

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO

SEPTEMBER 2015



Meeting Specifics

When: Thursday, September 17
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.



A Visit to a Caatinga of Brazil

This month, Andy Siekkinen from San Diego will be visiting us again. For those of you who do not know Andy, his background is in chemical engineering, but 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 be presenting a talk on his visit to Brazil this past spring. He presented his preliminary results on his genetic research on the genus *Hechtia* to the first World Congress on Bromeliaceae Evolution (nicknamed 'BromEvo'). In this presentation, Andy will spend some time talking about the academic conference as well as showing some of the diversity of the bromeliads in the caatinga of Pernambuco, Brazil including *Orthophytum disjunctum*, *Aechmea leptantha*, and *Hohenbergias* growing on granite formations.

Dan Arcos and Jon Dixon signed up for refreshments this month. Any additional contributions are always appreciated.

Tillandsia purpurescens and scenes from Pam's 1988 trip with Werner Rauh



August Meeting

Last month, we visited Peru in 1988 with Pamela Koide Hyatt and Werner Rauh

Last month, Pamela Koide Hyatt summarized the legacy of Dr. Werner Rauh and brought us up to date on what has been happening since his death in 2000. Dr. Rauh received his doctorate in botany in 1937 and came to the University of Heidelberg in 1939 where he remained until his retirement. In 1960 he was assigned director of the

botanical garden that had only 3 greenhouses. The collection increased until his retirement to 15 greenhouses filled with botanical treasures - many of them collected by Dr. Rauh. During his career he described 1200 genera/species/varieties and wrote over 300 botanical articles/books. One of

Pam's most interesting slides showed a map of the world with a listing below the map of the many collecting trips by country that Werner made during his career. Although South American countries and Madagascar topped the list, he collected from all over the world.

Since his death, the Werner

Werner Rauh with a dramatic bromeliad in Peru

Rauh Heritage Project is building a database of his trips and taxa entries for each trip.

Pam traveled with Werner to Peru in 1988. Her slides showed how different it was on a plant-collecting trip than it is today. The roads were not paved, cell phones were not

yet invented, breakdowns were normal. Pam said that Werner traveled with two shirts, washing one each night. And Pam had to drive many miles to a town to make a phone call.

Our plant table for show-and-tell was amazing thanks to our



members and Pam provided an amazing plant raffle table as well as bring wonderful plants to sell.

Aechmea tocanina, *Aechmea pectinata*,
and *Guzmania* clump



To Divide or Let It Clump?

As the single plant we have purchased begins to grow and multiply, the decision has to be made whether to maintain single plants or let the plants multiply in one container. There are several factors that should be considered when making that decision.

Will the plant bloom if not allowed to clump? Some bromeliads do not bloom when separated into singles. One is *Aechmea pectinata*. I have never seen it bloom; however, I prefer the conformation of a beautiful rosette rather than an unattractive mass of leaves with an unspectacular bloom. To find out if your plant falls into this category, consult an experienced grower.

Will the blooming plant be more spectacular in a clump? Many smaller species make a stronger statement when grown in a mass. This is true whether it is being viewed for its foliage or when it is in its blooming stage. Typical genera where this is true would include *Tillandsia*, *Pitcairnia*, *Pepinia*, and *Fosterella*.

Will being grown too closely together destroy the conformation? When the correct conformation shape is a rosette or vase, distortion will appear when the plants are grown too closely together. This is true for such genera as *Aechmea*, *Hohenbergia* and *Neoregelia* species without stolons.

Does the plant have a spacing capability of its own? Many bromeliads have stolons, which provide natural separation. Division by cutting into smaller clumps or separated into individual plants would be determined by whether it is too large to handle, maintain, or display. Does the natural shape allow for close growth? Bromeliads with a tubular form are best for growing as clumps. The removal of old plants is all that is necessary to provide adequate separation. Typical genera where the tubular form occurs are *Billbergia* and *Quesnelia*.

Is the container or mount large enough to contain or support a larger clump? Moving the clump to a larger container is always an option. Even if roots are not going into the soil, larger pots provide more stability and ballast.

Will you be able to groom or move a huge clump? Being able to get into the center of a clump to remove dead leaves is important to the grooming process. It can also be a daunting task to attempt working on a clump with fifty little plants. Keep your clumps to a manageable size.

A tip that can make grooming your *Pitcairnia*s and *Fosterella*s easier is to remove all the leaves after the blooms have faded. Like many ferns and cycads, plants in these genera put on most of their new growth all at one time.

[This article by Kenneth Stokes is reprinted from the May 2012 newsletter of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies]

A Geography Lesson

The late Carol Johnson and her son Geoff ran the Florida nursery Pineapple Place



Prospective bromeliad buyers most often ask: 1. How much light is best for this plant? And 2. Will it take cold if planted outdoors? Rarely do they ask, “Where does this plant come from?” Yet, this is the most important of all information required to grow bromeliads successfully and the answer to this question will also settle the first two.

Geography plays a major role in the growing of our plants - altitude, moisture, and heat go along with this.

Bromeliads from southeastern Brazil generally do very well in Florida. That is because their latitude is very similar to ours; their altitude is not too far out of line and Brazil does have definite winter and summer seasons just as we do. I have always made it a practice, when ordering bromeliads to be shipped by mail from Brazil, to do so either in the spring or fall so that plants will not be coming from extreme heat into our coldest season, or vice versa. Think about it. *Vrieseas*, *nidulariums*, *neoregelias*, *Quesnelias* (our toughest species), are from southeastern Brazil.

Altitude is perhaps the greatest determining factor in the success or failure of plants imported into Florida. Most high altitude plants are *tillandsias*, *vrieseas*, *Guzmanias*, or *pitcairnias*, and *puyas*. Most of the bromeliads that are grown successfully in collections are those found growing under 5,000 feet. If you doubt me, check your *Padilla*. It is often possible to get high altitude plants through a first blooming, but then they fail to pup and just die. *Tillandsia imperialis*, perhaps the most beautiful bromeliad of all, grows and blooms in the cloud forests of Mexico. In October 1984, we brought back blooming specimens, which lasted for months, but we had to regard them as cut flowers and know that the growing plants could not survive or reproduce at sea level. On our recent trip to Ecuador, it was a great temptation to collect the beautiful *pitcairnias*, *Guzmanias* and *tillandsias* found blooming at 8-10,000 feet. However, it has been painful to watch those I could not resist wither and die, one by one, in our Florida summer. In borderline cases, plants brought back to Florida from high altitudes during our winter months stand a better chance of survival.

Humidity is perhaps the least understood of all the factors influencing bromeliad growth. Humidity is not just water; it is atmosphere. Terrestrial plants (*hechtia*, *dyckia*, *puya*, *cryptanthus*) need water. Epiphytic plants require humidity and are engineered to retain it in some fashion. Many bromeliads are murdered because of the misunderstanding about humidity vs. water. Example: Some years ago I made an investment in a stock of *Tillandsia tectorum* and was told they must be kept very dry - no watering whatsoever. Of course, in our dry season and in the greenhouse, they all died. The misunderstanding is reasonable. The habitat of *T. tectorum* is perhaps the driest in South America. In Lima, Peru, in 1983, a woman at our hotel told me that her six-year old child had never seen rain.

However, every night fog rolls in from the Pacific and drenches the plants, which soak up the moisture like sponges. Now, my *tectorums* get soaked by every rain and as long as they dry out between watering and have plenty of air circulation, they thrive. Most culture information in print still lists the *dyckias* as dry-growing plants “suitable to be grown with cacti.” For pot culture, this is absolutely untrue. *Dyckias*, *pitcairnias*, *hechtias* are all terrestrial plants and must have a water source to produce sustaining roots. They will tolerate dry, hot conditions overhead as long as the roots are kept moist. *Hechtias* collected in Honduras were growing on cliffs where water poured over them constantly. *Pitcairnias* (and they have been present everywhere we have collected) were all growing along wet creek banks or on moist dark cliffs.

Light. For many years I struggled to grow *Tillandsia punctulata* without much success. It neither lived nor died. Then, in Mexico, at about 3,500 feet, we collected *Tillandsia punctulata*. It was growing in the treetops in cool, dense shade and nurtured by wet rotted leaf mold. That taught me a lesson about the *tillandsias*. All those years I had lumped all *tillandsias* together, as sun-loving, dry-growing epiphytes. Now I know that every *tillandsia*, in fact every bromeliad, should be researched before

becoming part of a collection.

It is fairly easy to classify plants as tender or hardy when you know the native habitat:

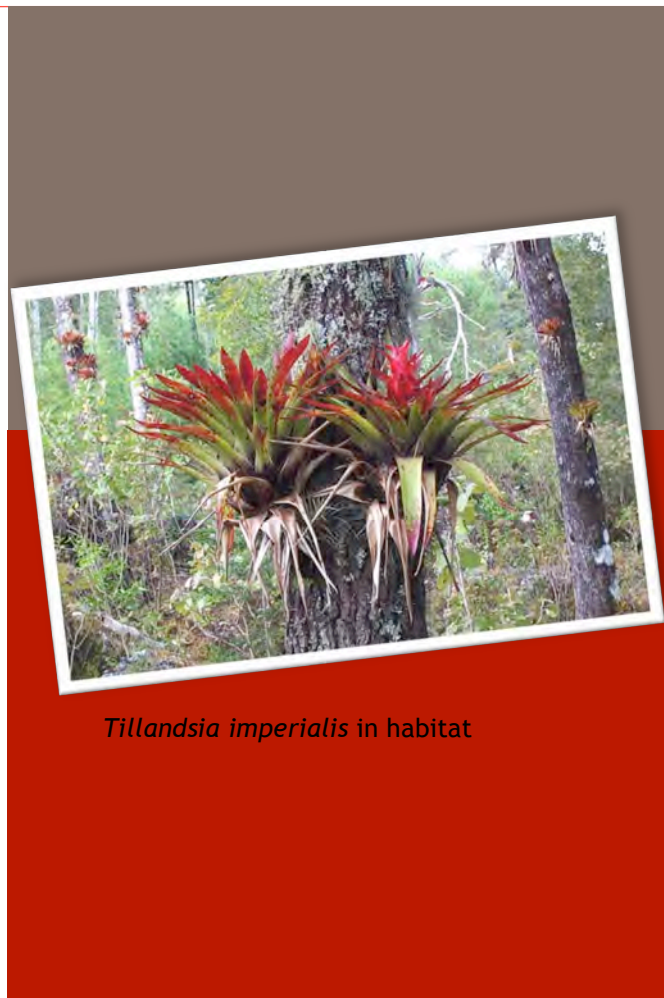
1. Plants from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean are all extremely cold sensitive. Examples: *Aechmea lueddemanniana*, *A. mexicana*, *A. smithiorum*.
2. Plants from Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Bolivia adapt best to our North American growing conditions and extremes of heat, cold, wetness, and dryness. Examples: *Aechmea disticantha*, *Vriesea carinata*, *V. schwackeana*, the nidulariums, and most Quesnelias.
3. Plants from the Amazon Basin, its tributaries, in fact all of sea level equatorial South America will tolerate no cold and would prefer a stable, constant growing environment. Examples: *Aechmea chantinii*, *A. zebrina*, all the streptocalyx [now merged into *Aechmea* - Ed.], *Neoregelia eleutheropetala*.
4. Items 1 through 3 presuppose that the plants in question originate at an altitude acceptable for Florida culture.

Every bromeliad grower should make a point of securing a copy of Bromeliads for Home, Garden and the Greenhouse by Werner Rauh and reading the first 18 pages of the book. He says the same as I do, but has the space to do it much better.

[This article by Carol Johnson is reprinted from the BSI Journal, Vol. 39, No. 6, Nov-Dec 1989, pg. 253-254. Carol was instrumental in promoting bromeliads through her many collecting trips, running the Pineapple Place nursery, and

In Memorium: John Molnar

With great sadness, we note the unexpected passing of John Molnar. Because his work was outside of the San Francisco area, John was unable to attend most of our meetings. But he actively participated in our two annual sales events. And we always saw him at our December holiday party with his husband Gary Turner - sometimes, with both of them dressed as Santa. Our condolences to you, Gary. We will all miss John!



Tillandsia imperialis in habitat

CELEBRATION Of Life For JOHN JOSEPH MOLNAR

October 1, 1961 - August 22, 2015

Join Us
As We
Remember
And Honor
The Life
And Love
Of Our
Beloved
Friend
And Companion



PHOTO: DANIELLOYD

More Info at JohnJosephMolnar.com

**Sunday
October 4th
2:00 pm
On The Patio**



World Famous Turf Club
22219 Main Street, Hayward CA 94544 - 510-881-9877 WFTurfClub.com

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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