

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF

SAN FRANCISCO

OCTOBER 2016



Meeting Specifics

When: Thursday, October 20

Time: 07:30 PM

Recreation Room

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



Ecuador: Bromeliad Paradise

If there is one country on earth that offers such a variety of habitats (desert, coast, Andes, Amazon Forest, Pacific Forest): it is Ecuador. It is not surprising that such a small country boasts the second largest bird species in the world (second to Colombia). Well, it is not surprising either that the country also offers a cornucopia of bromeliads from all different habitats: Tillandsia Vriesea, Greigia, Pitcairnia, Puya, and Guzmania are among some of them with many species to see and discover. The presentation will cover the whole country with its incredible habitats (from 5 separate trips).

Guillermo Rivera will be visiting us again this month. Born in Argentina. Owner of **Southern Cross Nature Tours** (former South America Nature Tours), a company dedicated to the organization of botanical and nature tours for the last 15 years, throughout mainly South America (Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador), Mexico and also South Africa, Madagascar, and Namibia, with emphasis on succulent plants (cacti, mesembs, aloes, etc.), bromeliads, and orchids. Every year a range of tours are presented and organized for botanical hobbyists to participate, and enjoy as well different cultures in different countries where the plants that we enjoy grow. For information on future trips, please join Facebook Group: "CACTUS AND SUCCULENT FIELD TOURS"

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/10667570933894>

No one signed up for refreshments this month. However, our society members are great at providing delicious goodies.

Billbergia mini-nutans, Fantasia, Muriel Waterman



September Meeting

Jon Dixon hybridizes billbergias for hardiness and outdoor growth

Last month **Jon Dixon** gave us a hands-on demonstration of his billbergia hybridization over the years. Friends and his mother gave him his first billbergias. What appealed to him about billbergias was the ability to grow them vertically that takes up less space and they could be grown outdoors for the most part.

A college friend introduced him to hybridizing and billbergias were good because no special tools were needed. He could make the cross with his fingers as he demonstrated to us. It was easy to obtain the seeds as well as creating sterile medium of peat moss cooked in an oven. He now uses New Zealand moss broken down in a blender to create a finer medium. The seeds get

Planted in a mixture of the moss with vermiculite or perlite. Billbergia seeds can germinate within a week. He has learned that second generation and later generations make more interesting pups. He tends to grow all the pups to adulthood because they may changes significantly from

Billbergia Mount Shasta is one of Jon's hybrids!

His first two hybrids were made from red plants that he has named Billbergia Woodside and Billbergia Elfin Glow.

Early parents of his hybrids are B. Fantasia, B. Muriel Waterman and B. mini-nutans. He has had great success with Billbergia

mini-nutans as one of the parents because he get diverse hybrids.

What is his favorite hybrid? This is Billbergia Green Leopard.

Hopefully, John's expert explanation of his methods will prompt some of our members to



try hybridizing bromeliads themselves!

That Special Brom...



From time to time, we ask members to name a favorite or interesting plant that you might enjoy. This month's speaker, Cristy Brenner, gave us several to choose from. Her selection criteria were not rarity but plants that she enjoyed having in her yard.

One of her choices was *Portea petropolitana* var. *extensa*. Why did this plant come to mind? She has it mass-planted as a feature plant in the very front of her yard. It is a source of decorative color for the majority of the year. First, it blooms with a beautiful mass of pink, green and lavender flowers on long loose stalks starting in late winter or early spring. (see a close-up picture at left). Then it provides a mass of juiceless green berries that turn blue/lavender for another set of months. It is still a mass of wonderful color during this holiday season. In total, she has color for almost 9 months a year.

Portea is a small genus of large vibrantly colored plants from Brazil. It is named for a French plant collector who introduced it into Europe. These plants feature a long stiff rosette of yellow green spined leaves.

Portea petropolitana is generally a very large plant but the size is variable. M. B. Foster introduced variety *extensa* into the United State because it is generally smaller than the typical variety. But note that "small" is a relative term. Small here means leaves that can give a rosette 4 feet in diameter. The long flower stalk can further increase the plant size requirements. It is an ideal plant for mass feature plantings like Cristy uses but needs a lot of room. It can be grown in containers but a plant of this size generally needs support. Strong, filtered bright light is generally considered best for color development. The plant may need protection in frost prone areas. [Protection is probably required in most of our growing area. Ed.]

[This article by Joe Wujcik is reprinted from the January 2011 newsletter of the Saddleback Valley Bromeliad Society in southern California/]

Bromeliads on YouTube and the Internet

[Author Maxim Wilson writes of some of his experiences with Internet sites. This is taken from the July/August issue of Bromeliaceae, the publication of the Bromeliad Society of Queensland and reprinted in the January 2011 newsletter of the Saddleback Valley Bromeliad Society newsletter.]

There are many short videos on bromeliads on YouTube to add to the information we get at Bromeliad Society meetings. Just Google “YouTube” to bring up the web site, then look for the search bar. Type bromeliads, hit return, and a large selection of short videos appears. Do remember to click the small icon with four small arrows at the bottom Right hand corner to get full screen video. Below I list some of the videos I found useful, and you can enter the titles listed below in the search bar.

1. How to harvest pups, Part 1. Todd from N.Z. demonstrates harvesting pups from Guzmania and the mini Neoregelia ampullaceal (shown at right) in 6 minutes.
2. How to plant pups, Part 2. Again Todd does that in four minutes 46 seconds.
3. Jack’s Florida Bromeliads. This four-minute video takes you through his greenhouse showing interesting specimens. No commentary, occasional labels.
4. Jack’s Florida Bromeliads I and II feature a slide show of his plants in flower, with occasional names.
5. Bromeliad *Alcantarea imperialis rubra* is a one minute 48 second video of a good specimen.
6. The Evil Florida Bo Weevil is a video clip from TV news with a woman reporting on the pest from Central America, which is destroying bromeliads
7. *Tillandsia ionantha* (at right) shows a 47 second slide show of the many forms of this bromeliad.
8. Spanish moss in flower (two minutes 30 seconds). This caught my attention because I have not seen this bromeliad in flower.
9. The Story of Spanish Moss. This professional video from the History Channel tells a fanciful story (one minute 26 seconds). If you understand Spanish, then your choices are extended.

You don’t need to search each of the titles listed above. Once you have viewed one video, you will see a column on related videos down the right hand side of your screen.

When I see a beautiful bromeliad at our monthly meeting, I Google its name and come up with many sites. Clicking images at the top left hand side of the window brings up a whole screen of photos of that bromeliad and others.

Some sites lead to a blog where brom fanciers exchange ideas, photos, and answer questions. One such blog led me to large neoregelia species and hybrids that I imported to a file for an archive of bromeliad photos.



Billbergias

Billbergias flower in winter & spring. Blink & and you will miss the whole blooming thing. John Catlan

Billbergias were named after Gustov Billberg a Swedish botanist. They are usually cylindrical tubes ranging from green to deep red; many have spots or cross bands or both. They need strong light to obtain good color. The inflorescence rises from the center then usually cascades down the plant as the flowers open flowering is spectacular but does not last long.

The colour of the foliage intensifies as the plant matures but is adversely affected by too much nitrogen- it can remain green. At exactly the flowering time there is a slight increase in colour especially if the plant should happen to be throwing a pup at the same time. After flowering the color of the mother intensifies rapidly if it is throwing pups. If you use little fertilizer the colours can become brilliant by the following winter. The colour of the foliage billbergia will be at peak perfection during the year after flowering. Billbergia 'Hallelujah' ('Domingos Martins' X 'Ed McWilliams') is one of the most beautiful bromeliads available and I can almost picture Don Beadle exclaiming, "Well, hallelujah, just look at that!" when he saw the developing colours, then finally the outstanding inflorescence. Just one sighting and a grower will usually includes 'Hallelujah' on his 'Wish List'. I complained to Olive Trevor that I could not keep up with demand and she advised me "fertilize it". I replied that she had taught me not to fertilize billbergias and her answer was "If you want plenty, fertilize them." I was obedient and a few months down the track I phoned her and said, "My Hallelujahs are green". Olive laughed and replied, I bet you have plenty, now wait for the next generation".

This was a great learning curve as I found I could have a range of colours in the one plant, depending on the age and the amount of light given to each plant. They range from quite dark green, almost black, through deep purple to palest pink, all with spots and dots of cream and white. It is also popular for hybridizing and now we have many dark billbergias available. There have been many crosses but 'Hallelujah' usually dominates,

[This article originally appeared in the #3 Cairns Newsletter from 2012 and is reprinted from the August 2016 newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of the Greater Chicago Area. following article.]



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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