

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO



September 2012

NEWSLETTER

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, September 20, 2012** at 7:30 PM
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

September Program

Bromeliad Ecology: Diversity in an Ecological Wonderland, Part 1: Distribution and Abundance – Diversity Matters

Terrie Bert will be visiting us again this month. In this talk, she explores the reasons that some bromeliad genera contain only one species while others contain hundreds of species. She will compare the relationships between numbers of species within genera to the ages of the genera, the geographic ranges and habitats the genera occupy, the ways that the genera expand their ranges, and the forms of the bromeliads within the genera. Along the way in this ecological journey, we'll see the diversity of habitats occupied by bromeliads and the beautiful variety of bromeliad shapes and forms.

Terrie is a longstanding member of the Sarasota Bromeliad Society (SBS) and the Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society and has held multiple offices in the SBS. She also served the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies (FCBS) as a representative and officer for eight years. For the Bromeliad Society International, she has been a Florida Director and chaired several international committees. She currently is Librarian, Curator of the Wally Berg Award of Excellence, and an internationally accredited Master Judge. She's given over 100 presentations on bromeliads to numerous U.S. and international bromeliad societies and other groups. She has authored articles for the BSI

Journal and the FCBS newsletter. She cultivates approximately 2,000 different bromeliads in 24 genera. Terrie has a Ph.D. in marine biology and is a research scientist for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Her hobbies also include making quilts and SCUBA diving.



Dr. Terrie Bert is our speaker for this month. Photo is courtesy of Bromeliad Guild of Tampa Bay

September Refreshments

Nick Soumie, **D**an Arcos, and **J**on Dixon signed up for refreshments this month

August Meeting

Last month **Betty Patterson** visited us from Dallas, Texas and gave us a slide show on some of the unusual Aechmeas. There are so many unusual Aechmeas that this could have been part one of a multiple part show. The slides we saw included large plants, small plants, and a few plants that some of us have in our own collections. Since Betty provided most of our raffle table plants some of us were able to go home with at least one of the odd Aechmeas or another uncommon bromeliad. Our members supplemented the raffle table with several superb plants. **Casper Curto** won the first plant from the raffle table with the most colorful of the Aechmeas that Betty brought to us. Your editor does not remember the name of this plant, but it will get quite large before flowering. This plant was very popular among the members and we wanted to make it a silent auction plant but no one had any paper. Thanks Betty for showing several unusual plants for us to add to our wish list.

Sale Plants and Raffle Plants

Terrie Bert will be bringing pups from her large collection for our raffle table as well plants to sell. When she has visited us before, her plants have been popular with lots of species, lots of neoregelia miniatures, and other small easy to pack plants. So bring your cash or checkbook and go home with lots of new plants for your collection.

Hannibal, Norman and Tunisia

This article by Chester Skotak is reprinted from the September 2002 newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of South Florida. Chester is a well-known collector and hybridizer who has lived in Costa Rica for many years. He is particularly renowned in Florida for his variegated and albo-marginated neoregelias.

Reading the national bestseller, “The Orchid Thief,” by Susan Orlean, I noted yet another tall story that was told about the origin of *Neoregelia* Fireball. This little neoregelia might be one of the most found plants in the bromeliad world. Which brings me to my story. I want to be first in the line of storytellers to claim *Neoregelia carcharodon*

Tiger. Hopefully, my story will be followed by other stories leaving Tiger to yet another dubious origin.

Someone at the conference in St. Petersburg had remarked to me that *Neoregelia carcharodon* Tiger was not a carcharodon at all. This was not an earth shattering statement to me.

After seeing Ed and Moyna Prince’s perfectly grown Tiger in the marvelous display put up by the Bromeliad Society of South Florida, my memories started racing back to the day this plant was “discovered.”

I have to add here that I always wonder about new plant discoveries since the plants had always been there, somewhere, only waiting for someone with a pedagogic mind ready to collect, dry, dissect, compare and categorize said plant, only later to report that such new discoveries were now extinct or in over abundance, similar but different, and only more research and grants could tell the tale. So I now refer to this new discovery and hope it doesn’t get kicked around too much.



This is a photo of *Neoregelia carcharodon* Tiger. Photo is by P. Pisan and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

Not so long ago, I was traveling north of the city of Niteroi, in Rio de Janeiro state, looking for new bromeliads. I was traveling with my good friend and well-known botanist, Pedro Nahoum. On this particular day we stopped to visit a dilapidated orchid nursery located off the main road. The old wooden slat houses were leaning to one side, not by design but because of their age and direction of the predominant wind. Browsing through so many new orchids was dizzying when suddenly two plants really caught my eye – not orchids at all. They were a pair of wonderfully

banded, somewhat large *Neoregelias* under the bench mixed in with the weeds and the orchids. I nearly tripped over myself falling forward and smashing some orchids. I remember thinking to myself that it was my good fortune that they were only orchids popping and crunching under my feet and not those wonderful undescribed *neoregelias*.

The *neoregelias* under the bench looked back at me like two large basketballs painted to look like tigers; the plants were heavily banded and mahogany in color. They had been found in nature this way. Plants made by the hybridizers of all hybridizers.

We asked the owner of the orchid nursery where he got these two *neoregelias*. After a lot of foot dragging, looking up towards the heavens and muttering and pretending to be deaf, we realized this was getting us nowhere. Somehow, call it divine intervention if you must, the orchid owner decided to go that day and see if there were more plants to be found. We were not invited for the hunt. Returning to the orchid nursery the following day, the owner reported to us that, sadly, he had only found one more plant. He pointed towards the hills behind his nursery and waving his hand from left to right said, "The plant is from there." This area he was pointing to must have been a full one-half of South America. As always when one is traveling, the reasons "not to" were many more than the reasons "to." It would be a long walk, there was no time, and anyway with two *neoregelias* you can make thousands of seedlings and now we had three. So I left that area hesitating and looking west towards the hills over my shoulder. I kept wondering what other treasures were out there for the finding.

On my return to Costa Rica, work began on crossing *Neoregelia punctatissima* x *Neoregelia carcharodon* Tiger to produce *Neoregelia Hannibal Lector*. Look for *Neoregelia* Norman Bates, a cross of *Neoregelia Hannibal Lector* x *Neoregelia carcharodon* Tiger – very heavily banded with short wide leaves. Last of all (at least for now) is *Neoregelia Tunisia*, a cross of *Neoregelia Hannibal Lector* x *Neoregelia punctatissima*. All of these are very heavily banded *neoregelias*.

The potential for new, banded *neoregelias* looks promising, thanks to Tiger. There are many talented hybridizers currently working on this group of *neoregelias*. Who knows what these creative people will come up with in the future?

Oh, I forgot to mention, how did my conversation end with that fellow that informed me that Tiger was not a *carcharodon*? At first I thought I should read him his *Carmen Miranda Rights* (Brazilian law) but I calmed down. Sure, I have my doubts about this being a *carcharodon*, but at least Tiger has a point of reference, and I told him if Tiger is described one day, at least there is a story to go with it, and whether it is dubious to you or not, that's how it was....

What's in a Name?

This article by Alice H. Quinn from Alajuela, Costa Rica is reprinted from the September 1997 newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Broward County, Inc.

The bromeliad family has been a privileged one, at least in the English speaking world. With very few exceptions, the botanical names given its members are names by which they are known: *Aechmea*, *Billbergia*, *Tillandsia*, *Hechtia*, *Guzmania*, etc.

One appreciates the system of botanical nomenclature even more when confronted with the problem of securing a particular plant in a foreign country. Common names of plants create an exasperating confusion everywhere. Costa Rica is no exception. There are probably more common names per plant and even more plants per common name here in Costa Rica than there are in the United States.

Sometimes a common name in Spanish translates into about the same one for the identical one in English. An example would be *Euphorbia milii*'s "Crown of Thorns." Here in Costa Rica, it is known in Spanish as "Corona de Christo." (Incidentally, *E. milii* is used extensively here as barrier hedges, growing beautifully and profusely with exuberant blooming.)

The common name "Flame of the Forest" for *Spathodea campanulata* is the same in Spanish – "Llama del Bosque." But the same tree also has another common name: "African Tulip Tree" in English while *Llama del Bosque* is also applied to some other plants. And in English, "Flame of the Forest" is also attached to *Butea monosperma*

Examples of even greater confusion could easily be cited in either Spanish or English common names, as used in the United States or Costa Rica. Add to those the different common names used

for these same plants in other Spanish speaking countries and the nomenclature is totally out of hand!

In the United States, with the great mushrooming of nurseries and plant shops selling ornamental plants for the home, an unfortunate trend has developed. Commercial plant vendors (not dedicated knowledgeable nurserymen) have labeled plants with cute names, or fanciful names, or just-easy-to-say names. "Creeping Charlie" (an ugly name for an attractive bit of hanging greenery) has been given to three different plants, none of which are in the same genus as the other: *Lysimachus*, *Pilea* and in California only, a *Plectranthus*.

The bromeliad family, having a more recent introduction into ornamental cultivation in the United States, got off to a reasonably untarnished start. You could ask for an *Aechmea fasciata* or a *Billbergia pyramidalis* and know there would be no confusing it with any other plant of the same name. Commercialization, though, has begun to muddy up our nomenclature in the world of brome culture. We are now finding such contrived names as "Pheasant Leaf", "Zebra Plant" and "Heart of Flame" – all of which has been applied to plants in other families as well.

All of this is not to say we disapprove of a little wit, whimsy, or imagination in naming new hybrids. For instance, *Aechmea By Golly* is the correct registered name of that beautiful hybrid by Erwin Wurthmann. Nobody should call it anything else. (But try pronouncing it in Spanish!)

Any plant lover seriously interested in the bromeliad family should at least learn the correct name of the bromels in his/her collection. It's easy and logical as learning the names of people – your friends and those whom you respect and admire. Vendors should label plants with their correct botanical names. Botanical names open up a world of information to you too because they often tell you something descriptive about the plant. For instance, *Guzmania sanguinea*: the genus was named for a person by the name of Guzman and the species name tells us it is reddish – "washed with blood." So you see, there is much in a botanical name. Let's keep our bromeliad family's nomenclature pure – unconfused and uncontaminated with phony childish names that could apply to dozens of unrelated species.



This photo of *Aechmea By Golly* is by Erwin Wurthmann and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

Mounting Bromeliads

This article by our own Dan Arcos is reprinted from the August 1983 newsletter of the Bromeliad Study Group of Northern California

Most of us are used to mounting tillandsias and the ubiquitous mounted *Aechmea fasciata* in boutiques, but we forget how easy other bromeliads are to grow mounted on cork or wood [as well as rock – Ed.]. After all, bromeliads take to the branches like ducks to you know what. They don't even need moss except for decoration. Good strong fishing line or wire readily attaches most bromeliads in the genera *Aechmea*, *Billbergia*, *Neoregelia*, *Quesnelia*, *Vriesea*, and *Guzmania*. Be sure to check that you aren't mounting something like an *Aechmea disticantha* because they are terrestrials like *Cryptanthus* that almost always hate being mounted.

I have noted adverse reactions to a lack of sufficient light, much more than reactions due to lack of spraying. When I do spray, I use water with a fertilizer dilution in it and occasionally I either immerse the plant in water or give it a shower. One nice thing about this kind of horticulture is the lack of messy pots and soil. A good eye can achieve some quite attractive results. One of my favorite types of plants to use for this are the dark purple foliage *Aechmeas* such as *A. Mirlo*, *A. Foster's Favorite*, *A. Prieto*, *A. Black Jack*, etc. The discolored ones like *A. miniata discolor* also look good. Some of the

really tubular erect and banded Billbergias also look really striking, especially with their contrasting black spines, not to mention their flashy inflorescences.

The only *Quesnelia* I really recommend for mounting is *Quesnelia marmorata*, because of its elegant tubes with the mottling and their stoloniferous habits that give those odd candelabra effects. Of course, the miniature Neoregelias seem to be the perfect bromeliads for mounting with their variety of colors and markings and all those crazy zigzagging stolons. If they get too rangy, just break them up and attach them all back onto the same plaque or branch and stand back!



Kinzie - Bessellieu Memorial Award, Best Neoregelia - John Boardman
15th World Bromeliad Conference, St. Petersburg, Florida, May 13 - 19, 2002

Here is an example of a Neoregelia mounted on a large piece of wood. This is *Neoregelia* Ronald and was on the head table in WBC 2002. Photo is courtesy of the BSI.

Tillandsia usneoides

This article is reprinted from the November 1986 newsletter of the Bromeliad Hobbyist.

T*illandsia usneoides* is an extremely interesting plant. Many tiny plants make up a large lovely hanging clump. There seem to be several varieties of *T. usneoides*. Some are quite 'fine' and small while others are 'lush' and plump. It seems to be according to what area they originate from.

The fragrant lime green flowers tuck themselves down among the leaves and one has to look closely to find them, but at certain times of the day you can enjoy the fragrance and know they are there.

It grows quite easily hung up in an area where there is plenty of air circulation, but I have found that if you want to retain it, you had better find an

area where the birds can't get to it. They will steal every bit of it to make a nest.

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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Terrie Bert will show us why bromeliad genera are singles or multiples!