

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO



OCTOBER 2011

NEWSLETTER

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, October 20, 2011** at 7:30 PM
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

October Program

Oaxaca: Tillandsias and Hechtias

Andy Siekkinen is a nanotechnology chemist with a plant problem. Growing up in northeastern Ohio was good, a brief stop in Seattle for a couple of years was better, but then he found San Diego. After discovering the bromeliad family he hasn't looked back. Currently the President of the San Diego Bromeliad Society and the Bromeliad Study Group of Balboa Park his collection focuses on Tillandsias and the terrestrial genera, especially the genus *Hechtia*. Over the past several years he has been exploring Mexico looking for the new, the interesting, and even the old and has covered over 14,000 miles.

Andy's talk is split into two parts and the first part will be presented at the San Francisco Succulent and Cactus Society meeting on Tuesday, October 18 at 7 PM in the same room that we meet.

Part 1: North Central Mexico—*Hechtia argentea* and Friends

The first of the two programs focuses on the *Hechtias* of north central Mexico. With large mountains and barrancas (canyons), north central Mexico has many spectacular landscapes and plants to match. With rumors and passing clues about the long-lost *Hechtia argentea* lurking in the canyons of the area, Andy has spent a lot of time exploring this region. There have been a couple of interesting discoveries and observations made along the way. Along the

search for *Hechtias* many cacti, agaves, and succulents were seen.

Part 2: Oaxaca—Tillandsias and Hechtias

In the second half of the series we will explore the wonders of Oaxaca. In a country with amazing plant diversity, Oaxaca is a state that stands out with an amazing number of unique habitats with exceptional plants. While *Hechtias* were the focus of the trips there is no way to overlook the amazing *Tillandsias* that often share the same habitat. One thing that is clear is that it seems there will always be something to discover in Oaxaca.



October Refreshments

Roger Lane signed up for refreshments this month.

September Meeting

Last month **Dan Arcos** showed us slides from his visit to the greenhouses at San Francisco State University. The director of the Greenhouses, Martin Grantham, attended our meeting and brought a fantastic *Werauhia insignis* clump in flower that he has been growing in these greenhouses. Our president has seen this plant in habitat in Costa Rica and it is very tender. Martin is a great grower. In the future we will be exploring means of our society helping out in these greenhouses.

Plant Tour to Ecuador

Guillermo Rivera who has spoken to our group several times about the plant tours he conducts has requested we include the information on his next tour to Ecuador. Some of our members went on the previous tour Guillermo offered this June.

SOUTHERN/NORTHERN ECUADOR COMBINED: Jan 2012

Bromeliads and Orchids

Dates: Jan 20th – Feb 3rd, 2012

CONFIRMED

Mode: All inclusive, starting in Guayaquil, ending in Quito

Duration: 16 days

Price: \$ 3250, all inclusive except air fare. (Minimum 10) (Price may vary if number of people is less than 10).

South America Nature Tours will be leading a new expedition combining the best of Northern and Southern Ecuador. Our previous experience from our earlier trips allows us to maximize the number of plants we will see, minimize the amount of driving, and picking the best spots to see the plants we want to see: BROMELIADS!! In prior excursions we

saw over 120 species of Bromeliads and would expect more on this combined trip.

Bromeliad Bash

The San Diego Bromeliad Society would like to invite you to the first Bromeliad Bash at the San Diego Botanic Garden (formerly Quail BG). This is a new event that we hope many of you will join us to celebrate and socialize. I would like to start with the motivation for the Bromeliad Bash: strengthening the bromeliad community in the region. This is not a San Diego Bromeliad Society event but rather a California bromeliad event that we happen to be hosting. Along with celebrating bromeliads this is a social event where we can all meet new and old bromeliad friends.

The public event will be on Saturday and Sunday November 12-13th. It will feature two regional speakers each day, one in the morning and one in the early afternoon. Plant sales will be open both days, if you are interested in selling plants please contact me for more information. We will be creating both active demonstrations and passive displays for teaching the public (and newer members) some bromeliad basics. SDBS will be creating a display and welcome displays from other clubs (dimensions to be determined).

A second, but equally exciting part of the event will be display and sale of original 19th century botanical illustrations. The illustrations were taken from books that were falling apart and are already professionally framed. They will be on display and sale through December, but the grand opening of the show will be this event. To celebrate the opening of the display we will be hosting a wine reception on Friday evening. If you are able to come to that event please RSVP to myself.

To facilitate a greater opportunity to mix and mingle, we will also be hosting a potluck picnic on Saturday between presentations. For the judges of the region, on Sunday there will be a Judges Symposium in another building at the Gardens. We are also working on finding some lodging suggestions if you are interested in staying the weekend.

There is a lot going on and still much to do. As a new event, we are still exploring many parts of

the event and it will certainly be a learning experience. If you have any ideas, suggestions, or questions feel free to contact me.

-Andy Siekkinen, President SDBS
(siekkinenar@gmail.com)



Hechtia Dorothy – one of the few *Hechtia* hybrids. Photo is courtesy of Andy Siekkinen.



Hechtia texensis is one of the few *Hechtias* from the United States. Photo is courtesy of Andy Siekkinen.

Emergency First Aid

This article by Herb Plevier is reprinted from the May 2005 Bromeliana, newsletter of the New York Bromeliad Society.

The scenario: You've been growing this bromeliad for some time and it has rooted and has been growing well. Or, perhaps, you have

purchased a plant on our plant order, potted it and for two or three months it has seemed to have established itself in the mix. Or, maybe you have taken off a pup, potted it and have established it.

Then, in what may seem to have been all of a sudden, you notice that the lower leaves of the plant are starting to brown off; maybe they've even gotten discolored and soft, and perhaps the plant is also shaky in the pot. You know that in the past you've seen a few lower leaves on many plants dry off when the plants are first being established in a mix, but this is different!

The new condition should trigger alarm bells in your head. You can't afford to wait and see what happens. You have to take action because if you don't, and if your plant has a bad case of fungal base rot it will die if the rot destroys the plant stem. Time is of the essence!

What to do

1. Take the plant to the sink or a basin on your work counter where you pot up plants and gently remove it from the pot.
2. Brush away the mix from the lower base and inspect it. If the basal tissue has become a mushy brown or reddish-brown, it is rotting from some fungal infection. You have a chance to save the plant if the plant stem has sufficient healthy tissue to hold the leaves. This will depend on the size of the stem and how deep the rot has penetrated.
3. Ruthless surgery is called for. With a sharp knife or scalpel cut off all the roots right up to the follicles. You won't be able to retain the roots and still remove all the rot. Then start thinly shaving off the rotted tissue until all of it has been removed. You may have to use the point of the knife to dig into those places where the rot is deep. If your eyes are poor and you want to be sure you've completely cleaned off the base, inspect it with a magnifying glass. Any infected tissue that remains will start the rotting process all over again. When the cleaning job is complete inspect the base to see if the remaining leaves are still firmly attached and not about to fall off. If so, the plant can be saved.

4. Now you have to protect the exposed tissue from a new infection from fungus spores which seem to be present everywhere. The cut tissue is very vulnerable to being infected again. This can be done in a number of ways: you can dust the base with a fungicide or spray the fungicide if it is the water soluble type; you can dust the base with a rooting hormone containing a fungicide (providing the fungicide is relatively fresh and viable – if you’ve had it for 2 or 3 years, it may have lost its efficacy); or you can use my preferred method of spraying the base with a solution of 2 to 3 tsp. of 3% hydrogen peroxide (the stuff you can buy in the drugstore) to 24 oz. of water.
5. Now you must allow the base to develop a protective layer of callus. This will take two to five days while the plant is hung in such a way that the base is suspended without contact with anything but the air. (You can place it between the leaves of a large plant or into the narrow mouth of a watering pitcher, etc.)
6. While the plant is thus suspended and after it has been newly potted, still without roots, you should frequently mist the plant with a light fertilizer. If there are enough intact leaves to hold water in the center, then you must keep the cup with a small amount of water so the plant can continually hydrate itself.
7. After the basal callus has formed, the plant can be potted in a mix that is kept moist or damp but not wet. This will depend on the density of the mix, the amount of water retentive ingredients and the frequency of watering. If the plant is shaky in the pot (again, this may depend on the density of the mix) it is a good idea to stabilize it while new roots are developing. This can be done with stakes or by crossing strips of masking tape in a tic-tac-toe arrangement against the sides of the plant to brace it against any movement which might break off developing hair roots. (Fold the tape in the center to prevent the tape from sticking to the plant.)

What caused the infection?

I can only generalize about various ways in which infections start; these may help to avoid future problems if one or more of them apply.

1. The most common problem growers have is establishing a pup after it has been removed from the parent. You must get into the habit of allowing the pup to develop basal callus for a few days before potting it because of the vulnerability of the cut tissue to fungal infection. This is generally not a problem with aechmeas and billbergias whose pups form on stolons from below the surface of the mix. These will usually have already rooted in the mix before they are ready to be taken off. Even if they haven’t formed roots, their connections to the parent are so woody, you’ll need a very sharp knife or a small saw to cut through it.
2. You must take great care when removing Vriesea pups which emerge from deep in the leaf axils not to cut off any of the pup’s base. Their bases are usually small and very brittle so they may snap if pressure is applied when they are being cut off. Be sure to cut down all the way with a sharp knife angle toward the parent. It is safe practice to apply a fungicide to the base while it is being callused before potting.
3. Heavy, over-wet mixes tend to promote the growth of fungus and infection. When potting a plant purchase from the plant order, don’t pot it too deep into the mix. It should be no deeper than the lower part of the typical bulge at the top of the base. Apply a brace to stabilize the plant in the pot, as previously discussed. Be sure that your mix is not so dense that it stays wet and heavy after you water, as the mix may pack down after prolonged watering and prevent adequate aeration which is essential for the roots. You can loosen such a mix by adding a generous helping of perlite.
4. Learn to observe and inspect your plants as you water them. If you spot any problem, try to analyze its cause(s) and take protective action.

Plants for Sale



Hechtia dicrocantha has fine white spines.. Photo is courtesy of Andy Siekkinen.



Hechtia zamudoi is one of the Hechtias with fleshy leaves. Photo is courtesy of Andy Siekkinen.



Hechtia stoloniferous is one of the more colorful species. Photo is courtesy of Andy Siekkinen.

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:

Harold Charms, BSSF Treasurer, 255 States Street, San Francisco, CA 94114-1405.

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BROMELIAD SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

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BROMELIAD SOCIETY
OF
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Andy Siekkinen will take us to Mexico this month!