

The Bromeliad Blade

Newsletter of the
San Diego
Bromeliad Society

June 2020

VOLUME LV

NUMBER 6

President's Message

By Morlane O'Donnell

Greetings for month four of the COVID-19 quarantine. This month would have been our annual show and sale but unfortunately that is not to be. Tentatively our exhibition and sale will be held in lieu of our regular meeting on Nov. 14th. More information will be given in the future.

I'd like to thank Scott Sandel for organizing and hosting "Coffee in the Garden" on Zoom, June 6th. Hopefully, we can have more of those while the quarantine lasts. As for the future of our monthly meetings, including the annual picnic in August, it's too far in advance to make a decision as to whether to hold them or not. We will have them only if it will be safe for everyone to attend.

I know some of your comfort levels with using Zoom. I would like to know the opinions of the members I haven't heard from previously about how you would feel using the Zoom



From the Zoom meeting: Don Nelson's Billbergia 'Darth Vader'

technology for demonstrations, programs, Show and Tell, etc. Zoom is relatively easy to use and you can still participate if you don't have a camera on your receptive device. It may take a few tries to log on at first, but eventually you can get into the

meeting. Email me at morlane.odonnell@att.net with your comments and concerns. I'm also interested in what subjects you'd like covered during the meetings.

The future is uncertain as to when we can meet again in person. Meanwhile, enjoy the colors of your beautiful bromeliads. Now is the time to tidy up and remove dead leaves, repot overgrown plants, and separate pups. It's also time to send Juliana pictures and write about your observations. Is there a special plant that is near and dear to you? Are you noticing a big change in the growth of your plant/plants due to the weather? Would you like to know how members in different areas of the county are growing a specific bromeliad? Chances are we all want to know. We need your pictures and articles!

You are also welcome to send Scott Sandel pictures for the website.

Here's to better news about the status of our meetings by July. Until then, happy and safe growing. Stay safe everyone and be patient.

Upcoming Events

SDBS Meetings

SDBS June Show & Sale CANCELLED
www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org

SDBS July Meeting
 (May be cancelled)
 Saturday, July 11, 2020 @ 10AM
 Balboa Park Casa del Prado, Room 104
 1650 El Prado, San Diego 92101
www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org

SDBS Events

SDBS Annual Show & Sale
 November 2020
 Location TBD
www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org

SDBS at San Diego County Fair
 CANCELLED

Other Monthly Meetings

1st Tuesday, 6:30 PM
 San Diego Orchid Society
 Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 101
www.sdorchids.com

2nd Saturday, 1 PM
 San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society
 Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 101
www.sdcss.net

2nd Wednesday, 7 PM
 San Diego Epiphyllum Society
 Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 101
www.SanDiegoEpi.org

2nd Monday, 5:45 PM
 San Diego Horticultural Society
 Congregation Beth Israel (CBI)
 9001 Towne Centre Drive
 San Diego, CA 92122
sdhort.org

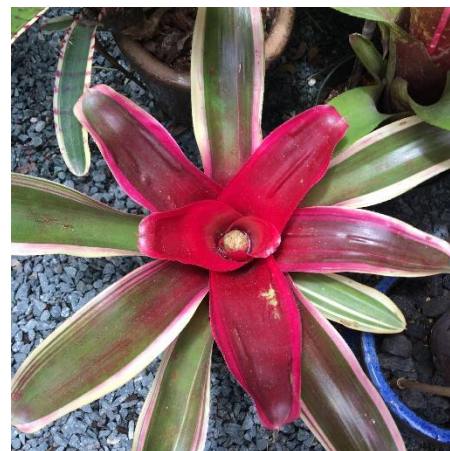
Mission Hills Garden Walk

Rescheduled for June 27
 See details on flyer in page 9

A Coffee in the Garden Online

by Scott Sandel

I hosted an online Coffee in the Garden Zoom meeting last Saturday. There were a few technical hiccups for a few folks, but it was a fun chance to socialize and share some of our blooming broms. After some idle chit-chat, I kicked it off with a demonstration of how I have been propagating Vrieseas by removing and potting up offsets. For those who missed it, I summarized the information in the article below. For our show-and-tell, I presented a couple of Neoregelia hybrids that have variegated Neoregelia carolinae in the cross. Several members had plants to show as well, and a few photos of the plants are shown below; still others will be posted on the website. Email Scott if you would like to be put on the list for future Zoom get-togethers.



Starring on Zoom: T. tectorum Ecuador by Nancy Groves, T. ionantha Huamelula by Andrew Wilson, and two Neo carolinae hybrids by Scott Sandel: Neo 'Red Pride' (top), followed by Neo 'Mendoza'.



Propagating Vriesea Offsets

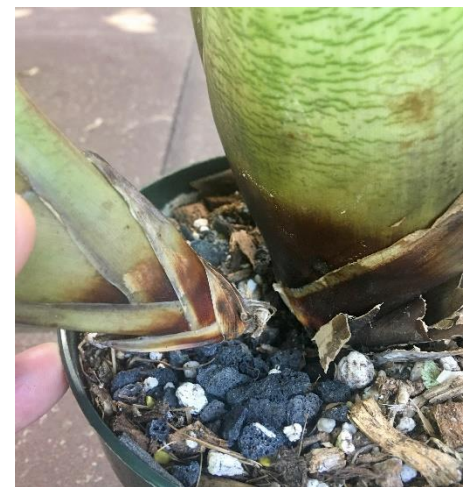
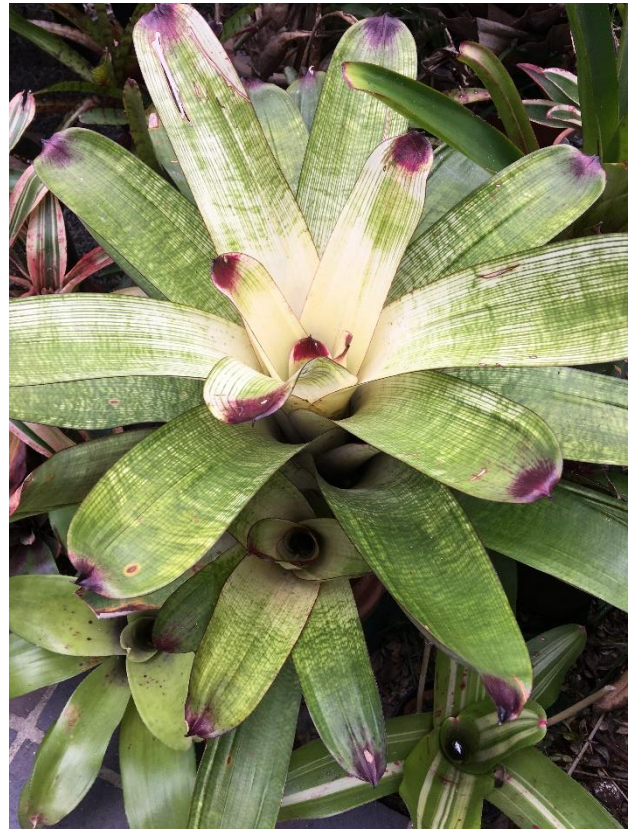
by Scott Sandel

At last Saturday's Zoom meeting, I gave an explanation of surgical offset removal. It's not an advanced subject for many bromeliad hobbyists, but it's fun to compare notes. The knife method works well for plants that produce offsets that are attached quite closely to the mother plant. Sometimes offsets are formed within the rosette of leaves, making it a challenge to do the surgery without damaging the mother plant too much! This method of using a sharp knife is suitable not only in *Vriesea* genus, but also in *Guzmanias* and mesic *Tillandsias*, and a well-sharpened knife is also useful on *Canistrum*, *Neoregelia*, *Nidularium*, *Werauhia* and *Wittrockia*, to name a few.

The gist of the procedure is that once the plant is big enough (about 1/3 of the "mother" plant), you take a very sharp paring knife and cut the offset off, preserving as much of the offset's base as possible. A goal is to take off the entire offset, which might mean taking off a small amount of the mother's tissue. It is easy to snap off the bottom of the offset if you try to wiggle it off without a thorough knife cut. Often, a lower leaf or two of the mother plant is carefully removed to expose the area where the offset is attached; this to allow good access to the attachment point, which is typically below the soil line. Once the offset is cut, leave the offset propped-up in an empty pot to let the cut tissue dry and 'harden-off'. This takes just a couple of days in warm weather. If the cut on the mother plant is extensive and is below the soil layer, I leave the soil pulled away from the wound to allow

the wound to callous over. Subsequently, I put a tablespoon of pumice or fine lava rock against the wound area.

The offset gets potted in a 5-6" pot with a porous epiphytic bromeliad mix. Everyone has their own recipe for bromeliads, and success is the best measure. For my *Vriesea* recipe, the largest component in the recipe is "seed starter" potting mix. (Seed-starter mix is simply a soil-less blend of perlite and pure peat.) For *Vrieseas*, a good mix is 50% seed-starter mix, 20% medium fir bark, 15% pumice, and 15% lava rock. The lava rock, obtained bagged at the Home Depot or Southwest Boulder, is either the 3/8" or 3/4" size -- or a blend of the two. Sometimes, large-aggregate size perlite is added for more drainage. This free-draining mix with some moisture-retention is suitable for most epiphytic bromeliads.



Top right: *Vriesea* 'Tasman' and pup.
Below, *vriesea* hybrid,
detail of separation and
offset removed.

To Zoom or Not to Zoom

by Andrew Wilson

The world's economies have been brought to a standstill. So have our meetings. But changes are stirring out there. Should we consider changes?

With extra time on our hands our gardens and collections have been receiving more attention than before this extensive time-out. With plentiful rain this year, absence of desiccating winds and a gradually warming springtime the growing conditions have been excellent. It is a shame that we cannot share the bounties of such fortune by going to see them in bloom. Instead, all we can do is share some plant images. Attractive as they may be they are devoid of conversation which accompanying text cannot replace.

As with so many other organizations, educational, political, commercial, or horticultural, we turn to the internet to provide a substitute. The software Zoom has risen rapidly in acceptance for that purpose. It enables schoolroom classes and meetings of all kinds, from small to hundreds of people, to be held without the need of anyone to undertake travel or undergo mixing with other people. At those meetings people could see and talk to each other as well as receive delivered talks and image-rich presentations. Sounding ideal for us a small group met in April to try it out. So long as everyone attending had a computer with a decent screen with a built-in or added mini-camera not much else was needed. Within a few weeks the group had met via internet, held discussions and shown plants to each other. There were some difficulties in establishing contact with each other but after a few tests it did seem to work, at least

for these enthusiasts. When a wider group of people on the Board were asked about its acceptability for our members the response was less confident. Not everyone had a computer with camera, built-in or added. Not everyone felt comfortable about the idea of meeting each other via the internet rather than directly with each other.

At the same time reports were flowing in about meetings being 'zombomb'ed by people breaking in to present offensive material, to stealing confidential information, to inserting computer viruses or simply to halt proceedings. Every type of meeting, from classroom to national debate, was subject to disruption. This happened in a small fraction of meetings, but break-ins were reported from all over the world. Zoom had to admit its failings and promise to correct the errors of its ways. The world awaits its corrections.



Andrew's Billbergia sanderiana at last week's zoom session, below, Andrew setting up a meeting

Faced with uncertainties about the software and about membership unease by some for any kind of computer-meeting, a decision was made (May newsletter) not to proceed with setting up Zoom meetings. By taking extra precautions in setting up meetings some, but not all of the security



concerns, can be reduced. An increasing number of institutions has proceeded to schedule and run classroom sessions, corporate meetings, webinars for city planning and financial marketing, to name but a few of its applications. Closer to home plant societies such as the Cactus & Succulent Society of America and the San Diego Orchid Society have run meetings that were well attended by members. Should we do so?

Recently Scott Sandel issued an invitation to members to join in a trial Zoom session. About twenty members wanted to attend but only about twelve of them managed to participate. There were some technical difficulties to be overcome as some members had not previously tried to use the software. It was easy enough if you got included but quite a few had difficulties getting into it. For the lucky dozen it worked well. They held discussions and showed their plants to each other. Both sound and vision were good. Scott demonstrated handling of pups on several vrieseas and questions were asked about potting mixes, such as why lava rock was used. The session showed that it could be successful and interesting. The underlying question was whether it could be made interesting and accessible to everyone.

A few training sessions would be needed as most members have not used Zoom before. Members should become acquainted with how to use it so that they can enjoy the meetings and not have to spend time figuring out how to get their computer into the arena. Once they do, they will find it a worthwhile experience. It would allow speakers from distant parts to present to us without having to travel here. We could show live presentations as well

as prepared talks. We could do Show and Tell, the announcements by Morlane could be made and questions could be asked about the next meeting, memberships, forthcoming shows and so forth. It is one way to fill the missing morning of each month. That is not to say that we are ready to do all that now. Much preparation would be needed for each session and that's a scary thought!

To continue as a club something must be done if we cannot meet in Balboa Park. Zoom (or an alternative) session, if there were sufficient enthusiasm, would be a way of meeting. It would not, of course, be a full replacement. Chatting via the internet is not the same as chatting in person, tasting the sandwiches and cookies, strolling around the room to examine the plant table. Nevertheless, it could keep us in touch. Without that sharing of time we lose connections and cease to be a club. Please, everyone, which would you prefer to see happen, stay put and await the all clear or proceed with setting up interactive meetings? Send replies NOW to Morlane.



Tillandsia fuchsii var. *fuchsii* by Tom Biggart

SDBS 2020

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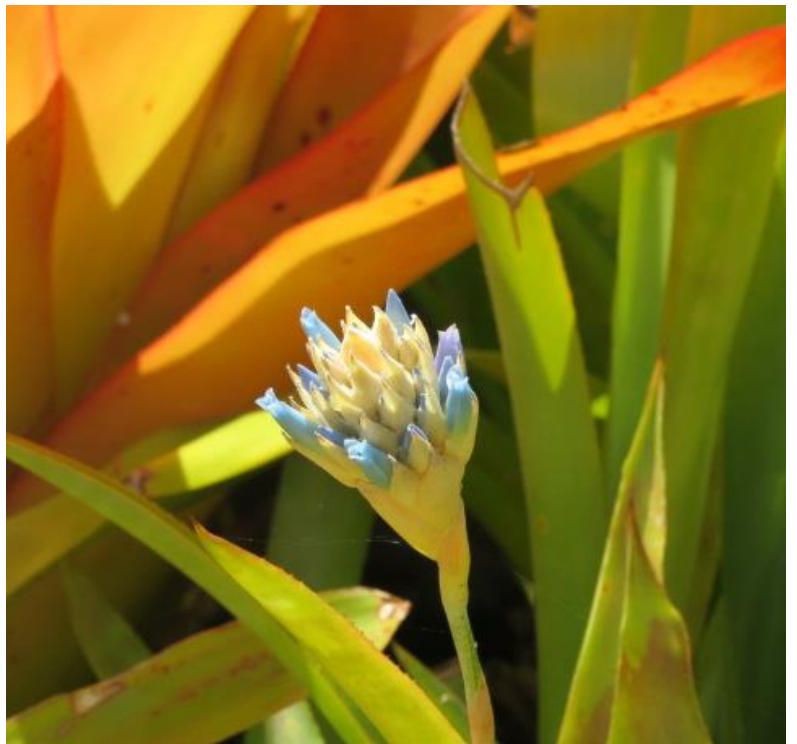
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Now Blooming



Above: Sandy Valone sent us this colorful picture of her bromeliads, tastefully accompanied by pigmy date palms. Many of the colorful broms were purchased from the collection of the late Don Patterson. I think it would have brought a smile to his face. Top right: *Quesnelia marmorata* blooming just in time for the June Blade. Photo by Juliana Raposo. Right: *Quesnelia seideliana* by Pam Peters. Below: *Aechmea fasciata* purple form and *Tillandsia flabellata* by Juliana Raposo.



Tillandsia Ionantha 'Peach'

by Al Evans



T. ionantha 'Peach', 'Druid' on the top right, detail of 'Peach' on lower right, and ionantha rubra below. Photos by Al Evans.

Mounting tillandsias on rocks, wood or clay projects is one of the things I enjoy most with Tillandsias. Ionanthas are one of the ideal tillandsias for such projects. Probably my first mounting was an



ionantha I had purchased at one of our sales that was sold to me as ionantha 'Peach'. I glued it to a piece of petrified wood and it has bloomed spectacularly nearly every May and now entirely covers the original piece of petrified wood it was mounted on. When in bloom, it has purple blooms set on a background of bright peach foliage which provides a spectacular presentation. I have been so impressed

by this particular variety of ionantha that I have tried ordering it from several different commercial growers. What they sell as 'ionantha peach' is an ionantha with peach colored foliage but white blooms. While impressive, I don't think it is nearly as spectacular as with the purple blooms (shown right). I may have to start taking cuttings from my original plant.

Another ionantha that I have received as ionantha 'peach' is ionantha 'druid'. It has more pale peach colored foliage also with the white blooms. "This variety was found by Drew Schulz of Fort Lauderdale. He had spent some time in Vera Cruz, Mexico, in 1971 where he collected a large quantity of *T. ionantha* plants". He noticed later that something seemed different about a few of the plants that he had brought back. They started to turn bright yellow and bloomed white



flowers, rather than the common

blushing red and purple flowers of most *T. ionantha* plants. Wanting to incorporate an air of mystery, the cultivar was named 'Druid' while also incorporating Drew's name (Beach, 1984, from the Air Plant Design Studio website).

Editor's note: Later, Al sent a shot of this aubergine, almost black-flowered ionantha (lower left). Bought as ionantha rubra. Who knows....

From New Zealand

I came across this stunning photo in the Bromeliad Society of New Zealand Journal. Thanks to Dave Anderson, editor, and John Lambert, Photographer, who were so kind to let us publish it.

The tui is a nectar-loving New Zealand native bird that developed a taste for bromeliad nectar. Like an oversized hummingbird, it is seen here sipping from *Vriesea phillipo-coburgii*.

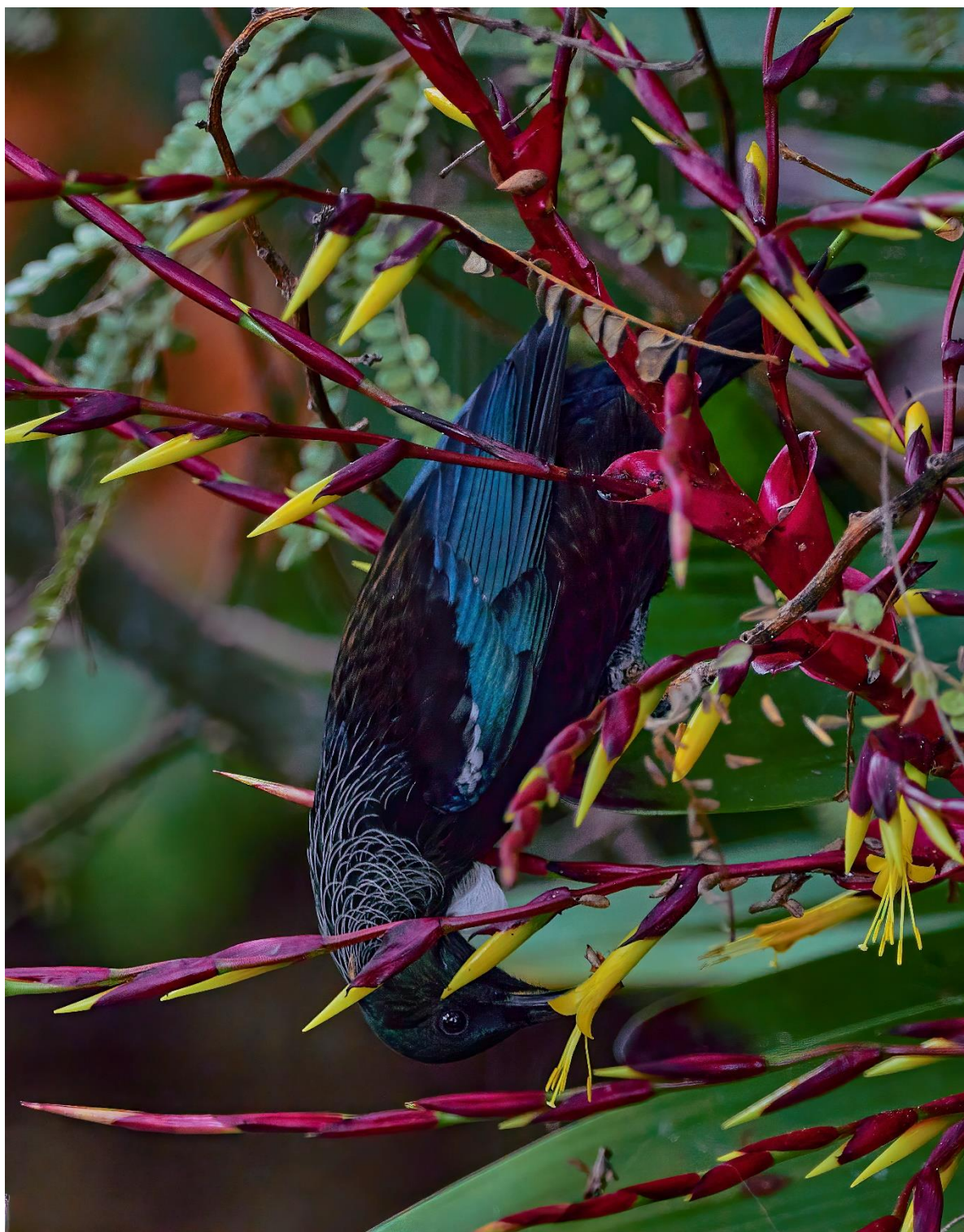


Photo by John Lambert, NZBS.



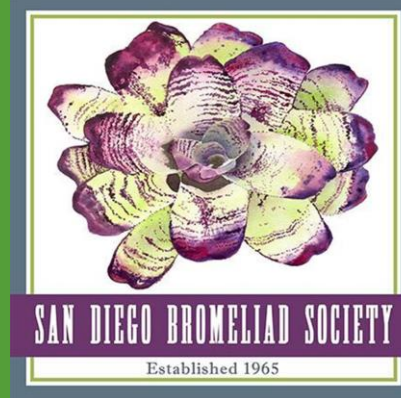
TAKE TIME TO LOOK

 **MISSION HILLS
GARDEN CLUB**

22nd Annual Garden Walk
SATURDAY
JUNE 27
10AM-4PM

Tickets at missionhillsgardenclub.org

THE BROMELIAD BLADE



Newsletter of the San Diego
Bromeliad Society

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To send material for publication,
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Make sure to submit your
contribution before the 20th 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