

# BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO



## JANUARY 2012

# NEWSLETTER

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, January 19, 2011** at 7:30 PM  
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

### January Program

#### Bromeliad Adventures in Southern Ecuador

**T**his month **Peter Wan** will give us a slide show on his trip to southern Ecuador last year. This is one of the plant trips that Guillermo Rivera organizes. Your editor was also on this trip and you will see slides of some very unusual tillandsias in flower as well as many other bromeliad species.

#### January Refreshments

**R**oger Lane signed up for refreshments this month.



Here is **Peter** posing beside a bromeliad on one of his other trips to South America. Photo is courtesy of Peter Wan

#### Dues are Due

**A** new year has begun and dues are due: **\$15 for a single membership and \$20 for a family.** Pay Harold at the meeting or mail to Harold. See back page for details.

## December Meeting

**O**ur holiday potluck dinner and party was a great success. Thanks for bringing in great food items and wonderful gifts to share. Michael Kiehl provided gift plants that everyone wanted. Thanks to all of you who arrived early to help set up the tables so quickly. We wish to also thank **Marilyn Moyer** and **Dan Arcos** for the planning and ensuring the party went off without a hitch.

### Plant in Focus: *Cryptanthus warasii*

This article by the late Dorothy Byer is reprinted from the November-December 1996 Cactus and Succulent Journal. Dorothy was a great grower of terrestrial bromeliads and may have had one of the very few *Hechtia argentea* plants in cultivation.

*Cryptanthus warasii* Pereira is a semi-succulent xerophytic bromeliad that greatly appeals to both succulent and bromeliad collectors as soon as they see it. On August 25, 1977, Eddie Waras discovered *C. warasii* at Diamantina, Minas Gerais, Brazil. The holotype is maintained at the herbarium Bradeanum in Rio de Janeiro. Brazil is the sole source of all *Cryptanthus* species often called “earth stars”.

Most *Cryptanthus* species are mesophytes inhabiting grasslands and forests, but *C. warasii* grows in the open, colonizing humus-deficient cracks in cliffs. The 20 to 30 leaves which make up its small rosette are linear-triangular, from 2 to 6 cm long, 1 to 2 cm wide, and so densely covered with white scales that they appear to be felted. They are broadly concave on top and keeled on the underside, acting like a backbone to give rigidity. Marginal spines, approximately 2 mm long, are almost straight. The original description states that the spines toward the leaf base, but in my experience this is true only of the basal portion of the leaf, while from the middle of the leaf the spines begin to hook towards the apex. The scaly coating on the leaves has distinct and beautiful spine impressions on both the top and the bottom that look a bit like zippers.



Photo of *Cryptanthus warasii* is by Steve Hoppin and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



*Cryptanthus warasii*

photo by Chris Nguyen

This photo by Chris Nguyen of *Cryptanthus warasii* shows the flowers and the zipper-like formation on the leaves. Photo is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

The inflorescence is nestled in the center of the rosette. It consists of about 20 flowers arranged in fascicles of 2 or 3. Spineless floral bracts about 11 mm long, glabrous above and scaly below, equal the length of the sepals. The petals are white to off-white, slightly longer than the sepals, and recurved at anthesis. Stamens are exerted at anthesis.

Before flowering, the rosette is upright and flaring. The leaves gradually recurved until, after flowering, the plant flattens out and produces a few pups on stolons. As with other terminal-flowering bromeliads, the parent plant dies and the offspring begin a new cycle.

When not in flower, it could be difficult to guess that *C. warasii* is indeed a *Cryptanthus* and belongs to the subfamily Bromelioideae instead

of the Pitcairnioideae, as do the puyas, Dyckias, Hechtias and most other terrestrial xerophytic bromeliads. Since this species is rarely seen in collections there is little chance to become familiar with it except by studying plants in the Huntington Botanical Garden Conservatory or in other botanical gardens.

This bromeliad has an undeserved reputation for being difficult to grow. It apparently does not do well if kept in 6-inch pots of humusy soil in the humid, warm greenhouse conditions so favored by mesophytic *Cryptanthus* species. Instead, *C. warasii* thrives with warm sunny days, cool nights, and plenty of air circulation, in a 4 or 5 inch pot filled with cactus-type soil mixed with about 50 percent pumice or perlite. Frequent spring and summer fertilization with a dilute solution of a balanced fertilizer produces a plant that does credit to the grower.

This charming plant presents two challenges. The first challenge is to find one; the second is to grow it successfully.

### Collecting Trips

This article by Kathy Dorr is reprinted from the April 1984 newsletter of the Bromeliad Study Group of Northern California. And this story occurred before 9-11.

**C**ollecting trips are often items of interest in different publications. Everyone who knows me, knows that my collecting is of the ‘armchair’ variety, or at the very most, confined to the territorial confines of the U.S.A. where I am familiar with the ‘dangers’ that are likely to be encountered. I just am not interested in meeting up with new varieties of bugs, snakes and other various types of unpleasant experiences of tramping through unknown areas.

Last fall, I took one of my kind of ‘collecting’ trips – and having often heard our intrepid plant collectors tell of their hair-raising flights, I decided to write about my own – and I never even left the good old U.S.A.

In another part of the country, I arrived at this airport with a confirmed reservation – only confirmed one week previously – on an airline that shall remain nameless and bankrupt. As the porter met me at the car and asked about my flight, his answer was: “Ma’am, y’all cain’t board that airline hyear. They ain’t been flyin’ out of hyear fo a month or more!”

Subduing a rush of panic, I decided to wait in line at another airline and inquire where the mysterious flight #000 that I had a reservation for, took off from.

A friend that had accompanied me started checking elsewhere. Suddenly, I heard a yell that my friend thought it had been found and I headed in that direction. Sure enough, it was listed on the departure schedule of an airline that I (and I’m sure no one else) had never heard of!

The girl behind the counter checked me in and told me that the plane would leave at gate five in forty minutes. She gave me my boarding pass and it had the number 11 on it. This should have told me something then, but I just assumed it meant row 11 – or maybe seat 11. What a surprise I had waiting for me!

Being hungry and having just a few minutes, I decided to have a sandwich before going to the boarding area. After all, it doesn’t take long to go through x-ray – WRONG AGAIN! This flight (and mind you, this is a fairly large airport) didn’t have x-ray and I had to wait while ‘Grandpa’ pawed and pried through my luggage (and plants) and even had to squeeze my ‘collected’ goodies.

Finally passing the ‘checkpoint,’ I walked what must have been a half-mile to the boarding area. The same girl who had checked me in downstairs was behind the counter. At least if it wasn’t, she had an exact twin wearing the exact same clothes and jewelry. I glanced out the window and saw only a VERY small prop plane and decided my plane must not have come in yet. There were only a few people waiting and the girl asked that we ‘check in’ with her again.

A few minutes later, she walked over to the door and announced “Flight #000 now boarding,” and marched us all down two flights of stairs and out on the field to the small plane I had observed earlier! I now found out what the #11 on my boarding pass meant. The plane only held twelve people and I had been #11 to check in.

They were so proud of the fact that the plane was air conditioned. It was written in large letters on the side of the plane. The plane provided its own steps – all three of them.

They even had two tiny shelves inside for carry-on luggage, which was a good thing because there wasn’t room for anything else, almost including me. I have fairly long legs and had to sit with

them mostly in the aisle as there wasn't enough room between my seat and the one ahead to get them in. The only problem was the sign attached to the shelves: "maximum weight 52 pounds." I knew my two pieces alone probably weighed that and there were all those other people shoving baggage in too! So, I sat on my briefcase. After sitting down, I looked up and saw the co-pilot and he looked as though he was probably only a short time out of high school; with this knowledge, I decided I would make no effort to see the pilot. They had a pile of maps between them and I never really made up my mind whether they were road maps or flight maps. We flew so low I thought perhaps they were following the roads/ Right behind them to the side of the plane was a door marked 'Fuse Box.' Remembering how fuses used to blow back home I sure hoped they had spares or at the very least, a penny which sometimes helped. I looked to make sure I had a penny.

The pilot's sunshade could have been taken out of a car – same size and style. They had a little television screen in front of them marked 'radar' but all they ever seemed to get was a spider web, so I started looking for something more interesting. There were five levers and a wheel rising from the floor between the pilots and they seemed to do the driving with these.

I checked the gauge marked 'Fuel' and it seemed nearly empty to me, but there was one marked 'left' tank and one marked 'right' tank and one marked 'usable fuel' as well, so I hoped we had enough to get to our destination. After that, I could have cared less!

There was a card in the pocket in front of me so I decided perhaps I should read it. First thing I saw was: "IN CASE OF EMERGENCY" "No smoking, remove such things that may hurt you such as glasses, pens, etc." After taking another look out the window, I took my glasses off and put them away.

Next: "AFTER THE AIRCRAFT HAS STOPPED, UNFASTEN YOUR SEAT BELT AND PROCEED TO NEAREST EXIT AS INDICATED BY CREW" – there was only one exit!!!. "WAIT FOR CREW INSTRUCTIONS TO ABANDON THE AIRPLANE." With twelve people in that small space, at least half would be trampled to death by the other half in the exodus. I declared the best thing to do would be to keep my seat and 'go down with the ship.' In the excitement would ANYONE remember to

"PRESS LOCK, PULL HANDLE, PUSH DOOR" as the instructions on the door indicated?

Then came the statement that really shook me!. "Your flight crew (all two of them) has met or exceeded the skill and experience requirements established by the U.S. Government for all airline pilots." I got to thinking of the students in our schools that they pass on to the next grade for various reasons, rather than the fact they reached the necessary academic level. I tried to think positively that our pilot had exceeded rather than just met!

A little over an hour later we reached our destination. It probably would have taken a regular jet less than 30 minutes. I can truthfully say I was NEVER so glad to reach good old terra firma.

But, would you believe? Four more flights down the road, I'm waiting for my flight which is nearly an hour late (in a smaller airport this time) and I see a pilot run by on his way to a restroom. When I looked out at the plane, I understood why. I remembered the constant vibration from the previous flight. However, this plane was a little more elaborate. It held 17 people. It had three exits and there was no sign limiting the luggage weight. Also, no interesting "IN CASE OF EMERGENCY CARD" as in the previous flight. I must admit I didn't have much more faith in it, particularly in the inclement weather we had to fly through. Fortunately, the trip was only a little over a hundred miles but it was to take 40 minutes.

Before we took off, I noticed the pilot and the co-pilot looking as though they had lost something and were perplexed as to where to find it. I also noticed there were notes attached to the co-pilot's steering wheel. I wondered if it was notes from his wife or flying instructions. I don't know whether they found what they were looking for ; I had the feeling that when they saw I was watching them so closely, they decided to draw the curtains so I couldn't see what was going on. The curtain really made this flight an 'uptown' flight, as the first plane did not sport one of these. Mind you, this flight was made at night and it was storming. It is rather difficult to cross all your fingers and toes at the same time, but I'm positive I managed it somehow. I would have paid any price for a rabbit's foot or even the whole rabbit! There were only six passengers on this flight including myself, but I guess somebody heard our palpitations and pleas, as we literally 'bounced' through the air to our destination.

I may not have ‘jungle’ collected those plants that accompanied me home, but I came home with enough ‘bites’ from something (chiggers, mosquitoes, unknown) and flights such as I’d never taken before that I feel empathy who do this deliberately the first time and will never understand those who repeat.

The next time I fly somewhere, I’m going to check and recheck what kind of plane is available. THERE HAS TO BE A BETTER WAY!

It isn’t everyone that can pack 38 plants in a bag 15 inches long and 7 inches in diameter. Should I start giving lessons in packing?

Incidentally, this is several months later and the 38 plants have survived – very little damage – and they are doing well!

**Pacific Orchid Exhibition**

Our society will be selling plants at this year’s Pacific Orchid Exhibition that takes place from 23 February through 26 February. We need help in staffing the sales tables over a period of several days. We will have a signup sheet at this month’s meeting for you to volunteer. The days and times for the sale are

- Thurs, February 23 (Gala Benefit) - 6:30pm - 10:00pm
- Fri, February 24 - 10am - 6pm
- Sat, February 25 - 9am - 6pm
- Sun, February 26 - 10am - 5pm



Photo of *Tillandsia cyanea* is by Ken Marks and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies. This is usually one of our best sellers at sales and is native to Ecuador.

**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.

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**This month we will be seeing some of the bromeliads from Ecuador!**