

# BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO

---



June 2009

## NEWSLETTER

---

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, June 18, 2009** at 7:30 PM  
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park,  
San Francisco

---

### June Program

#### Mystery Program

When this newsletter was generated, the editor did not know the program for this month. Be sure to come to the meeting for a pleasant surprise.

(As of this date, June 16, 2009 Bruce McCoy will enlighten us with a program on his visit to Costa Rica in 2005.)



Here is a photo by Pam Hyatt of *Tillandsia yunckeri* in cultivation. Photo is courtesy of Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

#### June Refreshments

**Casper Curto** and **Daryl Ducharme** signed up for refreshments this month. **Can some one else help them with the refreshments?**

## May Meeting

Last month, **Peter Wan** provide a fast-paced show on the many bromeliads he and **Bruce McCoy** found on their trip to Honduras. Their guide has discovered some new bromeliads including *Tillandsia hondurensis*. In case you were not able to get to last month's meeting, the plant that Peter was inspecting on the page 1 photo in our last newsletter, it is *Tillandsia yunckeri*, one of Peter's favorites. Thanks for a great slide show Peter.

## Looking Back (July 1972)

This article by Peter Waters is reprinted from the February 2001 Bromeliana, newsletter of the New York Bromeliad Society. It originally appeared in the November 2000 issue of the Journal of the New Zealand Bromeliad Society.

An interesting sight on a Society outing some months ago, was a clump of *Cryptanthus bromelioides var tricolor* apparently thriving, semi submerged in an aquarium. This looked to be a ludicrous situation at first, but on consideration, it seemed that this might be taking the fact that *Cryptanthus* prefer high humidity to its logical conclusion.

I decided to experiment along these lines myself and potted a small plant of the same species in a 3 inch clay pot. This was then stood in a plastic dish containing 2 inches of water. This kept the potting mix thoroughly wet at all times and must also have increased the humidity of the surrounding atmosphere.

After a few weeks, the increase in the growth was amazing and new offsets appeared from many leaf axils. This continued for about eight weeks until winter arrived with some very cold nights. This affected the plant badly with the uppermost leaves drying off. This would seem to indicate that the new growth had been too soft to cope with the cold weather, but much to my surprise, there has still been no rotting from the base. I have now placed the pot complete with water

container in a heated bed, which maintains bottom temperature at 60-65 degrees F, to see how things fare there.

Anyway, the gist of all this is that it illustrates a very important point, and that is that we can all learn from each other when it comes to results of experiments if members would take the time to write them up for the Journal. How about it?

Did anyone heed Peter's plea then? Will anyone take heed now?

(Bromeliana editor's note: The above questions asked by the editor of the Journal of the New Zealand Bromeliad Society are also pertinent for our Society. Even if you are not specifically experimenting, every plant you grow is a kind of experiment. Knowing what has worked for you will be of great benefit to all members, whether they are experienced growers or novices. Please take the time to send me a brief account of your observations.

Moreover, there is much to be learned from a careful reading of this brief article by Peter Waters. He does not say where the plant was grown because all New Zealanders grow their plants either outdoors or in a greenhouse. Whether grown outdoors or in a cool greenhouse the crypt was damaged by the cold night temperatures at the onset of winter. They are very intolerant of cold temperatures, especially when wet.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Waters tried to cope with the problems of growing crypts outdoors in the winter cold by using a heated bed kept at temperatures between 60° to 65° F. This is much colder than any indoor apartment in the winter, including mine. You can see that indoor growers should not have any trouble growing *Cryptanthus* because of winter cold, unless you grow them on a window sill when the outside temperature is below 20° F.

Our problem with *Cryptanthus* lie in maintaining high humidity, and it may be that Mr. Water's solution of standing the pot in 2 inches of water may be a solution. Here is your opportunity to experiment! If you have a few *Cryptanthus*, why not place one in a plastic dish with 2 inches of

water and see whether you can replicate the result reported in the article. If you don't have any crypts, order a few on our spring order. We'll have *Cryptanthus bromelioides* var. *tricolor* as well as other nice crypts available. *Cryptanthus bromelioides* var. *tricolor* rarely flowers, at least not indoors, but it does clump easily and it is a beautiful foliage plant.)



This photo by Bruce Holst of *Cryptanthus bromelioides* (green form) is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies. There is not a tricolor photo available.

## Tips From The Front Lines

This article by Lynne Fieber is reprinted from the July/Aug 2002 The Bromeliadvisory, newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of South Florida.

**I** love bromeliads. Aspects of my admiration include comparing the similarities and differences between Pitcairnia and Vrieseas, Tillandsias and Neos, seeing them flower and gleefully counting my "take" of offsets after the bittersweet passing of a really good bloom. But like most of our BSSF membership, I do not have a greenhouse, nor the discipline for garden chores that ordinarily adheres to those who do. I am a sloppy grower who cannot train herself to always aim for perfection in cultivation. I am laziest in the timely removal of pups for potting.

I like to enter a few plants in our annual show, however, so I do occasionally expend effort to ensure I have something presentable by April or May of each year, I would like to share a few tips, all of the learned from others in our society, that

are easy to implement and that offer a big payoff for the amount of effort expended.

1. The best new tip I have learned is from Nat DeLeon. During his program at our February meeting, he told us an interesting story about the natural history of Guzmanias in South America. He noticed their beauty in nearly full sun, which was puzzling to him at the time, because they also appeared to be living in dry conditions. As the day ended, Nat noticed that a dense fog descended right to the ground, bathing the Guzmanias in moisture until dawn. Nat took this observation back home and turned up the light level on his Guzmanias, while initiating a daily watering schedule. He has had excellent results. Figuring that this was something I could easily try, I did an experiment with 8 half-grown pups from a single *Guzmania wittmackii*. I placed 4 in bright light with daily watering (a northern exposure alongside a white sidewalk) and 4 in partial shade with twice weekly watering (eastern exposure). I water at dusk for my own convenience. Nat is right; the brightly grown plants are larger than the shaded plants after several months' separation. Do be careful about brightly grown plants as the season progresses. You can't get a burned leaf back.
2. Pup-potting technique, also from Nat DeLeon. This is a great trick that really works. For pups of genera such as *Cryptanthus*, *Dyckia*, or *Orthophytum* that, due to their spread of stiff leaves, are reluctant to hold their bases in potting medium, place the plant in the prepared pot with medium, then anchor it by placing 3 or 4 small twigs between the leaves. Water as usual. Leave the twigs in place for a few months until roots develop.
3. Show tip: I can't remember who I learned this from; it may have been the late Peniel Romanelli, who imparted many good growing tips over the years. When one plant in a clump is the one

you want to enter in the show or offer for the door prize, and it is rootless as a result of removal from the other plants in the clump, tie a string tightly around the base. Then either run the end of the string out of the center hole in the pot and attach it to the pot bottom with a piece of masking tape, or tie the string to a rock of the appropriate size and shape. You can tape down the end of the rock-tied string, too, for good measure. Once the potting medium is added and packed tightly around the plant, the anchor, whether string alone or string plus rock, will hold the plant in place, and no one will know it is there. I did this with 4 plants I entered in our recent show, and no one was the wiser. If you use the rock variation, an added bonus of this technique is that you can pot and not worry about it tipping over.

4. From Ed Prince: black gravel as a potting medium for a Tillandsia that is heavily trichomed creates a nearly unbeatable combination. Consider this as a display option if the Tillandsia you want to enter is not attached to anything. Or, if the plant is mounted, consider dismounting it to take advantage of this fresh look (But that's probably too much work for those of us on the front lines!)



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

### **Cultural Tips: Potting and Potting Mixes**

This article by Odean Head is reprinted from the March 2004 newsletter of the Houston Bromeliad Society.

Most of us were plant people long before we were introduced to bromeliads. Consequently, most of us have already had a lot of experience in transplanting, propagating, and repotting other kinds of plants. We have found that the rules for most of these procedures are much easier when applied to our bromeliads. This is because most bromeliads are less dependent on their root systems than most other plant families. Therefore, we do not have to be as protective of the roots during these transition periods.

Some of us will take off pups while we are performing other tasks such as grooming, culling, watering, and/or general area clean up. These pups may accumulate a few days before we take the time to pot them. Again, this is not a problem in most cases. Some of the terrestrials that have

already developed feeder roots may suffer a little if we defer potting very long. If we plan to defer potting, we should stand the pups up in an empty pot and water them. This will give the pups needed air circulation and allow them to begin correcting any malformed shape that may have occurred due to growing too close to their mothers. Some people will have a large container of perlite or loose soil to stick them in until their next potting session. I will demonstrate the potting procedure at the meeting.

**POTTING MIX** – First, we need to prepare a batch of potting mix that our plants will be happy growing in. There are so many different recipes being used that it may not be as simple as it sounds. Just be sure that the mix has good substance to hold the plant firmly in the pot, has good aeration, drainage, and some moisture holding capacity. The medium should be durable since the plant will probably remain in it for a long time. There is a large selection of ingredients available that will satisfy these basic needs.

Fir bark, orchid bark, pine bark, river gravel, coarse granite, hadite, tree fern fiber, coconut fiber, perlite, German peat, Canadian peat, builders sand, and coarse leaf mold are just some of the ingredients that are used. You may want to start out with some of the ingredients that are most available in your area that will satisfy these needs and do some experimenting on your own. If you grow outside in the summer and the rainfall is heavy or you water frequently, more consideration should be given to good aeration and drainage. Those who have problems watering enough should have a mix that will hold moisture better. This would also apply to most of the terrestrials. Some of you are using the relatively new pro-mix in their recipes which help both those who under-water and those who over-water. It helps the initial drainage while retaining moisture for later use. You may want to consider using it in your mix.

The mix that I am currently using is three parts hardwood mulch, one part Canadian peat and one part perlite. To this I add a double handful of Osmocote (14-14-14) to a batch of 10 to 12 gallons. I used ground-up pine bark for many years but have switched to the hardwood because it firms up better in the pot. Do some

experimenting. Check out the recipes of other growers. Try some of them and see what does best for you as to availability, cost and results.

**POTTING** – The plant should be potted upright to encourage a good growth pattern. It should be firm in the pot to stimulate root growth. Dampening the mix before potting will help to firm the plant in the pot. Do not plant too deep. The potting medium should come just above the roots. I sometimes plant a little deeper when the plants are large and have few roots so I can attain the firmness they need. Exercise caution because if they are too wet you may rot them off at the base. I try to repot these higher in the pot after roots have formed to reduce the possibility of rotting.

A frequently asked question is ‘what size pot should I use’? Not everyone will agree on the answer to this question. Plants that are expected to be large should grow in a large pot to reach their optimum size. Personally, I prefer to pot pups with no roots into smaller pots until roots have developed and then repot those needing larger pots. Just remember that bromeliads adapted to pot culture will develop a larger, softer root system that will provide added nutrients to the plant. Normally, the plant will grow larger in a larger pot. Some growers will try to visualize the size they want the mature plant to be and select the size pot that will attain a good balance. Other growers will try to intentionally put them into smaller pots to stunt the growth to make the plant’s growth more compact. After the plant is mature, they may want to pot in a larger pot to get better balance. This is particularly true when entering it in a show. I hope we can have some discussion on this at the 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 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.

---

**BSSF 2008 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS**

PRESIDENT	Carl Carter	510-661-0568	carl.carter@ekit.com
VICE PRESIDENT	Bruce McCoy	510-835-3311	bruce.mccoy@gmail.com
SECRETARY	Dorothy Dewing	650-856-1441	
TREASURER	Harold Charns	415-861-6043	Harold@States-Street.com
DIRECTORS:			
	Roger Lane	650-949-4831	rdodger@pacbell.net
	Marilyn Moyer	650-365-5560	MarilynMoyer@comcast.net
	Peder Samuelsen	650-365-5560	Pedersam@comcast.net
	Peter Wan	408-500-2103	peterkwan@earthlink.net

---

**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

---

BROMELIAD SOCIETY  
OF  
SAN FRANCISCO

Roger Lane  
Newsletter Editor  
551 Hawthorne Court  
Los Altos, CA 94024-3121

---

<b>Mystery Program this month!</b>
------------------------------------

---