

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO



November 2007

NEWSLETTER

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

November Program

Michael Kiehl's Nursery

Tom Vincze makes an annual trip to the National Aroid Convention in Florida. On his trip this year he also visited some bromeliad nurseries. His favorite nursery is Michael's Bromeliads, owned by Michael and Donna Kiehl. According to their website: "Michael's Bromeliads was established in 1988 as a mail order nursery and remains a family operation dedicated to providing quality bromeliads to collectors and enthusiasts world wide. Our collection has grown to include nearly 1900 varieties of bromeliads from over 40 genera." Tom will be showing us a slide show of many of the most beautiful bromeliads he saw.

I believe our society is purchasing the December plant gifts from Michael's. Tom's show will give you a preview of the plants the members may receive.

October Refreshments

Stacy Michaels signed up for refreshments this month. Can someone else help her with refreshments?



Here is **Tom Vincze** surrounded by bromeliads, but I don't think this is at Michael's Nursery.

October Meeting

Roger Lane provided a slide show on the *Neoregelia* species. Although there are some really beautiful and unique species, many of the small “ampullacea-type”, such as *Neoregelia binotii* and *N. dungsiana*, are very plain and mostly green. Our members provided a sensational plant table as always. Thanks for bring in your beautiful plants to share with the rest of us.

Nidularium rutilans

This article by Dale Williams is taken from the February 1980 newsletter of the Bromeliad Study Group of Northern California. [This article was originally written about *Nidularium regelioides* – this plant has been renamed *Nidularium rutilans* – Ed]

Nidulariums, and in particular this one, are a must for all collectors, beginners as well as the advanced. Now, before too much more, a slight explanation on the difference between *Neoregelia* and *Nidulariums* to avoid confusion between the two. *Neoregelias* at blooming time will have color in the center of the rosette with the flowers sunk deep in the cup – no exceptions. *Nidulariums* will color in the center but only on the bracts with the flowers emerging at different levels; sometimes the bract will rise up and out of the center. That is the distinctive difference. *Nidularium rutilans*, like all *nidulariums*, is from Eastern Brazil, most being terrestrial and growing at quite high elevations. Being terrestrials also indicates that at high altitudes they would be low light lovers, which is true, and like it to be humid; however, most can be hardened to take quite a bit of light as long as the humidity is high. *Nidularium rutilans* is a relatively small plant seldom attaining a diameter of 55 cm and a height of approximately 25 cm. The leaves, as with most *Nidulariums*, are quite glossy. The flowers when first open are orange turning with age to a bright rose. *N. rutilans* usually produces two to five offsets and when cared for can bloom annually. My *N. rutilans* are usually grown under benches and brought out into brighter light only at the first indication of blooming so that I can obtain brighter colors. I’ve had *N. rutilans* take temperatures down as low as 4C with no damage and during heat spells take temperature readings of 39C in the shade. So, no matter what your location, with proper care there is no reason why you can not grow this 20-24 leaved plant.



This photo of the *Nidularium rutilans* flower bract is taken by Derek Butcher and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

Four Choice but Seldom Seen Guzmanias

This article by Chet Blackburn is reprinted from the July 1996 “Bromeliad News”, newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Sacramento.

Guzmania hybrids make up the bulk of the plants available at supermarkets and discount outlets that sell bromeliads. Unfortunately, it is rare to find one labeled as to which hybrid it is. Most are simply sold as “bromeliads.” *Guzmania* hybrids have become increasingly popular in recent years because their large conspicuous colorful inflorescences hold up for many months as indoor plants.

While hybrids are easy to come by, most *Guzmania* species are not, in spite of the fact that there are a great many attractive ones among the roughly 175 species currently described.

Guzmania remyii is occasionally found, but less often these days than they were twenty years ago. At that time, most of them were being sold as *Guzmania melinonis* var. *quitensis*. It is a small plant with a cylindrical, rosy-red inflorescence. The tips of the floral bracts and the flowers are white. It occurs on the western slopes of the Andes in northern Ecuador and possibly southern Columbia.



This photo of *Guzmania remyii* is taken by Michael Andreas and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

Guzmania kraenzliniana, from Columbia, is a small plant that could be mistaken for some of the hybrids available. It has been known since 1889 but is very seldom seen in collections.



This photo of *Guzmania kraenzliniana* is taken by Betty Patterson and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

Guzmania testudina var. splendida is from Ecuador, as are many of the other showy Guzmanias. The plant reaches about 3 feet in flower and we have had several on display in our Cal Expo exhibits in the past. It was discovered in 1983. The other variety, *Guzmania*

testudina var. testudina is also an attractive plant (see the photo on cover of the Sept/Oct 1992 issue of the Bromeliad Journal). It was described in 1979 and is even harder to find in cultivation.



This photo of *Guzmania testudina var. splendida* is taken by Wally Berg in habitat and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

Guzmania cabreræ from Columbia is about the same size in flower as the previous species. A photo appeared in the Jan/Feb issue of the Bromeliad Journal mislabeled as *Guzmania longipetala*.

If you do find any of these plants, pamper them, because you may not come across them on the market again. All four are tender plants that require continually moist soil, and prefer temperatures ranging between 60 and 85 degrees, tending to suffer at the extremes at either end of that range. All Guzmanias, hybrids and species, respond well to fertilization.

Billbergia ‘Fantasia’

This article by Herb Plevier is reprinted from the February 2000 “Bromeliana”, newsletter of the New York Bromeliad Society.

Billbergia 'Fantasia' is a plant that should be in every member's collection. It has beautiful foliage, takes up very little horizontal space and its gorgeous bloom will take your breath away even if it only lasts a week to 10 days.

It will grow even in moderate light, but in a bright south or west window, it develops strong white blotches and dots. In a full sun window or outdoors it will develop a bronze to purple hue.



This photo of *Guzmania cabrerana* is taken from the Journal of the Bromeliad Society and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

Like all other Billbergias, 'Fantasia' reacts to a short day photo period. It flowers in the winter when the days are short and there is a long period of darkness. However, the plant may be fooled if it is grown in a room where you keep the light on late at night. Then it doesn't sense that it is winter and it may not flower.

For instance, I grow the plant on my bedroom window which faces south, but my wife and I also read in bed

at night and the lamp light changes the photo period. If you grow it in such a room, you should temporarily move it to a room where you don't turn on the light in the evening and it will flower.

There are differing opinions about fertilizing Billbergias. Don Beadle advises that you use no fertilizer at all. Other growers fertilize moderately during the late spring and summer. I believe you will get better markings and a tighter conformation with very minimal or no fertilizer.

B. 'Fantasia' is one of the loveliest hybrids made by Mulford B. Foster (justly called the Father of the Bromeliads). Its parents are *Billbergia pyramidalis* (Sims) Lindley and *B. saundersii* (W. Bull). It takes after *B. pyramidalis* in its upright, dense inflorescence and it gets its spotted markings from *B. saundersii*. Its brilliantly colored inflorescence favors *B. pyramidalis*.

Too bad the cross wasn't able to pick up the psychedelic colors of the flowers of *B. saundersii* as did Walter Richter's *B. 'Fascinator'*, a cross of [*B. 'Windii'* (*B. nutans* x *B. decora*) x *B. saundersii*]. Richter was one of the first growers to recognize the value of bromeliads as houseplants.



This photo of *Billbergia 'Fantasia'* is taken by Frank Sherman and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies

Soil Mixes

This article is reprinted from the August 2006 "Puptalk", newsletter of the Saddleback Valley Bromeliad Society.

Don [Beadle – Ed.] in his Billbergia article says he uses a commercial soil mix called PROMIX and states that most growers "design their own concoction." We wondered what soil mix our club's top growers use for this type of plant.

Robert Kopfstein says, I use a mix for all of my epiphyte broms that consists of equal proportions of

- Fir bark
- Pumice or perlite
- Peat moss

I then add a small amount of commercial potting soil. This helps the mixture hold moisture better. Lastly, I add a handful of magamp or slow-release fertilizer. I mix this in one of those plastic muck buckets 2/3 full.”

(Editorial comments:

1. *We have found that in an open mix such as this, Pumice is preferable to perlite. Perlite seems to migrate to the surface when watered while pumice is more likely to stay in the mix.*
2. *We mix our soil in an oval, metal turkey roasting pan. Its rounded corners make it easier to use and there is something satisfying in banging on a metal pan to get the last bit of soil out.)*

Jeff Sorensen adds, “I am still trying to find the perfect soil for bromeliads, and I am not sure there really is such a thing. It really depends on the growing conditions, type of bromeliad, and probably most importantly, how you water. Most broms are by nature epiphytic, so heavy soil or garden “dirt” is not usually a suitable moisture-holding medium as well. If you are lazy (like me) or don’t have a lot of time to keep a close eye on your plants, use a loose mix with:

- 1/3 good potting soil
- 1/3 pumice, and
- 1/3 redwood bark.

“‘Coir’, fine-ground coconut husk material, was recently introduced as a new miracle growing medium, but my results have not been very good. It seems to break down and get soggy easily, so I recommend avoiding it. On the other hand, coconut husk chips are a good substitute for bark and hold up well. Put something, such as window screen in the bottom of the pot to prevent the potting mix from escaping through the drain holes. If you water often (more than once a week), use less soil. Vrieseas and Guzmanias like more water retaining medium in the mix, but be careful not to over water (both also need good water to look their best). Alcantareas, being terrestrial, like a heavier mix; and since they can

get quite large, they need a lot of weight in the pot for stability. I sometimes put rocks in the bottom to add extra weight.

I still sometimes have problems with too little or too much moisture in the soil when I check it. Usually, this is due to uneven watering from sprinklers that plug up or do not cover well. Check automatic watering systems regularly because they tend to fail often. They make watering easy, but are not to be trusted to work forever.

Also, cut WAY back on watering in the winter. Most plants do not require as much water, plus there is less evaporation and higher likelihood for rot in the winter. (I have killed many plants by not following this rule). It is better for them to be dry than wet during the winter, and if you err on the dry side, they can usually survive until you realize there is a problem since the cooler winter temperatures are not working against you.

If your plants don’t look happy and you suspect potting is the problem, pull them out of the pot to see what the problem may be. You want to see good root structure and potting medium that isn’t too wet or dry. If they are soggy and have poor roots, change the mix and water less. If the soil looks OK, but there are few or no roots, make sure the portion in the soil is alive, and if not – cut it off to live material. Use a rooting hormone on the stump and replant, keeping it evenly moist. With some luck, you might be able to salvage it.

December Holiday Party

Save December 20th for our annual holiday party. The club will provide honey baked ham, turkey, and a free plant for each member. You will provide beverages, vegetable dish, salad, or dessert. We always have great time at this meeting. There will be a sign-up sheet at the meeting this month and we will follow up with you if you can not make this meeting.

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:

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BROMELIAD SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

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BROMELIAD SOCIETY
OF
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Join us for a Slide Show on Florida Bromeliad Nurseries!
