

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF

SAN FRANCISCO

JULY 2016



Meeting Specifics

When: Sunday, July 10th

Time: 11:00AM -12:00PM (start)

Where: 3 Peninsula gardens



One of the plants you will see on the tour: *Cryptanthus warasii*

Annual Garden Tour - Peninsula

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 Peninsula and visit 3 gardens. We will start at 11:00 AM-12:00 PM in Palo Alto at **Thomas Dwyer's** garden. Our second stop will be in Los Altos at the home of **Roger Lane** to see **Roger and Peter Wan's** collection (12:30 -1:30 PM). Our last stop is to visit the plants at the home of **Marilyn Moyer and Peder Samuelsen** starting at 2:00 PM.

At our final stop, Marilyn and Peder 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 Carl Carter by midnight on 8 July. Carl's contact info is carl.m.carter@sbcglobal.net or phone Carl at 510-318-2379



June Meeting

Nels Christianson provided us some of the most beautiful scenery photos we have ever seen

Nels Christianson from southern California, gave us a talk on a 2012 two week trip that he had taken with Guillermo Rivera to northern Argentina. Although many of us in this society have been on Guillermo's trips to Argentina, Nels captured aspects of Argentina that we have seen but might not have photographed ourselves. He got wonderful scenery, small town

overviews, and magnificent photos of plants. I understand that builds his shows from several thousand photos taken on the trips.

His knowledge of Spanish enabled him to catch the local flair of verb conjugation and unusual word usage adding some humor to the presentation.

Additionally, Argentina is

Known for its diversity of interesting cacti, ranging from the cute blooming gymnocalyciums to giant *Trichocereus terscheckii* and *pasacana*. These are happy outdoors here if you have the room.

No visit to Argentina would be complete without a selection of Puyas, Dyckias, and mounds or

Tillandsia peiranoi is a miniature rare tillandsia with very limited habitat in Argentina.

even mountains of Deuterocohnias.

It was nice to see some of the Tillandsias we can grow here in the bay area. My favorite *T. xiphioides*, in flower, is always a gem. And the colonies of *T. duratii* are always impressive

“climbing” to the treetops. And it's fun to guess how old the masses of tiny *T. bryoides* can be. And everyone was impressed with habitat shots of the rare *T. peiranoi*.

Nels also brought custom pottery for sale.



A GOOD PEAT IS HARD TO FIND

A good potting mix for bromeliads should have the following characteristics:

1. It should be well draining and friable so that the water immediately and rapidly drops down and out through the drain holes and the pieces of the mix should be large and irregular enough to make air spaces for maximum aeration and oxygenation.
2. The ingredients should have an acid pH of between 5.5 and 6.
3. Yet it still must be able to retain moisture so that the mix is evenly damp but not real wet.

Growers may have different preferences for what ingredients should go into a mix and in what proportions, but the resulting medium must conform to these characteristics if it is to be successful. Ingredients with an acid pH usually used in mixes include peat moss, redwood, pine and fir bark, tree fern (haapu), osmunda fiber, etc.

What you use may depend on availability and price. Over the years, I have experimented with and changed my formulas many times, but I seem to have stayed with my current recipe for at least several years. I have been using 25% to 30% fibrous peat moss, 20% shredded redwood bark, 20% giant perlite, 20% shredded tree fern, and 10% cork bits. I am quick to admit that at current prices this is a pretty expensive formula, because the prices for tree fern and cork bits have gone out of sight. I use them because I still have a goodly supply. You probably will do almost as well with just peat and giant perlite.

It is important to note that I wick-water my potted plants, so that the medium is kept evenly and constantly moist. If you top-water indoors without wicks, such a formula will likely dry out quickly and you will have to water wither once or twice a week.

All of which finally leads me to the title of this article. Depending on where it comes from, peat moss varies radically in texture. Michigan peat is very powdery; much of it washes out and what doesn't packs down after repeated watering so that it chokes aeration. Canadian peat moss comes in standard, semi-fibrous, and chunk forms.

I used to purchase "fibrous" Canadian peat moss from OFE in Miami. The quotation marks around the word are apt, because it is not at all like the German peat we used to get. It has both fibrous and powdery material. I used to eliminate the powder by running the peat through a sieve I made by overlapping two pieces of small-holed chicken wire. I then discarded the stuff that passed through and kept only the fibrous material. I wound up with 50% of the package, but fortunately I can afford this hobby. Suddenly however, OFE no longer sells the fibrous Canadian peat moss, and it is very hard to find anywhere else. The chunk style peat moss they sell comes in discs larger than a quarter. As the peat is the primary moisture-retaining ingredient, it should be evenly dispersed throughout the medium, and I fear you would have to use too many chunks to do this and the medium would become too wet.

I suspect that fibrous peat moss has become scarce because of lower demand by nurseries that now buy from manufacturers like Fafard who make formulas to the specifications of the commercial growers. Almost all the bromel nurseries I know are using Fafard mixes. I find these mixes to be too heavy, though they seem to work for the big growers. In any event, we don't buy mixes in large enough quantity to be able to buy from Fafard.

In our society we are indeed lucky that we have Pete Palgrave, an expert who knows how to find supplies in the relatively small quantities we need. He has been getting us insecticides, fertilizer and perlite and he now has a source for fibrous peat. In the interim, I have been using shredded redwood bark as a substitute and it works well when I soak it with hot water for 3-5 minutes. I find that by using a wick, the redwood stays fairly damp. It is still available by mail order at OFE.

This article by Herb Plever, is reprinted from the November 1996 *Bromeliana*, newsletter of the New York Bromeliad /society.

Cryptanthus - Terrestrial Jewels

Commonly known as “Earth Stars”, the members of the genus *Cryptanthus* are true terrestrials; these bromeliads need soil to grow. *Cryptanthus* species are found in eastern Brazil where they grow in sun and shade, wet conditions, and sometimes dry, on the coast and in forests. First described in 1836, the name *Cryptanthus* comes from crypt, meaning “hidden” and “anthos” which means flower. *Cryptanthus* do not have inflorescences that extend above the leaves; the white flowers bloom from the center of the plant.

Cryptanthus come in a surprising variety of colors and forms. Colors include brown, rose, green, chartreuse, gray, copper, pink, and red. Scurf - that dusty looking substance on the leaves - appears as silver or white stripes, chevrons or other markings. Examples of its various forms include *Cryptanthus microglazioui*, which we saw on the head table at this year’s show (Bromeliad Society of Central Florida in 2004 - Ed, *C. beuckeri* with its spoon shaped leaves, *C. lutherianus* which has long narrow leaves, *C. Elaine* with its broad long leaves. There are small forms, long forms, cascading forms and twisted forms like *C. Whirlygig*.

These terrestrials like to be on or near the ground. From our own growing experience, we’ve seen major improvements in *Cryptanthus* when we plant them in the ground or sink the pot or simply place the pot on the ground. Provide them bright light such as morning light or filtered sunlight and you will be rewarded with strong color and good form. *Cryptanthus* do not have water tanks as their epiphytic bromeliad cousins do. Consequently, *Cryptanthus* depend on moisture from the potting media as well as from watering the leaves. Do use a potting media that drains well but does not stay soggy wet. Recently we started using capillary mats on the *Cryptanthus* bench in the shade house and have seen good results from providing a constant source of moisture.

Do not under pot these bromeliads. “If grown in pots, the pot should be wider than it is deep, as the root systems prefer to spread out rather than go downwards,” notes Andrew Steens in *Bromeliads for the contemporary garden*. Use a slow release fertilizer such as Nutricote in the soil mix when potting *Cryptanthus*. As true terrestrials, they absorb nutrition from their roots. Frost and cold winds are damaging, as you would expect in bromeliads from the forest floor. However, the canopies of trees or over-story such as shrubs or a *Philodendron selloum* often provide enough *C. lutherianus* protection. To be safe, be prepared to provide cover or move the *Cryptanthus* to a protected place in case of hard frost or freeze.



Cryptanthus microglazioui



Cryptanthus beuckeri



Cryptanthus Elaine

Removing pups from *Cryptanthus* is very easy. The pups will come from the base of the mother plant as well as from between the leaves. After the pup reaches about half the size of the mother plant, tug gently on one of its leaves. If the pup resists, do not force it to release. When it is ready, it will release easily. Use a root stimulator such as Root Tone to provide fungus protection and encourage root growth. You may also need to stake the *Cryptanthus* until its roots grow, often a slow process.

Cryptanthus used as accent and companion plants in the landscape can have quite an impact. Their colors and low growth habit provide a dramatic look in any garden.

If you would like to learn more about *Cryptanthus*, consider joining the *Cryptanthus* Society that publishes a journal four times a year. The Photo Index of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies has many pictures of this terrestrial genus (<http://fcbs.org>).

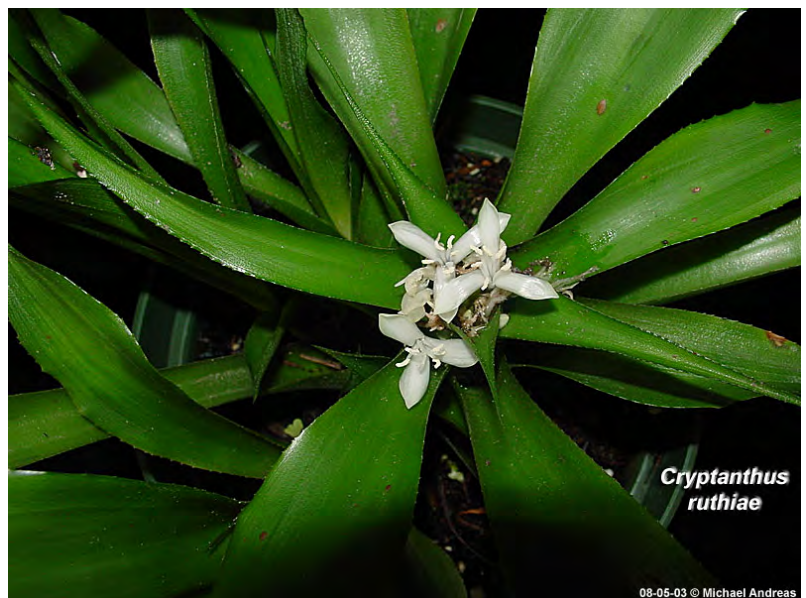
This article by Karen Andreas is reprinted from the August 2004 *Orlandiana*, newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Central Florida.

World Bromeliad Conference 2016

There were four members of our society in attendance at the recent conference in Houston: Marilyn Moyer, Peder Samuelsen, Tom Vincze, and Roger Lane. We all had a wonderful time. This was one of the better conferences: fantastic seminar speakers, large plant show representing the diversity of the bromeliad family; plant sales with new and rare plant material; and tours to visit great plant collections, great people, and enjoy local delicious barbeque.

Tom Vincze and Roger Lane took lots of photos, so we will provide a slide show later this year.

The next conference in 2018 will be in San Diego; so many more of our members should make an effort to attend. These conferences are a most rewarding experience and the next one is within easy driving distance for our members.



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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