

World Bromeliad Conference in San Diego 2006

Tour Information

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As part of the 2006 San Diego World Bromeliad Conference there will be several interesting and exciting tours designed especially for bromeliad aficionados. The region surrounding the conference site is famous as a horticultural Mecca; hundreds of growers and nurseries call the San Diego area home. The climate is the most temperate (the highest lows and the lowest highs) in the continental United States. As a result, conference attendees who travel around San Diego County can expect to see an incredible range of plants which adapt well to the local climate - from cactus and succulents to semi-tropical and some tropical species.

The bus tours are not included in the conference registration fee, and it is wise to pre-register for the tours because the number of buses will depend on how many conference attendees register before the conference begins. Registration forms will be mailed to all registrants in early 2006.

Tuesday, June 6

No visit to San Diego would be complete without seeing the world famous San Diego Zoo. Located in Balboa Park, the zoo covers more than 125 acres landscaped with thousands of exotic plant specimens, palms, orchids, euphorbias, cactus, trees from the tropical climates, and of course bromeliads. It's said that the value of the zoo's plant collection exceeds that of its animals. The recent birth of a baby panda will offer you the opportunity for a close-up view of the results of the zoo's commitment to preserve rare and endangered species.

Included in the zoo experience will be both a bus tour and a walking tour of the zoo grounds. Lunch is included.

Wednesday, June 7

San Diego's only botanical garden is located just a few miles up the coast from San Diego. Originally an estate, Quail Botanical Gardens covers 30 acres divided into gardens representing the various floral regions of the world: Australia, Africa, Madagascar, and the Himalayas. It is home to more than 100 species of bamboo (more than in any botanic garden in the U.S.), a sub-tropical fruit garden, an herb garden, and a rainforest. Several acres are devoted to the California native coastal sage scrub, the most endangered plant community in all 50 states. Lunch at Quail Gardens is included in the tour.

If possible, there will be a stop at Bird Rock Tropicals, a nursery specializing in tillandsias and other bromeliad species.

Thursday, June 8

The Thursday tour promises to be a bromeliad bonanza. In the north San Diego County area of Fallbrook is the greenhouse complex of Rainforest Flora, run by Paul Isley. The specialty of Rainforest is tillandsias, and seeing how bench after bench of these interesting plants are raised commercially will prove to be an eye-opening experience.

Not far from Rainforest Flora is Kent's Bromeliad Nursery, the largest commercial grower of vrieseas in the United States. The Kent family runs a high-tech nursery that uses meristematic cloning to produce thousands of plants with some truly breathtaking colors, the result of *Vriesea* and *Guzmania* crosses.

John Arden is also very well known for his *Vriesea* crosses. His private garden in Vista, California is also part of this tour. Over several decades John has enriched the bromeliad world with his fascinating and beautiful creations. If you are interested in hybridization John has a wealth of knowledge and hundreds of examples of how the human imagination can produce stunning hybrid plants to delight the eye.

Friday, June 9

The Friday afternoon (12:00 - 6:00 p.m.) tours are on your own, so you will have ample opportunity to check out some of the sights in the greater San Diego area. For the mall addicts there is Fashion Valley Mall, which is within walking distance of the conference hotel: be careful, however, not to overbuy if you are on foot. You may have to carry all those packages back to the hotel. The San Diego Trolley stops near the hotel so Horton Plaza, the historic Gaslamp District (lots of restaurants here: Italian, Brazilian, a Spanish tapas bar...), the ships of the Maritime Museum in the harbor, and Tijuana, Baja, California Mexico are all within easy reach by inexpensive public transportation.

Saturday, June 10

There will be no charge for the Saturday tours to three private gardens. The morning tour will be from 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. The same tour will be repeated in the afternoon for those of you who would rather not get up with the chickens on a Saturday morning.

Jim Wright's garden, featured not long ago in an extensive newspaper article, is a tropical paradise of palms. Jim's garden reflects his lifelong passion for tropical plants.

Bill Tweet also is a grower of palms, cycads, and orchids. His garden abuts one of the canyons, which interlace the city of San Diego (here's another good chance to check out the native California coastal sage scrub habitat).

East of San Diego is Jennie Wisley's garden in La Mesa, California. Jennie's collection of bromeliads has been in the making for years, and her garden also features her collection of antique odds and ends, which lends an air of whimsy to the garden.

The tours at the 2006 Bromeliad Conference will not only provide some entertaining diversion but they also will offer you a chance to learn about the world of bromeliads and other semi-tropical and tropical flora. You'll find that California plant people are truly enthusiastic about showing off all the plants that grow so well in the local Mediterranean climate.