



THE CALOOSAHATCHEE BROMELIAD SOCIETY'S MERISTEM

January/ February 2017



CALOOSAHATCHEE BROMELIAD

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THE CALOOSAHATCHEE BROMELIAD SOCIETY

**January Meeting– Sunday, Jan 15th
February Meeting– Sunday, Feb 19th
At the FMLC Garden Council Building**

**Reminder to the Officers and Major Committee
Chairs– We will be meeting at 10:30AM before
the meeting; check with Pete about location.**

Our new meeting place is the Ft. Myers– Lee County Garden Council Building 2166 Virginia Ave. Fort Myers. It is north of the Edison Gardens parking lot and about 1/2 miles north of our previous meeting location— Covenant Presbyterian Church. Virginia Ave is approximately 3 miles north of the intersection of Colonial Blvd. and McGregor Blvd. and the 2nd Street north of the Edison Gardens

Doors open at 12:30PM for Meeting Setup

The Workshop begins at 1:15PM

Please bring food, Raffle and Show and Tell Plants

Membership Sales are permitted at the Jan meeting.
Membership Sales are not permitted at the Feb meeting.

The Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society is an active Affiliate of:



Cryptanthus Society



BSI



FCBS



FM/LC GC

January Program

“Home Movies of Someone Else's Home” By Dr. Larry Giroux

In the 1980s and 1990s, we didn't have all these fancy hybrids to brighten up our gardens and patios. Instead, the trend was to try to collect species and to display these plants and demonstrate how well we could grow them. Of course this was also the beginning of the hybridizing era. It was people like John Andersen of Corpus Christi Texas, Dennis Cathcart of Sarasota, Florida, Sam and Hattie Lou Smith of Fort Myers, Florida and Wally Berg of Sarasota, Florida, who traveled to those exotic places and endured the poor traveling conditions to bring back those species for us to enjoy. There are few collectors who would recognize the initialism BAB on a label. BAB stands for Berg –Anderson –Brazil. It was associated with a number to identify specific plants brought back from Brazil by Wally Berg and John Anderson. This collecting duo tried to bring back at least three plants of each species. One was kept by Wally, one was kept by John in Texas and one was given to the late Harry Luther, who was the chief curator at the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens in Sarasota and Director of the Bromeliad Identification Center (BIC). A great many of the bromeliads at Selby Gardens were acquired in this manner by collectors such as Berg and Anderson.

Following that passing of Wally Berg, his wife invited Gene McKenzie and myself for a visit, at which time I was allowed to video the famous “Berg Cage”. It wasn't too long afterwards that the collection was eventually donated and sold.

I invite you to attend the January CBS meeting and to see a bit of Bromeliad history.

February Program

“Billbergias are Awesome” By Dave Johnston

Dave Johnston has been the owner and operator of Bromeliads Galore in Pinellas Park for over 20 years. Many of us have known him from the many events such as the FCBS Extravaganzas, Society Sales and WBC's. He always carries his “Inventory Book” where ever he goes in the hope of acquiring something new or telling a bromeliad collector if he has that sought after plant. I think this will be the 4th or 5th program Dave has given to the CBS. Each has been well received and accompanied by plants for exhibit and sale. I'm sure this presentation on the Genus: Billbergia, will be no different. Dave will be bringing plants for sale.

Holiday Party

Another Holiday Season has past and we have again enjoyed a perfect party. Food, Raffles, Games, Friendship and Friendship plants all made this event a great success. Many thanks to Carly Sushil and her family, Betsy Burdette and all who con-

tributed. I'm not embarrassed to say that I can't wait until April for our next Party. Our Society does a lot of things right and having PARTIES is high up there on the list! Thanks all!

Pitcairnia

By Steve Hoppin and Larry Giroux

All photos by Larry Giroux & Steve Hoppin until otherwise noted.

Pitcairnia is a genus of the botanical Family Bromeliaceae, Subfamily Pitcairnioideae. The Genus Pitcairnia has the second most species of any of the bromeliad family (after *Tillandsia*). Prior to 1999, there was a distinction between the Genera Pepinia and Pitcairnia, both for species and crosses of the two genera, resulting in the bigeneric *xPitinia*, when a cross of the two genera was made. When the Genus Pepinia was determined to be an invalid genus, plants with the *Pepinia* designation were changed to *Pitcairnia* and all bigenerics are simply *Pitcairnia*. Even today there may be plants labelled incorrectly.

Habitat: Almost all *Pitcairnia*s are terrestrial or saxicolous, which means you need to grow them in a media or their roots need to be able to draw nutrients and water from a media, whether it is the soil in a pot, humus between the fissures in rocks or leaf mold in the crotch of trees. Although there are some *Pitcairnia* that appear to be growing epiphytically, their roots are often supplementing any leaf absorption of food and water. The majority of this genus can be found in moist rainforests, but its distribution from Northern Mexico throughout the Gulf and Caribbean and South America, includes all kinds of environments where they thrive. (See map, from Flora Neotropica by Smith and Downs) It is believed that a bird may have carried seeds from South America to Africa to explain the one species of bromeliad, *Pitcairnia feliciana* found in western Africa.



Appearance: There has been a running joke with gardeners... you've been smoking that pitcairnia?? Pitcairnia have been called the "grass" or "weed" bromeliad because of the appearance of the leaves of most of the plants of this genus. There are some exceptions such as *Pitcairnia tabuliformis* and *burle-marxii* and even variegated species such as *echinata* 'Variegata', but most are relatively soft leafed, green with spines that tend to get more dangerous toward the base of the leaves.

As a traveler to nearly any of the countries south of the mainland US, except a few (See map), you could likely spot a *Pitcairnia* species in habitat.

Many have bract-like stiff, sharp, pointed leaves encircling the bulbous base of individual plants. The plants send up offsets to create clumps. These are somewhat difficult to separate and usually you just wait until you have a large clump, remove it from its pot and saw the group into halves or quarters and replant. If planted in the ground they can spread into massive groupings, particularly in warm, moist climates like Hawaii. If potted, they can out grow the pot and start sending shoots out ever hole and cracking or tearing the pot.

Propagation: Many have brightly colored and conspicuous inflorescences and sprays of tubular flowers in shades of red and orange, which explains why hummingbirds are *Pitcairnia*'s pollinators along with insects, moths and small bats. Although the inflorescences tend to grow upright, some have a unique characteristic of growing horizontally or along the ground for long distances. Dry capsules containing the seeds are readily formed, which split to release numerous light weight seeds that can be air borne or can be carried away by passersby.

Care: *Pitcairnia*s are a hungry group of plants. It is recommended that you make available a sufficient quantity of slow release fertilizer in the mix when potting or repotting up these plants. Fertilizing with a diluted water soluble general purpose fertilizer in a ¼ strength each time you water can be of great benefit. Remember you're not foliar feeding, so be sure that the fertilizer gets to the roots. During the dry season it is wise to use a saucer under your plants. And since clay pots tend to dry out the mix very quickly, grow your pitcairnia in larger plastic pots. When the temperature is consistently low and the light diminished, you can cut down on the amount of fertilizer. Some pitcairnia actually become dormant and lose their leaves. Less water is also necessary during the wintertime. If kept properly hydrated, Pitcairnia can tolerate cool temperatures but not necessarily cold temperatures. The condition of their roots and their ability to absorb sufficient food and moisture is imperative to the health of your plants. If you suspect that your plant is root bound, occasionally pull it out of its pot then check it. It may be time to divide the plant and repot the divisions. Any good potting mix with the addition of pine bark, sponge rock, perlite or such to keep the mix loose, is ideal. Properly spaced plants growing in a well ventilated area are seldom bothered by disease or insects. If you allow your pitcairnia to propagate into large dense clumps they may be more prone to disease. Cut out dead leaves and provide air circulation will reduce this chance. Occasional scale or mealybugs present problems. Treatment with systemic Imidacloprid is a reliable treatment and preventative.

When not in bloom many pitcairnia appear as un-interesting green grass; however there are several, which are discolored with reddish under leaf surfaces and even some with color leaves that change with the seasons. This genus excel in their flashy inflorescences of red, orange, green, yellow, purple and flower petals tinged with black. The collection of pictures displayed in this issue, are of species and hybrids. I have heard from some growers that you can seldom improve on nature and that hybrids are not as attractive as those created by evolution. *Pitcairnia* is an exception to that rule as you can see in these photos.



On the front cover are four *Pitcairnia* hybrids. Steve Hoppin was working with available *Pitcairnia* species and hybrids in the 1990's. The efforts of his work produced this unregistered cross of 'Bud Curtis' (a Jim Irvin hybrid) and 'Coral Horizon' (another Jim Irvin hybrid). The very full, 3D, inflorescence is really a beauty. It is a shame that it was never registered or



released. Another of Steve's hybrids (its dark red inflorescence seen above), *Pitcairnia imbricata* (species) crossed with *carinata* (species), has suffered a similar fate. It is possible that these two outstanding cultivars will re-emerge within our collection, right now we can only appreciate the photos. The third photo is of *Pitcairnia smithiorum*, a species named for the collectors, Sam and Hattie Lou Smith, which was discovered in Peru. A grouping of these plants in bloom is a memorable vision. Many of the cultivars with a full, 3D inflorescence were made with *smithiorum* as one of their parents.



The last picture on the cover is a hybrid by Jim Pearce named *Pitcairnia* 'Flaming Arrow'. He created this from two species having their own unique character— *Pitcairnia pseudoundulata*, a wide petiolated leafed plant whose inflorescences emerge below its foliage and *Pitcairnia burle-marxii*, which is a small plant with wide discolor leaves and an upright inflorescence. (See picture on back cover.)



(Above and left) *Pitcairnia* 'Stephen Hoppin' made by Dr. Sam Smith is *smithiorum* x *sanquinea*. It has traits of both parents... the cone shaped inflorescence and the wide, petiolate discolor leaves.



A Jim Irvin hybrid of *rubronigriflora* and *smithiorum* called *Pitcairnia* 'Beaujolais'



(Left) Dr. Sam Smith made this outstanding cultivar with 'Beaujolais' x *smithiorum* and named it in honor of his wife Hattie Lou— *Pitcairnia* 'Hattie'. The dense cone shaped inflorescence could almost be mistaken for certain types of ginger inflorescences!

Not all of the hybrids are as flashy as the ones you see here. Jim Irvin's *P.* 'Coral Horizon' (*rubornigriflora* x *coralline*) has an inflorescence, which can be easily mistaken for one of the species.





A fantastic sight for visitors to Cairns, Australia is this large groups of pitcairnia within the dividers of a downtown streets. You can see a similar sight in Hawaii in gardens everywhere..

Many of the more attractive species have been introduced into cultivation and since most come from countries where exportation laws are less strict, we should have many more introduced. Below are a few of those *Pitcairnia*s that are readily available. (From left to right) *Pit. maidifolia*- this plant has yellow, green and peach colored bracts and cream colored petals. *Pit. imbricata* has a tubular red inflorescence with bright yellow flowers that progressively bloom from the base of the growing inflorescence. *Pit. amblyosperma* (seen here) and *xanthocalyx* are two frequently seen yellow petal plants. A variegated form of *Pit. echinata* is now in cultivation; its inflorescence is branched and is orange. *Pit. atrorubens* has an inflorescence mimicking a water fountain with pale yellow flowers. The distinctive *Pit. undulata* and *pseudoundulata* (seen here) are available on occasions.



CBS Minutes for November 20th 2016

Location: Fort Myers-Lee County Garden Council Bldg., 2166 Virginia Ave., Fort Myers, FL 33901

Meeting called to order at 1:14 PM. By President Peter Diamond. **Attendance total:** 51 New members: 0

Guest: 6, Wes Robinson, Addison Denty, Phillip Fenner, Marjorie Cartwright, Amy Blakeley, Charlie Birdsong

Workshop: “Dividing Offsets” by Bruce McAlpin. Bruce brought in some of his plants and used plants brought in by members for demonstration on how and when to remove pups. He suggests looking for what’s blooming now and take pups from them to enter in next years’ show. He wears thick elbow length gloves when he divides spiny bromeliads. In the winter he only separates pups that are 2/3 the size of the mother, he waits for warmer weather for all others. He uses lava rocks to stabilize large pups and also cinder blocks for others to make sure they stay upright and water remains in the tank. Chattahoochee gravel is also used. He cleans his pots and sidewalks with about a 10% Clorox bleach solution, and he sprays his entire bromeliad collection with Imidacloprid twice a year- wearing a full body suit, hat, gloves and uses a mask/ respirator. He does not spray his pineapples when fruiting. He reminded us that a workshop chair is still needed. He will ask Brian Weber to do another naming workshop in the coming year.

Business Meeting called to order at 2:35 PM. By Peter Diamond

Announcements:

Our holiday party is on December 18th at Carly Sushil’s house. Bring chairs, a table if you like, food to share and nice clean bromeliads or other quality plants and related items you would like to have. Betsy has games and a hat contest (Most colorful, Most likely to be worn by Santa all year long and Most likely to be worn by Scrooge) with prizes waiting for us. Carly will have balloons on the mailbox. Please start arriving around 12:00 PM with your food and we will start eating around 1:00-1:30PM. Vicky Chirnside FCBS rep. reported that in Miami they are pulling out bromeliads and threatening to shut down commercial growers. Anything Zika Virus related you can find on their website. She will send Larry an article by Peter Bock, along with other articles. If asked about Zika we will refer them to the appropriate sources/websites/articles. Dr. Teresa is no longer associated with the university, but she is continuing her research on the weevil. Vicky feels that the Florida Council needs to support her as Teresa will be looking for grants, and a PayPal account has been set up through the Council. The Extravaganza is at the Clarion Hotel near the University of South Florida in Tampa. She has some registration forms in the back. Dates are August 4th - 6th. See Vicky/Registration form for details. Dr. Larry – Election unanimous decision. President: Pete Diamond, Vice President: Dale Kammerlohr, Treasurer: Betty Ann Prevatt, Co-Secretaries: Carly Sushil and Sharalee Dias. Betsy- Make sure you put up sale signs the Friday before the sale and take them down on Sunday after the sale. Send email for advertising to anyone you can think of.

Program: “A Bromeliad Autumn in Australia” Presented by Charlie Birdsong
Charlie lives in Baton Rouge LA, is a Bromeliad Judge and travels to Australia where his daughter lives half the year on the gold coast and the other in Fort Lauderdale. He

showed us a wonderful power point presentation of many of the conferences/shows/nurseries he has attended and judged in while there. They call their shade houses “Bush Houses” He has seen most all genera there and over 60% of the plants are ones he sees around here. Australia has major restrictions on importing so they grow a lot from seeds. At shows he sees many unnamed *Vriesea* and Classification tends to divide their Neoregelias into mini and standard groups. Some shows divide their categories into three levels, beginner, intermediate and advanced growers. There tends to be a lot of hybridizers there. At the Gold Coast Bromeliad show there were many intergeneric x*Vrieslandias* for sale. He showed beautiful bromeliads from these shows, sales, nurseries, and conferences. Australia has their major conference in the opposite years of our World Conference. It is also hard to get plants out of Australia, as it took him 91 days to get his plants back to LA even with all his permits. If you do ever need a permit get it for the Family *Bromeliaceae* not *Bromelia*.

The Annual March Auction

Your next newsletter will not be sent out until early March,. March is the month for our annual Fund raising Auction. So I thought we might start talking about it now!

We split the money made after expenses with the CBS and the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies, who uses it to help to continue research and the eradication of the Mexican Weevil, also known as the “Evil Weevil”. For over 2 decades the CBS has been a major contributor to the fight against this weevil, which is decimating native bromeliads in habitat in our State and bromeliads in our collections.

Each year we ask the membership to donate nice plants and plant related items to be auctioned. These can include bromeliads, orchids, other tropical plants, tools, art work and collectibles. The items are split between a “silence auction” and a regular auction. This makes it possible for our members to bring in desirable, less expensive items as well as the possibly higher ticket items. All donations are appreciated. There are always bargains to be had and we always have fun.

We do the auction in lieu of our March meeting. We still have refreshments, but no sales. The Society business is kept to a minimum. The first hour or so is for setup and there is a lot of work to do in a short time so we will need volunteers. Specific instructions and an outline of the activities will be sent in the next newsletter, but please start searching around for some nice items to donate to the Auction.



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Unless New members joined in October, November or December and for existing members, your dues are due by the January Meeting. Dues are \$15 for single and \$20 for dual per year. Please pay Betty Ann Prevatt as soon as possible.