

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF

SAN FRANCISCO

JUNE 2014



Meeting Specifics

When: June 19

Time: 7:30 PM

Where
Recreation Room
San Francisco County Fair Building
9th Avenue at Lincoln Way
San Francisco

Andy will be bringing plants for sale, so bring your checkbook.



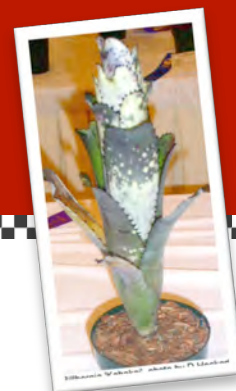
Jalisco, Colima, and Coastal Michoacán

This month, Andy Siekkinen from San Diego will be visiting us again. On his last visit, his presentation focused on the *Hechtia* genus and his exploration of these plants in Mexico. Although Andy's background is in chemical engineering, his fascination with the bromeliad family and exploring them in habitat has resulted in his forming a tour company called Eagle Eye Adventures (www.eagle-eye-adventures.com) that provides tours to Mexico to explore plants. During his adventures, he has discovered what may be a new *Hechtia* species, a new *Tillandsia* species, and a new *Pitcairnia* species.

This month, Andy will take us to parts of Mexico we do not often hear about. He will also talk to us about the unique bromeliad genus *Ursulaea* and the loss of habitat for these plants. This meeting will introduce us to parts of Mexico that most of us will never visit in person.

No one signed up for refreshments this month. We appreciate contributions from one and all.

Gary Turner with Dennis Heckart and David Shiigi, Vriesea Princess Annique (a Shiigi hybrid, Billbergia Kahakai (a Heckart hybrid)



May Meeting

Gary Turner took us to the big island in Part 2 of his Hawaiian vacation

In March, Gary Turner gave us a show on Honolulu and the Lisa Vinzant nursery. Last month we were treated to a trip around the major Hawaiian Islands. Gary and John Molnar toured the islands by cruise ship: the Pride of America. On Maui, they took the road to Hana. On Kauai, they visited beautiful waterfalls. When they arrived at Hawaii, Dennis Heckart met

them at the dock and performed as their tour guide while on the big island.

Some of our newer members may not know Dennis Heckart. He was a very active member of our society until he retired and moved to Hawaii. His major bromeliad interest was in the Vriesea genus and he hybridized many magnificent plants. When he moved to Hawaii he

continued his interest in bromeliads and hybridization, but with the ideal climate his hybrids have extended to many other genera. In fact, Dennis has opened his own nursery called Heckart Tropicals. Gary showed us many slides of Dennis' colorful creations. The colors rivaled that of the photos of the plants at Lisa Vinzant's nursery. Must be something about the climate!

Gary and John toured the Hawaiian islands on the Pride of America cruise ship



Next stop was at David Shiigi's. Given the time limitations, Gary was only able to visit David's home. He has used bromeliads for attractive floral arrangements near the house and at the main entrance. It was then time for Dennis to take Gary and John back to the ship for

their next stop on the tour around the Hawaiian islands.



David Shiigi's nursery

Cryptanthus zonatus hybrid

Potting

Cryptanthus should not be mounted. They are terrestrials and will develop a root system equal to the size of the plant. Do not under pot; at least a five or six inch plastic pot is recommended to help conserve the needed moisture for best growth. Many growers are using 12-inch saucers and we frequently use eight-inch bulb pans.

There are as many soil formulas as there are growers. Some use commercial potting soils; some grow in straight sphagnum; others are

How to Grow Cryptanthus

This article is reprinted from the 1988 Cryptanthus Catalog, published by the Southern Exposure Nursery in Texas (no longer in existence).

experimenting with hydro culture. We grow in a mixture of three parts ground bark mulch (pine, because that's what grows in our area), two parts peat moss, one part loam, one part sand, and one part perlite. The plants enjoy the acidity in the mulch and peat moss. Regardless of the mix, it must be kept damp for best growth. Cryptanthus do well on capillary matting, wick watering, misting systems, or watering when the top is dry to the touch. Use tepid water. Do not use water that has been through a water softener.

Feeding

Some growers use fairly rich soil with minimum supplemental feeding. Others prefer an inert growing medium devoid of plant food and depend entirely on mild feeding with each watering.

Although it is not necessary to fertilize your Cryptanthus to have the dazzling display of color and markings, you must fertilize to obtain maximum growth for show plants. Use dilute solutions (quarter of the recommended strength when using water soluble fertilizers). We use time-release granular even-balance fertilizer (14-14-14) or houseplant spikes.

Light

There are Cryptanthus that will grow in every light condition you may have. *C. beuckeri* is a low-light plant and many of its hybrids like to be shaded, moist, and humid. *C. bahianus*, on the other hand, can take full sun. Most prefer bright-diffused light to bring out the best coloration.

*Cryptanthus bahianus*

Shown by Larry Giroux
2004 Mothers Day Show, BSCF

Cryptanthus bahianus (courtesy of Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies)



Cryptanthus warasii, a most unusual cryptanthus.
(courtesy of Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies)

If you do not have good natural light, use fluorescent lights 12-16 hours a day. Cool white, daylight or tubes designed specifically for growing plants may be used alone or in combination.

Temperature

Cryptanthus prefer 65 degrees to 85 degrees daytime temperatures with a 10 degree drop at night. Basically, they are comfortable in temperatures the same as you. We grow most plants in raised beds in our greenhouses and fill our flowerbeds with Cryptanthus as border plants and ground cover. We cut back on watering in fall and allow the plants to “harden off” before winter. Here in southeast Texas the ground rarely freezes. Our air temperature however can go into the twenties and sometimes lower. Plants left outside survive if protected with a heavy mulch. Severe leaf damage, of course, may result, but spring brings abundant, beautiful offsets. On the other extreme, Cryptanthus can take temperatures above 100 degrees as long as there is good air circulation and the mix is not allowed to dry out.

Humidity

Many Cryptanthus enjoy moist conditions, which may be increased in the home or office by humidifiers, misting frequently, setting the pots over water or grouping together.

Pests and Diseases

Cryptanthus are relatively pest free. Should you encounter scale (only observed by us on *C. bahianus*), wear gloves and dip the plant in Malathion 50% or Cygon 2E (1/4 tsp./qt). [These pesticides may not be available to the general public in California - Ed.] Shade the plant at least four to 24 hours, then rinse the plant but do not place back in bright light until the leaves dry. It is always wise to follow good horticultural cleanliness practices. Do not allow your plants to come in contact with galvanized metal, copper, or treated lumber.

Blooming

Different species and cultivars bloom at different times of the year and it is possible to have a collection blooming year-round. Some varieties bloom one flower after another; in others, a cluster may open at the same time. Some varieties flatten and some bloom high on a stem. Cryptanthus bloom only once in their lifetime, at which time they begin to produce offsets or “pups” which normally comes from the leaf axis, from stolons, or from the base.

Propagation

Offsets may be left on the mother plant for continued growth as a multiple or may be removed when ready (approximately, one-quarter the size of the mother) with a slight tug. The pup will release easily when it is ready. Don't be alarmed because there are no roots on the pup. It will root easily in your potting medium. Insert the short stem into the mix and press the soil firmly around the plant. Don't bury the plant too deeply but don't just set it on top of the mix either. Place the plant in good growing conditions and water as you would a mature plant. If trying to root pups during cold months, consider bottom-heat for extra-fast growth.

June Bromeliad Sale

This is a final reminder about our largest sale of the year. Our combined plant sale with the San Francisco Succulent and Cactus Society (SFSCS) will be on **June 21st and 22nd** this year at the County Fair Building. Setup will be on **Friday, June 20th** from 2 PM to 8 PM. We must be out of the building at 8 PM on Friday evening.

Sale schedule is Saturday (9am to 5 pm) and Sunday (9 am to 4:30 pm). Cleanup is 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm.

The signup sheet for helpers has gone out via e-mail to remind those who have already signed up and denote our weak spots where we need more help. We need volunteers for Saturday afternoon and Sunday afternoon. If you can help, please contact Roger Lane at 650-949-4831 or rdodger@pacbell.net.

Thanks! It is always a fun-sale.

Mesophytic vs. Atmospheric Tillandsias

This article by James R. Dawley, a late member of our society, is reprinted from the April 1982 newsletter of the Bromeliad Study Group of Northern California

In my contact with bromeliad enthusiasts, I have found that many novices and some collectors believe that all tillandsias are adapted to living in xerophytic conditions, i.e., an environment where moisture is very scarce. This opinion has probably been engendered by the popularization of tillandsia plant sculptures and the advice “just mist them occasionally and they will grow”. What they are talking about is the atmospheric tillandsias, so-called because they need little else than condensation from the atmosphere to live. They occur in many geographic locations and take many forms. They are characterized by narrow, channeled leaves covered with trichomes or scales (minute mushroom shaped appendages that act to trap moisture and absorb it), thus making it available to the live plant tissue. They must have evolved from more primitive mesophytic (adapted to moderate moisture conditions) forms that lived in a region of adequate rainfall and moist conditions. Long term and gradual changes from a wet climate to a dry one was the evolutionary driver in encouraging mutations and natural hybridization to produce genotypes that incorporated a degree of drought resistance. A second reason for the development of atmospheric tillandsias might have been excessive crowding of the lower branches of the trees in the primitive moderate moisture forest leading to colonization of the upper and top branches. Higher winds and more sun near the treetops caused faster evaporation, leading to the evolutionary changes required for drought resistance.

The development of larger cups or tanks in the tillandsias to store more water might have been tried but the small high branches would twist and sway, spilling the water and doom this experimental type. Drought resistance was achieved by proliferation of trichomes and reduction of evaporative leaf surface. Higher light intensities favored reduction in plant size, and the nearly 100% leaf coverage by trichomes acted as a light filter to reduce the high light intensities.

The leaves became narrower and they became channeled to increase moisture absorption without increasing solar absorption area and the plant abandoned the central cup. Once having achieved this physical form, and developed a special form of photosynthesis called CAM or crassulacean acid metabolism that results in less water loss from the leaves, the tillandsias were adapted for a very dry environment.

Tillandsia’s wind-borne seeds could travel for miles and with the extreme adaptation they could colonize desert areas. It is not hard to see why these plants adapt so readily to mounting, to misting as their only moisture, and to a relatively high light tolerance.

Tillandsia wagneriana



The mesophytic tillandsias are descended by a different route from the primitive original. Although many have evolved large sophisticated inflorescences, they have retained their cup or tank, their sparsely trichomed-leaves, and their adaptation to medium and high moisture locations where there is abundant shade. Many have found their niche in the mountain cloud forests of the tropics where they receive constant misting from the clouds passing through the semi-shade to deep-shade forests where they live at elevations above 5000 feet, temperatures infrequently go above 80° F and below 50° F. In cultivation, most mesophytic tillandsias have wide thin leaves, usually require bright light but no sun, 60 degrees relative humidity, temperatures 80 to 45 degrees F, and frequent misting. A partial list of the mesophytics include *T. ponderosa*, *T. prodigiosa*, *T. lucida*, *T. guatamalensis*, *T. wagneriana*, *T. lampropoda*, *T. makoyana*, *T. parryi*, *T. violacea*, etc.

Both types of tillandsias are fascinating to grow and will reward you with a beautiful (or at least interesting) inflorescence. Try these recommended growing conditions for better tillandsias.

Hope you have been saving your boxes for the sale.

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 sfbromeliad.org 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 payable to the BSSF to: Harold Charns, BSSF Treasurer, 255 States Street, San Francisco, CA 94114-1405.

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BROMELIAD SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

The Bromeliad Society International publishes the Journal bimonthly at Orlando, Florida. Subscription price (in U.S. \$) is included in the 12-month membership dues. Please address all membership and subscription correspondence to Membership Secretary Annette Dominiquez, 8117 Shenandoah Dr., Austin, TX 78753-5734, U.S.A. or go to www.bsi.org.

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