

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF

SAN FRANCISCO

MARCH 2017



Meeting Specifics

When: Thursday, March 23

Time: 7:30 PM

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



Tillandsia Collection of the German Bromeliad Society

This month, our own member, **Ben Harink**, will be our speaker again. In July 2016, Ben was able to visit the conservation collection of the German Bromeliad Society. This is a collection of mainly Tillandsia species, either documented or identified species and forms that are deemed as highly valuable to science and hence need to be protected. At the time of Ben's visit, the majority of plants were outside and looking quite fabulous, with quite a few specimens in bloom. The focus of the collection is the Mexican species, and Ben was quite amazed to see the many local forms they had, as well as their ability to grow the cloud forest and lowland species equally well.

PLEASE NOTE THAT OUR MEETINGS DATE THIS MONTH IS THE FOURTH THURSDAY!



February Meeting

Last month, Keith Smith provided an excellent survey of the Cryptanthus genus and its hybrids

Keith Smith from the Sacramento Bromeliad Society gave us a slide show on the Cryptanthus genus. I think that only a few of us grow cryptanthus perhaps because they require more humidity than we are able to give the plants. There are about 77 species described and many hybrids from a few of the more colorful ones. The slide show included many of both

species and hybrids and the probable parentage of some of the hybrids. He explained how to grow them, where to buy them, and put many cryptanthus on our plant table. Keith suggested that we really should try growing cryptanthus. Thanks Keith for an informative presentation on this genus.

PACIFIC ORCHID EXPO

Thanks to all our members who helped to make our sale this year a fantastic success. You put in a lot of time and our society appreciates this effort.



This is an outdoor scene at the Utrecht University Botanical Gardens

DUES ARE DUE

This is your last newsletter unless you pay your dues by 1 April. Dues for 2017 are \$15 for a single membership and \$20 for a dual membership. Pay our treasurer, Harold Charns at the meeting or check the last page of this newsletter for details.



A Carnivorous Man

(Reprinted from the July 2013 issue of BROMGAZETTE, newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of South Australia)

There are very few Bromeliads that have evolved to have a taste for flesh. One is *Brocchinia reducta*. It has leaves formed into a tube like a Billbergia; only the top of the tube has a waxy coating making it slippery and allows insects to fall in to the water at the bottom of the tube. He quickly found out that this particular plant is not widely grown by the Bromeliad fraternity in Adelaide. In fact his best place to see one would be with Bill from Bute. Bill grows it and never flowers it and gets replacement stock from Melbourne. So we were not that helpful in giving advice as how to grow the plant.

Carnivorous plants have evolved to be able to survive in an environment where they get very little nutrient from the strata to which they may be attached. Plants generally get their nutrient from decayed matter whether flora or fauna and generally take this up via their roots. Plants will do anything to get a feed! Carnivorous plants may be considered even cleverer because they might realize that there is more nutrient in dead fauna than dead flora.

Let us now look how Broms got involved. Remember we are reconsidering how bromeliads evolved millions of years ago, when North and South America were separated, when the Venezuelan highlands were lowlands ready to be pushed up, and when the Amazon drained through Lake Maracaibo! Well, these lowlands did get pushed up to form the tepuis (*high plateaus*) that we know today.

Imagine plants growing there had the ground beneath their feet going upwards with the inevitable change in climate. It was a case of die or evolve. Many Bromeliads grow up there today but try to grow them in your backyard. You see they have evolved to such an extent relying on specific natural conditions that they cannot survive unless those conditions are replicated.

There are a few exceptions and *Brocchinia reducta* is one. Not only is it used to harsh wet conditions but survives by being able to digest beetles and things. It doesn't actually trap them like the Venus Fly Trap but grabs any spare meal that might pass by. (*Insects that enter the waxy top of the long, narrow tube tends to slip all the way down. Once they have hit the water they will find it difficult to climb up and out. They will die and decay in the water and will provide nutrients to the plant.*)



Brocchinia reducta in the lowlands of Venezuela photo by Stewart McPherson

Photos courtesy of FCBS

A Brief History of Bromeliads

The *Bromeliaceae* is a great family of plants said to be native only to the tropical and sub-tropical Americas. They were discovered and introduced into Europe by the early plant collectors where for at least a century they have been and still are classed among the finest and most desirable decorative plants. The first two species arrived in Europe in 1690. These were what are now known as *Ananas comosus*, our edible pineapple, and *Bromelia pinguin*.

When the first pineapple grown in England was presented to Charles II by his gardener, the event was of such importance that a painting was made of it, and that painting now hangs in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

The introduction of *Guzmania lingulata* occurred in 1776. In 1811 Kew Gardens had 16 species; in 1864 that number had mounted to 100, and by 1887 the total rose to 252 species. By 1894 the Botanical Garden of the Dutch University at Leyden had 334 species.

Many famous Belgian plants men played an important role in the introduction of bromeliads and the Botanical Garden at Liege had the largest collection in the 1880's while that Garden was under the directorship of Prof. Charles Morren. Later, the Morren collection was acquired by Kew Gardens. *Vriesea splendens* was introduced from the Guyana's in the 1840's and about that same time *Aechmea fulgens* came from Brazil. *Aechmea fasciata*, which our Miss Victoria Padilla calls "The Beauty Queen of the Bromeliad Family," was introduced into Europe in 1828 and flowered for the first time in 1846 at the establishment of Van Houtte in Ghent.

This one species is now grown commercially by the thousands in many European countries. Vast greenhouses filled with this one species are not uncommon, and *Vriesea splendens* and *Cryptanthus* are grown in almost as great quantities.

The great Swedish botanist, Linnaeus, established the genus *Bromelia* that he named for another Swedish botanist, Olaf Bromel. Many genera of Bromeliads bear the names of other famous plants men of early times:

Billbergia was named for Gustave Johannes Billberg, Swedish botanist; *Guzmania* for A. Guzman, a Spanish naturalist; *Hechtia* for Julius Hecht of Potsdam; *Ochagavia* for Sylvestris Ochagavia, a Chilean; *Portea* for Dr. Marius Porte, a French naturalist who lived many years in Brazil; *Pitcairnia* for Dr. Wm. Pitcairn, a London physician; *Tillandsia* for Elias Tillands of Finland; *Vriesea* for DeVriese, a Dutch botanist of Amsterdam; *Quesnelia* probably for E. Quesnel, a French horticulturist.

Other VIPs - Very Important Plants men -have been honored by having their names given to various species of Bromeliads. To name a few; Jean Linden (*Tillandsia lindenii*); Charles Pinel (*Aechmea pineliana*); Dr. Richard E. Schultes (*Aechmea schultesiana*); Ladislaus Cutak (*Dyckia cutak*); *Aechmea weilbachii*, *Ochagavia lindleyana* and many others.

Among these "many others" is the name of one who perhaps has done more than any other one person in the United States to promote the knowledge, appreciation and use of Bromeliads. I refer, of course, to Mr. Mulford B. Foster, collector and hybridizer of these beautiful plants, several of which bear his name, and one the name of his wife, Racine. One of his hybrids, *Aechmea* "Foster's Favorite", on November 15, 1949, under Plant Patent No. 898, became the first bromeliad ever to be patented.

It was through the efforts of Mr. Foster (*and a few California bromelphiles - Ed.*) that the Bromeliad Society was organized on September 17, 1950. This is an international society, with members and enthusiasts in many foreign countries as well as in America.

(This is a summary of a lecture given by Mrs. Sydney W. Lawrence at a meeting of the Florida West Coast Bromeliad Society and is reprinted from ORLANDIANA, newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Central Florida.)

Hechtia glauca - An Update

One advantage of being a newsletter editor is that reviewing articles submitted by others or researching your own articles gives you a chance to learn more about your plants. Carol and I often took advantage of this. In November 2007, Carol wrote the following:

Last month, during a repotting frenzy, Joe and I rediscovered our *Hechtia glauca*, which had grown and become statuesque in bright shade. It was gorgeous, “glaucously” so. We decided to repot. The thick leaves were brittle, and cutting off damage revealed a bromeliad more succulent than I’d ever seen before. Wow! Lots of succulent gel!

We’d received the plant four or five years ago from a Saddleback raffle (from which so many good things come!); originally it was a Bird Rock Tropical plant. As a small plant, I gave it quite a bit of sun, and although colorful, it began to look stressed and a bit burnt. So I began giving it less light.

After repotting, we became curious about the plant itself. It’s a recently described plant (1993) from central western Mexico, from cliffs in Michoacán. Knowing Guy Wrinkle likes bromeliads and seeing his recent nursery list had a similar appearing plant (from Oaxaca), we contacted him. He had seen *Hechtia glauca* in habitat, where “it grows near the coast in Michoacán - very hot and nasty. They are only on cliffs and grow with *Ferocactus lindseyii*.” Plants at Bird Rock are from seed via him and a friend.

Guy continued, “Most of the plants you see in cultivation are grown in too much shade. This makes for a very large but glaucous green plant. In more sun, they are smaller but with nice purple, red and yellow patches . . . Give it more light gradually and see what a difference it makes.” (I wonder if growing the plant harder would make it less turgid and brittle?)

Goggling the internet resulted in several references to a “Dave’s Garden website.” These references were very helpful. Information there suggests *Hechtia glauca* would do well in xeriscaping here in S. CA with plant hardiness to maybe even 25 degrees: USDA Zones 9b, 10a, 10b & 11. Leaves may become as long as 2 feet and height could go to 18 inches. There’s a pronunciation guide for the insecure: *Hechtia* (HEK-tee-uh) *glauca* (GLAW-kuh) of the *Bromeliaceae* (bro-mee-lee-AY-see-ee).

Update:

After repotting, we placed it where nearby trees provide morning and evening shade. The plant again became stressed looking so we added shade cloth to provide the needed mid-day summer shade.

In 2011, I left the shade cloth on all year as plants “coasted” while I recovered. The result: very green leaves. In summer of 2012, I loosened the shade cloth to both ease watering and allow more light.

The plant did well. This year, wind removed the cloth for me and I decided to rediscover how an uncovered plant summers.

Close inspection in October shows a mother plant with leaf tips that have seen better days as feared. But leaf color is an attractive deep red. Three pups large enough for removal are thriving with leaf tip damage on pups located on the sun side of the plant. Also “mom” is sending a flower spike. Did it need all the summer shade we thought? Or did it need the shade in a hot, dry location but not nearly as much in our somewhat moister and slightly cooler climate? Was our generally cooler than usual 2013 summer a factor?

This article by Joe Wujcik is reprinted from the November 2013 newsletter of the Saddleback Valley Bromeliad Society.

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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