

# SEMB S

## The Southeast Michigan Bromeliad Society

an Affiliate of the Bromeliad Society International

**September/October 2024**



For our meeting on Sunday, October 20 at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, we welcome back Betty Patterson to share her experiences from her trip to Colombia earlier this year. Colombia is home to an incredible number of epiphytic plants, including bromeliads, orchids, and aroids. We will share this meeting with the Ann Arbor Orchid Society. Betty promises a balanced number of bromeliad and orchid photos. It should provide great insight into the culture of these wonderful epiphytic plants! Photo by Betty Patterson.

## *Calendar- September/October 2024*

### September Show and Sale

The **Society Southeast Michigan Bromeliad Society** and the **Michigan Cactus & Succulent** have once again joined forces to give you two great shows/sales in one! Come join us on Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 7th and 8th at the University of Michigan's Matthaei Botanical Gardens for the **2024 Exotic Plant Sale**.

#### LOCATION:

Greenhouse #3 - Plant Sale

Matthaei Botanical Gardens  
1800 N. Dixboro Rd.  
Ann Arbor, MI

More information can be found on their website at <https://mbgna.umich.edu/events>

Additional information on the SE Michigan Bromeliad Society is available at:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/365549693516963/>

Information on the Michigan Cactus & Succulent Society can be found here- [michigancactus.org](http://michigancactus.org)

Sale hours are 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM both days.

There is always a bit of confusion regarding purchases. Each of the SE Michigan Bromeliad Society sellers collects their payments directly from each customer. The Michigan Cactus & Succulent Society is a collective and has two cashier stations at the front of the greenhouse for all their customers.

Parking is \$2.20 an hour/\$6.00 day payable at the kiosk. We have been told there will be Matthaei staff and volunteers to assist with the kiosk and direct parking to overflow areas if needed. We ask that you please bring a small box to carry your purchases in and if you could bring a few extra to share they will be appreciated. We apologize to our many members but only pre-authorized sellers and scheduled volunteers for that day may circumvent the admission line.

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**REGISTRATION** : Anyone that wishes to sell plants, pots, books, or soil components please notify Paul Wingert by email by this Sunday, September 1, and include an estimate of how many square feet you feel you will need and whether you are planning on being present for both days, or just one.

**PLEASE VOLUNTEER**: It's also a fantastic opportunity to trade tips, hear stories, make friends, and build green thumb relationships with people who enjoy plants as much as you do! We ideally need 4 or 5 volunteers on Friday (4 have already committed for this); 2 - 4 volunteers each for Saturday morning (9:30-1:00), afternoon (1:00-4:00), and Sunday morning (10:00-1:00) and afternoon (1:00-cleanup). Please contact Paul Wingert if you can commit to one of the time slots above. Primary tasks are to supervise the membership table and manage handouts; collect money for society books for sale, BSI Journals, and new memberships, engage with guests, and keep watch on the Display Table. If you



have your lanyard from past events, that will facilitate entrance to Greenhouse #3, especially at Saturday's show open!

**SET UP :** Matthaei is allowing us access to the building on Friday, Sept. 6th between 10:00 AM and 8:00 PM for set up. We will be in Greenhouse #3. We can bring in our plants through the west lobby which is close to the main parking lot. There is accommodation for unloading vehicles there. Matthaei will make available some wheeled carts. This 10-hour window on Friday should make it easy to load up the sales tables, post signs and rearrange the furniture. For those that can't make it on Friday, the building will be open at 8:00 AM Saturday and 9:00 AM Sunday for set up as well. The room has (14) 6'x16' standard greenhouse tables on castors. SEMBS will have 5 of these (98 sq.ft. for display and 392 sq.ft. for sales)

**POTS :** Please be aware that the greenhouse tables have expanded metal mesh coverings with approximately one-inch spaces. Small 2" pots can easily tip over on this. Bring trays or shallow bins to avoid this. You may also find it beneficial to water any top-heavy plants ahead of time. All sale plants require TWO LABELS, details below.

**PRESALE - SELLERS / VOLUNTEERS :** We will have a *sellers/ volunteer only* presale on Saturday shortly after 9:30 AM. Presale is limited to 3 plants per person.

**\$\$\$ :** All vendors are required to make a 10% contribution to SEMBS. Each vendor is responsible for collecting Michigan state sales tax. Please consider this when pricing your plants.

**DISPLAY:** The show DISPLAY TABLES with our club members' specimens will again be inside Greenhouse #3. Brooke Monette and Connie Manley will be taking the lead in creating our society display this year. We ask that if you're selling or volunteering kindly consider bringing one or two nice specimen plants (or more!) that you're proud of for the society's display table! Display cards will be available for you to fill out your plant's information or you may supply your own card identifying your plant. We ask that you put your name on the plant(s) to both help us know who to return the plants to after the show and for the benefit of other members if they have questions. Culture requirements and country of origin are optional. As always, ALL plants should be free of pests or disease.

**STANDARD SHOW:** Not this year! We have discussed the goal of hosting an accredited BSI Show at some time in the future, but realistically, as a society we are not quite there yet! As a BSI affiliate, we should consider doing this. The BSI has a number of judges who are always looking for opportunities to gain and to maintain accreditation. Hosting a standard show would certainly bring more attention to SEMBS and be more engaging for visitors to the show. Planning for this will take some time, but we should consider putting it on the agenda for further discussion at an upcoming meeting. Meanwhile, for the upcoming Display, we will reprise our "People's Choice" award as we did last year. We have ballots for people to choose their 3 favorite Bromeliads. Votes will be collected from visitors during the show on Saturday, and we will have the results of the vote on Sunday. The results will also be posted in the next Newsletter. Two goals from this exercise- the first is to encourage more of our members to participate in displaying plants! The second objective is to have show visitors more engaged, not just look at the plants, but actively engage with what they are viewing!

**PERKS :** Volunteers and sellers will be reimbursed for parking (\$2.20/hr. or \$6.00/day). BE SURE TO GET A RECEIPT at the kiosk. Write your name on the back of the parking receipt and submit it to Paul during the show. On both days, our combined societies plan on ordering pizzas for lunch for all the sellers, volunteers and the Matthaei staff. We will have bottles of water on hand, but you are welcome to bring your own beverage. We have been given permission to share the employee break room to place our beverages in as well as the use of the adjacent small conference room for a break room. Our host, Matthaei has requested that there be NO POTLUCK food at this event.

**LABELS:** All plants for sale must have two labels. One with the description of the plant and one with the price. Price labels must have both the PRICE and the vendor's name, initials, or pre-approved code to facilitate cash distribution to each vendor. Plants must have an additional separate label identifying the plant (at minimum, the genus name) for the customer. All items are to be priced in WHOLE DOLLAR amounts to avoid making change in coins! If you are selling a big-ticket item, you might consider placing a redundant price STICKER on the item if you're worried someone might swap the price label.

**BUG FREE :** As has been stated before, all plants should be free of pests or disease. We strongly suggest that if your plants have been outside all summer, place them in an enclosed garage or shed and fumigate them with a bug bomb to eliminate hitchhikers. No one wishes to buy a plant that houses ants or worse.

**EYES OPEN :** As we have seen in past years, it's chaotic at 10:00 AM when the public is allowed in. Please be vigilant and watch out for each other's plants to prevent thefts and fraud. It's extremely rare but we have caught individuals in the act of swapping price labels. With the number of people that we attract there will always be a few bad apples.

**CLEAN UP :** At the conclusion of the sale on Sunday afternoon, any orphaned plants or sale items will become the property of SEMBS and subject to disposal (or future raffle table).

The photo below features a portion of the 2023 SEMBS Show display at Matthaei Botanical Gardens.





## *Sunday, October 20 Meeting*

Please note the change of day (Sunday, not Saturday) for the October meeting! This was to accommodate room availability at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, and to coordinate with the Ann Arbor Orchid Society schedule. The meeting will take place in the Auditorium beginning at 2:00 PM. The meeting topic will feature Betty Patterson's trip to Colombia earlier this year. Here's a preview from Betty!



### COLOMBIA South America Tour- by Elizabeth Patterson

On my recent trip to Colombia, I joined a group of plant lovers walking about 4 miles a day for 16 days. We crossed 3 cordilleras (mountain ranges), hiking on tropical trails through humid fog forests and crossing páramos (high, treeless plateaus in South America) at altitudes of up to 11,000 feet. We found bromeliads, orchids, anthuriums, flowering trees and saw many beautiful birds. Colombia is a beautiful country with 42 National Parks dedicated to environmental conservation and features an impressive Botanical Garden in Bogotá. Colombia is ranked number one worldwide in the number Orchid species & number two in Bromeliad species.

Our guide was David Haelterman. He is originally from Belgium but has been living in Colombia for 10 years. David is an agronomist, environmental advisor, photographer, nature guide, conservationist, and orchid expert.

Website: [flickr.com/photos/58798926@N07](https://www.flickr.com/photos/58798926@N07)



Scenery as we hike crossing one of the cordilleras which stretch across Colombia. In addition to taking time for sight-seeing, you can imagine that the rugged hikes limited the distances traveled each day!

Photos on this page by Betty Patterson.



## July Meeting recap- A fabulous field trip to Jerry Raack's! -by Brooke Monette

Down the highway and into Buckeye territory, this July we paid a visit to longtime collector Jerry Raack, and his wife, plant pathologist Joanne Kick-Raack, who graciously opened their home, greenhouse, and garden to members of the Southeast Michigan Bromeliad Society for our enjoyment. The Raacks' garden and bromeliad collection are a rich tapestry wherein Jerry and Joanne have woven color, structure, and texture together with particular skill, informed by Jerry's years working with a nursery where he was able to source many exciting and unique tree species.

After ensuring we were well fed after our trek, we began our tour as Jerry pointed out favorite plants, many he collected decades ago when collection was still the allowed norm. In fact, there are two species named in the couple's honor, *Tillandsia raackii*, light on trichomes but high in anthocyanin pigment dusting and spotting the tops and covering the leaf undersides, bearing a short scape with Vriesea-like paddles of white bracts from which white flowers emerge, and *Tillandsia kickiae*, densely covered with white-silver trichomes and bearing a velvety bloom spike with pink bracts bearing deep purple flowers. We noticed he tends to favor *Guzmania* and green-leaved *Tillandsia*, both of which are underrepresented in collections today.



Dotting the collection among the rolling hills of southwest Ohio, we saw several forms of *Guzmania squarrosa*, including a new form from Peru, which he described as slow growing and difficult to propagate. It is stingy with setting pups, though he's decided it's worth the trouble due to its red, orange, and yellow inflorescence with wide bracts. When space is at a premium, there has to be a compelling reason to keep such a large specimen, so it must be pretty impressive! He tells us he'll share a bloom photo when he's able, which he expects may be in another month or two. (Updated photo 8-24-2024 by Jerry Raack- right) Another notable *Guzmania* was *G. sanguinea*, which he collected in





Santa Isabel, Ecuador while on his honeymoon. Frog enthusiasts familiar with the *Dendrobates auratus* 'El Cope' should recognize the specific epithet of *Guzmania* sp. 'El Cope' found in and eponymously named for the same region of Panama. At roughly 22



inches across, it's much too large for the average terrarium, but a fun sight to see among Jerry's plants, where one can imagine a glossy, little, blue frog tucked among the leaves.

From a less familiar genus to some, Jerry describes *Cipuropsis dubia* (syn. *Vriesea dubia*, pictured- left) as a common but highly recommended representative. Other especially rewarding plants he indicated include *Neoregelia* 'Wolfgang,' happy and attractive in really any lighting, *Tillandsia complanata*, which he has grown to specimen size, exploding with flowers all year 'round and which propagates in whorls rather than pups or typical offsets, (pictured- below)

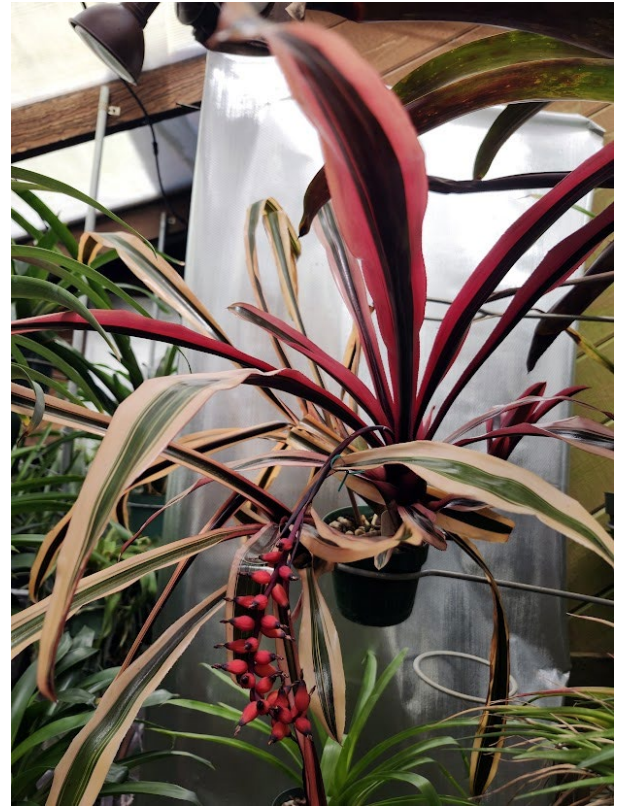


*Pitcairnia heerdae*, a grassy-leaved, easy grower with intense, magenta bloom spikes and white flowers, (pictured- below, photo by Jerry Raack) and *Neoregelia* 'Inferno,' which blooms consistently, always looks good, and isn't fussy.



He was also eager to point out his *Aechmea* 'Foster's Favorite,' an early variegated bromeliad with a red underside, which is a cross between *racinae* and *victoriana*. (Pictured next page)

Jerry tends to focus on plants that thrive in his conditions, so it made sense to define his growing environment. Asked about greenhouse temperatures, Jerry gave estimates of wintertime temps ranging from 58°F at night to 63-68°F in the daytime (with occasional highs in the 70s during exceptionally warm weather patterns), and summertime temps ranging up to 100°F. This, of course, means many plants head outdoors and decorate the lush and beautifully landscaped grounds come spring. He described his fertilizer regimen as a liquid injection of Peters (20-20-20) at ¼-strength on a more-or-less weekly basis. When first potted up, he tops the pots with a slow-release fertilizer that is also 20-20-20. In the summer when things are outside, he does not supply additional fertilizer. It goes without saying that the humidity is fairly high, and he's got great air circulation from a number of fans and screened windows for cross ventilation. He also employs a misting system in his greenhouse, in addition to hand misting. The breezy greenhouse currents seemed to suit the *Racinaea*, *Tillandsias*, *Aechmeas*, *Guzmanias*, and others that remained inside during our visit.



As we filmed, Jerry indicated a very attractive *Tillandsia pendulascapa* collected in 2018, which, as its name suggests, sprouts a branching inflorescence that hangs below the plant by as much as six feet. Another noteworthy *Tillandsia* was *azuayensis* (syn. *Vriesea wuelfinghoffii*), a lithophytic native of Cuenca, capitol of the province of Azuay in Ecuador.

As we came upon *Aechmea entringeri*, Jerry became gleeful, a twinkle of memories exploring South America in his eyes and described his experience of stumbling upon it in Santa Catarina, Brazil in 1992, while encountering a man with a group of hikers ahead of them who had been bitten by a snake earlier in the trip. The man had spotted another of the same snake who'd bitten him. Jerry explained, "We hired a guide in a local town to take us on a hike up the local mountain in search of bromeliads. The man's foot was greatly swelled from having been bitten a week before by a venomous snake. During our hike up the mountain, the guide was well in front of us when we heard him screaming. When we ran up towards him, we could see him pounding toward the ground with his machete. He had found another venomous snake and was cutting it into as many pieces as he could before showing us the teeth in the snake's mouth." It wasn't clear if the snake was in or near the plant, but it certainly reminded us to always take care when peeking into bromeliad leaves! The only creature we found in Jerry's collection was a spring peeper on a *Tillandsia arpocalyx* (syn. *Vriesea arpocalyx*), which Jerry explains is fairly cold tolerant, getting snow on it in situ at 3200 meters elevation in Ecuador, where it is endemic, that is, found there and only there.





Outdoors, he had a few select Vrieseas which really caught our eye, such as the large Vr. Fosteriana 'Raspberry Sorbet' bred by David Fell, which has an outstanding blue iridescence racing over its deep purple glyphs.(pictured- left)

Another David Fell creation nearby was Vr. 'Grow Love,' which has a great red color that really blushes hard as temperatures fall, and which can, he tells us, handle full sun if acclimated to it. (pictured- right)



Roughly three feet across, Wittrockia cyathiformis can blush pink to red, yielding a large bloom, he explained.(pictured left)

At the end of our tour was Barfussia platyrhachis, a large plant, more than four feet wide, with an underside more purple than red. Its stem can be more than an inch in diameter, and it grows at about 2200 meters. It has a spectacular bloom spike with candy pink bracts from which the small, blue flowers emerge.

As we wound down our tour, we marveled at his ponds and laughed at his amusement over how some of the tiny fish there found their way up the waterfall. It was over so quickly, but we had to be on the road home, and were grateful for having the opportunity to see oddities and beauties that are uncommon in cultivation, and some species only recently discovered and lacking formal names. The weather couldn't have been better, and neither could our afternoon with the Raacks.

### **Library Announcement**

New this month, we're pleased to announce the availability of the first two volumes of the book *Koulèv*, by Dennis Cathcart. Cathcart is the founder of Tropiflora, one of the premier bromeliad growers located in Florida. He came to bromeliads through his travels in search of snakes, his first passion, and the inspiration for the title of the book, which is a Creole word for, "snake," chosen also for his affection for Haiti, where Creole is spoken, and where many of his stories take place. It's a vivid tale, involving several close brushes with death, and visceral descriptions of both the events and the scenery. Paul and I both read the books and agreed that it's hard to put them down, with the plot and pace moving in a way that makes you feel like you are living his experiences firsthand.

There are dangerous encounters with Vodou, the Tonton Macoute, and toxic frogs, as well as excursions into the Everglades, the West Indies, Mexico, Central and South America, and the Bahamas, prior to their transformation into a vacation destination. He also details his days working in a venom lab in Costa Rica with military scientist, Major Herschel H. Flowers, and how he ends up on both sides of the venom. Additionally, what's usually a philosophical icebreaker or an abstract hypothetical for most of us, Cathcart got to discover what he would do if ever stranded on a desert isle. If you've ever wondered how such an event comes to pass, you can read about his nearly one-way trip in striking detail. On the whole, *Koulèv* is the story of a life lived on a precipice. You can tiptoe along it safely from the comfort of your own reading nook by checking out one or both books from our library.

To borrow the books, simply email the librarian at [brooke@brookemonette.com](mailto:brooke@brookemonette.com), and we'll make sure to bring them to the next meeting for lending, or make other arrangements to get them to you.