

S E M B S

The Southeast Michigan Bromeliad Society
an Affiliate of the Bromeliad Society International

November/December 2024



Tubular bromeliads- featuring the genera *Billbergia* and *Quesnelia* subgenus *Billbergiopsis* will be the focus of our meeting presentation at Matthaei Botanical Gardens on Saturday, November 9 at 2:00 PM. Pictured here is *Quesnelia alvimii*.

President's message- This year's show and sale were a success. Vendor contributions raised just over \$250 for the club. As we plan for our 2025 show and sale, we would like to encourage our new members to consider participating by offering their own plants for sale and entering plants in our display.

Speaking of new members, we'd like to welcome those who have just joined us!

Bea Jenkins, Kevin Griffin, Stephanie McGwin, Joe Batdorff, Sarah Prescott, Nancy Draayer, and Carol McCarthy.

We hope to see you frequently at upcoming meetings and getting to know you better!

Our next meeting will be held at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, Room 139 on Saturday, November 9th at 2pm. One item of business- we will open the floor for nominations for Officers and Directors.

Here are the positions and candidates currently nominated to fill them:

President	Brooke Monette
Vice-President	Paul Wingert
Secretary	Lisa Eldred-Steinkopf
Treasurer	Connie Manley
Director	[Open]
Director	[Open]
Director	[Open]
Newsletter Editor	[Open]

If there are additional nominations for officers, we will hold an election. There are three positions for Director currently open, and we're ready to welcome some new people to the roles. Any member in good standing is encouraged to run for a position on the board. Would you like to be part of our team? Contact us at pcwingert@gmail.com, or brooke@brookemonette.com and let us know you're interested. We're looking forward to hearing from you!

Holiday Party!

When: Saturday, 7th December at 2pm

Where: Matthaei Botanical Gardens, Room 139

What: Potluck and Gift Swap

Finally, we'd like to announce that our annual holiday party has returned! This year, we'll be meeting at Matthaei in Room 139 for a potluck. Yes, Matthaei has given us permission to bring our own food again, so please bring a dish to pass. Also, please contact Brooke or Paul to let us know what you plan to bring. As festive as it is, we don't want to end up having only fruitcake!

Also, this year, we're planning a gift swap. Our gift limit is \$5. We suggest bringing items related to horticulture, but there's certainly room for a little mischief. There will be a prize for the best gift given, so choose wisely!

For a bit of fun, we've decided to try the Dirty Santa exchange. It might sound complicated, but it's very easy, and we have lots of practice. To participate, simply bring your gift with you to the potluck. Gifts must be wrapped and ready to go. When you arrive, let Brooke know what you brought so we can register your participation. You will be assigned a number. Once we're all accounted for, we'll begin. Here's how it works.

1. Each participant will be randomly assigned a number. We will call people starting with the number 1, and continue in order from there. When choosing, you may gently shake and visually inspect the gifts.
2. The first person called selects a gift from the table.
3. The first person opens the first gift.
4. The next person called gets to choose either an unopened gift from the table, or to steal the already opened gift.
5. If a person has their gift stolen, they can then return to the table to choose another new gift **or** steal from among the already opened gifts. They cannot steal back the gift just stolen from them immediately, but may do so later if another gift is stolen from them later on in the exchange.
6. This continues until all gifts have been opened.
7. The first person called has one last chance to keep the gift they have at the end, or steal, since there was no option to steal on the first turn.

After person 1 has made their final decision, we will vote on the best gift given by show of hands, after which, its giver will be revealed and awarded their prize.

Show & Tell Table- Everyone is encouraged to bring plants to display at each meeting!

Dues reminder- Our new members and those who renewed their dues at or since the September Show are paid up through December 2025! All others are encouraged to renew their dues for 2025 at the November 9, 2024 and December 7, 2024 meetings. An address for membership renewals by mail will be provided with the December meeting reminder, subsequent to confirming the new society Treasurer.

October meeting recap- Approximately 30 people attended our joint meeting with the Ann Arbor Orchid Society. Guest speaker Betty Patterson shared photos of her January 2024 trip to Colombia, featuring photos of bromeliads, orchids, other tropical plants, and exotic birds. Everyone was enthusiastic that we would consider another joint meeting at some time in the future! More than 2 dozen plants were on the Show & Tell table, including both orchids and bromeliads by our new member Kevin Griffin! The joint Raffle Table was also a lot of fun, with members from each club crossing over to try something new!

The featured topic at our November meeting will be tubular shaped bromeliads. The focus will be on the genus *Billbergia*, which is one of the most popular with bromeliad collectors. *Billbergia* is a genus of the subfamily Bromelioideae. The genus, named for the Swedish botanist, zoologist, and anatomist, Gustaf Johan Billberg, is divided into two subgenera: *Billbergia* and *Helicodea*. They are native to forest and scrub, up to an altitude of 1700 m, in southern Mexico, the West Indies, Central America and South America, with many species endemic to Brazil. They are rosette-forming, usually epiphytic and cylindrical in habit, often with brilliantly colored bracts and flowers. The foliage is colorful year-round. Flowering is often spectacular, although, it is typically ephemeral. The number of accepted species in this genus is 63. Plants from the subgenus *Billbergia* are typically more suited to growers in temperate climates. They are generally smaller than plants in the subgenus *Helicodea*, and their habitats are subject to cooler weather conditions during the winter months.

Here are a few of the most popular species.

Billbergia pyramidalis- Widely used in subtropical gardens, it is one of the colder tolerant bromeliads. It blooms reliably as the autumnal equinox approaches. The photo below was taken during the World Bromeliad Conference which took place in Hawaii in September 2014. Several variegated cultivars are known, including the variety 'Kyoto' shown here, and the medio picta variegated 'Alan Ladd'.



Billbergia vittata cv. *Domingos Martins*- This plant was found less than 50 years ago on Kautskys Mountain near the town of Domingos Martins, Espirito Santos, Brazil. It was originally described as *Billbergia domingosmartins*, but later reclassified as a cultivar of *Billbergia vittata*. Highly coveted by bromeliad collectors, it has been widely used to create a whole new generation of *Billbergia* hybrids, as the ivory spots appear to be a dominant characteristic in most of its offspring. My own observations suggest that it pups and blooms much better if given more generous feeding with a balanced fertilizer.

Billbergia rosea—one of the larger growing species from the subgenus *Helicodea*, it is an epiphyte native to Venezuela and Trinidad. A large growing plant up to 36” tall. The pendant inflorescence hangs as much as 18” beyond the base of the plants, and the huge pink bracts remain colorful for about two weeks. Note the flower detail which highlights the tightly coiled “watch-spring” petals, a feature that is dominant in all of the *Helicodea* species. *Billbergia rosea* blooms reliably in mid to late summer. It is notable as one of the parents of the famous



early hybrid *Billbergia* ‘Windii’, a cross with the diminutive *Billbergia nutans*. It is interesting to note that *most* *Billbergias* do not self-pollinate, so they need a genetically unrelated clone simultaneously

blooming in order to set seed. A notable exception to this is the species *Billbergia zebrina*. (As an aside, when I was taking a Practical Botany course as a student at the University of Michigan, the opportunity to grow *Billbergia zebrina* from seed was largely responsible for a lifetime addiction of growing bromeliads from seed!)



Billbergia hybrids- Far outnumbering the species count, the hybrids listed on the BSI Cultivar registry is well over 1000. Two simple reasons for this are that they are very easy to hybridize, and many of the resulting



hybrids are simply stunning! Several hybridizers have had a prominent role in creating new *Billbergias*, but most particularly the long-time Florida grower Don Beadle, *aka* “Mr. *Billbergia*”. Sadly, Don passed away in 2018, but his legacy lives on with bromeliad enthusiasts. The plant featured here was acquired during one of our annual Society Spring plant orders. I asked Micheal Kiehl to send me his favorite hybrid with *Billbergia sanderiana* as parent. *Billbergia sanderiana* features prominent, black spines and a compound (branched) flower spike. Evidently these traits are dominant in this hybrid! So, this is the plant that Michael sent! I was very excited to see it bloom! The hybrid was named by Don’s nieces and nephews after Don passed way. It was called *Billbergia* WUD, an affectionate moniker that they used to refer to “weird Uncle Don”. Aside from his obvious obsession with *Billbergias*, Don was known for his wonderful sense of humor, and his ability to tell a good story!

Rather than showing more registered Billbergia hybrids here, I will refer you to check out the link to the Billbergia hybrid page on the [Bromeliad Society Cultivar Registry](#). This is another significant part of Don Beadle's legacy. He took the initiative to do the original compilation of bromeliad hybrids, researching and publishing a list of all known bromeliad hybrids as of 1998! His work has been carried on by others as we have entered the age of the internet. I hope that you will take the time to randomly check out 10 (or 25 or 100) random Billbergia hybrids listed there.

In addition to the thousand of registered hybrids, there are many more unregistered Billbergia hybrids being

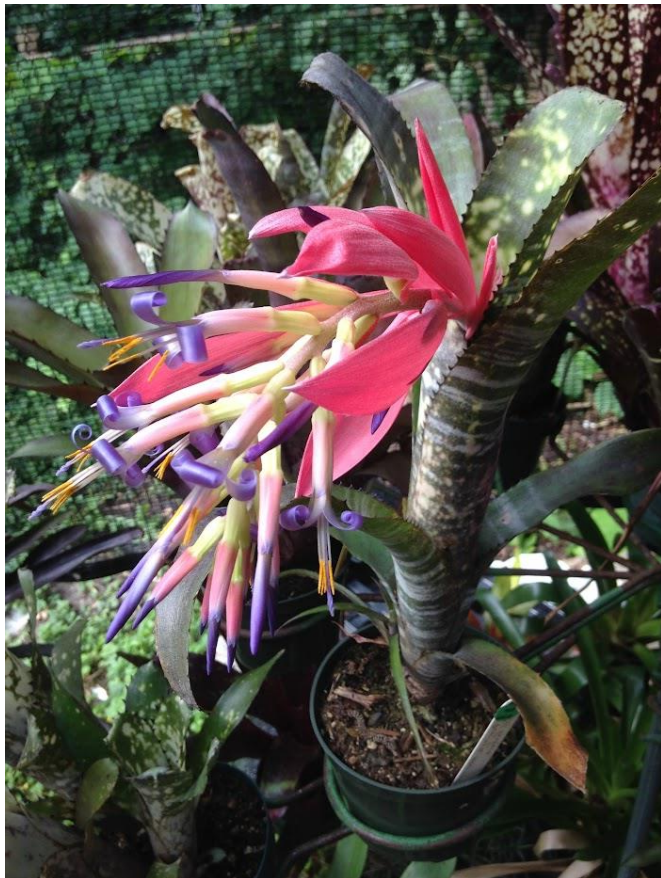


created. SEMBS member Kevin Patterson has been actively hybridizing Billbergias and Neoregelias. Attractive foliage is a top goal, though flowering is likely to be an exciting bonus! Pictured, left, is a hybrid of Billbergia Prickly Heat x Smokestack. The influence of Billbergia Domingos Martins is strong with this one! Lots of ivory spotting, rich leaf colors, and prominent spines all combine in one attractive package. Possible flowering in 2025? We will all be looking for updates!

Pictured, right, is another of Kevin's hybrids. This is a cross of Billbergia Carioca x Prickly Heat. Eye-catching, mottled shades of pink predominate in this beauty! Pink is not a very common foliage color for Billbergias, so it will be fascinating to see if the colors become even more intense as it matures!



Kevin also had the uncommon good fortune to have Quesnelia Tim Plowman (Q. marmorata cultivar with recurved leaf tips, pictured below, left) and Quesnelia Raphael Oliveira (a variegated Q. marmorata) concurrently in bloom. Although no variegated seedling resulted in this cross, which would have been a super fun outcome, it is interesting to see the subtle variation in leaf color and intensity of spotting. The whole stand of Quesnelia marmorata looks pretty cool. The inflorescence is unexpectedly beautiful!



Billbergia Domingos Martins x Fanfare. This is one of Paul Wingert's hybrids. Billbergia rosea is one of the parents in B. Fanfare. Its influence is quite evident in the inflorescence.

During the meeting on November 9, there will be a slide presentation highlighting many more blooming Billbergias.

Photo recap of our 2024 Annual Show Display at Matthaei Botanical Gardens

