

# The Bromeliad Blade

Newsletter of the  
San Diego  
Bromeliad Society

May 2019

VOLUME LIV

NUMBER 5

## President's Message

By Morlane O'Donnell

Happy Anniversary to SDBS! We have now been in existence 54 years. There will be a cake for all to enjoy as we celebrate this occasion.

Last month KPBS presented an episode of "A Growing Passion" which featured bromeliads. If you did not have a chance to see it, you missed a treat. A few of our members, Juliana Raposo, Pam Koide-Hyatt, and Scott Sandel were interviewed and Steve Zolezzi and David Kennedy made cameo appearances. It was a testament as to how beautiful and diverse bromeliads are. Missed the show on TV? It's available online at [agrowingpassion.com](http://agrowingpassion.com).

Dan Kinnard has a proposition for interested members during the May meeting. I won't give anything away,

you'll just have to be there to find out what this is all about. May is one of the busiest times of the year for SDBS. There are still seats available for the garden tour on May 18th. This trip has been over a year in the making. Andrew Wilson gave a mini slide show presentation last meeting to whet our appetites for what will await us. The price of the tour includes lunch. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to see how



*A Growing Passion with Nan Sterman. Season 7, Episode 1, The Beautiful Bromeliad. [Watch episode online available now.](#)*

others incorporate bromeliads into their landscape. The Del Mar Fair display is coming along nicely. From the looks of the display plan, it will be something amazing. Nancy Groves and her committee have been hard at work planning this event.

Installation will begin around mid-May. Going to the fair and seeing the display live and in color is a must!

Don't forget the SDBS Show and Sale will be held next month on June 8th and 9th. Set-up will be on June 7th starting at 9:00 am. All members are encouraged to lend some plants for the display. The more plants there are, the more impact the display will have. There will be an incentive with

more details forthcoming. If you wish to sell plants, you are strongly encouraged to bring at least five plants for the display. Guidelines will be available at the May meeting. There are volunteer opportunities available for sign up at the meeting too. Friday set-up, Sunday tear down and clean-up, as well as security, are areas in which

there is a particular need. The show is a great time to enjoy the camaraderie of fellow members and spread the joy of growing bromeliads. May all your bromeliads be prospering. Safe and happy growing!

# April Highlights

## Talk

We learned a lot with Dr. Terrie Bert who gave us a presentation on bromeliad ecology. Based on a trove of hard data, she drew interesting conclusions that help inform gardeners how best to grow our bromeliads.

## Show and Tell

### Al Evans

*Aechmea recurvata* x *comata*

### Jim de Forest

*Tillandsia butzii* hard leaf

### Dan Kinnard

*Tillandsia sprengeliana*  
from Espirito Santo, Brazil

### Dave Kennedy

*Tillandsia Fasciculata* x *ionantha*  
*Dyckia* 'Dakota'

### Robert Kopfstein

*Billbergia* 'Nita'

### Andrew Wilson

*Tillandsia ixiooides*  
from southern South America

### Scott Sandel

*Neoregelia* 'Monet'  
red with freckles  
Neo 'Tatiana'

### Mary Yan Lee

*Billbergia* hybrid

### Pam Peters

*Tillandsia* 'Ed Doherty' (*aeranthos* x *leonamiana*)  
*Cryptanthus* 'Strawberries Flambee'  
*Tillandsia* 'King Cobra'

### Morlane O'Donnell

*Tillandsia leonamiana* *photo*  
Basket of Skotak neos: Mirage,

Tamaris, Ufo, Charlie Brown  
*photo*

### Nancy Groves

*Tillandsia duratii*

And more... Neo 'Redneck' *photo*  
– who brought this? Xiang Li and Lucia Velasquez also brought plants.

## Auction

*Neoregelia* 'Star Wars'  
*Aechmea* 'DeLeon' dark  
*Alcantarea brasiliiana*  
*Dyckia* 'Heaven and Hell'  
*Neoregelia* 'Lucifer'  
*Tillandsia pseudobaileyi* x  
'Haley's Comet'



More from Show and Tell: The look on Nancy Groves face when asked why *T. duratii* grows flower spikes in opposite directions. The minute *T. sprengeliana*, a big clump at that. Andrew Wilson admiring *T. ixioides*, Al Evans proudly holding this ornamental *A. recurvata* x *comata*, and detail of plant. This one should be registered.



## Upcoming Events

### SDBS Meetings

May 11, 2019

SDBS Monthly Meeting

Balboa Park, Casa del Prado, room 104

[www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org](http://www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org)

May 18, 2019

SDBS Private Garden Tour

[www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org](http://www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org)

We still have room  
in the garden tour!  
Sign up at the May  
meeting!

### SDBS Events 2019

SDBS Display at the Del Mar Fair

Del Mar Fairgrounds

June 1 – July 4, 2019

SDBS Annual Show & Sale

Balboa Park, Casa del Prado room 101

June 8 & 9, 2019

### Monthly Meetings

1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday, 6:30 PM

San Diego Orchid Society

Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 101

[www.sdorchids.com](http://www.sdorchids.com)

2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday, 1 PM

San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society

Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 101

[www.sdcss.net](http://www.sdcss.net)

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday, 7 PM

San Diego Epiphyllum Society

Balboa Park, Case Del Prado, Room 101

[www.SanDiegoEpi.org](http://www.SanDiegoEpi.org)

2<sup>nd</sup> Monday, 5:45 PM

San Diego Horticultural Society

Congregation Beth Israel (CBI)

9001 Towne Centre Drive

San Diego, CA 92122

[sdhort.org](http://sdhort.org)

## May Meeting

by Andrew Wilson

### Talk

It has become noticed by Bromeliad Society International (BSI) that help is needed in getting people like ourselves accustomed to many of the bromeliad names, particularly the new ones. So, a presentation is being prepared in that cause and we in San Diego have been asked to help.

That is the purpose of our meeting in May. We'll show the draft that BSI has put together (example of single page below) and you get to critique it and offer suggestions for changes to the text, the images and overall. Come with your ideas; don't be shy to ask questions or suggest improvements. All but one of the 39 known species of *Lindmania* are native to Venezuela. A few also occur in neighboring Guyana and northern Brazil.



## Plant Table

by Stephen Zolezzi

May plant table will include member donations and duplicate plants from the April table plants from Florida. Auction plants are from Tillandsia International. Members are always encouraged to bring their extras for future tables.

# June Show & Sale Help Needed

By Juliana Raposo

SDBS Annual Show & Sale is coming soon! We don't have a monthly meeting in June, as our show happens on the second weekend of the month, June 8 and 9.

## Sale

We will have a great selection of plants from the best bromeliad growers in California. Expect to see Birdrock Tropicals, LiveArt Plantscapes, Cuffel Farms Tillandsias, and many others. Our SDBS President Morlane O'Donnell is sales

chair, talk to her if you want to be a vendor.

Sellers, please be sure that each plant has 2 tags attached and that **both tags have your member ID# and the sale price clearly written**. At our last Show and Sale, when we were busiest with a long line, we had several customers that purchased up to 30 plants and when we started adding the tags, at least one tag had only the name of the plant. We had to stop everything and try to locate that plant to get the

seller's name and ID#. Alternatively, if you have small plants such as tillandsias, you may use one tag if you draw a line on the tag where it is to be cut off or better yet, start a cut on the tag that will separate the plant name from your member ID# and price. Be sure the price/ID# are on the part that we remove. If everyone does this, it will make the sales part of the show and sale proceed much more smoothly.

We will need volunteers for the sale such as cashier help, tag pullers and security. Look for the sign-up sheet at the May meeting. Al and Kerry will deploy their expertise once again handling the sale transactions.

## Show

This year our show will be much different. We are painting with bromeliads! Bring your plants, the bigger the better, to be part of the bromeliad exhibit. The heart of the show is an eye-catching naturalistic display showcasing the beauty and variety of bromeliads that we grow in SoCal.

We are planning an island of bromels set amidst foliage and driftwood. Central to the exhibit, a slideshow presenting bromeliads growing around the world, in all-day rotation. Our exhibit will highlight different bromeliad genera, species vs. hybrids, and will be educational, like a mini conservatory. It's a perfect opportunity for the general public to fall in love with broms.

As you may have noticed this is not a judged show! Your less than perfect plants are more than welcome to join the fun – of course, clean and healthy plants only please. We need lots of bromeliads to make this work. We need potted broms, we need hangers.



**San Diego  
Bromeliad  
Society**

presents  
its annual  
**SHOW &  
SALE**



**Saturday & Sunday • June 8 & 9**

Balboa Park Casa del Prado, Room 101, 10:00 - 4:00

[SanDiegoBromeliadSociety.org](http://SanDiegoBromeliadSociety.org)

All show plants are to be registered before the event. This will help us plant the exhibit and streamline the check-in process on setup day.

**Pre-register your show plants here:**

<https://forms.gle/CY1DQVRPbztVJFq5>

Vendors are strongly encouraged to bring a minimum of 5 plants to the display. Vendors who lend a substantial amount of plants will get special signage.

Non-vendor club members, here's the incentive – First 10 members who bring 10 plants or more on

Friday get a coupon for \$10 OFF on your purchase during the weekend sale.

All plants entered in the exhibit will be properly checked in on Friday and accounted for when you collect them on Sunday. Volunteer opportunities include plant check-in, display prep and show hosting.

Please consider volunteering to help. The sign-up sheet will be at the May meeting. There will be an online signup as well. For questions about the show, get in touch with Juliana Raposo, show chair.

**More Ways to Help with the SDBS Show & Sale**

Share the show event with your Facebook friends:

Are you a member of other plant societies and garden clubs? Ask your club to advertise the SDBS show. We will reciprocate.

Write a post about the show on Nextdoor, to attract people in your neighborhood.

Take a few flyers and pass them out to friends, family or drop off at nurseries.



*The SDBS display at the world bromeliad conference was a huge success!*

# Aechmea Brevicollis Growing Trial

## May - November 2018

By Dan Kinnard



Eloise and Dan have a few *Aechmea brevicollis* seedlings that we will use for a growing trial. The trial is open to 20 members who wish to participate.

Here's how it will work: Grow your plant for the next 6 months as you think it will best grow. Fill in the information requested on the form accompanying your seedling and any other growing observations, revelations, or discoveries. Bring this form and your plant (Dead or Alive) to the meeting in November. We will discuss the results.

Here's how it will work: Grow your plant for the next 6 months as you think it will best grow. Fill in the information requested on the form accompanying your seedling and any other growing observations, revelations, or discoveries. Bring this form and your plant (Dead or Alive) to the meeting in November. We will discuss the results.

That's all there is to it. A link to one set of growing information is included on the form. You might want to look up additional information from your favorites sources to see if they have additional tips.

*Aechmea brevicollis* can be grown inside, outside, or in an open terrarium. It is a bit of a challenge to grow but not impossible. When mature, they are small plants about 6 or 8 inches tall.

# It's a Puya Year!

By Juliana Raposo

Puyas are poetic. They lay around unremarkable, for years, maybe decades, until one day bursting into bloom with some of the most striking inflorescences in the plant kingdom.

In nature they inhabit steep Andean hillsides that look like Martian landscapes. They cling to life where most living things are absent. Some species of Puya grow in such remote areas that few people have seen, let alone photographed, their incredible blooms. These flowers come in tall spears that can grow way overhead, including perches for the birds that pollinate them. For the birdies they also produce copious amounts of sweet nectar, sometimes enough to fill a bucket. The flowers themselves come in multiples and may have iridescent colors or be covered in a wool that resembles cotton candy.

It's a spectacle that goes on unnoticed by human eyes.

In cultivation, only the bravest gardeners will tackle this beast. Most puyas grow into big clumps, requiring an estate-size backyard. The vicious spines make it practically ungroomable. The gardener must resign to many years of waiting and mysterious perfect conditions - to rejoice, when they finally deliver.

This year, puyas are blooming in San Diego all over. We heard from Dan Kinnard and Eloise Lau, and Andrew Wilson, who grow several of the big types.

## The Puya Puzzle

By Andrew Wilson

Each springtime the same question comes up 'Are they going to do it this year'? Puyas, at least those from the Andes and grown in this area, have the reputation as plants you cannot be sure about when it comes to flowering. Some say it's because of

our mild climate with its lack of winter chill, some say that it's our low rainfall and for the rest, that it's just a matter of time.

Last year we heard from Brian Kemble at the Ruth Bancroft Garden located east of the San Francisco Bay area. He said the flowering had been reliable there for as long as he could remember. Compared to San Diego, its rainfall is higher and winter nights are cooler. Several years ago, we heard from John Trager at the Huntington Botanic Gardens where, he says, blooming is reliable every year. Rainfall is higher than in San Diego but nights in winter are a bit cooler. On the southwest coast of England, definitely cooler all year and with consistent rainfall and no dry season, Puya chilensis was brought there a hundred and fifty years ago and blooms every year. In contrast, at Santa Barbara Puya alpestris blooms infrequently as does P. chilensis, just twice in thirty years. If, anyone can draw definitive conclusions from these statements, do let me know!

In any case, puyas are doing well in San Diego this year. At San Diego Botanic Garden P. alpestris is now in bloom. In Dan and Eloise's garden the high mountain tropical puyas, P. lanata and P. aequatorialis have come into bloom (see last month's newsletter).

They had waited about fifteen years for these rarely grown species to bloom. In my garden the good news continues with P. alpestris showing eleven heads in one clump.

This is good news because it is the fourth year in a row for the expanding clump to bloom, following eight years with nothing to show.



Andrew Wilson's Puya alpestris, first spike to bloom





The colony of *P. alpestris* at Wilson's is about to bloom en masse. Below, *P. chilensis* is huge but hasn't bloomed yet.

Maybe these plants need to become large to produce about as many pups as flower spikes in order to maintain the clump. Perhaps patience is all that's needed? Perhaps, but it's a patience that can accept disappointments as well. Right next to the blooming clump is a smaller one of the same species but from a different clone. Planted at the same time over twelve years ago it has yet to show bloom. An even greater test of faith is needed to undergo the trials of *P. chilensis*, magnificent when it does bloom. Several specimens have grown into large clumps up to 8 feet tall from pups planted twenty years ago, all without any blooms to show yet and all in abundant good health, preparing to bloom at some time in the future. Some members may have puyas like these. If so, let us know about them. It might help getting the 'when and if' questions answered.





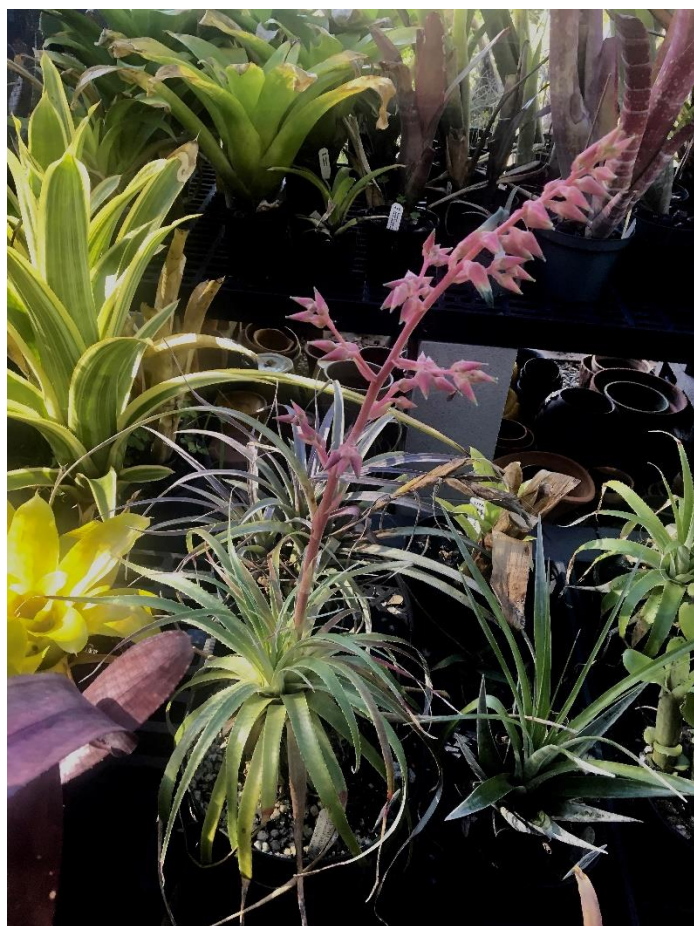
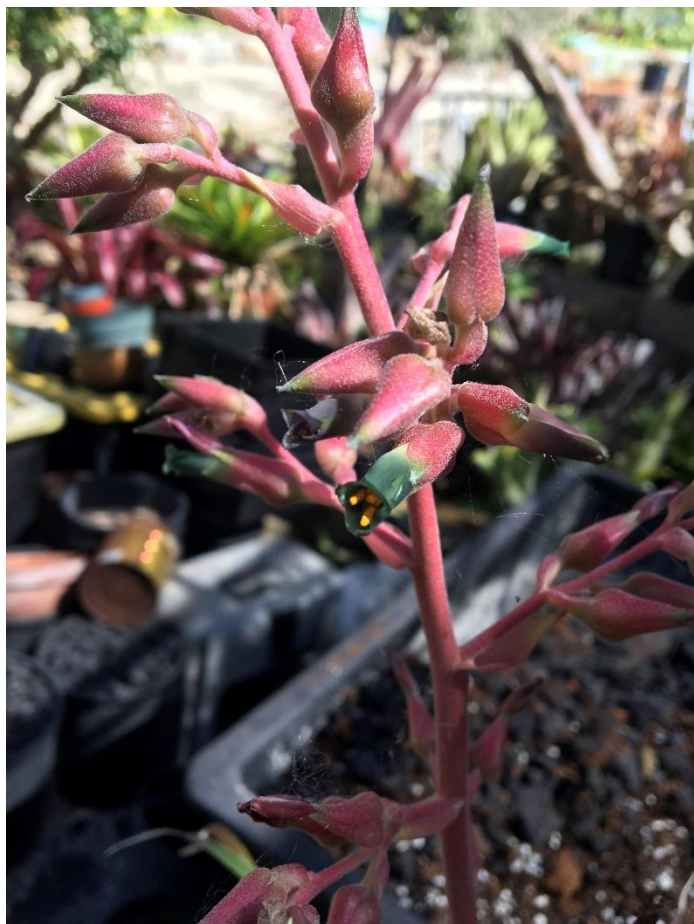
At Dan & Eloise's

Above: *Puya lanata* in the landscape.

Upper right: *Puya spathacea* detail.

Lower right: *P. spathacea* in the shadehouse. First bloom for the plant grown from seed collected at Tucuman, Argentina (1500 m) on 11/10/04. A small plant that is only a little over a foot high with the bloom spike.

Next page: *Puya aequatorialis* with 7 ft tall spikes and detail of flowers.





*Puya aequatorialis*



## SDBS 2019

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## Expert Tip

From Dr. Terrie Bert, who spoke last month at the meeting and furnished the plant table.

She sent a tip about rooting bromeliads that may be a little difficult or that might arrive in less than optimal condition.

*"They might root best in pure perlite with a bit of time release fertilizer. Harry Luther taught me that trick. Would you pass that info on to the club members?"*

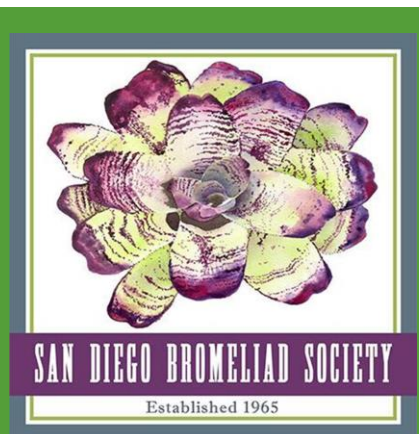
Harry Luther, the self-taught bromeliad savant who described / helped describe countless species of bromeliads, and probably the top bromeliad expert of all time. This must be a good tip!

When he unexpectedly passed away in 2012, an entire issue of the BSI Journal was made to commemorate his legacy. You can find it online at

[http://journal.bsi.org/PDF/V62/BSI\\_V62\(6\).pdf](http://journal.bsi.org/PDF/V62/BSI_V62(6).pdf)



## THE BROMELIAD BLADE



Newsletter of the San Diego Bromeliad Society

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To send material for publication, please contact Juliana at [julianadraposo@gmail.com](mailto:julianadraposo@gmail.com)

Make sure to submit your contribution before the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month for inclusion in the next newsletter.

## SDBS MEETING

The club meets on the second Saturday of the month at 10am in Balboa Park, Casa del Prado, room 104.

## SDBS WEBPAGE

[www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org](http://www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org)