

# BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO



## NOVEMBER 2011

# NEWSLETTER

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, November 17, 2011** at 7:30 PM  
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

### November Program

#### Tillandsias You Can Grow Outdoors

**M**any of you know **Gregg DeChirico** because he lived in San Francisco for many years and was very active in the San Francisco Succulent and Cactus Society including serving as its president. Gregg has been involved with plants for over 30 years and his interests have recently extended into the bromeliad family. He now lives in Santa Barbara which is a marvelous place to grow almost any kind of plant. He now runs a nursery called Gregg's Greenhouses and he grows many exotic types of plants from seed. His topic for us is on tillandsias you can grow outdoors; tillandsias are his favorite genus in the bromeliad family, although he grows many other types as well.

Let's have a great turnout for Gregg who will talk on a subject important for most of us because we do not have a greenhouse. Gregg will also be speaking on Peru on Tuesday night to the San Francisco Succulent and Cactus Society.



**Gregg DeChirico** is showing Maggie Palecek a picture on his phone.

#### November Refreshments

**N**o one signed up for refreshments this month. Our members are fantastic at providing goodies, so I am sure someone will come through this month.

## October Meeting

**A**fter a short reprise of the search for the rare *Hechtia argentea* that **Andy Siekkinen** gave to the San Francisco Succulent and Cactus Society on Tuesday night, he took us to Oaxaca where we discovered more Hechtias as well as many wonderful Tillandsias. Andy also provided many Hechtias and other terrestrials for us to add to our collections. We don't usually have many terrestrials on our plant tables. It was great to see a young person like Andy who is so keen on bromeliads and enthusiastic in promoting the interest in bromeliads through his very active participation in his local societies.

### *Tillandsia xiphioides* and Friend

This article by Jeff Sorensen is reprinted from the July 2005 newsletter of the Saddleback Bromeliad Society.

**A**s you probably know, I like tillandsias, especially when they are fragrant. One of the most fragrant species is *Tillandsia xiphioides*.

There are several varieties of xiphioides and a close cousin that is sometimes mistaken for a xiphioides: *Tillandsia diaguitensis*. In a recent GrowRR discussion on the BSI website, someone submitted a picture of an unknown plant that they wanted identified. One of our better-known experts identified it as *T. xiphioides*, but it was clearly a *T. diaguitensis*; I know because I made the same mistake on a plant I entered in one of our shows. Hopefully, by the time you are finished reading this article, you will recognize the difference.

There is a considerable variation in form between the varieties of *T. xiphioides*. Overall, it is one of the "grey-leaved" tillandsias, meaning it is from a bright, dry climate. Xiphioides means sword-like or resembling a sword, due to the shape of the inflorescence. The non-blooming inflorescence extends from plant center on a relatively long stem for the size of the plant. The primary bract, or flower covering, widens into a flat bulge with a pointed tip (lanceolate), usually green or beige in color. Three to eight flowers appear, usually one at a time, from the two edges of this bulge. All varieties can be found growing saxicolously (on rocks) or epiphytically (on trees or plants, but not as parasites). According to "An Alphabetical List of Bromeliad Binomials" there are two

subspecies: *T. xiphioides* ssp. *xiphioides* and *T. xiphioides* ssp. *prolata*.



Photo of *Tillandsia xiphioides* is by Bob Spivey and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

*Tillandsia xiphioides* subspecies *xiphioides* is found in Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay growing at elevations from 2100 feet to 8100 feet. It has a short, but obvious stem, and leaves towards the inflorescence. The plant is typically 6 inches wide and tall, but sometimes can be as large as 9 inches (most are less than 6 inches). The leaves vary from erect to spreading forming an open compact plant. The flowers are similar in shape to an iris (there is also an iris called xiphioides), but about one inch, or slightly less in diameter and it has a citrus fragrance.

There are three varieties of *Tillandsia xiphioides*: *T. xiphioides* var. *tafiensis*, *T. xiphioides* var. *lutea*, and *T. xiphioides* var. *minor*.

- *T. xiphioides* var. *tafiensis* is found in the Tafi region of Argentina at an elevation of 6000 feet to 10,000 feet and is similar to *T. xiphioides* but has heavier leaf scale due to its more intense solar exposure. The plant is smaller, on the order of 4 inches wide and 5 inches tall. It is less spreading and more upright in

appearance, exposing less leaf surface to the sun. The flowers are similar to variety *xiphioides* but the corolla is more conical. The FCBS.org website has pictures of blue and lavender colored specimens but these flowers are smaller and less flamboyant than the white variety. They look more like a hybrid with a smaller-flowered species. Variety *tafiensis* is not tolerant to wet or overly humid conditions.

- *T. xiphioides* var. *lutea* is another variety found in Bolivia at elevations of 4800 feet to 6000 feet. It is 6 inches wide and 10 inches high, often with yellow flowers that are less iris-like than the typical white varieties. It also prefers sunny, dry conditions. I did not find information on its origins.
- *T. xiphioides* var. *minor* is not listed anywhere else but the Binomial List, so I can't say much about it other than it is probably a small variety.

There is also a reference to another variety, *arequitae* (André, 1893) that I came across on a Brazilian website, but only the name was provided.

*T. xiphioides* ssp. *prolata* is a plant I got on one of our plant tables and what a find it was! It looks like the large form of *Tillandsia latifolia* until it starts to bloom (I thought it was something else for a long time because the spelling was wrong). The leaves are uniformly longer (4 inches) and wider than the other subspecies and it also has a trailing habit. When it finally bloomed it was 18 inches long not including the inflorescence and that was another 12 inches! Until I saw the flowers I was not sure what I had. It has the typical *xiphioides* flowers, but slightly larger than the others. Its growing habit is distinctly different than its cousins, but the flowers are the same.



Photo of *Tillandsia diaguitensis* is by Renate Ehlers and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

Now, for *T. diaguitensis*. If you were only judging it from the flowers, you would say it was another subspecies of *T. xiphioides*, but for reasons only known to botanists, it is classified as a separate species. Many of you may have *T. diaguitensis* but don't know it because it was not tagged when you got it. It looks a lot like many other clumping varieties of tillandsia, but it is loose and has a distinctive "wave" in each leaf. The leaves are quite narrow and stiff, about 1.5- 2.5 inches long and not closely set on the stem as with all the *T. xiphioides*. Instead, they are spaced out about ½ inch apart in a spiral pattern and are set at an oblique, nearly perpendicular angle to the stem. The plant has a drooping habit, but the newer growth becomes more upright. *T. diaguitensis* forms many offsets before it blooms, but the offsets tend to be loosely attached and the clumps fall apart easily. When it blooms, the inflorescence appears to be like *T. xiphioides*,

including the strong citrus fragrance. The inflorescence is usually upright with the same habit of having the flowers appear in succession. It is found growing in Argentina and Paraguay.

Even though I mis-labeled it in the show, I still was given a blue ribbon for my "*T. xiphioides*". It was several months later that I discovered my error. *T. diaguitensis* looks a lot like a variety of *T. xiphioides*, but I know better now and won't make the mistake of showing it as *T. xiphioides* again.

## Nidularium

This article by Karen Andreas is reprinted from the January 2005 newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Central Florida

**T**he genus *Nidularium* was first described in 1845. The name is derived from the Latin word *nidulus*, meaning small or little nest, describing the rosette shaped inflorescence that is found nestled in the center of some of the species. *Nidularium*'s native habitat is Brazil where its 45 species are found in the lower parts of rain forests at sea level to the edge of the cloud forests. They grow in the litter on the forest floor, on low tree limbs and sometimes are found on rock outcroppings.

*Nidulariums* make excellent landscape plants. They add texture, shape and color to collections and are good for low light conditions, including in the home or office. Leaf color may be light or dark green, green with white stripes, green on top, maroon on bottom, green mottled with purple or maroon. The rosette-shaped inflorescence is long-lived – often for several months. In some *nidulariums*, it sits nestled down among the leaves; in others, it rises on a stalk above the center of the plant.

Moisture is a key component in the native environment of *Nidularium*. In cultivation, the soil should be moist but well drained.



Photo of *Nidularium linehamii* is by Dorothy Berg and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

Do not let the soil or the rosettes of the *Nidularium* dry out completely. While *Nidulariums* grow well in semi-shade and shady conditions, a little morning sun will ensure that the leaves do not grow long and strappy. They can be grown well indoors if they have some humidity, filtered or diffused light and consistent temperature. They do not like temperatures below 55°.

Pups can be removed when they are at least one-third the size of the mother plant. The pups do not like to be over potted; start them in 4" pots. Mature *Nidulariums* will thrive in 6" pots.

The shape also varies, with some rosettes of densely formed leaves and other inflorescences having a spiky appearance. The inflorescence turns color when in bloom: rose, cerise or maroon. Its flowers are red, blue or white and they open in sequence.



Photo of *Nidularium antoineanum* is by Dorothy Berg and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

Nidularium is a rewarding bromeliad to grow. With its elegant leaves and intensely colored inflorescence, it is an attention getter in any collection.

*Nidularium linehamii* was named for Bromeliad Society of Central Florida (BSCF) member Tom Lineham in 1993. Tom is a former BSCF president and a former editor of the BSI Journal. This handsome Nidularium has medium to light green leaves with a rose red center and violet-blue flowers. *Nidularium antoineanum* grows both terrestrially and epiphytically in habitat. Its dense rosette is pink when it commences blooming and turns to purple or mauve as it ages. Steens highly recommends this as a landscape plant which should be prominently displayed for its dramatic impact. The inflorescence of *Nidularium fulgens* turns “fire-engine red, which lasts for more than six months, fading to cerise as it ages.” (Steens) Its dark green leaves are spotted. The leaves and rosettes of *Nidularium ‘Leprosa’* are green, mottled with purple. Even the rosette has the spots. *Nidularium meeanum* has an inflorescence that is spiky as opposed to the dense rosette of other Nidulariums.



Photo of *Nidularium meeanum* is by Luiz Felipe Nieves de Carvalho and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



Photo of *Nidularium Leprosa* is by Herb Plever and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



*Nidularium fulgens*  
15th World Bromeliad Conference, St. Petersburg, Florida, May 13 - 19, 2002

Shown by  
John Anderson

Photo of *Nidularium fulgens* is by Michael Andreas and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

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

**BSSF 2011 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS**

PRESIDENT	Carl Carter	510-661-0568	carl.carter@ekit.com
VICE PRESIDENT			
SECRETARY			
TREASURER	Harold Charms	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 Samuelson	650-365-5560	Pedersam@comcast.net
	Peter Wan	408-500-2103	peterkwan@earthlink.net

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BROMELIAD SOCIETY  
OF  
SAN FRANCISCO

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

**We will learn which tillandsias we can grow outdoors this month!**