

# The Bromeliad Blade

Newsletter of the  
San Diego  
Bromeliad Society

October 2020

VOLUME LV

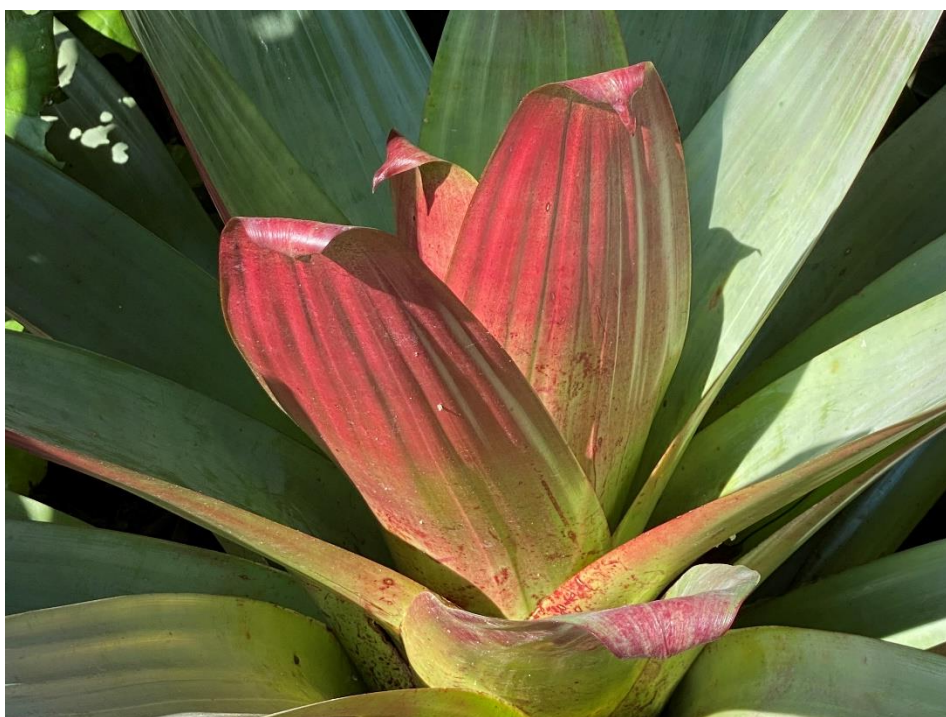
NUMBER 10

## President's Message

By Morlane O'Donnell

Here we are into our third meeting via Zoom during the pandemic. We have gone from no meetings at all to a virtual meeting with a speaker, an abbreviated Show and Tell, and a plant auction. A few people have put in many long hours to make this possible and a heartfelt thank you goes out to all of them. I won't mention all of them here, but I'd like to thank Andrew Wilson for hosting the meeting while Scott was on vacation. We learned many interesting facts about Costa Rica with slides to illustrate them from Peter Wan. This month our awesome speaker/program committee was able to procure Leonardo Versieux to be our speaker. This is the first speaker from outside the U.S. to give a presentation via Zoom. This will be an outstanding program not to be missed. More info is in the newsletter.

Right now, we are averaging about 25 - 30 members attending the Zoom meetings. I want to encourage those



*This month, we will have a program dedicated to the genus Alcantarea, with leading expert Leonardo Versieux from Brazil. Photos by Juliana Raposo.*

of you who are not attending to take the plunge and "zoom" in. It's not difficult once you take the first step. You don't need to have a camera to participate. You can still see the video without it. We just can't see your pretty or handsome face. Please join us and at least give it a try.

Thank you to Dan Kinnard, Andrew Wilson, and Juliana Raposo for sharing their plants in the September Show and Tell. Steve Zolezzi followed

them and officiated the auction. Speaking of Steve, he orchestrated our first plant raffle since the Covid-19 lockdown. Because of deadlines, I do not have the results of the raffle yet. He has patiently been tending to several plants that were intended for a raffle before the quarantine.

Thank you again to Andy Cuffel who held another sale of bromeliads from Kent's. He generously donated half his sales to our club.

The October meeting is usually time when nominations would be given during the meeting. As these are extraordinary times, as stated in previous newsletters, the officers and directors have agreed to extend their terms by one year. Unfortunately, it would have been extremely hard to coordinate an election. Kerry Nelson wrote an article informing the membership of that and no objections were made by any members. You get us all for another year.

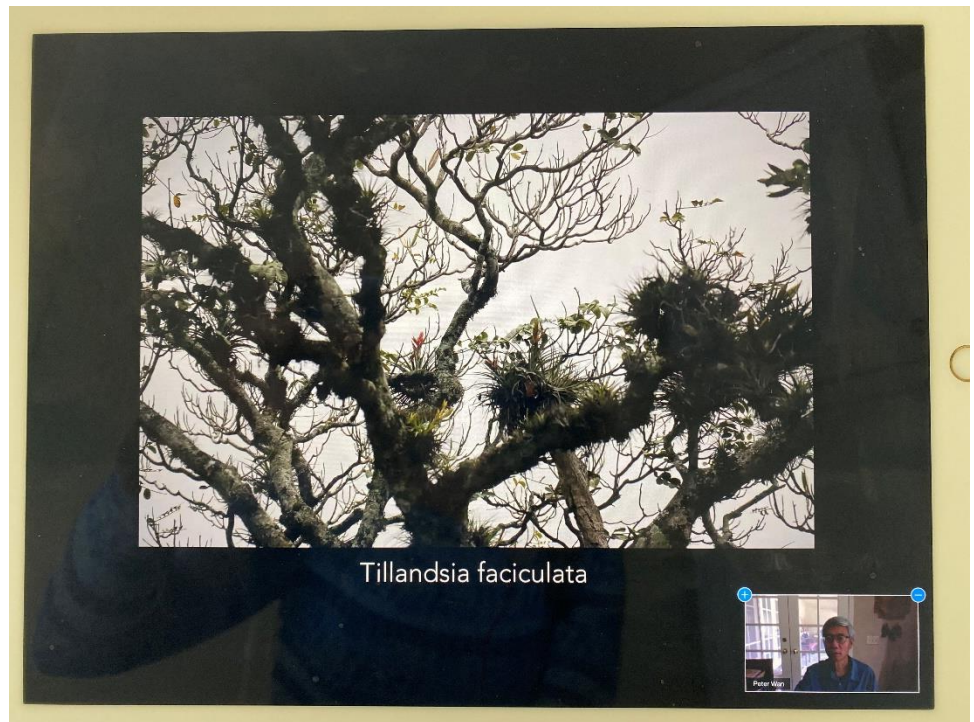
We will be holding a board meeting on Sunday, October 18, beginning at 10am via Zoom. All members are welcome to attend. If you wish to attend, email Scott Sandel and he will give you the information needed to be admitted.

I hope all of you and your plants are all doing well, especially during this heat wave that is occurring as of this writing. It's supposed to be the beginning of fall, but no one has informed the weather of that. Once again, I hope to see you at the meeting. Happy and safe growing .



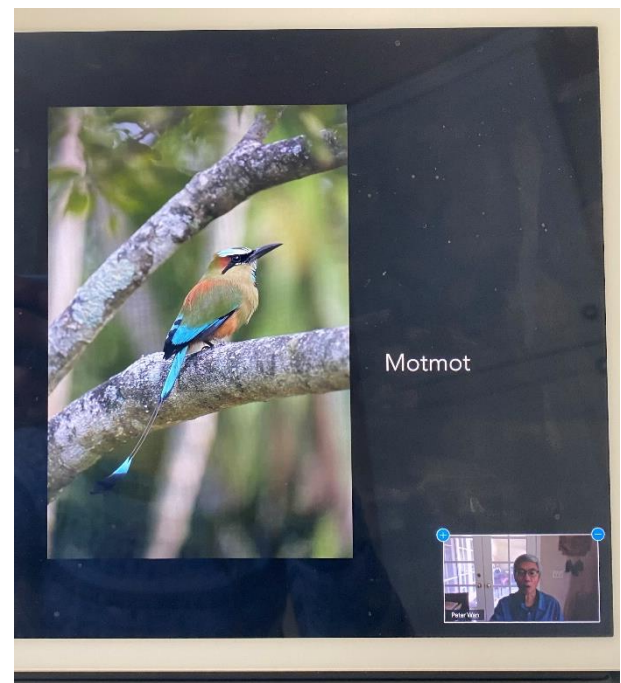
## September Meeting Recap

Speaker Peter Wan, *The Bromeliad Scene in Costa Rica*



Screenshots from the talk. *Tillandsia fasciculata* in habitat and speaker Peter Wan. Below, the motmot.

Back on Zoom for the SDBS monthly meeting, Wan took us on a visual journey to Costa Rica, the land of *pura vida*. In this travelogue, the speaker showed us bromeliads being widely cultivated in Costa Rican gardens, and habitat shots with local species growing in the rain forest, including the iconic natives from the genus *Werauhia*. He included – why not? – dazzling shots of the rich avian fauna that attracts birdwatchers from all over the world to the region. Costa Rica is a model in using eco-tourism to keep their forests standing. Peter is a talented photographer. His photos are worthy of the National



Geographic. In addition to the presentation, we had an abbreviated Show and Tell and a plant auction.



# October Meeting

Saturday, October 10 @ 10am on Zoom

The genus *Alcantarea* includes some of the most fascinating bromeliads out there. [With 40 different species, it is entirely endemic to eastern Brazil.](#) Our first international Zoom speaker will be a world authority in *Alcantarea* speaking to the San Diego Bromeliad Society this month! Thank you, Speakers Committee, (Andrew Wilson, Dan Kinnard, Eloise Lau) for your diligent work in making it happen.

## October Program

by Andrew Wilson

The noted author and professor of botany Leonardo Versieux of the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte in Natal, Brazil will be our speaker in October. Here he is, in the area of Bahia where one of the new *Alcantarea* species, *A. nahoumi* was found.

In his presentation “*Alcantareas, the giant bromeliads from Brazil*” he will tell us about the general morphology and taxonomy of the genus. He will also provide cultivation tips for its spectacular members. He is editor of “*The New Guidebook to Alcantareas*, to be published (in English) later this year. *See the September issue of the Blade to find the book review and details on how to acquire a copy.*

To anyone interested in bromeliads this is an opportunity not to be missed. Dr. Versieux has broad interests in plant systematics, morphology, evolution and plant reproductive biology. He maintains keen interest in botanical art, historic gardens and the ornamental potential of native plants.



His laboratory performs research linking plant morphology to systematics and reproductive biology with particular focus on the pineapple family (Bromeliaceae).

## Tips for a successful Zoom Meeting

If using a phone or tablet, make sure it's fully charged. Zooming drains your battery pretty fast!

Take a little time to get settled before the meeting. Consider noise: are people going to hear a loud tv in the background when you're speaking? Pick a spot with good (preferably natural) lighting, and make sure the light source faces you or is coming sideways. Having an open window behind you is a no-no. It will cause your face to be darkened by the overly bright background.

If using a tablet or laptop computer, it's a good idea to have it on a table and propped up with some books. This way we can see you at eye level.

As a general rule, **mute your microphone** unless you are speaking. Even wiggling in your seat can make audible noise.

## Upcoming Events

### SDBS October Meeting

Saturday, October 10 from 10am to 12pm

Join meeting on Zoom

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

### SDBS Bromeliad Raffle with Stephen Zollezzi

Register with Steve until October 2.

[sazolezzi1946@gmail.com](mailto:sazolezzi1946@gmail.com)

### SDBS Annual Show & Sale

CANCELLED

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

## Other Monthly Meetings

During the pandemic, we advise you contact the society in advance if you want to attend a meeting, as in-person meetings are postponed indefinitely.

### 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, Casa 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)

# Canistrums, Can We Grow Them?

by Andrew Wilson



They are not widely grown in California, but maybe they should be tried by more people. You will see them growing in South Florida gardens. With their wide open-cupped flowers they are a sight to behold in summertime. At least, I was smitten when I saw them first.

Enquiries to several people here in San Diego cautioned me about growing them. Watch out - they need a lot of humidity. As I have fared poorly with Cryptanthus, plants that do indeed require damp, shaded conditions and constant attention, the prospects seemed ominous. However, smitten by their beauty, I had to task the risk of losing them, not to speak of personal pride. In a phone call to Michael's Nursery in Florida he also cautioned about growing them in California. Indicating

that I needed a small collection of species and wanted to know those that could be grown epiphytically in bushes he was astounded. If you're in San Diego you've a good chance of growing them but do try them in pots and under cover was basically his response. An order was placed in April last year (2019) and the new plants were duly potted up in a fast draining mix similar to what you'd use for neoregelias or billbergias and set on a bench. They responded well, which resulted in moving them to less crowded conditions with brighter light but limited to sunshine in the

morning. It was a hot summer but so long as I filled their tanks once a week and misted the air with a fine hose spray on the hot days no plants suffered. One of them, *C. guzmanioides*, showed its first flowers. Encouraged, I decided it was time in October below a lowering sun to place them in more open conditions, mounted in branch crotches or suspended from tree branches. Still in pots, they were to stay there, at least to see how they would be in springtime.

The winter was wet with frequent windy days. It was certainly cool but not cold. An accident made it impossible for me to get out into the garden during December and January. They received no attention during that time. Fortunately, the mountings survived the winter rains and winds and, apart from the loss of



some labels, the plants suffered no significant damage. Watering did not commence until late April. With debris falling from tree branches, little fertilizer is used here for most bromeliads; the canistrums received some nitrogen when growth began in May. Growth has been steady this summer with new pups showing.

*C. guzmanioides*, nestled within a large *Crassula argentea*, flowered in June and is now flowering again in late August along with the other specimens illustrated here.

*C. seidelianum* is shown suspended from a branch in a *Schotia* tree that provides shade throughout the year with a leaf fall in spring.

*C. fosterianum* is suspended similarly from an *Erythrina* tree that offers strongest shade during summer and less in winter.

Canistrums have been crossed with aechmeas quite successfully. *xCanmea "Galaxy"* is an attractive hybrid of *C. fosterianum* and *Aechmea chantinii*. It appears to be

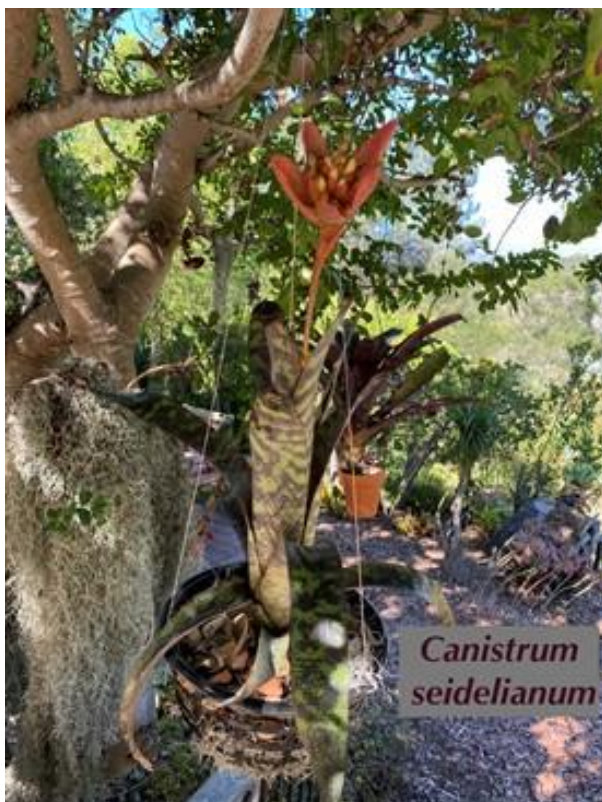
slightly more sensitive to sun than the *xCanmea* and, while still under observation status, is still growing in a large pot. The plant is vigorous, but its foliage is less attractive to me than the irregular banded foliage of the canistrums.

Almost all canistrums are found in the northeastern states of Brazil, from Bahía to Pernambuco, well within the tropics. They occur at mostly lower altitudes, which would seem to make them difficult for us to grow them in San Diego with our cooler winters. Their large open-cupped flowers gave them their name, which



was derived from the Greek 'kanistron' for a basket one may carry on the head. Those flowers

together with the banding patterns of their stiff leaves make them some of the most tempting bromeliads for us to try. Having succumbed to the temptation, enjoying it so far and having gained confidence from their behavior last winter I encourage others to taste the pleasures of risk-taking.





# Interview with SDBS Member Xiang Li

by Juliana Raposo

*Xiang has been a member of SDBS for a few years. He's fascinated by tillandsias and grows them beautifully. I had the hardest time deciding which photos of his plants to put in the Blade – they are all so stunning!*

**For the introduction, tell us how old you are, what you do, and why you joined the Bromeliad Society?**

I am 37 years old. I am a research biologist. I would like to exchange plants and learn experiences from others in the society.

**Tell us about your first bromeliad.**

**When did you get it?**

In 2017, I moved to our current house. At that time, I wanted to get some plants to decorate our place. Tillandsia attracted me since they look great and can grow just in the air, so I got my first tillandsia from Amazon.



*Xiang in the WBC San Diego in 2018. Bottom left, *T. Chiapas Gigantesco*; center right, *T. andreana*; bottom right, *T. tectorum*. All photos by Xiang Li.*

**How did you become interested in tillandsias? What makes them special to you?**

First, tillandsias can get the majority of their nutrients from the air and survive without soil. They are very unique plants. Secondly, you can propagate tillandsia from seeds. You can combine the desired characteristics of two parent plants to make a new plant.

**How many bromeliads do you have?**

I don't know the exact number; I would say around 200 kinds of tillandsias.

**How much time a day/ a week do you spend caring for your plants?**

One or two hours per day.

**Tell us about a plant that you thought was easy, but you killed it.**

*Tillandsia andreana*.



**Tell us about a plant that you thought was hard to grow but is doing great for you.**

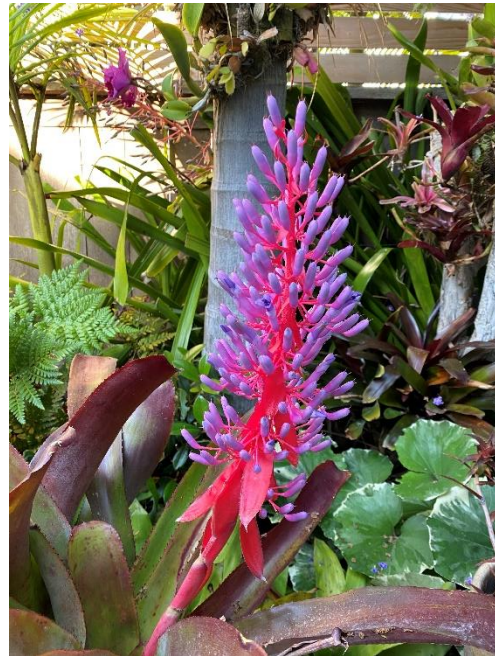
*Tillandsia tectorum*.

**Your favorite plant**

*Tillandsia Chiapas Gigantesco*.



# Blooming



Above, *T. Bahia* (*rothii* x *fasciculata* Magnificent) and *Marvelous Masterpiece* (*rothii* x *brachycaulos*) by Xiang Li. Below, *Portea Candy* by Robert Kopfstein and same plant by Juliana Raposo.

## SDBS 2020

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*Aechmea aquilega* by Sandra Reus.

## 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)

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