



orlandiana

**Newsletter of the
Bromeliad Society of Central Florida**
Volume no. 51, Issue no. 7

Next meeting: July 17, 2024

Where: Leu Gardens, 1920 N. Forest Avenue, Orlando, FL 32803

6:30 –7:00 is time for displaying and purchasing plants

Program officially begins at 7:00 pm

CONTENTS

President's Message	2
June Minutes	4
Guest Speaker	5
Plant of the Month	6
Facts About Spanish Moss	7
Our Native Guzmania	10
Snacks	10
Ants	10
Marilyn's Garden	13
Pictures	14
Membership form.	15
Officers	16

Visit the Bromeliad Society of Central Florida Website at:

www.bromeliadsorlando.com

You will find an activities page that lists our speakers for upcoming meetings, downloadable copies of newsletters, plant photos, a map to Leu Gardens, and more! This is a great place for the public to find out about our Society or send us a message. Check it out!

Cover photo: Aechmea 'Wild Ace' courtesy: John Vecchitto

President's Message

One of our newer members was unable to attend the meeting last month. They commented that when they joined they were hesitant, uncertain what to expect at a meeting. Now, it is a highlight they look forward to, and really regret missing one. Another member tells me that they surprised themselves when they answered a question a new member asked. When they joined a couple of years ago, a lot of stuff was over their head. Now they feel comfortable giving advice. "I did not realize how much I've learned." Another tells me their spouse no longer says anything when they bring another bromeliad home. A dozen had seemed like a lot of broms, but now a hundred isn't all that many.

Of course, I mostly hear from folks who are happy with what they get out of being members. The unhappy ones just stop coming. It would be good to know what causes some members to drop out. If someone moves to another city or has family obligations that prevent attendance, there's not much we can do. (Of course, they can still be part of our Facebook group!) But, most of the time folks do not talk about what would make them happier. They just move on. I ask, but mostly get no responses. So, we are left to focus on those who are already happy enough to remain members. What can we do to make them happier? Are there activities to add? Are there subjects we should focus on teaching?

In the olden days, brom hobbyists mostly grew species. There weren't many hybrids. Identifying all those species with plain green foliage could be a real challenge. There was no internet and the available books had a limited number of photos, mostly black & white. To help members identify their plants, a study group was formed focused on learning how to use botanic identification keys. That required learning the technical terms used by botanists to describe plants. (What is an acuminate leaf?) Dissecting flowers was a regular exercise in that group. Most of the dozen or so participants became flustered along the way, but enjoyed the get togethers. A few became fairly proficient. The group would gather at someone's home with pots of unidentified broms and analyze the plants, measuring flower parts and the like, using one of the identification keys to reach a conclusion. Maybe they were right. Maybe not? Whatever. They learned a lot and enjoyed it... at least for a while. It faded away over time. I don't think our members would be much interested in such a technical study group today. There are no identification keys for hybrids. But, maybe a few would be interested in some subject for concentrated study? Maybe a study group on the native bromeliads of Puerto Rico? Or, maybe one on a genus not widely grown.... a Pitcairnia Study Group anyone?

Most of our speakers are growers who sell plants. We pretty much let them select their own topics, and they keep it at fairly basic levels everyone can understand... most of the time. This works well for most members and does not involve a lot of work by the Society. But, maybe

some members would be happier if there were 'higher level' talks on occasion? Or, would that be too 'heavy' and chase off those at a beginner level? Maybe there should be two programs some months. One could be 'experienced level' and the other 'novice level'. Some orchid societies have tried dual programs, sometimes successfully and sometimes not. The limited time available might require the programs to be held in separate rooms, with members choosing which they attended. Those who wanted to attend both would be out of luck. Coordination of dual programs in separate rooms with all the other meeting activities could be challenging, but if people want to give it a try.... Do they?

I do not know what will make members happier, give them a sense of getting more out of their membership. Maybe the members do not know themselves? Our vision of what is possible is so often limited by what we know. If you have only ever seen red and blue, it is tough to imagine what yellow looks like. "Do you know how many colors there are at the ultra-violet end of the spectrum?" Members who have only experienced what BSCF currently offers have the challenge of imagining something never experienced.

As hard as it may be to envision new things, it is important to try. Staying 'on course' cannot be allowed to mean 'staying stagnant'. A lot of the time people don't voice their idea because they're concerned it would be rejected. Sometimes ideas for something new are reflexively rejected because it would involve 'too much effort' or an assumption that it would not work. But, you really don't know until you try. It's a funny thing how folks have an easy time imagining all sorts of prickly problems when they've not done something before. Often it is much easier than first thought, but fear of failure inhibits even trying. If the worse that could happen is an idea fails to work out, what's the big deal? The easy way to avoid failure is to do nothing. Such stagnation is the biggest failure of all. If we don't experience failures along the way, we're not really trying.

The question is, do members want to try something? If they do, then we can work on the how of doing that something.

We have had increasing attendance at our meetings, but in recent months the upward curve has been flattening. Not so long ago, having 30 in attendance was considered a good turn out. Then it was 40. Now we are regularly around 60. But, we have over a hundred members. Why aren't we getting over 70 at every meeting? Why aren't there over 200 members? If we truly serve members' needs and interests, the growth curve will be consistently upward. There are 2.7 million people in the Greater Orlando area to get addicted to broms. The broms will do their part if we do ours. Wouldn't it be amazing if we were out-growing the space available at Leu Gardens? BSCF would have to make a whole lot of folks really happy for that to happen! What a wonderful problem it would be.

What would make you happier? Imagine possibilities.

Then, speak up.

Mike McMahon

June Minutes

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA, INC.

Draft Meeting Minutes

June 19, 2024

Will be approved with potential corrections at the July 17, 2024, meeting

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by President Mike McMahon at Leu Gardens Orlando, Florida.

Program: Vice President Tim Dreggors introduced speaker Jason Mellica on, "My Big Neos."

Announcements: Mike McMahon announced that plants are still for sale; check-out Plant of the Month table: Genus Nidularium and bromeliads grown from seeds table; silent auction continues and drop by the Advice Table. Meeting break was from 7:34 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Business Meeting; was called to order at 8:00 p.m. by Mike McMahon. Mike announced that raffle tickets could still be purchased.

Membership Secretary: Pam Marion introduced the new members Diane Smith, Richard Schultz and Louise Schultz. Pam reminded members to sign in when they enter the room.

Minutes: The draft minutes of the May 18, 2024, meeting were published in the June 2024 *Orlandiana* with no corrections. ***A motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Dr. John Vecchitto and was duly seconded. The motion passed unanimously.***

Treasurer's report: Joyce Gibault reported that the organization was financially stable. Income and expenses were presented.

World Conference: Mike McMahon congratulated the BSI and Palm Beach Society for a very successful World Conference. Congratulations to John Boardman for winning the Sweepstakes Award and other awards at the World Conference.

President's Report: Mike McMahon thanked Karen Steinberg for coordinating garden tours. Board approved unanimously to renew the monthly room rental price at Leu Gardens of \$1500/year. Membership doesn't vote on this.

Please contact Mike if members have ideas for future events to take place at monthly meetings. This month bromeliad plants that were started from seeds was something new and was successful.

Old Business: None.

New Business: Mike discussed approval to authorize participation in GROWvember Festival at Mead Garden was needed. It would have a similar budget as last year's space of about \$500.00. The motion was made by Phil Wright, 2nd by Joyce Gilbault. Motion passed unanimously.

Dr. John Vecchitto announced that he purchased 50 pounds of Osmocote fertilizer. He is willing to divide it up into approximately 5-pound bags for sale at next month's meeting. Pricing will go in the next newsletter.

Show & Tell: Numerous interesting specimens were shown and explained by various members.

Door Prize/Raffle giveaways: President Mike McMahon announced that participants that brought in a Plant of the Month could go up first to pick a plant, then, ticket numbers were drawn.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dr. Telka diFate
Recording Secretary
Bromeliad Society Central Florida

Date Approved

Guest Speaker



Our July meeting speaker is Bonnie Friedrich, she will be talking about "specialty mounting of bromeliads". Different ideas and ways to do it. Specialty containers, etc.



Plant of the Month

This month's Plant of the Month display will complement Bonnie Friedrich's guest lecture on the creative mounting of bromeliads. If you have a



uniquely mounted bromeliad, please bring it to display on the Plant of the Month table. Members enjoy seeing the diverse, creative, and artistic ways people have cultivated their bromeliads. Your participation in these displays sparks engaging discussions, promotes information-sharing and ideas, and provides attendees with the opportunity to see something that they may have never seen before. *We look forward to seeing you at the July meeting! Stay hydrated!*



Special Display Table – Ornamental Pots

Most of us likely have a special planter or container used to grow our bromeliads. The July meeting provides an excellent opportunity to showcase these ornamental planter pots and the bromeliads growing in them. Members are encouraged to



participate by bringing in and displaying their unique ornamental planters with bromeliads to the July meeting for the enjoyment and experience of all attendees.

Who will be the owner of the favorite ornamental planter show pot with bromeliad??!!

Cathy



Florida native tillandsia in a Florida Native Eastern Blue Bird nest

8 Facts About Spanish Moss

A large part of the natural beauty of the South is the silver garland that hangs from our live oak trees. Spanish moss-draped oaks are the consummate image of the South and appears just about everywhere you turn. An image of beautiful Spanish moss hanging from majestic trees instantly reminds us of sultry summer days in the South. It's a symbol of nature at its most relaxed; but it's also very stately and refined, in a rustic sort of way.



But how much do you really know about Spanish moss?

Spanish moss isn't Spanish, and it's not moss

Spanish moss is part of the bromeliad family which places it in the same plant family as pineapples and succulent house plants. Spanish moss is actually native to Mexico, Central America, South America, the United States and the Caribbean where it can grow in a tropical environment. Here in the U.S. Spanish moss grows from Texas to Virginia, generally staying in the moister areas of the south.

Spanish moss doesn't kill trees

That's right. Contrary to popular belief, Spanish moss does not kill trees, limbs or branches.

If it's not Spanish and it's not moss, how did it get its name?

Spanish moss was given its name by French explorers. Native Americans told them the plant was called Itla-okla, which meant "tree hair." The French were reminded of the Spanish

conquistadors' long beards, so they called it Barbe Espagnol, or "Spanish Beard." The Spaniards got back at them by calling the plant Cabello Francés, or "French Hair." The French name won out, and as time went by Spanish Beard changed to Spanish moss.

Spanish moss is an Epiphyte

Epiphyte: a plant that grows on another plant without directly gaining nourishment from it. Spanish moss receives all of its nutrients and moisture from the air and is not considered a parasite to the tree, it only uses the tree for support. The only damage it may cause is by breaking a weak limb. When the moss absorbs moisture its weight can increase tenfold. If there is enough bloated moss on a thin, weak, or dead limb it can cause the limb to break off.

It had many uses during the Civil War

The use of woven Spanish moss blankets and saddle pads was adopted by Confederate cavalry during the civil war. By the end of the war it was the most commonly issued blanket, which is probably not surprising considering its abundance in the south. It was durable and waterproof, did not chafe the horses, and allowed airflow and evaporation of horse's sweat.

Spanish moss was once used for everyday items

Until around 1960 Spanish moss was used for all sorts of everyday items such as stuffing for car seats and furniture. Native Americans would use Spanish moss to make bedding. They even made clothes by spinning the inner black core and using it as thread when cloth material wasn't available. Moths are not drawn to Spanish moss, therefore upholsterers preferred to use it over wool, until synthetic fibers replaced both.

According to Mental Floss (<https://www.mentalfloss.com/>), other uses for Spanish moss included: Lids for cooking pots, emergency blankets, insulation, mixed with clay to strengthen plaster, fiber woven into floor mats, to make string, rope and sacks, doll decorations and Voodoo doll stuffing.

It's a natural sponge and has been used as a covering to keep things from drying too fast, such as dug out canoes and cement. It also makes excellent mulch and the water it is boiled in is excellent fertilizer. Spanish Moss is often draped on chain link fences to create privacy.

There is evidence that Spanish moss was used over 3,000 years ago to make fire-tempered pottery. Although the moss burned away during the firing, the distinctive pattern of the fibers is still evident in the clay pottery. Spanish moss is still used today by many Native American tribes. For example, the Houma and the Koasati of present day Louisiana use Spanish moss in the construction and decoration of small dolls.

Birds & Animals like Spanish moss

Many species use Spanish moss. Birds including warblers and orioles use it to build their nests. Rat snakes and at least three bat species live in Spanish moss. Boll weevils are especially drawn to Spanish moss, but moths are not, which is one reason it was preferred over wool in upholstery before synthetic fibers replaced both.

Other names for Spanish moss

Other common names for Spanish moss are Old Man's Beard, White Beard, Spanish Beard, Florida Crape and Wool Crape.

Now, after learning all of this, the next time you see Spanish moss, which may be in just a few minutes from now, you may think something different about it.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Agriculture



Tillandsia usneoides

Our Native Guzmania



Guzmania monostachia is one of 16 native bromeliads from Florida. It grows in the Fakahatche swamp deep inside the Everglades.

Before the Mexican bromeliad weevil, large, dense, localized populations could be found in deep slough habitat, where water depth, water-holding capacity of the peat soils, and canopy provide optimal conditions. Now, these populations are being destroyed by the weevil.

Thanks to John Boardman for this. Apologies that it got formatted over in the last newsletter.

Snacks

The summer is racing by with intense heat. Hopefully, all of your broms are thriving. Leu Gardens on the 17th will be cool and the refreshment table bountiful. Keep bringing those treats and we can share by the refreshment table how we shall prepare for eventual cooler weather! Kathy and John never fail to provide varied beverages and ice which will be doubly appreciated, if the weather keeps up!

Ants

Mike McMahon

It is another hot summer day. I have spent recent days indoors in A/C mostly reading. One day I organized a closet that had gotten filled with stuff best donated to Goodwill. (Any box on the top shelf should just get tossed out without opening it. I never remember what's in those boxes, but if I open one I'll spend an afternoon going through the stuff, keep nearly all of it and just put the box back on the top shelf to gather more dust.)

I want to be outdoors.

I decide I can sit in a shady spot by the pond without getting too hot, clean-up a few Tillandsias and listen to NPR talking heads on the radio, or a book-on-tape. So, I gather up my brom-cleaning tools (scissors, tweezers), some name tags (to replace ones becoming brittle from sun exposure) and some wire (in case some re-mounting is needed). I settle down in front of a short step-ladder on which I hang the Tillie clump I'll work on. With iced tea within easy reach, I give a good pull on the dead leaves hanging from the bottom of a big clump of a *T. fasciculata* hybrid. The leaves come off easily. Then a swarm of a gazillion ants comes pouring out of the clump. They are the those big giant-sized ones. I knock over the tea as I scramble away. I stub my toe (I'm barefoot, of course), and almost lose my glasses while flailing away to get ants off my arms. A couple biting my legs are squashed, but there is no way to smash the mass of ants still spilling out of that clump.

An hour later, I go back. There is no sign of the ants. They have returned to the peaceful comfort of their home among the leaves. The radio has a BBC World News report on agricultural programs in some former British colony in Asia. Maybe the ants are fantasizing about Asian crops to devour. I carefully move the Tillies back to where they were hanging originally, pick up my tools and put things away. I am hot, sweaty and have a half-dozen festering ant bites. Maybe I should have cleaned another closet.



This is not the first time I've had ants take up residence in a Tillandsia. The big black biting ants like the large clumps with long leaves. I've never found them in single plants or small clumps, only in old, large clumps. People have told me about small ants making a home in one of the bulbous types, like *T. bulbosa*, *T. butzii* or *T. ehlersiana*. They do in Nature, but I can't recall when they ever did in mine. It's been the large Tillies in clumps that attract ants in my garden. I do not like having ant colonies in my broms. It doesn't happen often, but even one colony among the hundreds of Tillies is too many for me. It can happen any season of the year, but it seems to happen most during the rainy summer months. I guess they get too much flooding at ground level. When I grew large Aechmeas in the garden years ago, I would come across ant colonies. Aechmea 'Bert' and *A. distichantha* seemed to be favored, but any crowded bed of large broms provided good ant habitat. Even if there is no nest among the leaves, ants love foraging on bromeliad inflorescences. There's lots of sticky nectar to gather.

Scientists have gone to great lengths to study the relationships between bromeliads and various insects, especially mosquitos (for obvious reasons) and ants. In one study of *Aechmea bracteata* growing high up in trees in Quintana Roo, Mexico, 96% of the plants were occupied by ants. These resident ants were found to protect the host trees from defoliation by both a beetle and leaf-cutter ants. This protection of the tree resulted in *A. bracteata* thriving. It was fertilized by the ants' waste and the decaying debris they gathered to make their nest; plus, the leafy canopy remained intact providing some protection from too much sun exposure. The ants, broms and tree were all happy together.

Innumerable bromeliads have been found to house ants at one time or another. *Tillandsia bulbosa* seems to be the winner when it comes to ants loving their broms. At least 26 different species of ants have been observed in *T. bulbosa*. (So, why haven't I ever found ants in mine?) Other bulbous Tillies probably host just as many in the wild, but have not received as much focused study. The bulbous Tillies are perfectly designed to house ants. The inflated leaf bases provide cavities protected from rain and predators. In some instances, ants cut a small hole in a leaf base making it easy to enter. Inside the cavity, the ants can store food, lay eggs and raise their young. The plant suffers no serious harm. It likely benefits from the nutrient supplied by the ants dragging their food to the nest and the ants' own waste. Plus, any caterpillar or bug that tries to make a meal of the Tillie is going to get swarmed, just like I was when I pulled those dead leaves off that clump.

I like to think I am a rational person. But, I'm not so sure. The ants living in that clump of Tillies are undoubtedly benefitting my plants. It may be such a thriving clump because those big biting ants are fertilizing it like crazy. Even the evil weevil would stand no chance against their painful pincers. But, benefits be damned, they bit me! I'm declaring war on those ants.

Over the years I've learned that spraying insecticide on a brom is not very effective when it comes to ants. It does not reach the nest. The spray kills a few ants, poisons the environment and leaves the queen unscathed. When ants have made their home in a potted brom, I have succeeded in encouraging them to move by submerging the whole pot in a deep bucket of water. (Give the ants a 'bridge' to the rim so they can leave.) But, that can result in potting media floating out of the pot and a big mess. What works is the ant bait sold to get rid of fire ants. It can take a week or even two to kill off the whole colony, and it may need to be spread a couple of times if there is a lot of rain, but it works.

So, already hot and sweaty, I rummage through the garage and find the ant bait I last used two years ago. I sprinkle it on the ground under the clump where the big biting ants live. They will find it when they go foraging. They go out as the sun sets and complete their outdoor work by dawn. (They aren't so dumb as to do their chores in the heat of a Florida summer

day... unlike me.) I have no sense of moral outrage over committing ant genocide. Those bites still hurt. That done, it's time for A/C and a shower.

Then I'll think about closets.

Marilyn's Garden

Growing Bromeliads is a learning experience



Part 1 of a 3 part series

By Marilyn Howser

This info was found on the internet and I take no responsibility for its accuracy.

Here are a few easy terms that will help you understand what you're looking at. Using these will help you be more professional.

If you're unsure look at the fcbs.org site.

Genus: A grouping of plants that have similar characteristics. There are often many species found within a genus. This is the first name listed in scientific names, it is always capitalized. ie Aechmea, Billbergia, Cryptanthus, Dickia, Neoregelia etc.

Species: The unique classification of plants that identifies a group as similar and naturally capable of producing offspring. Every plant in a species will have the same specific characteristics. In written scientific names this is the second part of the name, it is never capitalized. ie blanchetiana, chantinii, fasciata, nudicaulis etc.

Hybrid: A cross between two different **species**.

Most of the natural hybrids are not named yet and if they occur often in the wild it would be preferable to describe them and name them. If not named they will appear in the list as a hybrid formula of both parents if those are known. Some hybrids do have a CV name in the BCR and those are shown between 'quotes'.

Bigeneric: A cultivar created from two different **genera** of plants. This is accomplished by horticulturists with bromeliads in cultivation and a **Cultivar:** A crafted **hybrid** between two or more species that does not occur in nature. Should always be written with 'quotes'.

Pictures



Bromeliad Society of Central Florida

MEMBERSHIP FORM

_____NEW MEMBER _____RENEWAL

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name (s) _____

Address _____

City, State Zip +4 _____

Phone/Email _____

\$15 for one member, plus \$5 for each additional family member at the same address.

Name Tags are optional. The price for a name tag is \$8 per member.

If so desired please insert number ordered _____ \$_____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$_____ Make checks payable to BSCF

Either **bring payment to the next meeting, OR** If mailing please send to:

Bromeliad Society of Central Florida, PO Box 568872 Orlando, FL 32856-8872.

Meetings are held at Leu Gardens, 1920 N Forest Ave, Orlando, FL 32803.

On the 3rd Wednesday of every month, from 6:30-9:00 pm. Buy plants from the speaker between 6:30-7pm. The meeting starts promptly at 7:00. You'll enjoy informative programs, Show & Tell, plant sales, door prizes and raffles. Members also receive a monthly newsletter. Please come join us!

Date _____ Check # _____ Cash \$ _____

www.bromeliadsorlando.com

Officers

President: **Mike McMahon**
Vice-President: **Tim Dreggors**
Treasurer: **Joyce Gibault**
Recording Secretary: **Telka diFate**
Membership Secretary: **Pam Marion**
Immediate Past President: **Mike Saunders**
Florida Council Reps: **Mike Saunders & Mike McMahon**

POSITIONS

Meeting Layout Coordinator: President.
Meeting Hospitality Coordinator: **Kathy Hancock** (Beverages); **Peggy Bohl** (Snacks)
Welcome Table/Raffle Coordinator: **Robin Norton** Helpers: **Katherine Vaccaro, Kathy & Phil Hancock.**
Recycling Coordinator: **Dan Sawyer**
Meeting Breakdown Coordinator: **Pam Marion** Helpers: **Tina Self, Karen Steinberg, Robin Norton, Katherine Vaccaro & others who pitch in.**
Secret Bid Auction Coordinator: **Phil Wright**
Plant Of The Month Coordinator: **Cathy Schubert**
Speaker Helper: **Bonnie Friedrich**
Librarian : **Dan Sawyer**
Newsletter Editor: **John Vecchitto**
Newsletter Proofreader: **Marty Folk, Katherine Vaccaro, Robin Norton, Destini Coiner**
Audit Committee: **Bob Johnson, Dan Lott and Tim Dreggors (Chair).**

PLANT SALES -

Plant Sale Chair for Leu Gardens Spring Plant Sale: **Mike Saunders.**
Plant Sale Chair for Mother's Day Show: **Mike McMahon**
Plant Sale Chair for Mead Garden Fall Plant Sale: **Mike McMahon**
Field Trip Organizer: **Karen Steinberg**
Holiday Party Coordinator: **Paula Edwards**
Webmaster: **Greg Kolojeski**

Just a reminder. If you have an article for the orlandiana or if you need to get in touch with the editor the new email is:

orlandiananews@outlook.com

Permission to reprint is granted with acknowledgment. Please send all correspondence to the address below:

Bromeliad Society of Central Florida, Inc.

PO Box 536961

Orlando, FL 32853-6961

facebook.com/BromeliadSocietyOfCentralFlorida



BSCF is a nonprofit Florida corporation recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization.

Donations to this society are tax deductible in accordance with IRS regulations.

BSCF is an affiliate of the Bromeliad Society International, Inc., and a member of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies, Inc. and the Cryptanthus Society.