

# BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO

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January 2009

## NEWSLETTER

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Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, January 15, 2009** 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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### January Program

#### World Bromeliad Conference 2006

This month we will have **Peder Samuelsen** give us a show on the 2006 World Bromeliad Conference held in San Diego. Since this conference was in California, there was a good participation from our membership – so be prepared to see your photo. Peder's show will be fast and cover a lot of the conference in a short amount of time. It is surprising that we have not seen a show on WBC 2006 yet, but be assured that we will have a show on WBC 2008 that took place in Australia later this year.



Here is **Peder Samuelsen**, our speaker this month on the left, at one of our annual garden tours. **Bruce McCoy** and **Marilyn Moyer** are also in the picture. Photo is courtesy of **Peter Wan**.

#### Dues are Due

A new year has begun and dues are due: \$15 for a single membership and \$20 for a family. Pay Harold at the meeting or mail to Harold. See back page for details.

#### January Refreshments

**Roger Lane** and **Carl Carter** will provide refreshments this month.

## December Meeting

Our holiday potluck dinner and party was a great success. Thanks for bringing in great food items and wonderful gifts to share. We wish to also thank **Marilyn Moyer** and **Peder Samuelsen** for the planning and ensuring the party went off without a hitch.

## *Tillandsia brachyphylla*

This article is compiled from the book "The Red-Flowered Tillandsias from Brazil" by Renate Ehlers.

These are the nicest and most precious forms of Tillandsias available to us. At flowering time we get an explosive brightness of color which even the non-Bromeliad enthusiast would enjoy.

Regrettably, as with many other precious things, they are very rare. Three of these species are endangered in habitat and are under CITES I protection: *T. sprengeliana*, *T. kautskyi*, and *T. sucrei*. Even in Brazil, years ago, it was not easy to find these plants in collections or botanical gardens, much less being able to acquire any. If there was a possibility of purchase, the price was astronomical. In 1978, my brother who lives in Rio wanted to surprise me and bought a *Tillandsia sprengeliana* for me. He paid US \$70.00, a very high price which we never would have paid.

*Tillandsia brachyphylla* grows in the Brazilian states of Rio de Janeiro and Guanabara on nearly perpendicular rocks which are almost inaccessible. So it is well protected as long as people don't destroy this habitat. This is an area where grassland fires get out of control and get to the rock face and destroy the plants. It is also an area where competitive hot air balloons are flown and sometimes get entangled on the rock face and set the place on fire.

The plants grows on rocks as a single or in small groups, stem less, flowering 10-15 cm high, 3-5 cm wide, forming an erect mostly second subbulbose rosette.

There are 20-30 leaves, up to 9 cm long, almost erect and densely upright gray-green because of dense rough pruinose scales appearing whitish-gray, the margins with large rough winged trichomes.

The scape is 2.5 to 6 cm long, slender, almost erect to bent over, almost glabrous, covered with 3 to 4 imbricate, elliptic, long acuminate scape bracts.

The inflorescence is up to 5 cm long, 4 cm in diameter, subglobose, bipinnate with 4 to 7 almost densely erect spikes.



This photo of *Tillandsia brachyphylla* was taken by Renate Ehlers and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies.

The primary bracts are similar to the scape bracts, exceeding the spike, red, densely lepidote.

The spike is up to 1 cm long, 1 cm wide, up to 5 mm thin stipitate, lax with 2-4 sessile flowers.

Floral bracts are 1.3 to 2 cm long, as long as the sepal, 9-10 mm wide, elliptic, acute, mucronate, membranaceous, nerved, indistinctly carinate, bright brick red, glabrous or punctulate lepidote.

Sepals are 1.3 to 2 cm long, 3.5 to 4 mm wide, lanceolate acuminate, light green punctulate lepidote, the posterior pair carinate and joined for 1/3 to 1/2.

Petals are 1.8 cm long, 2.5 to 3 mm wide, ligulate, the rounded tip recurved, upper part intensively red, the bottom white.

Stamens are enclosed. Filament is 1.3 cm long, thin ribbon-like, straight, white. Anthers 2 mm long, 0.3 mm wide, linear, fixed at base, yellow. Style is 1 cm long, white, upper third red. Stigma is small, red.

This plant is extremely rare and there are only a few examples represented in collections. It is relatively common in its natural habitat. The rock walls are often hundreds of meters almost vertical and so the plant is well protected from the collectors.

## Roots

This article by Kathy Dorr is taken from the October 1992 newsletter of the South Bay Bromeliad Associates.

The main functions of the root system are anchorage and absorption. Most plants store some food for at least a short period of time in their roots. Others, such as potatoes and carrots have specialized food storage organs. Roots are also used as conductors to move the water and mineral salts which they absorb from the soil to the stems and in turn to the leaves and other organs of the plant above ground.

The food that is produced by the leaves is conducted by the stems to the main roots and from there to the branch roots, so that even the root system and the growth above ground, particularly (and of great importance) between the total leaf surface exposed to the sun and the total root system.

The leaf surface absorbs energy from the sun and uses it in the manufacture of carbohydrates. The root surface in contact with the soil absorbs the mineral elements and water. There must be

sufficient root system to provide the proper amount of mineral elements and water for the shoot system, and in turn, the shoot system must be able to manufacture enough food for the root system. The roots absorb water, the stems conduct it, and the leaves use it. In using the water in photosynthesis, they transpire a large amount of the water into the air.

We have been told the roots of tillandsias are used merely for attachment; however, botany books state the dead cells on the surface of the roots absorb and hold any moisture for the use of the plant. This is true of all epiphytes.

There are several different types of root systems. Weeds or small plants which are easily pulled from the soil have a shallow fibrous root system. It does not grow very deeply in the soil, but usually extends outward from the plant. There is also a fibrous root system which will penetrate the soil from three to five feet. This is not the same as a tap root, in that it is a mass of roots.

The fibrous root system is found in most of the monocotyledons, which includes bromeliads. The tap root system is mostly found in dicotyledons and the gymnosperms.

Every viable seed contains a potential young plant. When germination takes place, the radicle (or primary root) is the first thing to appear. It will have branches and sub-branches (secondary roots) as growth continues.

If you grow from seed, there are some billbergias and aecheas which begin to grow – then after they are about an inch and a half to two inches tall – they begin to have roots form from a node above the soil. These are adventitious roots (refers to a structure arising from an unusual area, i.e., roots growing from leaves or stems). These are the permanent roots of these plants rather than the primary root. You can cut off the plant below the adventitious roots and pot it up and the plant will suffer no ill effects.

## Alice Black Passes Away

Your editor received notice from Alice Black's niece that she passed away in May 2008. Alice

was an active member of our society from the time it was founded and she was active in many San Francisco plant societies. She enjoyed growing bromeliads and had a large collection in her San Francisco home. Some of our older members probably remember Alice.

### **Pups – A Bit of Lexicography**

This article by Derek Butcher is taken from the March 2006 Orlandiana, newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Central Florida.

Just where did this expression start in Bromeliads? It means the offsets that occur at the base of the plant. After questioning Brom-L and Round Robin participants on the Internet in August 2005, Geoff Lawn of Perth suggested the answer could well lie in Brom Soc Bull 1952 where Mulford Foster, the then Editor, wrote about Muriel Waterman. Anyone who has read about Muriel from her fellow Kiwis will realize she was a one-eyed Bromeliad grower and rather eccentric too! Her diaries could well have been destined for the rubbish tip but for the action of Andrew Flower who saved them from a shed in a local Botanical Garden. These make interesting reading and suggest her main contacts were in England or the USA. She had very little contact with Aussies.

This is what appeared in the Bulletin with a drawing of pups by Mulford Foster where the caption reads, “Mrs. Waterman is never in the doghouse but she is always finding ‘pups’ on her bromeliads.”

#### **OUR NEW ZEALAND TRUSTEE in Brom Soc Bull. 2(4):1952**

Mrs. Muriel Waterman is our honorary trustee from New Zealand; there are few members who have worked so actively for new members in our struggling Society. So infectious is her enthusiasm that ten recruits have succumbed to her spell! And she doesn't just let it go at that; she buys the last ten copies of the bromeliad issue of the Missouri Botanical Bulletin (Sept 1945) and sends them to the New Zealand members for Christmas with a neat reminder that their renewal to the 1952 Bromeliad Bulletin is due. And, as if that were not enough she has paid for three subscriptions so that she can have two extra

copies each month just to loan around (for bait we suspect)! This is the real bromel booster spirit. We believe that before long they will have enough members to form a local chapter of Bromel Boosters Down Under.



Bromeliad Pups

Mrs. Waterman is never in the doghouse but she is always finding “pups” on her bromeliads.

Her enthusiasm is classic! No one but a genuine plant lover could express herself so originally, so simply and effectively. She does not only converse about her plants but they speak to her.

Mrs. Waterman lives several miles from Auckland. When a package of bromels arrived sometime ago she went into a whirl after receiving a telegram from the airport which stated, “Please uplift carton bromeliads from Pan American.” What happened after that is best described in her own words: “Not being dressed for a trip into the city I rushed into a covering long coat and tore down the road adjusting clothes, hat and buttons as I flew, yelling to the busman who was almost out of earshot, to wait for me. Luckily, he happened to see me, or I would have had to wait another hour, and it is an hour's ride to the airport. You can imagine with what animated suspension of anticipation I made that ride. It was a big thrill to behold my box of bromels being unpacked for inspection.”



“When finished and back in the bus, I clasped the box to my bosom, practically ‘talking’ to them all the way home. What an event on this side of the world! After rushing into the house, I hurried through tea, since it was 5:15, and then hurriedly shut up twelve coops of baby bantams, (a ceremony I usually do more lovingly) told my husband not to call me for anything under the sun! Then proceeded with my precious cargo to the sanctum of my glasshouse where I fondly unpacked each prize from another world. As I carefully unwrapped each plant I dipped it, head down, into one of two buckets of tepid water, (each a different depth); I allowed them to drain and then planted each treasure with its already prepared name-label. Finally, I sprinkled the lot with a child’s watering can. Already they looked as if they had come from a greenhouse across the street instead of from half way round the world!”

Clearly Mulford Foster was impressed with the word ‘Pups’ and we know from reports from others that it was a word that Mulford frequently used. I feel sure it was because of his great influence on bromeliad growers for nearly 30 years that this expression is now so widespread. It is catchy and has fewer letters than offsets or offshoots, and never gets confused with cuttings! Why pups and not kittens or chickens will remain a mystery. There is also a suspicion that this term was used even earlier with Agaves and Aloes of Succulent plant interest. It should be noted that these too are monocotyledons like Bromeliaceae and offset similarly.

It is a trait of the English language to experiment with new words or new meanings as though there are not enough already! Some continue and some get discarded. I am sure that ‘pup’ will remain in Bromeliad usage for many years to come but will always refer to ‘normal’ offsetting at the base. The seedling type offsets that sometimes occur in Alcantarea and saxicolous Tillandsias have yet to have their own special name. It has been said that ‘hair pups’ and ‘grass pups’ have been used to describe these in the USA but these have not, as yet, appeared in any official publication of the BSI. Which one will appear first? Which one will prevail? Other offsetting in the inflorescence such as you find in Orthophytum and others, will get the name adventitious added to them if only to denote they are emerging in an unexpected place.

Outside Hawaii, will ‘keiki’ apply just to these floral phenomena? Who knows?

Finally you would have noticed the use of the word ‘bromel’ by Mulford Foster which was a word he coined. Much to the disgust of both Racine and Mulford, Aussies further reduced it to broms!

I would like to thank the various respondents from Brom-L and Round Robin that made this article possible.



*Neoregelia 'Yang'*

Entered by John Boardman  
1999 Mothers Day Show, BSCF

This photo of *Neoregelia* Yang is by Michael Andreas and is courtesy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies. Your editor has a *N. Yang* that has had ten pups so far. It is a prolific pupper.

## Welcome New Member

Warren Warren  
28 Vallejo Street  
Berkeley, CA 94707

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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 single (\$15), dual (\$20). To join the BSSF, mail your name(s), address, telephone number, e-mail address, 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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BROMELIAD SOCIETY  
OF  
SAN FRANCISCO

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<b>Happy New Year! Annual dues are now due!</b>
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