



BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF GREATER CHICAGO

# THE BSGC NEWS

MARCH-APRIL, 2014

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Lori Weigerding

We had a great meeting on March 9<sup>th</sup>. We hope you can come to the April 13<sup>th</sup> meeting at 2pm in the Annex at the Botanic Garden. Lori will be showing the DVD of Dennis Cathcart's program on the "Gardens by the Bay" in Singapore. He presented it last year at the Australasian Conference in New Zealand. You won't want to miss it. There will not be a meeting in May since we want you to celebrate Mother's Day.

April 13<sup>th</sup>- 2pm meeting in the Annex at the Botanic Garden, DVD of Dennis Cathcart's-Singapore

June 8- 2pm meeting in the Annex at the Botanic Garden

July 13-2pm meeting in the Annex at the Botanic Garden to finalize our Show.

July 18, 19 & 20-Set up and Combined Show of the Cactus Club and Bromeliad Society.

July 19- Dinner of Bromeliad Society members paid for by the Club.

## *President's Column*

*Well we again had another wonderful presentation from Martha and Steve. They take such wonderful pictures of all those plants and areas. We voted on our new officers and kept the officers as they are, except that we still have to fill the position of secretary, unfortunately. The Chicago weather is still kinda screwy, so we're not ready to put our plants outside yet.*

*So how is everyone's plants faring this long cold winter? I'll be glad to be able to open a*

*window to let in some fresh air, but I'm wondering how hot it's going to get this summer with the long cold winter we had.*

*We also discussed the set up for the flower show, which we should probably discuss a little more and discuss how much we want to spend on plants this year.*

*We will be seeing Dennis Cathcart's presentation from the Australasian Conference in New Zealand that the Goode's went to. The Goodes will not be at the meeting. We'll certainly miss having them there!*

*Hope to see you all there April 13, 2014 at 2 PM.*

*Lori Weigerding*

At the March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, Larry made the motion that we accept the current officers to continue again next year. Priscilla seconded the motion and it passed. We asked if anyone present would be interested in being the Secretary but no one volunteered. (I told you that our members were smart!) It will be open until we can recruit someone (or draft someone).

During the discussion of the show, Paula asked if we should ask The Chalet Nursery if they want to sell at our show. Martha will look into this possibility. We also discussed having the Show plants in the middle of the room and have sales tables on the sides.

Larry donated three *Aechmea fasciata* pups and they were raffled off. The winners were: Del, Jeff and Priscilla.

While I was out shopping recently at Lowes, I saw *Guzmania conifera*. (labeled Bromeliad!) I hadn't come across it before so I bought it to see how it does for me. It definitely will not go outside here in Arizona but I will get to enjoy the odd flower scape inside.



That made me think of the great diversity in the Bromeliad plant family as well as all the oddities. That is one reason why I grow them. When we were first married my husband said, "You can have houseplants as long as they look like they came from 'Star Trek'." Little did he know how many plants fit this category. This diversity in plants is also carried over in to our Society and the people in it. (We have Vulcans?) Barbara Black said it well in the February 2014 East London Bromeliad Society Newsletter:

"From the Editor"

To appreciate how different we all are in character and personality, just look at our gardens or collection of plants! Diversity is a wonderful thing!

It always impresses me how our plant priorities differ too, they are unique to individuals and the way they think and want to express themselves. Myself, I love gardening and working with the soil and plants, creating a garden, nurturing our plants on their way to reach their potential and also have something aesthetically pleasing and inspiring to look at when I venture out the door, such a good feeling!!! Add the collectors bug into that mix and you are sure to end up with loads of variety and challenges as well. Recently I have become interested in finding out the parentage of a few hybrids that we have in our garden. It is interesting to see the plant characteristics that the breeder has chosen to breed into a new bromeliad. I really admire those of you who are intent on hybridising, never give up, it is painstaking work, requiring much thought and patience with hopefully those few amazing results!

There are many of us who always want that special plant to add to our collections for one reason or another. Then you get the folks who are into the taxonomy of plants, whose interest in plants is far more in-depth. It is very interesting to read that scientists are now doing DNA testing and as a result some bromeliads are being re-classified and re-named. It is confusing to newbies to this magical bromeliad hobby, but a very important aspect of the plant world that plants be correctly classified. A lot of it is a mystery to ordinary gardeners. I know a fair amount of brom names now, only to discover recently that quite a lot have changed and I am sure there are more to follow. Talk about a curve ball coming our way! But it is all for the good. It is all about progress.

In the January 2014, New York Bromeliad Society Newsletter there was [A Brief History of Bromeliads](#) which was a summary of a lecture given by Mrs. Sydney W. Lawrence at a meeting of the Florida West Coast Bromeliad Society as reported in the FWCBS Newsletter.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF BROMELIADS

The Bromeliaceae is a great family of plants said to be native only to the tropical and sub-tropical Americas. They were discovered and introduced into Europe by the early plant collectors where for at least a century they have been and still are classed among the finest and most desirable decorative plants. The first two species arrived in Europe in 1690. These were what are now known as *Ananas comosus*, our edible pineapple, and *Bromelia pinguin*.

When the first pineapple grown in England was presented to Charles II by his gardener, the event was of such importance that a painting was made of it, and that painting now hangs in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

The introduction of *Guzmania lingulata* occurred in 1776. In 1811 Kew Gardens had 16 species; in 1864 that number had mounted to 100, and by 1887 the total rose to 252 species. By 1894 the Botanical Garden of the Dutch University at Leyden had 334 species.

Many famous Belgian plantsmen played an important role in the introduction of bromeliads and the Botanical Garden at Liege had the largest collection in the 1880's while that Garden was under the directorship of Prof. Charles Morren. Later, the Morren collection was acquired by Kew Gardens.

*Vriesea splendens* was introduced from the Guianas in the 1840's and about that same time *Aechmea fulgens* came from Brazil. *Aechmea fasciata*, which our Miss Victoria Padilla calls "The Beauty Queen of the Bromeliad Family," was introduced into Europe in 1828 and flowered for the first time in 1846 at the establishment of Van Houtte in Ghent.

This one species is now grown commercially by the thousands in many European countries. Vast greenhouses filled with this one species are not uncommon, and *Vriesea splendens* and *Cryptanthus* are grown in almost as great quantities.

The great Swedish botanist, Linnaeus, established the genus *Bromelia* which he named for another Swedish botanist, Olaf Bromel. Many genera of Bromeliads bear the names of other famous plantsmen of early times:

*Billbergia* was named for Gustave Johannes Billberg, Swedish botanist;

*Guzmania* for A. Guzman, a Spanish naturalist;

*Hechtia* for Julius Hecht of Potsdam;

*Ochagavia* for Sylvestris Ochagavia, a Chilean;

*Portea* for Dr. Marius Porte, a French naturalist who lived many years in Brazil;

*Pitcairnia* for Dr. Wm. Pitcairn, a London physician;

*Tillandsia* for Elias Tillands of Finland;

*Vriesea* for DeVriese, a Dutch botanist of Amsterdam;

Quesnelia probably for E. Quesnel, a French horticulturist.

Other VIPs – Very Important Plantsmen – have been honored by having their names given to various species of Bromeliads. To name a few;

Jean Linden (*Tillandsia lindenii*);

Charles Pinel (*Aechmea pineliana*);

Dr. Richard E. Schultes (*Ae. schultesiana*);

Ladislav Cutak (*Dyckia cutakii*);

*Aechmea weilbachii*, *Ochagavia lindleyana* and many others.

Among these "many others" is the name of one who perhaps has done more than any other one person in the United States to promote the knowledge, appreciation and use of Bromeliads. I refer, of course, to Mr. Mulford B. Foster, collector and hybridizer of these beautiful plants, several of which bear his name, and one the name of his wife, Racine. One of his hybrids, *Aechmea* "Foster's Favorite", on November 15, 1949, under Plant Patent No. 898, became the first bromeliad ever to be patented.

It was through the efforts of Mr. Foster (and a few California bromelphiles - Ed.) that the Bromeliad Society was organized on September 17, 1950. This is an international society, with members and enthusiasts in many foreign countries as well as in America.

Are any of your Bromeliads blooming? We would love to put your plant picture in our newsletter. We have *Dyckia Mercury X Reitzii v. Rubra* in bloom. Since we have had a warmer winter here in Arizona, plants are a little earlier in their blooming.



We are looking forward to the Sonoran Conference in Tucson on April 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. Dennis Cathcart will be giving two programs on Dyckia, “The Beautiful and Mysterious Dyckia” and “Understanding and Cultivating Dyckias”. Andy Siekkinen from California will be giving two programs on Hechtias, “Hechtia-The Ignored Genus of Succulent Bromeliads” and “Growing and Propagating Hechtias and Other Succulent Bromeliads:.



Larry sent us a note and a picture of a tillandsia.

*“Thought you might find this interesting. A few weeks ago while watering my tillandsias, I found this little one on the table I was working from. At this point I have no idea which one it came from, but it sure is tiny. It's actually grown some since I first found it.*

I found the following information in the book Die Bromelie by Lieselotte Hromadnik. The Tillandsia tectorum Complex translated by D.&M. Butcher.

The first description of T. Tectorum was by E. Morren in 1877 which was from the collections made by Gustav Wallis during his trips to Peru in 1865 & 1866. Tillandsia tectorum was cultivated and distributed using the name T. Argentea then. In 1872 Benito Roezl went on an expedition into the northern provinces of Peru and noted that they grew with other plants in the sun and heat rootless on rocks. He also noted the natives planted them on their roofs. That gave Morren the idea for the name of the new species, “Tillandsia des toits” which translated to Tillandsia of the roofs. He had several plants in culture from different expeditions and he wasn't sure if they were all the same species.

As a result of several collection trips to remote valleys in Peru, Lieselotte found a wide variation in the species. She said that this was due to the extended distribution which stretches from the Southern Ecuador provinces of Azuay and Loja along the higher coastal valley of Peru.

The author notes that there is a wide variation in size. The large form can reach a length of more than 1 meter (39 inches) with a rosette diameter of 50 cm

(19.7 inches). The leaves and scape are almost 30 cm (11.8 inches) long and the inflorescence has numerous, up to 6 cm. ( 2.36 inches) long spikes. She divides the species into 2 groups: those with bicoloured petals and those with unicoloured petals. She concluded that since there are many more inaccessible areas, there are probably many more *T. Tectorum* to be discovered.

I enjoyed reading the excerpts from her diary. Here is one from Mon, 10.3, 1997(March 10<sup>th</sup>)

Mon, 10.3: The place is so dead that not even the dogs bark or the cocks crow. About 6:30 a.m., we are on our way. From here, we go down a slippery winding small road to the river at 2200 meters(Ed. Elevation) Opposite is a gigantic dark steep wall where the road continues, more zigzags; Pallasca is 2700 m high, a place with beautiful houses and steep streets over which cows, sheep and pigs are driven. The descent is long from there over black landslides from an oily slate quarry. Later a columnar *Cereus* cactus with *V. Cereicola* on it and rock walls full of both large and very small *T. Tectorum*. By midday, we reach the river valley again, first cacti, *Espositoa*, *Haageocereu.*, and *Neoraimondia*, later only stone desert. The road is scary, usually single-tracked in a rubble strewn gorge, stone terraces in wider places on the steep hillsides and an Inca ruin, then more canyon, 100 km (60miles) long; driving the entire afternoon until we finally reach the junction with the Rio Santa. Still more dumps and canyon until almost to Huallanca. Cloudburst; we seek in vain what was promised in the guidebook as “tourist hotel with lawn”, and find only primitive quarters in stifling heat (corrugated iron roof), no water; we are given once again canned fish with bananas to eat. A kingdom for a shower!

You have to admire these plant explorers.



