excellent tips that will be of great benefit when we photograph our own plants.

1. **Digital cameras need enough 'grunt'**
Digital cameras are very convenient but if you want good sharp definition in your prints, you'll need plenty of (usually expensive) capacity. Andrew says around 4 mega pixels. Otherwise you'll get much better results by sticking to traditional film. For his book, Andrew mainly used a Nikon SLR 35mm camera with a 35-70mm lens with a flash, and he shot standard 200 ASA film. He used his digital camera with 4 mega pixels to take about a third of the photographs featured in his book.

2. **Good lighting is essential.** You have to be sensitive to the lighting conditions to get great shots. Andrew likes to shoot outside wherever possible. Early in the morning and late in the afternoon give the best, softer light with good contrasts. Slightly overcast conditions are ideal. Avoid bright overhead sunny conditions in the middle part of the day – this light will 'wash' out your colors and definition. Remember, bromeliads are sensitive to light and the detail of many leaf markings is easily lost in poor lighting conditions.
3. **Check that background detail.** Andrew showed us several examples of good photos of very nice plants that had been spoiled by inattention to background detail – often missed by the naked eye, but ruthlessly exposed on film. It might be the corner of a watering can, a cobweb, a poor condition plant tucked away in the background somewhere or just the unwanted intrusion of the leaves of another species into the frame. Avoid unnecessary clutter and learn to be fussy. You don't want the background to distract and/or compete.
4. **Close up or long shot?** Both can work very well, while it's often best to avoid the 'in-between' shot. Either zoom in very tight onto the main subject, for example the flower, the rosette, or the main leaf markings for a dramatic close up effect or go well back and take in the overall effect of a wonderful group planting, perhaps in a nicely landscaped area. And remember, if you're taking a long shot of the garden, do make sure the garden has been 'groomed' for it. Otherwise, you may just be wasting film.
5. **Dark patterned leaf plants look best on light, creamy-toned backgrounds.** The contrast is dramatic and pleasing.
6. **Groups of plants (e.g. Neoregelias) need careful attention.** This is because the center of the photo, the natural focal point, can easily become a jumble of overlapping, intertwined leaves. The answer? Experiment with different camera angles and lighting effects. You need to capture the rosettes or

the centers of the plants and make them 'heroes.'

7. Identify your plants carefully. Don't end up with a superb photo and no idea at all of what the plant is. If you're using film make sure you have a good system of writing down plant names. Don't trust your memory! If you're using a digital camera it's a good idea to take a separate, follow-up shot of the plant's label.

8. Overall check list. Prepare plants carefully.

- Clean, shine, and groom.
- Hide plant labels – they don't look good.
- Hide pots wherever possible
- Be sensitive to what's in the background. You don't want it to distract.
- Choose your light conditions carefully. There might be a 30 minute slot early or late that is the perfect time to do it. Be patient!
- Carefully frame your subject. Always be ready to zoom in to one section of the plant or one clump, or one feature. Look for the dramatic effect.
- Be prepared to take quite a few shots, slightly varying the angles and the lighting. That's how professionals get that elusive 'magic cover shot.' Andrew Steens estimates that to get the final 300 odd images for his book, he shot around 2,000 separate exposures.

Michael Schmale offers the following additional suggestions:

1. This guide is for outdoor photography. For indoor shots, lighting issues will of course differ. There can be some advantages to shooting indoors and controlling the lighting and background.

2. Suggestions of a cream colored backdrop is interesting but the reason most folks use dark backgrounds (especially black) is that these backdrops hide distracting shadows that can be cast on the background by the leaves (particularly when using a strobe on the camera).
3. Even outdoors, it is good to use a strobe. Usually outdoors this will be in "fill flash" mode where it will fill in the shadows cast by overhead light (most strobes use this as the default mode).
4. When using a large strobe (as on an SLR-type camera) it is best to use some type of diffuser so that the light is a bit softer and casts fewer hard shadows.
5. Use digital if possible so that you can examine each shot for optimum lighting.

A few things to check other than overall exposure and focus (and background, as mentioned in Steen's article):

- Watch for shiny leaves that flash to white in the picture – these require an adjustment of light and/or camera angle.
- Look at how much of the plant is in shadow, how even the lighting is. Adjust as necessary. Note that outdoors a large piece of WHITE poster board (held by an assistant) can be used to reflect sunlight on the side of a plant to give more even illumination.
- Try to shoot close-ups of interesting flowers and leaf patterns as these are often the defining features of a particular plant and may bring out details you overlooked from a distance.

The Genus *Hohenbergia*

This article is by Karen Andreas and is reprinted from the November 2004 Orlandiana, newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Central Florida.

The genus *Hohenbergia* was first described in 1830 and was named after the Prince of Wurttemberg, a patron of botanists who was known as Prince Hohenberg. There are 52 species in this genus, which is found in Brazil, Venezuela, the Lesser Antilles, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. *Hohenbergias* have such a sturdy appearance that they add drama and interest to the landscape and in collections.

The largest number of *Hohenbergias* are found in Jamaica with Brazil having the next largest number. *Hohenbergias* grow under diverse conditions, including as epiphytes on palms and trees, on sand dunes in coastal Brazil, and on rocks. *Hohenbergias* can be grown like *Aechmeas*, for which they are often mistaken because of the similar appearance of their leaves, tall inflorescences, and upright tank-type growth habit.

Hohenbergias like light shade to morning sun to maintain their color and the best form, although they do tolerate filtered afternoon light. Unlike many *Aechmeas*, however, they are sensitive to the cold and should be protected from frost. The inflorescence rises from the center of the bromeliad and in some species, has long-lived color.

Here in Florida you will often find *Hohenbergia stellata* in bromeliad gardens. This bromeliad is named *stellata* because of the star-shaped floral bracts on its three-foot long inflorescence. Its 'stars' turn a dramatic red when in bloom and stay in color for months, eventually fading to white. Purple flowers are especially dramatic against the red of the floral bracts. Its green leaves grow about three feet long when grown in good light, so give it plenty of room in the garden. Although native to the cloud and rain forests of eastern Brazil, Martinique, Trinidad, and Venezuela, this *Hohenbergia* grows well in our landscape.

Hohenbergia rosea is another large member of this genus that grows in wide rosette form and needs room in the garden. Its inflorescence is similar in structure to *stellata* but its "stars" are

pink to rose in color. Its leaves also are a dark rose color. *Hohenbergia rosea* is best grown in light shade or morning light. It may take up to three years to reach blooming maturity.

Hohenbergia correia-araujoi was discovered in 1979; it's another popularly grown member of this genus. Its leaves are copper color with silver bands and its growth habit is upright and narrow. It is not nearly as large as *stellata* and *rosea*. *Hohenbergia correia-araujoi* needs plenty of light in order for the leaves to maintain their upright stiffness. While the floral bracts are mostly white, they are striking against the rose pink color of the inflorescence stalk.

Rather than growing in large rosette form, some *Hohenbergias* have more of a vase shape. *Hohenbergia pennae* is one such member of this type. The leaves of this Brazilian bromeliad are wavy on the edges, giving it a most interesting look. *Hohenbergia leopoldo-horstii* is another example of a compact vase-shape.

Whether planted in the garden or in a pot in a collection, *Hohenbergias* always offer a dramatic and stately look.



Here is *Hohenbergia stellata* in a garden environment. This photo by Frank Sherman is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



Hohenbergia penna Shown by Bullis Bromeliads
14th World Bromeliad Conference, San Francisco, California June 26 - July 5, 2000

This photo of *Hohenbergia penna* is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



Hohenbergia leopoldo-horstii - Winner Div. II Shown by Dan Kinnard
14th World Bromeliad Conference, San Francisco, California June 26 - July 5, 2000

This photo of *Hohenbergia leopoldo-horstii* is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



Hohenbergia correia-araujo Entered by David Meade
13th World Bromeliad Conference, Houston, Texas July 1 - 5, 1998

This photo of *Hohenbergia correia-araujo* is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



This photo of *Hohenbergia rosea* is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

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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BROMELIAD SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

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BROMELIAD SOCIETY
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Dues for our society are now payable!
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