

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO



November 2012

NEWSLETTER

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, November 15 2012** at 7:30 PM
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park, San
Francisco

November Program

Dyckias

This month **Keith Smith** will be visiting us from the Sacramento Bromeliad Society. His talk will be on the *Dyckia* genus that is the stepchild of both the bromeliad family and of cactus and succulent lovers. To whet your appetite, he will provide a slide show of some of the new species coming from Brazil as well as some of the hybrids that have found a home in our collections plus a few growing tips.

Keith has been an active bromeliad grower and member of the Sacramento Bromeliad and Carnivorous Plant Society since 1976. He acquired a number of his dyckias and other spiny monsters as a result of being the only member with a pick-up truck when a former member's collection was being distributed to Society members. He has learned to live in relative safety with his adoptees and has even grown to appreciate them as reliable and easy to grow companions.

(Members who have dyckias, big or small, are asked to bring them to the meeting so our members can get up close and personal with them.)



Keith Smith is our speaker this month

November Refreshments

Cid Young signed up for refreshments this month. Can someone else help out with refreshments?

October Meeting

Last month Kelly Griffin made his annual visit to our society. He apologized for not having as many bromeliads for sale and as comprehensive a show as he wanted. The next day he was flying to Madagascar and that trip was foremost in his thoughts. Although most of his slides were from Mexico, he did include a few from Cuba to whet our appetite for a future show. Your editor was pleased to see habitat slides of the *Hechtia* species nova that he obtained at the WBC 2000 rare plant auction.

Criminal Type

This article by Kathy Dorr is reprinted from the October 1987 Bromeliad Hobbyist, newsletter of several study groups in California.

I am a law abiding citizen and expect protection from criminal types. Yet, I am exposed to torturers and killers every day – right in my own yard! If I were to call the Sheriff's office, they would send out the men in white coats carrying 'butterfly nets.' I have formed a 'flashlight' posse and 'shot' all types of granules, but these criminals are shrewd and manage to elude me nearly every time.

Not only re the adults impossible, but they practice NO birth control and produce legitimate or illegitimate progeny by the thousands. They use no discipline with their youngsters and allow them to form vicious gangs to roam and continue the destruction and killing at random.

At least, one must assume that it is at random. But they seem to victimize only the most affluent and superlative. The more exceptional the victim, the more apt its death warrant is signed. If it is a wretch of little consequence, more than likely a little torture would be sufficient, and then it is left for me to nurse and care for the victim to bring it back to health.

I have seen the time when as many as several hundred poor babies were cut down – in one night – before they have a chance to even have a good start in life. Usually, it takes only one, maybe two, of the slimy creeps to commit such mass murder! Often, they will only cut off an arm or leg and at least let the prey survive.

These gangs of criminals are exceptional at finding hiding places. They seem to be able to disappear in thin air. To all appearances there isn't one within miles, but let the sun go down and they come out from everywhere to pillage and kill. They belong strictly to the underworld – from birth to death. It is a disgrace

that they are allowed among decent people. If one can stomach it, it is no wonder we commit cannibalism. Personally, I don't have the stomach for it!

When there is dew in the early morning, it seems to bring out hordes of these desperados. That's the only time I really have a chance to take the law in my own hands! Since I am considerably larger than they are, I can just don a good pair of shoes and start 'stomping' – and believe me I do. My conscience doesn't hurt me a bit. I feel that I am doing mankind a good deed.

If you haven't guessed by now, the criminals go by the names of 'slugs' and 'snails' and they are number one on my 'Most Wanted List' – that is, the list to do away with.

I have bought and tried every available bait. I have ever seen and broadcast it everywhere, but it NEVER seems to eradicate all of them – or perhaps the neighbors sent all theirs over too!

Tillandsia usneoides – Roots on a "Rootless" Bromeliad

This article by Sue Gardner is reprinted from the November 1995 newsletter of the Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society..

It is generally accepted that *Tillandsia usneoides*, "Spanish Moss", is a rootless bromeliad as stated in "Some Remarks on the Water Supply of Bromeliads", by W. Rauh, R. Schill, N. Ehler and W. Barthlott (Journal of the Bromeliad Society – XXIII, No 3).

Growing in long tangled masses, the thin twisting leaves and continuously elongated stems intertwine with each other and with tree twigs to hold the plant in place. This habit makes roots unnecessary for anchorage, and the long feathery trichomes adequately absorb moisture and nutrients, thus eliminating the need for roots to serve this purpose. Roots are reported to be present only in the juvenile stage, holding the plants in place until the tangling effect of the leaves and stems take over.



Tillandsia usneoides

photo by Ken Marks

Here is a great photo by Ken Marks of Spanish Moss showing the tiny fragrant flower. Photo is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

We have recently observed that roots may also be formed under another set of circumstances. A long skein of *T. usneoides* which had been used in a bromeliad show display was in poor condition when the show was over and was draped over a long slab of tree fern fiber on which miniature bromeliads and orchids grew and then hung in a shaded nook of the saran covered growing area. It was left to recuperate.

After just over a year, the plant had regained its former vigor and was a beautiful silver color once again. While admiring the marvelous recovery it had made, we noticed that there were some roots forming! Closer observation revealed that there were many areas where sections of the plant had died and the portion just below had produced roots on the upper end of the living plant, likely in an effort to establish the plant's hold on its position should the hair-like skeleton of the dead portion, which is now holding the plant, break.

Examination of other tresses of this *Tillandsia* showed some further examples of the phenomenon, but to a lesser degree. In each case where roots were found, the stem above the roots had died and was present only in the thread-like skeleton giving the plant below a precarious new hold on its position.

Scientific Fact Uprooted

This article by M. B. Foster is reprinted from the Long Beach-Lakewood Bromeliad Study Group 1985 Vol. X No 4.

For the past 27 years I have literally lived under a canopy of Spanish Moss here in Florida. I have used it during these twenty-five years on wire netting to shade my plants. I have pulled tons of it from the branches of trees. I have enjoyed the exquisite fragrance of its delicate, transparent green flowers which is released between the hours of eight and twelve on the soft April and May spring nights. I've seen the tiny seeds suspended on a silken parachute, but I've never

planted one of these seeds nor seen the tiny baby plants that emerged from those seeds until a few weeks ago. Yes, I was surprised and very much thrilled. It was Easter Sunday morning.

In our garden is a very much-neglected plant of *Ligustrum coriaticum*. It is a slow cautious growing plant with leaves that appear to be only half developed...curled up and stiff but, like an old bulldog, its beauty seems to be in its homeliness. This *Ligustrum* was smothered with Spanish Moss and with Ball Moss (*Tillandsia recurvata*) and a cat's claw begonia vine. Each species of plant seemed bent on strangling and smothering the *Ligustrum*, so I started tearing out these over-ambitious plants, only to find many, many tiny *Tillandsias* clinging to the branches of the *Ligustrum*; it was virtually an epiphytic plant nursery. And not all of the little plants were those of the 'ball moss' as I had first thought. I found plants from one to a dozen years of age of *Tillandsia usneoides* and they had honest to goodness roots! Roots that had held on for several years or long enough that the plant would be long enough to catch on a branch if the wind tore it loose from its birthplace. I found plants, some of them but a half-inch long and others eighteen inches long, still clinging with their little thread-like roots to the bark where the silken threaded seeds lodged during a previous April blow.

The most common of all bromeliads, *Tillandsia usneoides*, Spanish Moss to us in the southern part of the United States, has flown from tree top to tree top for many thousands of years. It has flown and grown in a magic circle down the Atlantic Coast from the southeastern tip of Virginia to five hundred miles south of Buenos Aires in Argentina, and from Chile, Lower California in Mexico on the Pacific Coast, thence across Texas to the coast of the Gulf of Mexico over to the Atlantic. And within this circle, practically all of the known species of bromeliads are found natively.

This queer plant has been and still is regarded as a parasite by the great majority of people because of its ability to live on the trees without any apparent method of feeding.

The artist and the poet have pictured its charm in pigment and praise. The Primitive has used it for mattress and the Modern for upholstery.

The first white man who landed on the shores of America soon saw this strange plant swaying in the trees.

It was a great find for the botanist and he has given it many botanical names, first as a parasite and later upon more careful observation as an epiphyte. It grows and grows and grows. It can be torn in a thousand pieces and each piece can continue the seeming endless and rootless growth, as it does not need roots for its continuous growth. It is one of the few plants that the botanists have persistently described as one with 'roots absent'.

For some reason or other I have apparently gained a reputation as being one who seems to enjoy breaking down traditions and cherished beliefs, even though the belief may have been one I nursed myself. So, when I state that I have told thousands of people about the rootless bromeliad, *Tillandsia usneoides*, I have little more than related what I had already read in botanical records regarding this plant. In other words, it's nearly always a bit easier to take the other fellows words and repeat them without bothering about any personal investigation.

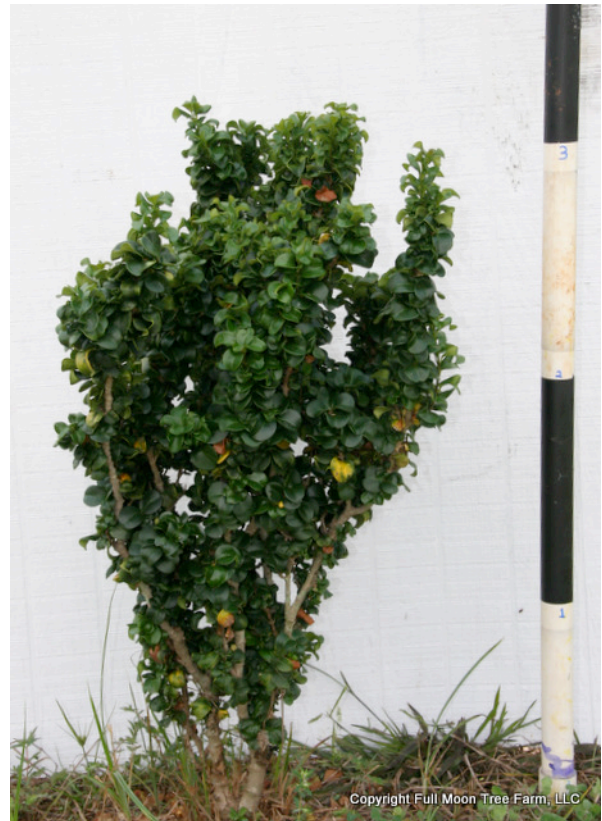
And so, one of the most cherished beliefs of the entire bromeliad family – the weird Spanish Moss with roots 'absent' – was shattered. *Tillandsia usneoides* DOES HAVE ROOTS in its early stages just as every other member of the remarkable bromeliad family has, although the roots dry up and are not necessary for it in later years.

Tillandsia usneoides (individual plant) only has three leaves.

World Bromeliad Conference 2012

The 2012 World Bromeliad Conference is now over and a good time was had by all. As I stated in last month's newsletter, we had a very good turnout from members of the San Francisco Society.

Your editor flew to Orlando on Monday and accepted **Peter Wan's** gracious invitation to stay at his home in Florida north of Tampa. The rental car company drove the car to me, packed the car and I drove away. Then, the problems began. I plugged in the GPS system, selected Peter's address that I had entered into the system in California, and drove away. Unfortunately, the system thought it was in California and had me



I agree with Mulford Foster that this *Ligustrum coriaticum* is a pretty ugly plant.

starting at my house. I re-entered the data and thought things were fine but I did not arrive at Peter's house until midnight (after several wrong turns and "recalculating" messages). During the trip I discovered that this rental car was one that had a keyless entry but the rental car company had not given me the device to lock the car. After an hour of searching throughout the car for this device I gave up and went to bed.

The next morning I thought I would have better luck in the daylight and searched again for the keyless device. No luck! I called the rental car company who suggested all sorts of spots to look for the device but I had already tried all of these. As the day progressed I was getting hungry but realized I could only go to a fast food drive thru since I was unable to lock the car. After eating, I returned to Peter's and waited for the arrival of **Dan Arcos** and **Nick Soumie**. When Dan and Nick arrived we went out to eat and loaded up with groceries for our stay.

On Wednesday, instead of driving to the conference for the home garden tours, we visited two nurseries. Peter had told us in advance to get an early start which we did but we still were caught up in the commuter traffic. Nick is a superb driver and we arrived at Michael Kiehl's nursery at about 9:30. Michael was loading vehicles with sales plants, show plants, and getting show plants ready. He told us that we were on our own and had to leave by noon. This was our first visit to Michael's nursery so we were awe struck. We had to

move fast and were not able to cover all of his greenhouses. His employees were getting show plants ready but also were very helpful. In addition to buying plants for ourselves we got to see some of the show plants and sales plants in advance. We were able to wrap up at 12:05 and headed for lunch at the best restaurant in Venice.

After lunch we arrived at Tropiflora where almost all of the employees were already at the conference. We started in the huge acre greenhouse that is so big you could spend hours there. Dan, Nick, and I each went our separate ways for shopping. After picking a few Neoregelias I moved on to the stickies (Dyckias, Hechtias, etc.). I was also interested in tillandsias and found a wonderful assortment to choose from (Dennis had recently returned from Columbia and had received a shipment of several unusual tillandsias). On our way back to Peter's we experienced several huge showers. Peter was due to arrive that evening but airline problems delayed him such that he did not arrive until early on Thursday.

On the way to the conference in Orlando, Peter and I stopped at the Tampa airport to turn in the car that would not lock. Dan and Nick had already left so Dan could set up his sales booth. Peter and I arrived at the conference after they had closed registration for the evening, but we were able to get our badges that got us into the sale that had already opened. It was great to see so many people that you usually only get to see at the conferences. I first saw Pam Koide who was selling lots of wonderful tillandsias. Dan was next to her and Betty Patterson was there too. Peter and I quickly split up – I wanted to chat and he wanted to shop. Even though we had arrived late on the opening sale night, we still did pretty well.

On Friday, Peter and I had planned to get up for the first seminars of the day but we overslept. We missed Terrie Bert and Andy Siekkinen but we had already seen their talks at our own meetings. After lunch we tried to attend the seminars but the rooms were not large enough for all the registrants interested in attending. The seminars alternated between two rooms so I grabbed a seat in the second room to assure our seeing Bruce Holt's presentation. Peter Wan had previously spoken to Bruce about all the rumors going around about Selby so Bruce added some charts about Selby at the end of his presentation. That evening was the rare plant auction where we saw **Casper Curto**, **Wes Schilling** and his wife. I bid and won two separate pots of bare-root Orthophytums and Neoregelias - a most reasonable investment. I believe Dan was also successful in the silent auction

On Saturday, we were all fortunate to attend Don Beadle's seminar – probably the highlight of the conference. Everyone cheered and raved about his performance and hoped that someone taped it. Don summarized his history in the bromeliad world up to the present in his inimitable way.

That afternoon we visited the very fine show. I was surprised to see so many Dyckias in the show and so few tillandsias (at least the epiphytic ones) Observing the head table, I was pleased to see that I had purchased three plants that were also on the head table. In addition to the plant show there was also an excellent art show of photographs and paintings with an emphasis on bromeliads.

Saturday evening most of the San Francisco group sat at the same banquet table where we were joined by **Barret Bassick** who used to be a member of our society. Tom Wolfe was the keynote speaker who spoke on the BSI Past. Tom Buchter, CEO of Selby, spoke on BSI Future. The next conference will be in Hawaii on the islands of Oahu and Hawaii. See you there!

Bruce Holst had invited all conference attendees to Selby on Monday when he would be available to us. Dan and Nick visited most of the day and Peter and I arrived late in the afternoon because we had driven up from Naples, Florida. After the Selby closing we saw Bruce where he generously opened up one greenhouse for us to visit and then he showed us the herbarium.

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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Bring in your Dyckias to supplement this month's topic!