

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO



July 2005

NEWSLETTER

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, July 21, 2005** at 7:30 PM
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park,
San Francisco

July Program

Costa Rica Collecting Trip

Our meeting this month is a digital slide show of the trip to Costa Rica that **Bruce McCoy** went on earlier this year. Bruce is a wonderful photographer and he had good guidance on some of the places to visit.

We will also have a selection of some of the plants we will be selling at the NORCAL sale that our society will be participating in on 23/24 July.

June Refreshments

Carl Carter and **Dennis Westler** will provide refreshments this month.



This is *Vriesea gigantea* var. *seideliana* (formerly know as *Vriesea gigantea* Nova). Photo is by Herb Plever and courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies. See the story about this plant later in the newsletter.

June Meeting

Last month **Dan Arcos, Lupe Cota, and Tom Koerber** provided a great introduction to the bromeliad family. Dan showed slides representing an overview of each subfamily. Lupe got her hands dirty, broke a few pots, and provided a potting demonstration. Tom brought a sampling of his mounted specimens and explained as well as demonstrated how to mount plants on various media. There was so much material to cover that when it was Tom's turn, he had to really skim through the points he wanted to make. The purpose for this meeting was to introduce our society and the bromeliad family to potential new members who had attended the June plant sale. We had about 9 new faces and hope to gain some new members.

June Plant Sale

Our combined plant sale with the San Francisco Succulent and Cactus Society was very successful this year. Your editor had helped to select and price the Tillandsias and we went for color and blooms. It really worked because by the end of the first day there were almost no Tillandsias left. Saturday night I rummaged through some of the club plants left over from last year to bring in on Sunday and these were not colorful or in bloom and these sold also. By the end of these sales, we usually have quite a few plants left over and it is a struggle to get someone to take them home. We did have leftover plants, but there were far fewer than in years past.

At this time, we do not know how well our society did at the sale because we don't have the rental expenses, etc. from the San Francisco Succulent and Cactus Society. We have received a partial check for over \$2400 and we will have the totals for each of you who sold plants available as soon as possible.

We had excellent participation from our membership helping to sell the plants and educate the public. Our society wishes to thank each of you for your participation in helping on this sale.

The SVdP Summer Festival is Coming!

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County is pleased to announce the SVdP Summer Festival. Please join us in this celebration of creative reuse and thrift, while meeting neighbors and learning more about our local community. **The festival will feature a sale and silent auction from the large private collection of tropical bromeliads by Pamela Leaver.** There is no cost to attend and everyone is welcome.

Date: Saturday, August 13, 2005

Time: 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Location: St. Vincent de Paul Headquarters located at 9235 San Leandro Street in Oakland

For more information, please contact [Greg Zaharoff](mailto:Greg.Zaharoff@svdp-alameda.org) at 510-385-1288 or gzaharoff@svdp-alameda.org

Join Us: **Engage the World**

Scarce and/or Unappreciated Broms

This article by Herb Plever is taken from the January 1997 BROMELIANA, newsletter of the New York Bromeliad Society.

A number of really beautiful bromeliads that we used to grow have now become scarce or just unavailable. In recent years we have witnessed the commercial introduction of a great many new, quality hybrids. A negative result of this development, however, has been the virtual disappearance from nursery catalogs of many fine bromel species and hybrids from the past.

Given the relatively small hobbyist market base which already may be saturated, and the increasing costs of nursery operation, the demand for the new hybrids may be crowding out of inventory the great plants we used to grow. Perhaps tastes have changed or our members are overstocked with plants and/or short on money?

Do newer members know about those great plants from the past? If we can increase the demand for them will bromeliad nurseries start stocking them?

One obvious way for us to stimulate demand is to increase our membership. This is an activity which sadly has been lacking throughout the bromeliad world. On the premise that something should be done about educating our membership, I'm going to try to "sell" members to request and buy some of my old favorites by printing material in these pages from time to time.

This is a lot easier to do now that we can show color pictures of the plants, so I'll start with two examples.

Nidularium innocentii var. *lineatum* – I have been growing this beauty for over 30 years and still don't tire of it. Its variegated green leaves are highlighted by many bright white longitudinal lines of varied widths from fine to quite thick. The stripes show on the primary bracts of the maroon inflorescence in bright and dark stripes. The plant spreads to a diameter of 17 to 20 inches, and with decent humidity it will grow well indoors under florescent lights or on a bright east window. It wants to have water in the cup and the medium to be damp at all times. If the reservoir or the medium are dry for a few days it will form brown spots on the leaf margins.



Photo of *Nidularium innocentii* var. *lineatum* is by Derek Butcher and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

One indication of the scarcity of *Nidularium innocentii* var. *lineatum* is that it is not even mentioned in the fine, new comprehensive book,

“*Blooming Bromeliads*” by Ulrich Bensch. An indication of the unfamiliarity of our members with this plant is the fact that there were only two orders for it when it was on our order list 2 years ago. (I was able to find only 2 pieces.) All *nidulariums* are found in Brazil and Dr. Smith's monograph for the genus indicates that var. *lineatum* is known only from cultivation. It is still listed as a valid variety in the latest list of bromeliad binomials. Its variegation is fairly consistent. Thus while some pups will come up with strong white lines, others at first may have only weak fine lines but they will develop good variegation as they root and grow. This seems to support the plant's designation as a true variety.

I don't know if it can be found today in habitat, but it was available from many nurseries in the 1960s and 1970s. I got my var. *lineatum* from Ed Hummel of Carlsbad, California in 1963 (for \$2.50). In checking old catalogs I found that in the 1970s it was also available from the following nurseries: Kent's when they were in Los Angeles (for \$12.50) Bill Seaborn of Escondido, California (for \$10.00), The Plant Shop of Reseda, California (for \$15.00), Taledge Fern Gardens of Chula Vista, California (for #3.00), Garretson's of Escondido, California (for \$12.50), Fuchsia Land of Los Angeles, California, Jenkins of Covington, Louisiana, Hans Gulz of Germany, and Marcel LeCoufle of Paris. [It is amazing how many nurseries that were in business in the 1970s that are no more! – Ed.]

Why is it scarce now? Florida nursery people tell me that var. *lineatum* won't grow there, and in fact in my plant lists from 1963 to date, no Florida nursery has listed the plant. And now the plant is not listed in any United States nursery. I don't know why Floridians have trouble with this plant.

True, it can be finicky (like most variegated bromels), but all it really wants is humidity and diffused medium light. It doesn't like to dry out, so you need to keep water in the leaf axils at all times and frequently water the pot (or better, use a wick). It may be that high heat coupled with high humidity in Florida may affect this variegate. Californians used to grow it in quantity, and it has

been growing well for me indoors for more than 30 years either under lights or in an East window.

Variety *lineatum* is easy to distinguish from its cousin var. *striatum*, whose mostly green leaves have fewer longitudinal lines (cream colored), and *striatum*'s inflorescence is identical to the all-green *N. innocentii* var. *wittmackianum*. Variety *paxianum* has green leaves with a single wide, white longitudinal central stripe and its inflorescence is similar to var. *lineatum*.

The type species is *Nidularium innocentii* (called var. *innocentii* in the monograph on the Bromeliaceae by Dr. Lyman B. Smith). This is a robust plant, spreading more than 2 feet with discolor leaves which are green on top (with a red-violet haze nearer the sheaths) and purple-maroon below. *N. innocentii* cv. Nana is a quite small cultivar of *innocentii*; it may be found in either a crisp or soft-leaved form.

The latest list of Bromeliad binomials recognizes 2 other varieties of *N. innocentii*: var. *bicolor* and var. *bauense*. Unfortunately, I am not familiar with any of them and cannot give any description.

Neoregelia lilliputiana – This Brazilian miniature is not really scarce as it is available from 2 or 3 dealers. It is a nice, under-appreciated plant that is not widely grown, perhaps because the nursery prices for such a small plant (\$6.00 to \$8.00) are rather high. This is especially true when one considers that in 3 or 4 years one plant will stoloniferously expand to a clump of 30 or more. The simple inflorescence puts up 4 to 8 violet flowers.

The photograph of the same plant on this page was taken 3 years later. Note that the clump has 26 plants and I had already cut off and given away 10 plants when the photograph was taken. The plant leaves are darker and only moderately marked because it was grown under moderate light with minimal sun, in contrast to the parent shown on page 2 which was grown on a south windowsill. [picture in our newsletter is a different example of this species – ed.].

Some of the pups flowered when only $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in diameter. The clump was tucked away under some large plants, but it was growing wick-watered and I rarely looked at it. Thus, the only fertilizer it got was from the slow release pellets in the pot and those were not renewed. This didn't seem to matter because the clump continually flowered and put up stoloniferous offsets. But if



Photo of *Neoregelia lilliputiana* is by Graham Alderson and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

you grow such a clump in good light, it will be spectacular. You can achieve the same fine result if you grow the plant close under fluorescent lights.

A plant which you can grow indoors in one 4 inch pot in a clump of more than 30 miniature plants is certainly worth acquiring, especially one which grows and flowers so readily and can fit in your window. *Neoregelia lilliputiana* will be on our spring order list. Give it a try!

There are a number of other miniatures which propagate by stolons and make very attractive clumps in a small pot: *Neoregelia ampullacea*, *N. paucifolia*, *N. pendula*, *N. punctatissima*, and *N. tigrina*. *N. pendula* and *N. punctatissima* are expensive and not easy to find. They will want a sunny exposure (especially *N. punctatissima*) in order to color up well. A larger but still small, stoloniferous plant you can grow is *N. zonata*. I do not recommend the beautiful *N. fireball* because we simply cannot give it strong enough sunlight to develop that brilliant red glow.

The End of an Era

This article by Anne Bartel from Kuranda, Queensland, Australia is taken from the May 1997 BROMELIANA, newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of New York.

Eleven years ago, I owned 9 different bromeliads. Never knew any of their names or genus, and over that period of time, knowing nothing of their culture, they were shifted many times. Full sun, full shade, and many places in between. Eight of them grew and multiplied many, many times, resulting in mass plantings everywhere, but No. 9, named by me as "Old Bluey", did nothing. He never gave birth like others; he just very, very slowly grew.

Around about Old Bluey's eighth birthday three years ago I joined a Bromeliad group and started avidly learning and collecting bromeliads. I learned that his name was *Vriesea gigantea* cv. Nova and now it's *V. gigantea* var. seideliana. Even with a name tag or two, he or she was still Old Bluey to me.

Two years ago, as a learning process, I decided to enter a few plants in a show and find out later what was wrong with them, etc. I didn't have a decent *Vriesea* (I water too much) and Old Bluey was the only respectable entry.

Ever had a plant that's a 'lemon' from the moment you owned it? (I have). No matter what you do, e.g. repot, re-position, curse, it always remains the lemon? Well, Old Bluey was the opposite; you could call him an 'Orange'. No matter what happened to him he came out smiling. Tree branches falling on him – not a bent leaf. Half covered in dead leaves and in dark shade, his shape and color remained perfect and grasshoppers avoided him like the plague.

I cleaned the nine years debris off him (nearly two days fiddling), repotted him and he scrubbed up quite well. Went to pack the show plants into my 2-door sports, and no room for Old Bluey; he was too big! No, I won't take him; cast him aside. Yes I will! No, yes, no, decisions, pressure! Yes I

will take him and I jammed him on the floor behind the driver seat, fully squashed!

Pulled him out at the show, and typical of Bluey, he sprang back to perfect shape. Imagine two days later, receiving a phone call that Old Bluey had not only won Champion Bromeliad, but also Champion Pot Plant of the whole show! The shock and adrenalin that flowed through me couldn't be described. He instantly became THE CHAMPION and never was to be called Old Bluey again! He was also placed in the premium position in the shadehouse.

Two weeks ago the CHAMP – now eleven years old – sent me into a panic. His center leaves became distorted, and my first thought was that some weird virus or worse, was sending him crazy. Many strange things have happened here in my patch. Twice a day I checked him, only to realize that the CHAMP was coming into flower.

Where normally I become highly excited at a new plant coming into flower, with the CHAMP I felt sick. Old Bluey has started his downward climb to his maker in the sky. After such a long association with him, the CHAMP becomes the end of an era.

P.S. It's now nine weeks later and his flower spike is still growing skywards. I may have to cut a hole in the shade house roof. And I will, just for him!

NORCAL Sale

All the Northern California Cactus and Succulent Societies (NORCAL) are having their annual judged show and plant sale on 23/24 July in Golden Gate Park at the Hall of Flowers. Since the public was in a buying mood in June, we have purchased more colorful and blooming *Tillandsias* and will have 2 tables at the sale. Additionally, we must volunteer, one hour per table per day, to the show and sale. We will be setting up tables Friday, 7/22 after noon. There will be a sign-up sheet at our regular July meeting, 7/21 to help at this sale.

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO (BSSF)

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 the affiliate section of the BSI webpage 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, and check made payable to the BSSF to: Harold Charns, BSSF Treasurer, 255 States Street, San Francisco, CA 94114-1405.

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BROMELIAD SOCIETY
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Get Tillandsias at our sale on 23-24 July, Golden Gate Park
