

# BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO

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## March 2007

# NEWSLETTER

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

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### March Program

#### Halloween Adventures with Martha Stewart!

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.

His program will be in two parts. The first will be a 12 minute video of Paul's Halloween Adventures with Martha Stewart preceded by an introduction about her. Then he will present the slide show that he gave at the San Diego World Conference last year.

Paul will be providing our plant table and will also be selling plants. This is our first visit from Paul. Don't miss it!

#### March Refreshments

**Roger Lane** and **Richard Wigen** will provide refreshments this month.

#### 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).



This is a Paul Isley photo of a tillandsia cultivar of *Tillandsia tenuifolia* called Bonsall Beauty. Photo is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

## February Meeting

Last month, **Tom Vincze** took us on a trip to various plant nurseries, botanical gardens, and an aroid show. Unfortunately, most of the bromeliad slides he showed are not yet available – specifically those that Michael Kiehl is growing. We did get a preview of the many *Dyckia* hybrids that are available through the current Cargo Report of Tropiflora. Thanks Tom for your great slides.

## Home and Garden Show

The Bromeliad Society of San Francisco has a display on the main floor of the Home and Garden Show at the Cow Palace from Wednesday, March 21 through Sunday, March 25. Two of our landscaping professionals are putting BSSF on the main floor this year! David Feix has designed and Casper Curto of Casper Landscaping is putting together a likely award-winning display. (Dan Arcos and Tom Vince have put in many, many hours and the society has donated many beautiful plants too). **Please respond immediately to our President if you wish to attend the Tuesday Night Discount Gala.** Tickets are available for Tuesday evening, March 20 (\$85 off \$185 admission). Come see the BSSF entry win a big trophy!

Additionally, **we need Volunteers to “Meet and Greet” the public while the display is up.** At the last meeting a signup sheet was distributed but **we need a lot more volunteers.** The current list of signups is as follows:

DATE	9 AM- 2 PM	2 PM – 8 PM
Wednesday 21 March	Roger Lane Marilyn Moyer Peder Samuelson	
Thursday 22 March		
Friday 23 March		Harold Charns
Saturday 24 March	Bruce McCoy Peter Wan	
Sunday 25 March	Bruce McCoy Dorothy Dewing	

Wristbands, and free admission, are available for people working at the display. If we have enough volunteers working everyone should have a chance to see the entire show. A limited number of free-admission passes for friends and relatives of workers are available upon request.

Please respond or I promise I will phone and bother you.

Warm Regards,  
Carl Carter President

## Premature Pupping

This article is by Tom Lorman is taken from the July 1995 newsletter of the San Diego Bromeliad Society. It originally was printed in the March-April 1977 Journal of the Bromeliad Society, Inc.

**H**aving received an unrooted pup of *Aechmea lueddemanniana marginata* from a friend of mine during December I was very excited to get it growing. At the end of six weeks very few roots had appeared. A week later, a new initiation of growth was noticed at the base of the pup. This new growth, which in fact was a new pup, developed very slowly but evenly until mid-August, at which time the pup from the young plant was almost the same size as the immature mother plant. The original pup was 7 inches tall, the immature pup six inches, and another pup 3 inches. A mature plant of this variety should range in size from 12-15 inches before pupping.

Premature pupping can occur through various reasons. One can be from removing the pup while they are still soft and undersized with no signs of root initiation. Early removal can lead to rotting of the base as well as failure of the pup to get established. Pups should be at least ¼ to 1/3 the size of the mature mother plant before removal. These factors were probably the reason premature pupping occurred in this case.

Oftentimes foreign matter such as a grain of sand or a small piece of redwood or fir bark from the soil mix will fall into the center cup of the pup, injuring the growth initials to abort flowering and initiate pup production. It is best to handle pups carefully in the process of removing them and to

use a sharp knife or long-nosed hand pruners that make a smooth clean separation of the pup from the mother plant without injury to the base of the pup or to the mother plant. After the pup is removed, it should be placed in a clean area. Many times pups are left on the potting bench to callus the wound for a day or two before being put into the growing medium, if no roots are present on the pup. Many pups get foreign matter such as the ones described above from the potting bench.

Injury to the pup before and during removal is probably the most common reason for initiating premature pupping. If the pup is not allowed enough pot space to develop up and out, injury can occur. Some of the leaves of the mother plant may have to be removed to let the pup develop properly, symmetrically and allow it enough light for development. Also, the tendency to want to wiggle and especially grip the base of the pup too tightly can injure the tissues enough to physiologically put the plant into a reproductive cycle.



Here is a photo by Carlo Morici of *Aechmea lueddemanniana* growing outdoors in very bright light. This photo is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

Excessive, unnecessary repotting of bromeliads should be avoided to reduce premature pupping. Bromeliads of the epiphytic nature have a very small root system that needs very little medium, if any, surrounding it. The less mass of medium to the size of the root system, the better. Very few bromeliads should be potted up to a size larger than 4 inches, but of course there are exceptions.

It is best not to let the water in the center cups of the bromeliads remain unchanged for more than

two weeks so that stagnation occurs and algae begin to form. This later can lead to bacterial or fungal diseases that will kill off the center bud at any maturity of the plant, including an unrooted immature pup, to initiate pupping.

Premature pupping can also occur due to moisture stress where the pup went too long between watering. Hot, drying winds inland and along the coast should be kept in mind for desiccating epiphytic plants as well as terrestrial ones. During this time, frequent fogging of a collection outside as well as saturation of the growing medium is important.

Temperature-humidity relationships affect the timing of pupping. Perhaps a drastic change in temperature, especially warmer trends with a reduction in humidity, will cause any unrooted pup to send out a pup prematurely. Excessively high temperatures and low humidity are enemies of many plants requiring an environment similar to where they are natively found.

Premature pupping of a bromeliad means that a longer time will be involved for reaching a full mature specimen plant. The food produced in the immature mother plant will now go toward development of the premature pup as the immature mother plant begins to decline before her characteristic form, size, and perhaps color are reached. The premature pup will now be the plant to watch and protect from injury by moving or through reproduction. In this instance, it would be best to remove the immature mother plant only after she has completely exhausted her supply of nourishment to the pup. This is the reverse idea of removing the pup from the mother and possibly causing shock or injury to the pup where initiation prematurely may occur again. By the time the immature plant is exhausted, the premature pup should hopefully be up to good size, with still somewhat retarded growth but with a good root system developed while still attached to the immature mother. Further generations developing from the new pup will be in most cases the characteristic size at maturity when they will produce pups.

Los Angeles State and County Arboretum,  
Arcadia, California

## Bromelain

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This article is reprinted from the June 2004 The Bromeliad advisory, newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of South Florida.

### **What is it?**

Bromelain is the name of a group of powerful protein-digesting or proteolytic enzymes that are found in the pineapple plant (*Ananas comosus*). Discovered in 1957 and widely studied since then, bromelain is particularly useful for reducing muscle and tissue inflammation and as a digestive aid. Supplements are made from enzymes found in the pineapple stem.

### **Health Benefits**

Bromelain is a natural blood thinner and anti-inflammatory. It works by breaking down fibrin, a blood-clotting protein that can impede good circulation and prevent tissues from draining properly. Bromelain also blocks the production of compounds that can cause swelling and pain. When inflammation is reduced, blood can move easily to a traumatized area, easing pain and speeding healing.

### **Possible Side Effects**

Bromelain is generally considered safe, even at high doses.

Avoid taking if you have an active gastric or duodenal ulcer.

Some people have occasionally reported nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, excess menstrual bleeding, or skin rash when taking medicinal doses of bromelain.

Bromelain can cause an allergic reaction (red or itchy eyes, sneezing, running nose, irritated throat) in people who are sensitive to it.

### **Cautions**

Check with your doctor before taking bromelain if you're on prescription anti-inflammatory medication.

<b>Fertilizer</b>
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This article is reprinted from the April 1986 newsletter of the Bromeliad Study Group of Northern California.

Over the years my fertilizer routines have ranged from half-strength 5-10-5, 15-30-15 or 20-20-20 to no fertilizer at all. My recent practice of not fertilizing at all or only three times at 25% strength in June, July and August produced optimum growth habit and compactness for most bromels, but weaker inflorescences. A closer look at each genus and at particular species reveals that you must adjust your fertilizing to their different specific needs.

Plants growing under lights get pretty much the same light regardless of the season, so they should be fertilized on a year round basis (depending on the genus). Bromels grown under natural light probably don't require feeding during the dark months of November through February, except Tillandsias which can be foliar fed all year.

The general consensus among growers is to use a 15-30-15 formula in March and April, a 20-20-20 in May through August and 10-30-20 the rest of the time. The strength of the formulas can be varied from 25% to 50%, depending on the amount of light a plant receives. Slow-release osmocote 14-14-14 pellets placed in or on the mix can substitute for or supplement steady fertilizing. They last about three months.

I have always fertilized Tillandsias and conclude that this is a most beneficial practice. Indoor grown Tillandsias grow very slowly and are stingy puppers. I don't believe indoor grown Tillandsias can take a steady strong fertilizing as they do at the Sonora Desert Museum in Arizona to get those huge clumps of giant Tillandsias we saw at the World Bromeliad Conference in Los Angeles. However, a weekly or bi-weekly foliar spray of 10-30-20 or 20-20-20 soluble fertilizer seems to spur leaf growth and pupping and it encourages flowering.

I fertilize Cryptanthus and other bromels I grow under lights the year round. The Cryptanthus get fed monthly with one-third strength fertilizer of whatever formula I'm using, and they have osmocote pellets in their mix.

Guzmanias and Vriesea seem to need frequent feeding to produce decent sized inflorescences. Plants such as *Guzmania* Amaranth, Cherry, Orangeade, etc. strangely want only moderate light, but steady fertilizer. I use a 25% to 33% strength solution in the cups every three to four weeks and have osmocote pellets in the mix.

This routine produced a large multi-branched inflorescence on *Vriesea* Polemannii, whereas with minimal or no fertilizer, the plant bloomed with only one spike. True, this practice produces a much larger spreading plant than I would like, but a pupy inflorescence is a big disappointment.

On the other hand, most Aechmeas do well with minimal feeding of 25% strength fertilizer every month from May to September only. I fertilize *Aechmea chantinii* only every second month during this period because it tends to spread out too much with fertilizer. Use a lower nitrogen formula of 10-30-20 on the Aechmeas to restrict the effect of feeding on leaf growth. But don't feed Neoregelias at all.

However, when a plant has reached maturity and is near to pupping, fertilize every two to three weeks with 10-30-20 at 50% strength to try to produce robust blooming.

## Husband vs. Plants

This poem by Charles Craig is taken from the February 1995 newsletter of the Saddleback Valley Bromeliad Society.

My wife is in the cellar  
Working on her plants,  
While I'm sitting in the kitchen  
Sewing a button on my pants.

The sink is full of dishes  
And the house is full of dust,  
These things are unimportant  
But the plants, they are a must.

She used to mix up cakes and pies  
That made me idolize her.  
But now I eat those TV meals  
While she mixes fertilizer.

In our house there is no chatter  
Or stimulating talk,  
She has no time for things like that.  
She has to go re-pot.

And then to cap the climax  
And add to my lonely woe,  
She calmly said, as I bowed my head,  
"I'm going to work on the Spring Flower Show."



This is a Paul Isley photo of a tillandsia hybrid of *Tillandsia xerographica* and *Tillandsia brachycaulos*. called Bonsall Beauty. Photo is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

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

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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.

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**BROMELIAD SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL**

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BROMELIAD SOCIETY  
OF  
SAN FRANCISCO

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<b>Dues for our society are now payable!</b>
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