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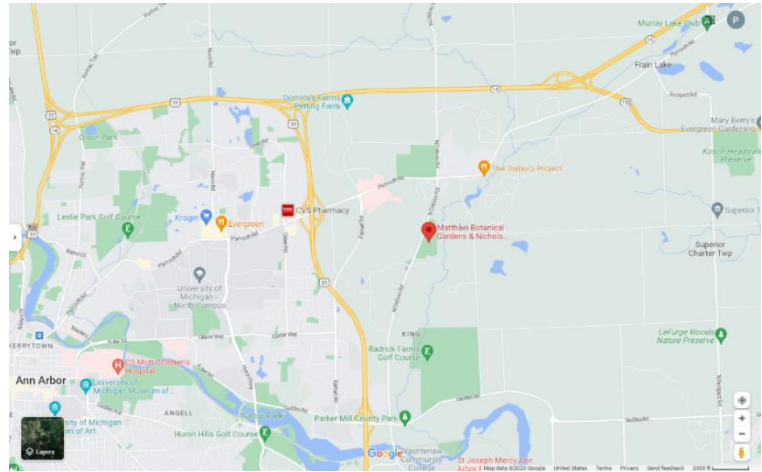
The Southeast Michigan Bromeliad Society
an Affiliate of the Bromeliad Society International
July/August 2023



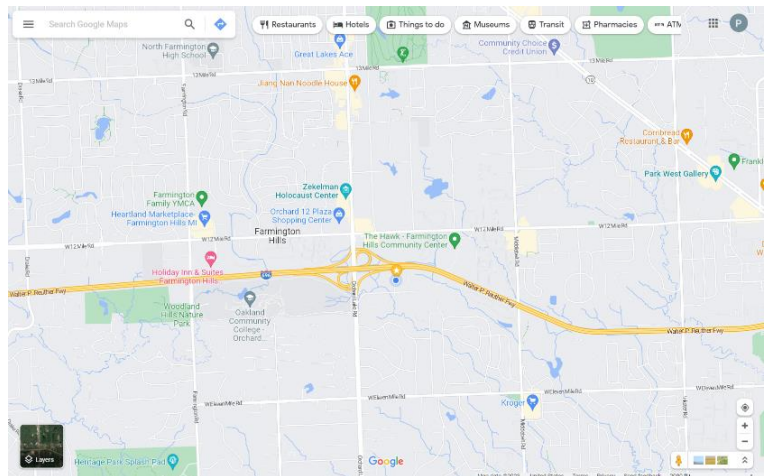
Aechmea 'Frappucino' blooming during November 2021. Photo by Paul Wingert

Upcoming calendar- We will meet at Matthaei Botanical Gardens on Saturday, July 15, at 2:00 PM. The meeting will take place in the potting room which is located down the back hallway near the service entrance. The featured topic is “A Spiny Affair- Dividing Dyckias”.

We will offer a hands-on opportunity to work with these marvelous, albeit intimidating plants! For the faint-of-heart, there will be some less lethal terrestrial bromeliads available for the workshop! The accompanying article in the newsletter is reprinted from the summer of 2018, and gives a preview of what to expect. Everyone is encouraged to bring a favorite terrestrial bromeliad to exhibit during the meeting. This can include Ananas (pineapple), Deuterocohnia, Encholirium, Orthophytum, Sincoraea, and of course Dyckia!



The August meeting will be held on **Saturday, August 19, 2023**, at **1:00 PM** at the home of Paul and Karen Wingert, 27276 Edgemoor, Farmington Hills, MI 48334. Please note the earlier start time! Also note that there is road construction on I-696. Weekend lane closures or ramp closures are always a possibility, so be mindful of traffic reports and consider using a trusted navigation app for alternate routes. While less convenient than the freeway, most of the surface streets should only add a few minutes to your travel time. If you need last-minute assistance, call Paul at 248-798-4139.



After three years of COVID concerns, we will resume our traditional summer potluck! Paul and Karen will provide hot dogs on the grill. A separate email will be sent in early August to

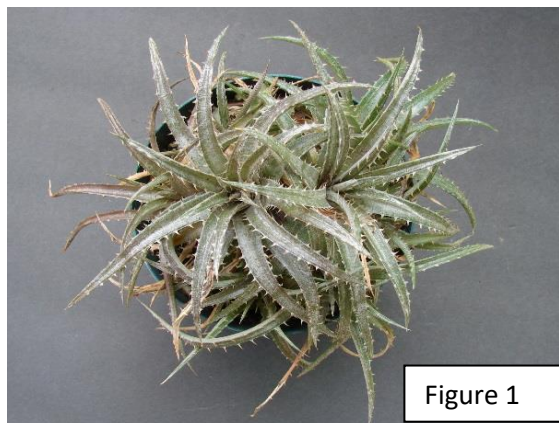
coordinate contributions for the picnic. Plan to be outdoors, except in case of thunderstorms or heavy rain. Bring a comfortable lawn chair for the meeting. The featured genus and primary topic of discussion for this month's meeting will be the genus Aechmea. Everyone is encouraged to bring a plant in bloom, or other favorite bromeliad for Show and Tell.

SAVE THE DATES- Saturday, September 9 and Sunday, September 10 will be our annual Display and Sale at Matthaei Botanical Gardens. We will join forces once again with our friends in the Michigan Cactus and Succulent Society. The hours will be 10 AM- 4:30 PM both days. Start preparing plants for display now! Everyone is welcome to sell extra pups. Details to follow at our summer meetings and in the next newsletter.

Dividing Dyckias- by Paul Wingert (*reprinted from August 2018*)

Dividing Dyckias. Simply said, those two words elicit feelings of dread and trepidation for many bromeliad growers! A preview for one of our recent local society meetings put it best. SE Michigan Bromeliad Society member and meeting host Drew Okla encouraged meeting attendance with the following message- “Some unruly Dyckia specimens, having become untenably crowded in their current pots, are also to be divided and repotted, sure to be a bloody and spectacular affair that would unnerve Caligula. Don’t miss it!” Admittedly, there are few tasks that induce procrastination more quickly than the thought of tackling a neglected, overgrown clump of some spiny terrestrial bromeliad. Like the strange noise coming from an automobile engine, it can't be ignored forever in the hopes that it will fix itself. Eventually, if you wish to maintain an orderly and presentable collection, the issue needs to be addressed! Sadly, we failed to memorialize the activities of the society meeting with photos. We did successfully divide two large clumps of Dyckias, a nice multi-headed D. choristaminea “straight leaved form” and the hybrid Dyckia “Sawfish”. Drew ended up with attractive, manageable clumps of each, and was kind enough to share divisions with those in attendance.

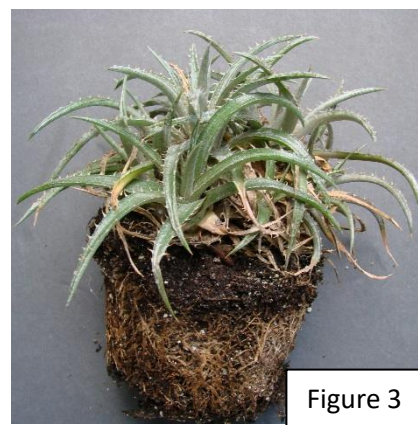
Our success inspired me to start attacking some of the long-neglected clumps in my own collection, taking particular care to provide careful photographic evidence this time! The two selected specimens chosen for this exercise were Dyckia ‘Betty Garrison’ (see Fig. 1) and



Dyckia choristaminea “small form” (see Fig 2). Each plant here has about a dozen growing points, some buried under the leaves of the dominant shoots.

Granted, these are relatively much less formidable than Dyckia goehringii or Dyckia beateae, but the same principles will apply for dividing the larger and/or spinier ones. The first step is simply to remove the unruly little beasts from their pots (see Fig 3, 4).

What a mess! Lots of old dead leaves to remove. At this point, though, ***it becomes clear that grooming is much easier when the plant is approached from below!*** The dead and decomposing leaves tend to lose their vicious nature and are not guarded as they are from above by flesh-tearing spines. Once you begin removing the lowest, oldest leaves, it becomes easier



and easier to get to the healthy, newer leaves. It might be advisable to use a good set of forceps or needle-nose pliers on some of the pricklier types, but I find I have a much better feel for things by simply using my fingers (see Fig. 5). Perhaps I was a bit lucky, but I spilled no blood, and didn't even get a single leaf spine embedded in my skin!

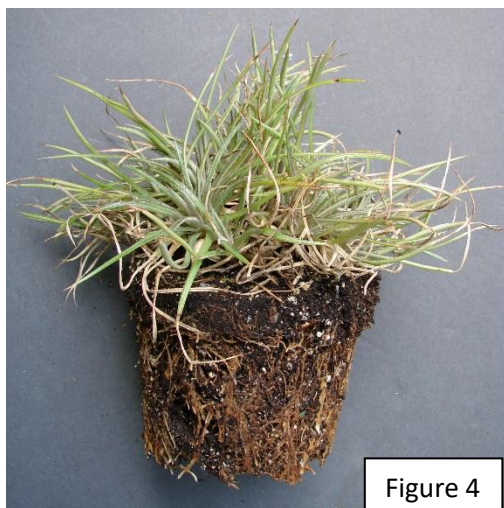


Figure 4



Figure 5

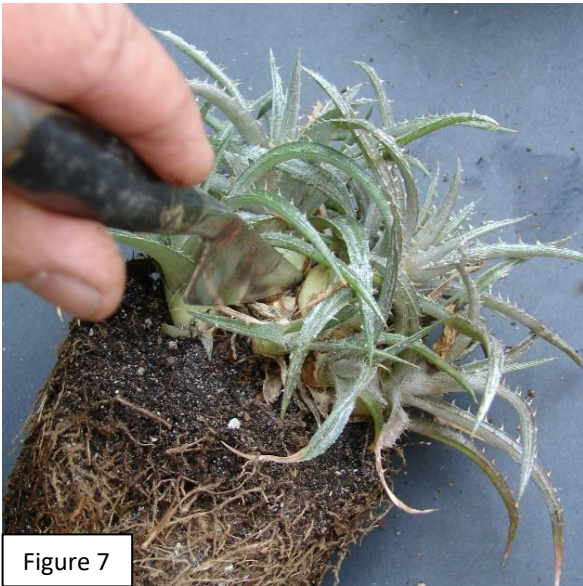
Interesting to note that the plants are nicely pot bound growing in my standard mix, which is high in organic matter (more than 70% peat, decomposed pine bark, and shredded cypress mulch), with perlite as the main inorganic component. While most of the terrestrials seem to love it, I have no doubt that it has been a death sentence for certain terrestrial species i.e., *Sincoraea navioides* and *Dyckia marnier-lapostollei*. Experience can be a cruel teacher! Recent observations have taught me that many terrestrials prefer (or at least are indifferent to) growing in an inorganic media. Drew Okla was successfully growing his terrestrials in a 50/50 mix of Turface (high fired calcined clay) and coarse poultry grit. Some of my acquisitions from the 2018 San Diego WBC were obviously grown in a very similar fashion. Admittedly, they were much easier to unpot, and then wrap for packing in my suitcase!



Figure 6

Figure 6- Removing the dead leaves reveals a natural point of division (in the center of the photo) between the two dominant shoots in the clump.

Inserting a knife between the two dominant shoots (see Fig. 7), and then twisting the blade (see Fig. 8) proved sufficient to separate the clump easily. A wide bladed screwdriver might achieve the same result. Tougher, or more connected specimens might require use of a serrated knife, or even a small saw!



Perhaps a bit less definition in the point of division with the *Dyckia choristaminea* (see Fig. 9). It was also necessary to cut through the root ball to achieve adequate separation.



Once the division was completed (see Fig. 10- showing separated *D. 'Betty Garrison'*), it was even easier to resume grooming, as the leaves that had been embedded in the center of the clump are now transformed as exterior leaves!



Figure 11- Division of Dyckia 'Betty Garrison' now ready to be potted in fresh media. This will go back into a 5" (12.5 cm.) pot. I'm not convinced to give up

on all organic matter when repotting this one, but I do plan to incorporate more perlite and coarse poultry grit into the mix.



Quite a difference from the initial photos! Two very neat, well-groomed little plants. Given a couple of months to fill out just a bit more, and with minimal additional grooming, each could be considered for display at one of our future society events.

Though I was finished I could not stop! In addition to the plants shown here, I went on to pot up numerous 1-4 headed divisions for future sale or trade.



Dyckia 'Heaven and Hell'. This is one of the more intimidating subjects likely to make an appearance at the July 15, 2023 workshop at Matthaei!

The Genus Aechmea- a botanical hodgepodge! – by Paul Wingert

There are 244 species in the genus *Aechmea* according to the most recent count. Most botanists agree that this is one of the most unwieldy and unnatural groups in the bromeliad family. Divided into eight different subgenera, this is an incredibly diverse group of plants which encompasses nearly the full geographical range of the entire bromeliad family. New plant discovery? Looks like an *Aechmea*? Throw it in that plant heap over there! Thankfully, some of the current research and DNA analysis will make better sense of the natural relationships in the future. Expect that there will be lots of name changes and new alignments with other well-known genera. But for now, we will enjoy them by the names we currently call them.

Let's begin with one of the most popular of all bromeliads- *Aechmea fasciata*. It is likely one of the first bromeliads that most growers credit for a newfound addiction! The one shown here is a beautiful selection with variegated foliage. *Aechmea fasciata* blooms reliably during mid to late summer when grown outdoors. The long days appear to trigger flowering.



Aechmea chantinii is a warm growing species from the headwaters of the Amazon River in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. Widely variable in nature, the inflorescence colors and foliage banding can be incredibly diverse. The greatest challenge to cultivating these beauties is to keep adequate warmth during the winter months. Shown here is *Aechmea chantinii* cv. 'Black', an attractive dark leaved selection which sports a showy inflorescence!

Aechmea nudicaulis is another variable species that has tubular shaped rosettes, and curious “leaf knuckles” at the point where the leaf blades flare out from the tube (more evident in the photo on the right). The nectar rich flowers attract the local hummingbirds.



Aechmea gamosepala cv. ‘Lucky Stripes’ is a charming foliage plant with a colorful inflorescence. The flowers are short lived, but the ripe berries turn dark red and offer a second show of color that persists for weeks.



Two views of one of my hybrids- *Aechmea orlandiana* x 'Bert'. It naturally features incredible banded leaves which are attractive year round. It grows in near full sun during the summer time, developing intense rosy-pink coloration.



The species *Aechmea orlandiana* is highly variable in color. Strongly banded foliage makes this a fascinating and highly attractive species. Several variegated and albomarginated cultivar exist as well. Flowering takes place in late autumn and into winter when relatively few other bromeliads are in bloom. Pollinated flowers (cross pollination by a non-genetically related clone) develop into beautiful purple berries (photo below) which persist for weeks. The plant pictured (at left) is the cultivar *Aechmea orlandiana* 'White Knight'.

