

# BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO

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December 2008

## NEWSLETTER

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Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, December 18, 2008** at 700 PM  
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park,  
San Francisco

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### December Program

#### Holiday Potluck and Gift Exchange

This month culminates another year for our society. Our membership grew this year, probably as a result of our great web site constructed and maintained by **Dan Arcos** and our bromeliad sales (we had two sales this year). There are many of our members that are not able to get to our monthly meetings. We hope that many of you will be able to join us for the holiday potluck. Our annual trip to the member's gardens was a wonderful opportunity to see diverse collections and beautiful landscaping – culminating in a great potluck.

**Note that our meeting time this month is 7 PM instead of 7:30 PM.**

This month's meeting will be an opportunity for us socialize and partake of great food. The society is providing a turkey and honey baked ham. We are asking you to bring a dish to share with the group – drinks, vegetable dish, rolls, desserts, etc. Please try to remember to bring serving silverware for the dish that you bring. We will provide plates, cups, silverware, and napkins. **Marilyn Moyer** is coordinating the food items. For those of you who have e-mail, she has sent you an invitation that shows the food items that have been selected. If you are not computer literate, **call Marilyn (650-365-5560) to see where you can fill in some of our gaps.**

Our club will provide a plant for each member. You may also bring a special plant/book, etc. for exchange with the other members.



## 2008 Programs

We enjoyed a wide variety of programs this year and gained several new members into the world of bromeliads. Thanks to **Bruce McCoy** for getting publicity for our society for each of our sales this year and arranging for an exceptional group of quality speakers. Thanks also to the very small group of members who worked many long hours to assemble impressive gardens of bromeliads on our tour to the East Bay. Here are some highlights of our activities this year.

### January

Our society's display at the Cow Palace in the spring of 2007 was such a success that the California Horticultural Society invited us to provide a show for them. **David Feix** and **Dan Arcos** assembled a PowerPoint presentation that was very successful when shown. Dan and David reprised this slide show which concentrated on bromeliads that can be grown outdoors in the bay area. This presentation is available to you on our society's website.

### February

**Roger Lane** provided an overview of the *Billbergia* genus with a slide show on many of the species, some of the early hybrids, and the current hybrids that are so much more colorful. Our plant raffle table was huge so Roger had to speed up the presentation of the slides to leave before the building lockup.

### March

There are no bromeliads native to Hawaii but if you visit many of their nurseries, you would not know that. The climate in Hawaii is conducive to producing spectacular plants. Some of our members have seen slides shows of Dennis Heckart's beautiful plant collection since he has moved to Hawaii. This month **Wes Schilling** showed us another aspect of bromeliads in Hawaii – at the Haalei Nursery that he visited in Makawao, Hawaii.

### April

In April, **Francisco Olive-Esteve** visited us from Caracas, Venezuela. He has lived most of his long career in Caracas, Venezuela where he worked as an Architect and Landscape Architect, designing and developing numerous public works. At our meeting he showed us bromeliad slides native to Venezuela as well as a short movie about the Tapuis. Did you know that in addition to the various flora, there are also dinosaurs? Just kidding! Apparently, before anyone actually visited these table-top mountains, there were expectations that dinosaurs lived there. The movie showed recent explorations of some of the Tapuis. Francisco generously donated one of his books to the Conservatory of Flowers that he visited before our meeting.

### May

In May we had **Guillermo Rivera** visit us from Argentina. Some of us knew Guillermo because he has been the guide on many of the trips some of our members have taken to Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile over the last few years. Guillermo has a PhD in botany and uses his background to arrange tours for us to see some of our favorite plants in habitat. Guillermo provided a show on some of the bromeliads that you can see on his tour to central Brazil on the bromeliads found in the Minas Gerais province of Brazil and some of the bromeliads in the Atlantic Forest region of Brazil. His slides provided many habitat shots of bromeliads you usually only see in pots, such as *Lymanias*. Among the bromeliads that we saw were *Encholoriums*, *Dyckias*, *Orthophytums*, *Cryptanthus*, *Neoregelias*, *Achmeas*, and more.

### June

Each year the government of Venezuela limits the number of people eligible to visit the Tabletop Mountains (Tapuis) and many of these mountains have still not been explored. Last December, **Bruce McCoy** and **Peter Wan** were among the lucky visitors to one of the Tapuis and Peter gave us a slide show this month that highlighted some of their adventures. His presentation included photos of some of the unusual bromeliads (including *Lindmania*, *Connellia*, and *Brocchinia*) as well as the colorful *Tillandsia*, *Racinaea*, and *Vriesea*. We also saw a video of Angel Falls, one of the most beautiful and highest waterfalls in the world. Peter's show was a great follow-up to

Bruce Holst's shows on these interesting geological features and plants of Venezuela.

### July

Although we had no monthly meeting this month, we did get to visit several beautiful gardens in the East Bay. A big thank you to **Casper Curto** and **Dan Arcos** for planning this event and thanks for all the people who opened their gardens for our viewing pleasure.

The tour kicked off at **Inge Hoffmann's** garden in San Leandro that is truly a collector's garden going from rain forest to desert in mere footsteps. It's a garden packed with rare and unusual specimens—you'd be hard-pressed to find many duplicate plantings here. Our tour continued northward and up into the hills of Oakland to **Richard Ostreicher's** home and garden. Working with designer Sherry Mercieri, they have created an exotic tropical garden with an Asian touch. The front yard features a pond replete with lily pads and koi. We all admired the antique bell which he brought back from Indonesia. Our third stop was to the nearby Fairchild residence and garden. Originally landscaped by Planet Horticulture, BSSF member and landscape designer **David Feix** has weaved a rich tapestry of color and texture into the existing garden with his own new plantings of bromeliads and succulents. The garden features lushly-planted terraces of plants layered in contrasting purples, reds, greens and grays. Pathways in the front yard along the perimeter invite the visitor in to explore and they cleverly extend the perceived size of the garden space. We wrapped up the tour at **Casper Curto** and **Daryl Ducharme's** residence and garden. On the back veranda, you cannot miss their impressive collection of bromeliads which includes neoregelias, tillandsias as well as some of their blooming orchids. Beyond the veranda, the garden continues up a steep hillside. Going up the stairs, one sees a wonderful collection of large specimen plants on the hillside including numerous aloes and agaves. Their garden features a diverse collection of bromeliads, begonias, aloes, agaves, proteas and other exotics in a xeriscape setting.

Following the visit to their garden, participants shared in a delicious potluck. We were all very hungry and the food was exceptional. This could

explain why very little was left over by the end of the afternoon.

### August

In August, Peder **Samuelesen** showed us the beauty of Argentinean Patagonia and some of the bromeliads he found driving south from Cordoba on a tour that he and some of our society members took in 2007. These bromeliads included tillandsias, dyckias, and deuterocohnias and they were seen only on the first few days heading south. The further south he went, the cooler it got and conditions became more inhospitable to bromeliads. During the trip, Peder experienced a bus breakdown in the middle of nowhere, an antique car rally, St. Bernard dogs, ski resorts, and many lakes. He ended his show with previews of his next show: the penguins of Patagonia and a trip north to Iguazu Falls.

### September

This month **Paul Isley** showed us the beauty of some of his favorite tillandsias and tillandsia hybrids he has made. Paul is a superb photographer and he showed these plants at their best. Some of the species are from plants he has collected in habitat over the years. Paul brought wonderful plants for sale and there was the usual frenzy in purchasing bromeliads that we each had to have, such as an orange-flowered *Tillandsia crocata* or a neat hybrid of *T. usneoides* and *T. recurvata*. Paul also told us that he is revising his 1987 book *Tillandsia*, so we can look forward to another new bromeliad book in the near future.

### October

In October **Dennis Cathcart** treated us to a fascinating evening. His slide show summarized many of his adventures from Mexico through South America with beautiful slides of tillandsias in habitat. Among the most memorable scenes were the habitats of *Tillandsia tectorum*. His narration included the story of his search for *Tillandsia subteres* in response to a request from **Harry Luther** for photos in habitat. After hiking for several hours, Dennis found the plant, took the photos and had to hike back in the dark. Some of the places Dennis has visited require armed bodyguards. A type of travel not for most of us!

### November

**Elizabeth Patterson** from Dallas, Texas visited us again. Betty is an expert on bromeliads and she

has traveled to study the bromeliads of Ecuador every year since 1985. When she isn't collecting in Ecuador, she is playing the string bass for the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. Betty's first visit to our society was in 1999 when she showed us many flowering puyas in Ecuador. Her topic was about her most recent trip to Ecuador in May 2008. She covered a great deal of territory and revisited spots that have been decimated when compared to her earlier trips. But she discovered many undescribed *Racinaea* species (6-8) and had habitat slides of many newly described orchid species that whet the appetites of the orchid growers in our group. The slide show was a bit long, but the quality of the slides was fantastic.

### *Billbergia nutans*

This article is a composite of an article from the January 1997 "The Commentary", newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Broward County, Florida and an article by Derek Butcher found on the website for the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

According to Victoria Padilla this plant is known as "the Friendship Plant". It is indigenous to Brazil, Argentina, [Peru – Ed.] and Uruguay.

*Billbergia nutans* is a very small (about 20 cm high), tight tube made of two to three leaves up to 12 inches long which turn reddish in color if exposed to strong light conditions. The inflorescence is a nodding (pendant type) with bright pink bracts. The flowers have pink sepals and the petals are green with blue tips and edges.

They are a great plant for beginners as they are the easiest bromeliad to grow. They look their best when viewed from below with light shining through the leaves which makes them particularly beautiful. They need high light to develop good color and form. They will tolerate temperature extremes and may be mounted as well as potted; they pup readily on short stolons.

Uncle Derek says:

This is a very widespread Bromeliad which seems to be able to take a wide range of climatic conditions and can be seen in many homes and gardens around the World with no other Bromeliad in sight! It flowers well and surprises the non-Bromeliad fancier with its colour

combinations. Because of its popularity it has been given common names like Queen's Tears, Tartan Flower, and Friendship Plant. BUT have you looked for the subtle variations that are around?

This article started with Michael Andreas, your Web Master, sending me a photograph of a plant he had under the name of *Billbergia nutans* var. *minima*. There is no such official variety but it is just a name given by gardeners as is their wont! In Adelaide we call it the Yankee job to differentiate it. This came to us via the Selby Botanical Gardens and has Selby 84-538 on the label. It is the smallest and the prickliest one that we grow and could easily have links with *Billbergia minuta* named by Mez in 1916. This name is now under synonymy under *Billbergia nutans*. [This plant as sold by Tropiflora is stated to have come from Peru – Ed].

I must now mention the Pommie job which came as seed from Peter Temple in England. Peter was very strong in the British Bromeliad Society when this was in existence in what I call the Foster era and was co-translator of "Bromeliads in Garden and Glasshouse" 1979, by Werner Rauh. This plant is larger and less spiny than the Yankee job but the flowers are the same AND it sets seed!

The third form is the Aussie job which must have come over with the convicts! You need to hit it hard with a stick to kill it. It is the largest of the trio but has the tendency, now and again, of producing an offset with a *Billbergia distachia* shape. In line with us colonials it seems to have mixed blood somewhere in its genes but alas it does not set seed.

We seem to be growing the *Billbergia nutans* var. *nutans* because the petals always have whiskers (see photo). Just have a closer look next time your *Billbergia nutans* flowers! If you rub your finger down the petal LIGHTLY (In the Northern Hemisphere you may have to go UP) you will create static electricity and the whiskers will stand out! You will need your bi-focals!

The variety *schimperiana* (see photo) is much more elusive and I have yet to find it in Australia. Not only does it have this unique petal tipping but it is also supposed to have non-spiny leaves. Have

you seen this variety in captivity? Perhaps we could prevail on Ludwig Buckup to find us a close-up photograph.



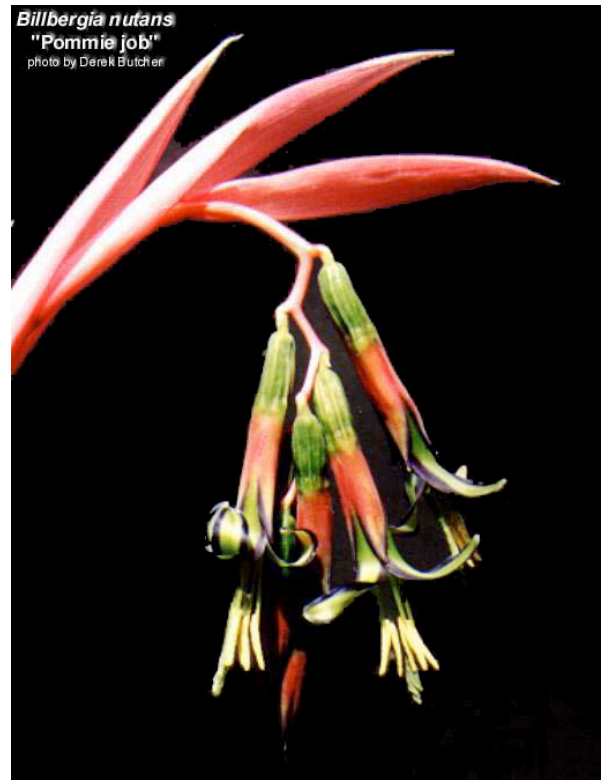
This is photo of *Billbergia nutans* var. *schimperiana* by Michael Andreas and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



This is photo of *Billbergia nutans* var. *minima* or Yankee Job by Michael Andreas and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



This is photo of *Billbergia nutans* var. *nutans* by Michael Andreas and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



This is photo of *Billbergia nutans* Pommie Job by Derek Butcher and 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**

The Journal is published bimonthly at Orlando, Florida by the Bromeliad Society International. Subscription price (in U.S. \$) is included in the 12-month membership dues: single (\$28.), dual (2 members at one address receiving one Journal -\$30). Address all membership and subscription correspondence to: Membership Secretary, Dan Kinard, 6901 Kellyn Lane, Vista, CA 92084, USA, membership@bsi.org

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BROMELIAD SOCIETY  
OF  
SAN FRANCISCO

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**Join us this month for good food and good times!**

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