

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO



March 2004

NEWSLETTER

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, March 18, 2004** at 7:30 PM
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

February Program

Bromeliads of Hawaii

Our own **Dennis Heckart** is visiting California from his new retirement home on the big island of Hawaii and he will be our speaker this month. Although he has not been there long, he has already accumulated quite a few bromeliads in his yard. He will be showing us digital slides of his new digs as well as those of one of his neighbors, **David Shiigi**. Most of us were introduced to David through his fantastic *Vriesea* hybrids at WBS 2000. David runs a bromeliad nursery and landscaping business and has been hybridizing since 1974

Marilyn Moyer promises “another exceptionally nice plant table – as nice or better than last month’s.” If you did not attend last month, don’t miss this one. Pretty soon, Marilyn will not have any more plants left to donate.

Dues are due!!!!

If you have not paid your dues, this will be your last newsletter.



This is *Vriesea* Carlsbad, an early Hummel hybrid. Photo by Derek Butcher is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

March Refreshments

Harold Charns signed up for refreshments this month. Can someone else help with the refreshments?

February Meeting

Although we only had 9 people in attendance at last month's meeting, everyone brought lots of show and tell flowering plants to share. There was also quite a variety of genera represented: Aechmea, Billbergia, Tillandsia, Vriesea, Orthophytum, Dyckia, and **Barret Bassick** even brought some orchids for those of us not attending the opening of the orchid show.

Marilyn Moyer promised a wonderful plant table and she did not disappoint us. There was a great diversity of plants – something for each of the 7 of us buying raffle tickets: a Brocchinia species, collected Vriesea species from Brazil, collected tillandsias from Argentina, a large clump of *Neoregelia wilsoniana* (which is a slow grower for most of us), and many more.

Flower and Garden Show

The annual Flower and Garden Show at the Cow Palace takes place from 18-24 March. **Marilyn Moyer** has loaned many of her bromeliads for one of the garden displays. Visit this event and see a very artistic arrangement of bromeliads.

The Major Pitcairnioidae

This article by Kathy Dorr was printed in the April 1994 North County Bromeliad Society newsletter. It originally appeared in the Long Beach-Lakewood Bromeliad Study Group newsletter (Vol. IX No. 6).

Dyckias are small to large plants with a thick root stem. The stiff spiny leaves narrow to a point. The inflorescence rises on a long stem, usually from the side of the plant rather than from the center. The inflorescence may be a single spike, or it may be branched.

The flowers, in most cases, are perfect with both male and female parts; however, in some rare instances there are some that are either “male” or “female” plants. The flowers are comparatively small and range in color from yellow to red.

The sepals overlap and are much shorter than the petals in most instances. The petals also overlap and are attached to the filament tube. The stamens extend beyond the petals of the flowers and the ovary is superior.

The seed capsules are short and fat. They contain many seeds. Each seed has a single thin extension attached. These plants are native to Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Bolivia.

There are about a hundred species. If you are limited to a very few, the following suggestions are made:

Dyckia fosteriana var. *fosteriana* – this small (5-6 inches in diameter) *Dyckia* forms a beautiful silver, compact cluster of leaves, arising basally from a crown. These narrow (5/16”) sharp pointed leaves arch and recurved again, giving a powder puff appearance. The silver with reddish brown tipped spines along the edge of the leaves are very prominent.

The flower spike rises 15-16 inches above the plant (very seldom) and produces bell-shaped, bright orange flowers all around the stem. The inflorescence is strikingly similar to most dyckias.

Dyckia fosteriana var. *robustior* is like the above described, only more so. It is larger, reaching as much as 7-8 inches in diameter. It is not as readily available as *Dyckia fosteriana* var. *fosteriana* but is worth searching for.

Dyckia marnier-lapostellei – it would be difficult to aggrandize the beauty of this *Dyckia*. The leaves are approximately one inch wide (or more) and eight inches long. They have a stiff succulent appearance. They appear silver colored and have very prominent spines which mostly hook toward the base of the plant rather than toward the tips of the leaves. Although these spines appear vicious, they are actually rather soft and this plants is one of the easiest to handle of all the dyckias. The flower spike is tall and has few flowers.

Dyckia platyphylla is a gorgeous dark green, shiny succulent appearing plant that is approximately 8-10 inches in diameter. The leaves are approximately an inch and a half wide at the base and taper to a very sharp point. They are edged with spines that appear almost white which curve toward the tip of the leaf. The inflorescence is usually one single stem with many flowers, though the flowers are not close together. There are many dyckias to choose from, but these are my top choices.

Encholirium – these plants have a very short stem. The coarse, heavily spined leaves form a heavy rosette. The leaves are long and narrow, or narrow and triangular. The inflorescence is usually a single spike that infrequently will branch sparsely.

The flowers are perfect (having both pistil and stamens) and each flower has a stem. The petals are narrower than the sepals and are yellow, cream, or yellow-green. The ovary is superior. The seed pod is short and fat. The seeds have an extension from the growing tip. The stamens are as long as or even much longer than the petals.

The most frequently found available species is *Encholirium spectabile*. This is a spectacular plant. The leaves turn a dull rose red when it is grown in bright light. The vicious very prominent spines along the edge of the leaves only enhance the beauty of the plant. These plants are native to Brazil.

Fosterella – these are small to medium sized plants with no stems, or nearly no stems. They usually consist of a few leaves in the form of a rosette. The leaves have few or no spines on the edges.

The inflorescence is loosely branched and tall in comparison to the size of the plant. The white flowers are small and bell shaped. They are perfect flowers, containing both the male and female parts. The stamens extend to or beyond the tips of the petals. The ovary is superior. The seed pod is round and small, but contains a lot of seeds which are dispersed over a large area if not contained in some manner. It seems to be self-pollinating. These plants are native to Mexico,

Guatemala, El Salvador, Bolivia, Peru, Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil.

This is a small genus, containing only the following species: *albicans*, *aletroides*, *gracilis*, *graminea*, *micrantha*, *pearcei*, *penduliflora*, *petiolata*, *rojasii*, *rusbyi*, *schidosperma*, *villosula*, and *weddelliana*. [According to the binomial list of named species, there are 11 more species and 1 variety since this article was written. Ed.]

Of these, I have only seen five available in the trade. The most attractive of these is *Fosterella villosula*.

These are very easy to get to set seed – easy to grow from seed. They will grow outside with very little protection in Southern California. At least one should be in every collection – as an oddity if nothing else.

Hechtia – These are mostly sun loving plants with a short stem. The pointed recurving leaves form a dense rosette. The leaves are usually edged with coarse, sharp spines and may be entirely covered with scurfy scales or only the under side of the leaf may be covered. The stem of the inflorescence may arise from the side of the plant, or be nearly centered or slanting. The inflorescence is a branching one: flowers may be produced on secondary spikes, rather than on a simple extension of the stem. The small flowers are either attached to the stem or may have a stem of their own.

A plant will produce flowers of only one sex. The seed pod may be egg shaped or elliptical and will open spontaneously when the seeds are ripe. Each capsule contains many oblong seeds with a narrow, thin extension, or with nearly no appendage at all.

These plants are native to Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, and Texas. Many are found growing on limestone cliffs and ledges in Mexico.

Some that are an asset to any collection would be *Hechtia guatemalensis*, *H. montanta*, *H. glabra*, *H. lundelliorum*, *H. tillandsioides*, *H. scariosa*, *H. marnier-lapostolei*, *H. glomerata*, and *H.*

rosea. These would be my choice because of the color of foliage, in most cases.

Hechtias are well known for their ferocity, but there are two that, if they have spines, they are not distinguishable. These are *H. lundelliorum* and *H. tillandsioides*. The inflorescence of both of these plants is beautiful. Airy, branched inflorescences remind one of 'baby's breath.' *H. lundelliorum* has white flowers and *H. tillandsioides* has blue-lavender flowers.

Another Hechtia that shouldn't be overlooked is *H. marnier-lapostollei*. This silvery, succulent appearing plant doesn't even need an inflorescence to catch the eye. The 'plump', pointed leaves are covered with scurfy scale making them appear the silvery color.

Other Hechtias have blood red splotches on the leaves, which make an attractive plant in the landscaping, as well as a deterrent to animals.

Hechtias are terrestrials in their native habitats and don't appreciate having their 'feet' (roots) crammed into a 4 inch pot. If you are unable to grow them in the ground, it is suggested that a large container be used for the best growing results.

Puya – These range from small plants such as *Puya mirabilis* to the extremely large *Puya raimondii*. They usually form a dense merciless growth of tough, pliable leaves edged with forbidding spines.

The inflorescence may consist of a single spike or it may be branched. The seed pods contain many fairly large seed with an attached dorso-apical wing.

Puya mirabilis is one that is quite commonly found in collections and is quite interesting. It grows about 18-20 inches in height when mature. The flower spike reaches a height of three feet or more producing enormous (for a bromeliad) yellow-green flowers.

Puya alpestris is one of the best known of the Puyas, and perhaps one of the most beautiful. It reaches heights of five to six feet (or more including inflorescences). The flowers are

metallic-blue? Aqua?; anyway, they are so pretty they don't look like real flowers. This makes a wonderful landscape plant.

Puya laxa is a most interesting small plant. Its twelve to fifteen inch long, fuzzy, grey-green leaves produce a lovely plant, which in turn produces a branched inflorescence about three feet in length. This, in turn, produces dark blue and green tubular-like flowers that are very attractive.

***Neoregelia ampullacea* and its neighbors**

This article by A. Herndon is reprinted from the May 2003 [The Bromeliadvisory](#), the newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of South Florida.

Among the miniature bromeliads, the *Neoregelia ampullacea* complex is a source of both great charm and great frustration. Thirty years ago, life was simple – there were only four plants available in the group (*ampullacea ampullacea*, *ampullacea tigrina*, *ampullacea zebrina*, and *ampullacea variegata*), and they were all readily distinguishable (although I am not sure I remember exactly what plant was called *ampullacea ampullacea*). Now, several of the plants from the olden days are known by different names; there are many more distinct types of plants available in this group; and an uncertain number of the species are treated as *ampullacea* cultivars in the trade.

The core group of *Neoregelia ampullacea* is characterized by the narrow, cylindrical shape of the water holding cup formed by the leaf sheaths and slender stolons that are generally long enough to keep the water holding cups of individual rosettes from each other. Leaves are decorated by dark patches, generally in the form of bars running partway across the leaf blades. Plants produce pups before flowering, so they tend to form clumps quickly. The flower petals are relatively large – two to three open flowers fully cover the top of the cup – with purple tips and a white throat. This group includes *Neoregelia ampullacea ampullacea*, *N. ampullacea* cv. Bert, *N. ampullacea* cv. Midget (known long ago as *N. ampullacea zebrina*), and

N. liliputiana. These cultivars differ in size and the darkness of leaf bars. *N. ampullacea ampullacea* has the lightest coloration, and with ample fertilizer, may show no trace of the leaf bars at all. *N. ampullacea* cv. Bert is slightly smaller than *ampullacea ampullacea* and has darker leaf bars. The leaves on this cultivar are more pointed towards the tip in contrast to the rounded leaf tips on other cultivars. *N. ampullacea* Midget, as the name implies, is smaller than *ampullacea ampullacea*. It also has very dark leaves, including both bars and a multitude of small dark dots, under all conditions. *N. liliputiana* is even smaller than *ampullacea* Midget, and has prominent leaf bars, but is not nearly as dark as Midget. Plants currently sold as *N. ampullacea tigrina* (or *N. tigrina*) in the trade differ from the plants called *N. ampullacea tigrina* 30 years ago. They are also totally different from the core species of the *ampullacea* complex. This plant has a funnel-shaped water holding cup and the bracts along the stolons of rapidly growing plants are loose, so the stolons appear 'leafy'. In addition, the petals are wholly white and much larger than those in the core group. The plant called *N. albiflora* in the trade is almost indistinguishable. These two differ only in the presence of a yellow-brown color in the leaves of *tigrina* and its complete lack in *albiflora*. To complicate matters further, the current *N. albiflora* was treated as *N. ampullacea ampullacea* in the trade for a time.

N. ampullacea Purpurea is a cultivar of *N. punctatissima*. These plants have a barrel-shaped water-holding cup and the leaf surfaces are much waxier than *N. ampullacea*, but the stolons are essentially identical.

Neoregelia zonata has the same general characteristics as *N. ampullacea*, but is at least twice as large. Still, *N. ampullacea variegata* of the trade belongs here and the plant we used to call *N. ampullacea tigrina* appears to be a hybrid between *N. ampullacea* and *N. zonata*. It is even possible that the plant we called *N. ampullacea ampullacea* is another *ampullacea-zonata* hybrid.

Finally, I have a plant called *N. ampullacea* cv. Marion Oppenheimer that does not appear to have any relationship to the *N. ampullacea* group.

This plant has no stolons, the leaves have no dark bars and pups are not produced until the parent blooms. How the name came to be applied to the plant is a complete mystery. *N. ampullacea* cv. *marnier-lapostollei* and *N. ampullacea* Black Beauty are also available in the trade, but I don't know these plants beyond the names, so I can't comment on them (although I have an unnamed plant that could represent one of them). Furthermore, the *N. dungsiana* brought to the January meeting by Dr. Karl Green is undoubtedly related to the core *ampullacea* group. It is likely that other species less frequently seen in cultivation also belong here. Due to their pleasing size and characteristics, members of the *ampullacea* complex (including allied species) have been used in many hybrids. Regrettably, name changes and uncertainties in the application of names within the group introduce great confusion concerning the parentage of hybrids. For instance, *N. Red Waif*, a Gary Hendrix hybrid, is listed as having *zebrina* and *Fireball* as parents.

If you have been paying attention to your history, you realize that the current name for the first parent is *ampullacea* cv. Midget. But, what if a hybrid lists *tigrina* as a parent? Is the parent the *tigrina* of many years ago or today? It is even more complicated if the parent is listed as *ampullacea* without qualification. Now it is totally unclear whether the parent is a member of the core *ampullacea* complex, an *albiflora*, a *punctatissima*, a *zonata*, or a hybrid. Furthermore, the range of possible choices depends upon the year the hybrid was made and to the extent the hybridizer knew and used up-to-date names.

Of course, confusion over names does not distract from the charm of the plants or hybrids made from them. If you prefer to not get involved with the intricacies of identification, just buy plants that look good to you. Your enjoyment will be just as complete regardless of the name on the label.

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 \$12. To join the BSSF, mail your name(s), address, telephone number, and check made payable to the BSSF to: Harold Charns, BSSF Treasurer, 255 States Street, San Francisco, CA 94114-1405.

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