

# BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO

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May 2004

## NEWSLETTER

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Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, May 20, 2004** at 7:30 PM  
Recreation Room, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

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### May Program

#### **Post-War Bromeliad Collecting in the Condor Mountains of Ecuador and Peru**

This month, our speaker will be **Jeffrey Kent** of Kent's Bromeliads in Vista, California. His last visit two years ago was impressive – both in terms of his interesting topic about the devastation to the plants in South America and the fantastic plant table that he provided. We may have made a record on the amount of money the plant table brought to our treasury.

For those of you who do not know Jeffrey, he is in charge of the production and hybridizing at the Kent's Nursery in Vista, California. Jeffrey is an avid collector, especially in Ecuador, and is a specialist on the guzmanias. This nursery was founded by Dr. Leonard Kent and his children are now running what has become the largest commercial nursery in the United States – more than 650,000 square feet of bromeliads on 3 separate sites in Vista.

Jeffrey will provide a fine plant table from Kent's Bromeliads so don't miss this meeting.



Kent's Bromeliad Nursery was awarded the Edwin Frazee Award for Best Use of Color at the Annual San Diego County Fair 2003 Flower and Garden Show. This exhibit featured 1500 sq. ft. of lush tropical landscaping with color provided by flowering Bromeliads.

#### **May Refreshments**

**Barret Bassick** and **Roger Lane** signed up for refreshments this month.

## April Meeting

**Tom Koerber** was our lifesaver. Jeffrey Kent was scheduled to be our April speaker, but an illness in his family forced him to re-schedule and Tom volunteered to provide a talk on the bromeliads of Florida. Tom asked us to bring to the meeting any Florida bromeliads in our collections. Although we had a representation of many Florida bromeliads, there are many that we did not have. Tom's slide show covered many different areas in the state that have bromeliads in addition to the Everglades. He showed how the expansion of housing and resorts are changing the environment that bromeliads like, but many are still doing fine and easier to see in suburban locations than wading through the Everglades. Tom has a respect or fear of the alligators that occupy the waterways and this hampered his exploring some areas. He ended his talk on a very serious note: the evil weevil. If we have obtained or received plants from Florida and discover the weevil, isolate them and provide insecticide to destroy the pest. Tom offered his assistance if we discover this pest. Thanks Tom for your enlightening talk.

In case you do not know which bromeliads are native to Florida, here is the list:

*Catopsis berteroniana*  
*Catopsis floribunda*  
*Catopsis nutans*  
*Guzmania monostachia*  
*Tillandsia balbisiana*  
*Tillandsia bartramii*  
*Tillandsia fasciculata*  
*Tillandsia flexuosa*  
*Tillandsia paucifolia*  
*Tillandsia pruinosa*  
*Tillandsia recurvata*  
*Tillandsia setacea*  
*Tillandsia simulata*  
*Tillandsia usneoides*  
*Tillandsia utriculata*  
*Tillandsia variabilis*  
*Tillandsia x floridana*  
*Tillandsia x smalliana*

## Strybing Annual Spring Plant Sale

The Strybing Spring Sale was a great success for bromeliad fanciers. Our society participated with lots of plants and lots of workers. We do not know how much money we made for Strybing, but each year our contribution seems to increase. A big thank you for all your plant donations and helping to sell plants at the sale. We had a flier to hand out that notifies customers of our June sale.



This is *Tillandsia pruinosa*, one of Florida's native bromeliads. Your editor brought one of these into the meeting that must be the Paul Bunyon of this species. Photo is courtesy of the Save Florida's Native Bromeliads website.

## Plant Donations to the Conservatory

Our society donated \$100 towards plants from Jeffrey Kent's nursery to be added to the Conservatory collection. Jeffrey kindly donated another \$300 worth of plants, so the Conservatory now has many new and rare bromeliads. We do not know when these plants will be added to the displays, but plan a visit to the new Conservatory. **Tom Koerber** is helping to install bromeliads in the appropriate rooms, and given his artistic talents, the displays will be beautiful.

## June Annual Bromeliad Sale

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Our combined plant sale with the San Francisco Succulent and Cactus Society will be on June 26th and 27<sup>th</sup> this year at the County Fair Building. Setup will be on Friday, June 25<sup>th</sup>. It is our only annual event that brings in money to support the society. Start setting aside your plants for the sale and save these dates to help on the sale.

Since this is such an important event for our society, we really need as much support as you can provide. You can help in three ways:

- Entering some of your premium plants in our Bromeliad display area
- Selling your own plants
- Working at the show/sale.

Remember if you plan to sell your plants, **25%** of the sales will be kept by the club. We are using the bar code system again. If you are selling plants, you must determine in advance how many bar codes you want made for each sale price (for example, 10 plants @ \$5.50, 15 @ \$10.00, etc.). You do not need to use all of the priced bar codes, but they **all must be made in advance of the sale** and placed on the plant or pot before the sale. You will be able to change the prices during the sale as long as you have a replacement priced bar code, so determine all prices you will need in advance. **Keith Anderson** is making up the bar codes, so you must notify him of the price and quantity of bar codes you need. **Keith really needs as much advance warning as you can provide on making the bar codes.** If you can not make our May meeting, call Keith at 650-529-1278. **One of the conditions of selling your plants is helping out at the sale for a minimum of 4 hours during Saturday or Sunday.** Let's try not to have everyone sign up only for the last 4 hours on Sunday.

Even if you are not selling plants or entering plants in the show, we need your help. The more workers we have, the less time each of us has to put in – and we have more time to shop for some of those plants we just have to own. If you have never worked at one of these sales, it is really fun. There will be sign-up forms at the May meeting, but even if you do not sign up try to

come to the sale. The hours for the sale will be from 9:00-5 on Saturday and Sunday.

Please **start saving your boxes and bags** for the sale. We never seem to have enough by the second day of the sale. We shared boxes with the San Francisco Succulent and Cactus Society last year and this may be possible again this year.

## Bromeliad Trichomes

This article by Penrith Goff of the S.E. Michigan Bromeliad Society is reprinted from the September 2003 Orlandiana, newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Central Florida

Bromeliad trichomes are complex cellular structures somewhat similar to an umbrella with a short shaft, the “shaft” being stalk cells, the “screen” being a disc-shaped shield. Not only does each bromeliad have its own unique trichomes, the trichomes on the upper (adaxial) side of the leaf are different from those on the lower (abaxial) side of the leaf. If the shield edges turn up, the leaf surface will be rough as in *Tillandsia ionantha*. The disc may be more fully developed on one side, producing a fuzzy surface (*T. crocata*). The extreme is the hair-like extensions on the trichomes of *T. tectorum*.

The trichomes have two important functions: to protect the plant from too much sun and to acquire and conserve moisture. Tillandsias (and other bromeliads), which grow in a shady, humid environment are green and have fewer trichomes than those exposed to full sun. Depending on the amount of sun exposure to which they have adapted, the density and extensions of the trichomes cause the leaves to appear gray, silver, or white. The cells of the extensions are hollow, so that they reflect light (up to 45%) and form a good insulating barrier. When the leaf is wet, the cells fill with water and reflect very little light; the leaf appears green. The trichomes channel water very quickly through the stalk cells into the leaf interior but prevent water (water vapor) from escaping. With good air circulation, the trichomes quickly dry out again and the plant regains its normal gray to silver luster.

## Plant Nomenclature

Harry Luther of the Selby Botanical Gardens wrote this article that is taken from the November 1998 The Bromeliadvisory, newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of South Florida.

Many people have trouble with terms defining groups of organisms: species, varieties, families, etc. Every plant and animal known to science has a name. Each named group occupies a position within the hierarchy of one of the biological kingdoms. For example, let's look at the white-flowered form of the native cardinal plant.

Kingdom	Plantae
Subkingdom	Tracheophyta (the vascular plants)
Division	Magnoliophyta (the flowering plants)
Class	Liliopsida (the "monocots")
Order	Bromeliales (contains the single family: Bromeliaceae)
Family*	Bromeliaceae (the bromeliad or pineapple family)
Genus*	<i>Tillandsia</i>
Species*	<i>fasciculata</i>
Variety	<i>densispica</i>
Form	<i>alba</i>

The names of the taxonomic ranks that you will most frequently encounter are FAMILY, GENUS, SPECIES and, to a much lesser extent, VARIETY, FORM, and CULTIVAR.

**FAMILY:** A definable group within an order usually consisting of several genera that have important characters in common and share a common ancestor. A few families consist of a single genus, and in rare cases, a single species.

**GENUS:** A definable group within a family consisting of one or more species which show common characteristics and appear to have a common ancestry. The plural of "genus" is "genera".

**SPECIES:** The basic unit of classification; an intergrading group of individual organisms which have in common one or more characteristics

which definitely separate it from any other group. Species are populations, are potentially interbreeding, and have a definite range of distribution. The word "species" is both singular and plural.

**VARIETY:** A definable group within a species that consists of one or more discrete populations. Varieties are true breeding; they remain distinct under normal circumstances.

**FORM:** A definable individual or group within a species that usually occurs at random within a larger population. A form may or may not breed true.

**CULTIVAR:** A definable, selected clone (individual) within a species or hybrid population which can only be maintained through asexual reproduction. Only the vegetative offspring of a cultivar retain the cultivar name. The word "cultivar" is short for cultivated variety; it is a horticultural term, not a botanical term, and is always expressed in a modern language, not in Latin.

As you can see, each of the terms of taxonomic ranking has a certain order of magnitude. For example, genera contain species but do not contain families. It is important to use the terms in the proper fashion. It is incorrect to say, "I have 100 varieties of bromeliads" when you actually mean "I have 100 species (or hybrids) of bromeliads." Likewise, it is incorrect to say, "This is a member of the Neoregelia family" when you mean "This is a member of the genus Neoregelia" or "This is a Neoregelia species."

\*There are many additional ranks or orders of classification between family, genus, and species; these are of concern only to the specialist and are rarely of any real interest to the hobbyist.

## Some Thoughts on Growing Dyckias, Hechtias, and Puyas

This article is by Tom Montgomery and first appeared in the Houston Bromeliad Bulletin, March 1984..

Often when I write about growing plants and ideal conditions, this is not the way they are kept in my collection. Hearing others talk, observing their plants and mine, certain conclusions can be reached, but for a variety of reasons it may be impossible for me to put these observations into practice. Space, light, and protection are fundamental problems.

Protection is very important to me in my yard. Not protection from theft – we have never had a plant liberated, to my knowledge. Protection from trash, blossoms, leaves, seed, grass clippings, etc. are almost magically drawn to many spiny-leaved plants. The cleaning process can be tiresome, boring, and bloody. It is easier to grow lean plants than to try a major salvage operation. There is no place available to me that offers this kind of protection for some of the plants requiring extremely high light.

Space is another compromise. There is room for just so many plants, and the best space is at a premium. These plants are all terrestrial and should have large pots compared to top growth. In Neoregelias we expect the plant to be much larger than the pot. When potting the Dyckias, Hechtias, and Puyas, over pot so there is at least ½ to 2 inches of pot extending past the rosette.

This will allow for future growth and sufficient, if not adequate, soil for root growth. Regarding root growth, you may have noticed that these plants send their roots to the periphery and wind around the pot. Now, quoting Wayne Guthrie, “if a dark plastic pot is used and set in the sun, the heat absorption of the dark plastic cooks the roots touching the outside; therefore, the use of clay pots is recommended.”

Regarding light, the requirements vary widely. Only the desert sun can give enough light for some species – or perhaps it is the high altitude with more ultraviolet that is required. We do

know that the Gulf Coast does not have the right light to do some of the species justice. Some of the green species and hybrids will bleach out if given too much sun, although high light is beneficial to all.

Water requirements are surprising. Many in the hobby associate these plants with cacti – or at least dry growing conditions. These plants enjoy much more water than one would suspect, much more than most of us give our Neoregelias, for instance. They also respond well to a regular feeding program with a balanced fertilizer. High, constant humidity is a must if dry leaf tips are to be prevented [not necessarily true – sufficient water is more important than humidity. Ed.]

In summary, consider growing Dyckias, Hechtias, and Puyas more like *Cryptanthus* than Neoregelias. They enjoy high light to full sun, high humidity, quick draining, but not dry soil, and a large area for the root ball. Protect the roots from heat and do feed them regularly.



*Puya clava-herculis*

photo by G. S. Varadarajan  
BSIJ 1988 p244

*Puya clava-herculis*, one of the terrestrials, is shown in habitat. Photo by G. S. Varadarajan, is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

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## BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO (BSSF)

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The BSSF is a non-profit educational organization promoting the study and cultivation of bromeliads. The BSSF meets monthly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 \$12. 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 INTERNATIONAL

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