

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO

JULY 2015



Meeting Specifics

- When: Sunday, July 12
- Time: 10:45-11:00 AM (Start)
- Where 4 Gardens in the East Bay



Giant *Tillandsia duratii* at WBC 2012

Annual Garden Tour - East Bay

This month, we will not have a regular monthly meeting. Instead, we have our annual garden tour to member's gardens. Because our membership is spread over the entire San Francisco area, each year we visit a different region. This year we will go to the East Bay and visit 4 gardens. We will start at 10:45-11:00 AM in Fremont at **Wes and Marilyn Schillings'** garden. Our second stop will be in Hayward at the home of **John Molnar and Gary Turner**. Our next stop will be in Oakland Hills at the home of **Leianne Crittenden**. Our last stop is to visit the plants at the home of **Casper Curto and Daryl DuCharme**.

At our final stop, Casper and Daryl will host a potluck meal, so bring a food item that is ready to go or needs very little preparation. There will be paper plates, napkins, and plastic silverware provided. Bring your own serving utensils.

To obtain details on the tour stops and driving directions, please RSVP to Dan Arcos by midnight on 9 July. Dan's contact info is danarcos@sfbromeliad.org or phone Dan at 415-821-7377 or 415-823-9661 (cell).

Naples Botanical Garden, Best-in-Show Alcantarea, Selby Botanical Garden



June Meeting

Last month, Peter Wan showed us some of his adventures during the 2012 World Bromeliad Conference in Orlando

Although the World Bromeliad Conference 2012 in Orlando took place a few years ago, our society did not have a presentation until Peter Wan gave his program last month. The plant show combined the normal bromeliad specimens with a very large art section that included photography, paintings, and wall hangings, each with an emphasis on bromeliads. The seminars

were interesting, but you had to be quick to get a seat because the seminar rooms were relatively small. The highlight of the seminars was Don Beadle's humorous story of his getting into the bromeliad hobby, leaving the hobby for repairing an older boat for different adventures, and returning to the plant hobby.

Our society was well represented at the conference and we sat with Barrett Bassick (a former member of our society) at the final banquet.

Peter's visit to the Naples Botanical Garden began with several shots of different forms of *Aechmea blanchetiana* in the parking lot.

This is the Orlando hotel where WBC 2012 took place

However, most of the slides focused on the Burle Marx garden that was a recent upgrade. Peter also showed a few slides of the Out of Africa nursery that specializes in unusual succulent plants.

He arrived at the Selby Botanical Gardens very close

to closing time, so there was no time to visit the regular displays. However, Bruce Holst was there and showed him the herbarium and opened up the greenhouses to view the bromeliad collection. This was an opportunity to see bromeliads yet-to-be



described as well as many non-bromeliads. Thanks, Peter for sharing your experiences at WBC 2012 with us.

T. prodigiosa, T. circinnata, T. filifolia



Mexico - Land of Tillandsias

This last collecting trip with the Van Hynings was an especially interesting one. First, because it gave me a great opportunity to see much of the area Racine and I had already traversed, but now with keener eyes and in closer association with species that we had collected years previously, as well as with a considerable number that I had not personally collected before. Secondly, three pairs of eyes - if they are all sharp, and I can assure you they were - can really make collecting most interesting and thorough.

Oather Van Hyning comes by his love of nature quite naturally. His father, T. Van Hyning, was for years a well-known naturalist in his own right.

The Van Hyning's interest and love of bromeliads is most genuine. Our trip took us, first, from Mexico City to Oaxaca and on to Tehuantepec in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. This trip carried us through an impressive mountainous country covering every elevation from 11,000 feet at Rio Frio, state of Puebla, to the Pacific sea level at Salina Cruz, a few miles west of Tehuantepec.

The spectacular scenery on

These semi-arid (for the most part, limestone) mountains has a grandeur all its own and the epiphytic and saxicolous flora gives it an added feature that makes it a memorable one to the bromeliad fan who will find a galaxy of tillandsias in many different kinds of habitats and as many species. But it is necessary to hunt, climb and sweat to find them and that is just what we did on this trip. The tillandsias, too, are accustomed to hard times and grow in the most impossible locations where one has to work hard to acquire desirable specimens. In fact, there may be countless thousands of a certain tillandsia growing on vertical cliffs, making it impossible to find a spot which could be reached by foot, not even where it would be possible to touch one of them by hand. Then suddenly, after hours of wishful hunting, a rock, which has avalanched from far above, appears to hold what you are seeking; it is covered with specimens...but all dead from days of unaccustomed exposure.

Then, in higher altitudes, there are giant species such as *Tillandsia prodigiosa*; they may be seen here and there high up in the trees, but most of the trees are so inaccessible that one cannot even start to climb these unscalable trees!

Several of the more common species, such as *T. recurvata*, *T. dasylirifolia*, *T. circinnata*, *T. schiediana*, *T. balbisiana*, *T. streptophylla* or even *T. filifolia* reside at ease on the giant cacti, never complaining to their host regarding the very sharp spines which do not ease the collector's hand. Nor does the host complain to the guest. The complaining is done exclusively by the man who would like to procure either the host or the guest for his garden decoration where they may be quite unhappy.

The different or restricted conditions to which these plants have adapted themselves are, of course, the very reasons for their variable forms and colors and this intrigues us no end. But it is often baffling to observe so many gradations and forms in many of the plants. For instance, *T. ionantha* with which many bromeliad collectors are familiar, in its commonest form is named *T. ionantha* v. *ionantha*. In Mexico, keen observing eyes may find a very compact, closely clustered type growing on exposed deciduous trees in an arid area. Although it certainly resembles the typical *ionantha*, it is compact and strict and seems different enough to be a variety. In a softer and more humid area we spot a 'giant' sized *ionantha*, which is three, or four times as large as the typical form; this too, might be different enough for a variety. Or perhaps a rock is found covered with *ionantha* plants, not clustered as all others are, but this one is caulescent and grows in masses by branching and rebranching like a sheet of moss. Shall this one be given a varietal distinction? The answer can be given after the flowers are carefully examined and compared with the other various forms, and if the flowers are alike, then they are all *T. ionantha*. This is the case of *T. ionantha* v. *van-hyningii*.

A varietal name can be given if the difference is slight but distinct such as a short and small scape or stem; this characteristic exists on one found in Guatemala and is named *T. ionantha* v. *scaposa*. Whether the elevation is high or low, *T. ionantha* may be encountered in some unexpected locations and it is the discovery of these different forms, varieties and species that add interest and enthusiasm which only plant collectors and botanists can fully appreciate.

After collecting in the isthmus we went on into the state of Chiapas, but did not attempt to go all the way to the Guatemala border as we wished to do some collecting in the Grijalva River area.

The Grijalva River has its source in the high mountains of Guatemala, but it courses west through Chiapas, Mexico. For hundreds of miles it winds its way through canyons and valleys and then runs north down through the vast swamp areas of Tabasco and out into the Gulf of Mexico at Punta Fonterra. There are few rivers in any country with such spectacular scenery along its borders and there are relatively few points on this river that are accessible from which to view these breathtaking vistas from above, even though it may be but 200 feet or 2,000 feet to the water.

It was on the overhanging ledges above this river, near Tuxla Guiterrez where we found the real *tillandsia* gem, *T. ionantha* v. *van-hyningii*. Here we would have liked to have had the use of a helicopter so that we could hover above the narrow shelves of vertical rocks and then drop down on a rope ladder to reach the few hidden colonies of this caulescent miniature form of *T. ionantha* which clings for 'dear life' on small areas of these perpendicular cliffs. However, without the wishful helicopter, if you wish to procure some of these 'silver stars', the next best procedure is to decide who will lie flat on his stomach on a bed of thorny *hechtia* leaves. It must be with full assurance that your friend will hold you securely by the heels while hanging over the cliffs far enough to clutch a few plants from a mat of happy little *tillandsias*. You close your eyes as you look down 300 feet below the calm waters of the Grijalva, then give one more look at the smiling little creatures who wonder why you have such poor sense of balance and composure.

Few persons would attempt to even take a picture of these plants, not to mention procuring some of them, yet they are worth the ordeal. It has, undoubtedly, taken thousands of years for *T. ionantha* to master the technique for its ultimate success in developing its caulescent growth in order to live safely on the vertical face of these rocks and to receive a new varietal name in recognition of it.

But not only the tillandsias have survived these many thousands of years of climatic changes. The hechtias and pitcairnia as well, have shown remarkable tenacity on rocks, not to mention their companions, the cacti and the agaves, which are growing on these same rocks and other similar areas.

There are other species of tillandsias, such as *T. flabellata* and *T. capitata*. They have not reached the extreme arid and xerophytic conditions as have the *T. ionantha* group. They are in a middle group of plants with softer and wider leaves. They are seeking the canyons, the shaded rock areas where there is still some sparse overhead shade. It is in these areas where we find new color varieties in the making, if not already made. So many bromeliads have a great tendency to develop red pigmentation in their leaves when exposed to much light and wind. It is a buffer that protects the leaves from extreme exposure.

[This article by Mulford Foster is taken from the February 1986 newsletter of the South Bay Bromeliad Associates.]

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Tillandsia ionantha v. *van-hyningii*, *T. capitata*, *T. flabellata*



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 Dominquez, 8117 Shenandoah Dr., Austin, TX 78753-5734, U.S.A. or go to www.bsi.org.

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