

# BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO



## April 2013

# NEWSLETTER

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, April 18, 2013** at 7:30 PM  
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

### April Program

#### Grand Opening of the Singapore Botanical Garden

**Dennis Cathcart** from Sarasota, Florida will be visiting our group again for the first time in several years. Dennis is the owner of Tropiflora, perhaps the largest tropical nursery in the United States. One of his greenhouses is one acre in capacity. Over the past 35 years Dennis and his wife Linda have made more than 100 collecting excursions in 25 countries. Dennis is credited with the discovery of many new species with three of them being named for him: *Aechmea cathcartii*, *Neoregelia cathcartii*, and *Vriesea cathcartii*.

In October 2007, Dennis received an offer from the government of Singapore to purchase most of their plants for a new 150-acre botanical garden. About 4000 varieties were shipped and Dennis helped to incorporate his plants into the new garden. His slide show will outline the process that took place to develop this new botanical garden.

Dennis will also be bringing plants for sale so make sure to bring your checkbook or credit card.

### April Refreshments

**Michelle Derviss** and **Liam O'Flaherty** signed up for refreshments this month. We are likely to have a large turnout this month and need your support with refreshments.



Here is **Dennis Cathcart**, our speaker for this month.

## March Meeting

Last month, Peter Wan started his show on his Peru trip last year with Guillermo Rivera by showing some of the bromeliads found in Peru before he visited the Amazon. We then got onto a small boat and started down the Amazon. Most of this part of the show focused on many of the animals found on shore and in the water. One of the stops on land involved climbing many feet up a tree to survey the Amazon from a large platform at the top of the tree. Many of the members of our society who had been on a previous trip with Guillermo had not had such a view. The highlights of Peter's show incorporated many videos into the slide show. Peter had purchased a video camera just before his trip, but you wouldn't know it from the quality of the video. His video of the river otters was amazing; these pictures were taken very early in the morning and Peter was able to zoom in to the otters on the riverbank as well as catch them swimming towards the boat. He also was able to capture video of many birds. Some of our members considered purchasing a video camera based on the quality of Peter's work. Thanks Peter for an amazing slide/video show.

## Cryptanthus

This article by Harvey Kendell is reprinted from the January 1993 Bromeliad Blade, newsletter of the San Diego Bromeliad Society.

The cryptanthus genus came into the hands of European scientists rather late. The first description was that of *Cryptanthus bromelioides* in 1836 followed two years later by *C. acaulis* (classified as a tillandsia). Both Rauh and R. Wilson say that there are about 20 species of cryptanthus now. (Editor's note – Harry Luther's binomial list shows 40 species and varieties). They apparently all come from eastern Brazil where they grow mostly in shady areas, occasionally in the sun, but always on the ground. In cultivation they are occasionally found attached to logs or rocks as epiphytes. I consider such treatment abuse. They will do much better in the soil.

Most cryptanthus species grow well in subdued light. They are commonly grown under the benches in humid greenhouses. They also flourish

– possibly best of all – in terrariums in areas in the house where many plants would perish for lack of light. On the other hand, if you want really healthy, colorful plants, give them bright shade. In an open fish bowl close under fluorescent light they are the happiest.

The flowers of cryptanthus are strange. They are seldom perfect. That is, they seldom have both male and female parts. Almost always the first several flowers to open on a plant are only male; they have only stamens and no pistil. If you want seed, you must wait for later complete flowers. Foster says that the complete flowers always appear between the axils of the leaves. Do not rely on self-pollination or a friendly bug doing the job for you. It won't happen. Get out your brush and move pollen from the stamens to the pistil. More reliable is using pollen from a different plant. Even when everything seems to have been right for getting seed, seed does not develop. The mysteries of nature are not always fathomable.

The hybrids of cryptanthus are too numerous to name, and indeed, many hundreds of them go unnamed. The Germans are notorious for crossing these plants indiscriminately. An amusing incident has happened with their crosses. They shipped them over here in flats containing many crosses with no records. A label on the flats said "Diverse". Americans, being linguistic ignoramuses, took this to be the name of a single cross and could not figure out why they all looked so different. The name simply means "various kinds". Another common error is the spelling of "Feuerzauber" (not Feverzauber). The name means "Fire Magic".

Cryptanthus plants have been involved in some very unexpected bi-generic crosses – crosses between two genera. Mulford Foster crosses *C. bahianus* with *Billbergia nutans* and *C. maritimus* with *B. amoena*. The most famous bigenerics of cryptanthus are *Cryptbergia Rubra* and *Cryptbergia Meadii*. The latter is made up of *C. beuckeri* and *B. nutans*. Can anyone tell me the parents of *Cryptbergia Rubra*?

At least one beautiful cross has been made between a cryptanthus and a neoregelia. *Neoregelia carolinae* x *Cryptanthus zonatus* produced a plant commonly called *Neoregelia Fire Foam*, but it should be called *Neotanthus Fire Foam*.

[Editor's note: This article appeared in the November edition of the North County Bromeliad Society Newsletter. I received a letter shortly after from Herb Plever, a member of the New York Bromeliad Society and editor of their Bromeliana, stating that the parentage of Hummel's hybrid Neortanthus Fire Foam as listed in Don Beadle's list of cultivars and hybrids is unknown. Herb feels that since Fire Foam has bright red leaf tips, which it is not likely to have gotten from *Neoregelia carolinae* or *Cryptanthus zonatus*, it is more probable that the Neoregelia parent is *N. spectabilis*.]



xCryptbergia 'Mead' photo in J. Brom Soc. 27(5): 217. 1977

This photo of Cryptbergia Mead is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

## Growing Nidularium

This article by Alan Herndon is reprinted from the July 2011 newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of South Florida.

Species of *Nidularium* are typically found as epiphytes in the lower levels of Brazilian forests. They grow quite happily in low light levels, although, if you want to grow them for the show table, the best conformation is reached with 70% shade. *Nidularium fulgens* and *N. atalpiaense* will both tolerate more light than other *Nidularium* species, usually growing happily under 50% shade. This year, however, both are showing heat stress due to the brutally hot and dry spell we lived through for a few weeks before the summer rains started.

The inflorescence of *Nidularium* is either nestled among inner leaves of the rosette (*Nidularium seidelii* and several other species that appear to contradict this statement are now considered to belong to the genus *Canistropsis*). The most conspicuous feature of the inflorescence is the

colorful primary bracts that resemble, in some cases, a bird nest.

Among the many features that will endear them to gardeners, *Nidularium* species mostly have inconspicuous spines along the leaf edges. In the *Nidularium fulgens* complex, the spines are formidable in appearance, but pose much less risk to life and limb than spines on the leaf edges of (say) *neoregelia*. Species of *Nidularium* are also known for cold-hardiness. We don't expect them to be harmed by brief periods of freezing temperature.

Species of *Nidularium* range in size from *Nidularium jonesianum*, flowering at barely two inches across, to the larger clones of *N. innocentii* and the large clone of *N. procerum*, originally known as *N. insulanum*, that can be 3 foot across. Leaf color varies widely. Many of the species have glossy green leaves that may be light or dark and in some species, contain small, scattered darker dots. Others are only known with leaves having a more-or-less red tint. In several of the species, however, we find different clones with different leaf colors. *Nidularium krisgreenii* and *N. longiflorum*, for instance, come with either green or red leaves. *Nidularium innocentii* comes in clones with green or red leaves and a range of shades in between.

Most *Nidularium* species are quite easy to grow in our area under the same conditions that are suitable for *neoregelia* species (excepting, of course, the need for lower light levels). Being epiphytes by nature they tolerate certain conditions more humid than the typical *neoregelia*.

*Nidularium rutilans* is probably the most widely grown species (usually sold under the name *Nidularium regelioides* in years past, and probably still so labeled in many cases). This species comes in a wide variety of disguises if you just consider the leaves. The most commonly grown clone historically had glossy green leaves with very inconspicuous marginal spines and spots of slightly darker green scattered throughout the leaf blade. These leaves were rarely more than 1 ¼ inches wide. A similar clone with the dark spots especially well developed (to the point of appearing brown) was grown as *N. leprosum*. *N. 'Sao Paulo'*, an early import from Brazil by Nat DeLeon is an especially large and elegant clone of *N. rutilans*. In all cases, the inflorescence is nestled in the rosette of leaves. Primary bracts surrounding the flowers are a light red. The



flower petals are a darker red. Stolons are short in all clones, so the plants tend to clump.

*Nidularium fulgens* was another species available to collectors in this country at an early date. As noted above, the marginal spines on the leaves of this species are quite impressive; they are light in color and up to about 1/8 inch in length. The leaf is shiny, light green with many darker green spots scattered around the blade. The inflorescence is nestled at the top of the rosette. Primary bracts are usually red and the flower petals are white near the base with dark violet tips. There is also a clone in circulation with bracts that are nearer orange in color. Spines as large on those seen on the leaves edge the bracts.

Various clones of *Nidularium innocentii* were also found in our collections at an early date. The primary distinction was between red leaved and green leaved plants, but there were also large clones and small clones. In all cases, the leaves have very small spines (they may be easier to feel than see) densely set along their margins and a matte, rather than a glossy, surface. The inflorescence is nestled in the rosette and, can be entirely red or have varying portions of the bracts green. On first impression, the flower petals appear to be entirely bright white. On closer examination you see that they are green for a short distance above the base before abruptly turning white. Two of the finest clones available in our area came through the collection of Life Member Bob Work. The first is a large clone with green leaves collected near Periube. The second is a medium size clone with red leaves collected in Parapiacaba. Not only does this clone have the red leaf color, it is also striated with fine white lines when grown under moderately stressful conditions.

If this or subsequent articles on *Nidularium* leave you wanting more information, you should purchase Elton Leme's recent book on the subject. The book is not cheap, but it will supply much more detailed information than I could ever fit in a few pages. Contact Karl Green, who sponsored publication of the book, for more information.



*Nidularium rutilans* photo by Holger Sachs  
This photo of *Nidularium rutilans* by Holger Sachs is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



*Nidularium innocentii* photo by Dorothy Berg  
This photo of *Nidularium innocentii* by Dorothy Berg 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  
This photo of *Nidularium fulgens* by Michael Andreas is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



This photo of *Neoregelia cathcartii* by Ken Marks is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



*Vriesea cathcartii* © Tropiflora/Dennis & Linda Cathcart

This photo of *Vriesea cathcartii* by Dennis Cathcart is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.



This photo of *Aechmea cathcartii* by Dorothy Berg is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies

## June Bromeliad Sale

This is an early warning about our upcoming sale during the weekend of 7-9 June. This is the bigger of our two annual sales and we need your support to make it a success. We will need help in several areas:

- Ordering plants
- Pricing plants
- Bringing in some of your beautiful display plants
- Helping at the sale.
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There will be signup sheets at the April and May meetings for you to pick your assignments

## **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 2013 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS**

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## **BROMELIAD SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL**

The Bromeliad Society International publishes the Journal bimonthly at Orlando, Florida. Subscription price (in US \$) is included in the 12-month membership dues: single (\$28.), dual (2 members at one address receiving one Journal - \$30). Address all membership and subscription correspondence to: Membership Secretary, Dan Kinard, 6901 Kellyn Lane, Vista, CA 92084, USA, [membership@bsi.org](mailto:membership@bsi.org)

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**This month Dennis Cathcart takes us to Singapore!**