

# BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO



## December 2012

# NEWSLETTER

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, December 20, 2012** at 7:00 PM  
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park, San  
Francisco

### December Program

#### Holiday Potluck and Gift Exchange

**T**his month culminates another year for our society. There are many of our members that are not able to get to our monthly meetings. We hope that many of you will be able to join us for the holiday potluck.

**Note that our meeting time this month is 7 PM instead of 7:30 PM.**

This month's meeting will be an opportunity for us socialize and partake of great food. The society is providing a turkey and honey baked ham. We are asking you to bring a dish to share with the group – drinks, appetizer, vegetable dish, rolls, desserts, etc. Please try to remember to bring serving silverware for the dish that you bring. We will provide plates, cups, silverware, and napkins. **Dan Arcos** is coordinating the food items. Dan has tried to contact each of you by phone or e-mail. If he missed you, please call **Dan (415-823-9661)** to see where you can fill in some of our gaps.

Our club will provide a plant for each member. You may also bring a special plant or plant-related item for exchange with the other members (not required).



## October Meeting

**L**ast month **Keith Smith** gave us an overview of the *Dyckia* genus including where they come from, how to grow them, and examples of some of the new species and hybrids that are coming from Brazil. The major point he made to all of us is to try and grow a few *Dyckias* – they should not be considered a stepchild of the bromeliad family. Our members brought many *Dyckias* in for Show and Tell – some of these Keith had among his slides; others were new to Keith.

## Bromeliad Art

This article by Mark E. Mishanie is reprinted from the January 1991 *BROMELIANA*, newsletter of the New York Bromeliad Society. It gives us a totally different look at the hobby of growing bromeliads and proves that bromeliad collecting offers many things to many people.

**W**e may quantify, qualify and identify the amazing bromeliad, discover its habitats in the Amazon wilds, chart its course through the centuries, but for me this doesn't get to the heart of the matter. For me the point is that bromeliads are beautiful plants which come in rainbows of colors, shapes, and sizes.

I can tell, generally, if a plant is an *Aechmea* or a *Guzmania*, and I've come to have not an ounce of interest in the minutiae involved in how and why they are classified. I am interested in bromeliads not from the scientific point of view but from their artistic aspect, and I have now begun treating my plants from this point of view.

As a result, my home has become a kind of art gallery. It all began during my weekly trip down to the plant district in Manhattan along Sixth Avenue and the 20s. As I wandered about the plant and florist shops, I spied one specializing in pottery and glass terrariums, etc. The pots were domestic and imported, cheap and expensive, and they came in wildly different sizes and shapes – Egyptian urns, etc., Roman and Greek designs,

shapes like elephants, donkeys, monkeys, giraffes, etc.

I bought many of them because I wanted a change from the dull white and green plastic pots that had been housing my beautiful bromeliads. Why should a magnificent plant be forced into a cheap looking pot? What's more, I began to question my setup with so many individual plants lined up along my windowsills and under fluorescent lights which looked like just another florist shop or discount store.

To create an esthetic appearance and to save on my limited apartment space, I used my new planters to plant multiple arrangements of my bromeliads.

I started slowly. All that repotting was hard work, but with the ultimate goal in mind, it was also fun. In my large elephant-shaped pot I combined a variety of large *Cryptanthus*. In my large donkey-shaped pot I planted a robust variegated and a plain green pineapple plant. In my Mexican dish gardens I established low-growing *Cryptanthus*. In an ancient Egyptian urn I grew four nice *Aechmeas*, and in several terrariums I planted small *Cryptanthus* with small pepperomias.

My bromeliad collection is now displayed in a way I can really be proud to show off. Will the transplanted bromels survive in their new pots? Will they do well in their new environments? I don't know, but I will keep a close watch and I will learn. No doubt there will be problems: overcrowding in the new pots may block light and retard growth and blooming. These are my concerns, but for "arts" sake", I will wait and see!

## *Neoregelia ampullacea* and its Neighbors

This article by A. Herndon is reprinted from the November 2006 newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Central Florida.

**A**mong the miniature bromeliads, the *Neoregelia ampullacea* complex is a source of both great charm and great frustration. Thirty years ago, life was simple – there were only four plants available in the group (*ampullacea* v. *ampullacea*, *ampullacea* v. *tigrina*, *ampullacea* v. *zebrina*, and *ampullacea* variegata), and they

were all readily distinguishable (although) I am not sure I remember exactly what plant was called *ampullacea* v. *ampullacea*). Now several of the plants from the olden days are known by different names; there are many more distinct types of plants available in this group and an uncertain number of the species are treated as *ampullacea* cultivars in the trade.

The core group of *Neoregelia ampullacea* is characterized by the narrow, cylindrical shape of the water-holding cup formed by the lead sheathes and slender stolons that are generally long enough to keep the water-holding cups of individual rosettes from each other. Leaves are decorated by dark patches, generally in the form of bars running partway across the leaf blades. Plants produce pups before flowering, so they tend to form clumps quickly. The flower petals are relatively large – two or three open flowers fully cover the top of the cup – with purple tips and a white throat. This group includes *Neoregelia ampullacea* v. *ampullacea*, *N. ampullacea* cv. Bert, *N. ampullacea* cv. Midget (known long ago as *N. ampullacea* v. *zebrina*), and *N. lilliputana*. These cultivars differ in size and the darkness of leaf bars. *N. ampullacea* v. *ampullacea* has the lightest coloration, and with ample fertilizer, may show no trace of the leaf bars at all. *N. ampullacea* cv. Bert is slightly smaller than *ampullacea* v. *ampullacea* and has darker leaf bars. The leaves on this cultivar are more pointed towards the tip in contrast to the rounded leaf tips on other cultivars. *N. ampullacea* Midget as the name implies, is smaller than *ampullacea* v. *ampullacea*. It also has very dark leaves, including both bars and a multitude of small dark dots under all conditions. *N. lilliputana* is even smaller than *ampullacea* cv. Midget, and has prominent leaf bars, but is not nearly as dark as Midget. Plants currently sold as *N. ampullacea* v. *tigrina* (or *N. tigrina*) in the trade differ from the plants called *N. ampullacea* v. *tigrina* 30 years ago. They are also totally different from the core species of the *ampullacea* complex. This plant has a funnel-shaped water-holding cup and the bracts along the stolons of rapidly growing plants are loose, so the stolons appear “leafy”. In addition, the petals are wholly white and much larger than those in the core group. The plant called *N. albiflora* in the trade is almost indistinguishable. These two differ only in the presence of a yellow brown color in the leaves of *tigrina* and its complete lack in *albiflora*. To complicate a matter further, the current *N. albiflora* was treated as *N. ampullacea* v. *ampullacea* in the trade for a time.

*Neoregelia zonata* has the same general characteristics as *N. ampullacea*, but is at least twice as large. Still, *N. ampullacea variegata* of the trade belongs here and the plant we used to call *N. ampullacea* v. *tigrina* appears to be a hybrid between *N. ampullacea* and *N. zonata*. It is even possible that the plant we called *N. ampullacea* v. *ampullacea* is another *ampullacea-zonata* hybrid.

Finally, I have a plant called *N. ampullacea* cv. Marion Oppenheimer that does not appear to have any relationship to the group. This plant has no stolons. The leaves have no dark bars and the pups are not produced until the parent blooms. How the name came to be applied to the plant is a complete mystery.

*N. ampullacea* cv. *marnier-lapostollei* and *N. ampullacea* Black Beauty are also available in the trade, but I don’t know these plants beyond the names, so I can’t comment on them.

Furthermore, *N. dungsiana* is undoubtedly related to the core *ampullacea* group. It is likely that other species less frequently seen in cultivation also belong here. Due to their pleasing size and characteristics, members of the *ampullacea* complex (including allied species) have been used in many hybrids. Regrettably, name changes and uncertainties in the application of names within the group introduce great confusion concerning the parentage of hybrids. For instance, *N. Red Waif* (a Gary Hendrix hybrid) is listed as having *zebrina* and *Fireball* as parents.

If you have been paying attention to your history, you realize that the current name for the first parent of *N. Red Waif* is *ampullacea* cv. Midget. But, what if a hybrid lists *tigrina* as a parent? Is the parent the *tigrina* of many years ago or today? It is even more complicated if the parent is listed as *ampullacea* without qualification. Now it is totally unclear whether the parent is a member of the core *ampullacea* complex, *albiflora*, a *punctatissima*, a *zonata*, or a hybrid. Furthermore, the range of possible choices depends upon the year the hybrid was made and to the extent the hybridizer knew and used up-to-date names.

Of course, confusion over names does not distract from the charm of the plants or hybrids made from them. If you prefer to not get involved with the intricacies of identification, just buy plants that look good to you. Your enjoyment will be just as complete regardless of the name on the label.



Here are four different varieties of *Neoregelia ampullacea*. Photos by Derek Butcher are courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



This *Neoregelia dungsiana* is a less frequently seen *Neoregelia* species. Its size and other characteristics easily qualify it as part of the ampullacea complex described by Herndon. Photo is by Dennis Cathcart and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



*Neoregelia lilliputiana* is among the smallest of this group. Because of its very small size and pleasing shape it has been used extensively to produce “mini” neos. The flowers as seen here are ampullacea type. Photo is by Michael Andreas and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



Another small cultivar of ampullacea is *Neoregelia Midget*. It is distinguishable from others in this group by its smaller size, darker leaves with consistent bars and many small dark dots. Photo by Geoff Lawn is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



This is another bromeliad labeled *Neoregelia ampullacea* with less intense banding. This shows the classic appearance of the flowers as described by A. Herndon in his article. Photo is by Ken Marks and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



*Neoregelia punctatissima* has the small size of the ampullacea group of plants but is distinctive with uniform short dark bars throughout the leaves. The bars appear as dashes and no one dash extends across a leaf. Photo is by Dorothy Berg and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



As Herndon mentions in his article, there are inconsistencies and confusion in the nomenclature of this group of plants. This photo of *Neoregelia ampullacea tigrina* from a 1970 issue of the BSI journal shows what should be a cultivar of the species but this differs from *N. tigrina* grown today. Photo is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



Except for its size which is nearly twice as large as *Neoregelia ampullacea*, *N. zonata* has few differences. Herndon believes that *Neoregelia ampullacea variegata* should be classified as a cultivar of *N. zonata*. Photo is by Derek Butcher 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.

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## **BROMELIAD SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL**

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**Come to our holiday meeting for great food and fun!**