

The Bromeliad Blade

Newsletter of the
San Diego
Bromeliad Society

October 2022

VOLUME LVII

NUMBER 10

President's Message

By Steve Zolezzi

Dear SDBS Members,

Feels good to be back in the garden without the excessive heat we have once again endured. We can focus on prepping our show plants to bring to the Saturday, October 8 general meeting for show and tell. It's also a good time to get started dividing large plants to prepare for our December plant sale with setup on Friday the 16th---sales the 17th and sale and cleanup on the 18th-----last year's one day sale was a great success for members and vendors alike helping out at Christmas time is a good thing!

Please contact Morlane to sign up for a sales table.

morlane.odonnell@att.net

For those able to attend a meeting, the quality plants in the auction and raffle table offer a great opportunity to add to our collections. I always

have to laugh when I hear "I don't have any room for more plants" then that person goes on to describe some just purchased online plants? Just think VERTICAL---there's always room for more plants!

The Christmas party/meeting is fast approaching and will be a topic of discussion at the October meeting---don't hold back helping to organize the best-ever event.

Longtime member Kay Quijada's plant sale was a great success as she prepares to move away---we wish her happiness and good health.

Good gardening!



*Fall greetings! This *T. tectorum* on a skull was supposed to evoke Halloween but it turned out more like Hamlet. Photo Juliana Raposo*

October Meeting

October 8 @ 10am, Casa del Prado room 104, Balboa Park

October Program

A journey through the highlands of Rio de Janeiro State

Rodrigo Freitas is a biology student and park ranger in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In the last 8 years he's been documenting the flora in the mountains of Serra do Mar. His work area covers the ecological corridor formed by 3 connected conservation areas - Organ Mountains National Park, Three Peaks State Park and Desengano State Park. Together they protect 425 square miles of the highly endangered atlantic forest in an area larger than the City of San Diego.

He will focus on bromeliads that occur at altitudes between 1700 meters (5,600 ft) and 2360 meters (7,700 ft), the upper ranges of the atlantic forest biome. Winter night temperatures dip to the low 30s F (close to 0 Celsius). You will see beautiful photography of bromeliads in-situ, from species that we are very familiar with (but may not have seen in the wild) to others that are seldom seen due to their rarity or inaccessibility.

The speaker will present the program by Zoom.



Above, Rodrigo Freitas in the mountains of Serra do Mar. Below, Alcantarea imperialis at Three Peaks State park. Photos by Rodrigo Freitas.



September Highlights

With a program about the World Bromeliad Conference in Sarasota with Scott Sandel, we had a plant table and auction with Florida broms inspired by the conference.

Show n Tell contributions included a suite of 4 different hybrids of *T. capitata* orange and *T. streptophylla*, by Dave Kennedy. We could compare and contrast the variability that is possible when repeating the same cross.

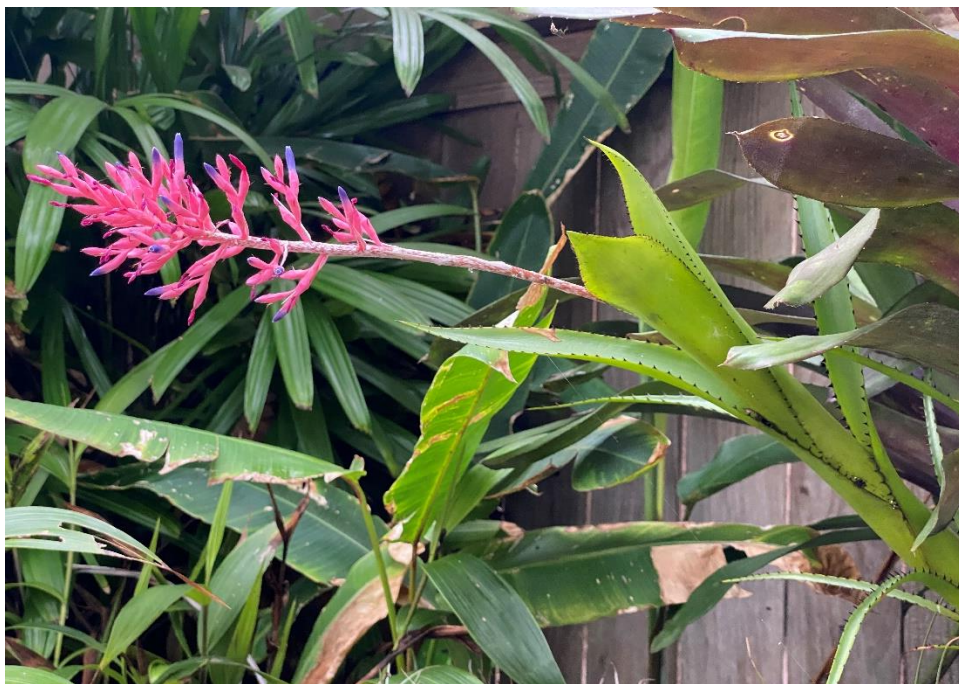


T. capitata orange by *streptophylla* 4 ways. Plants by David Kennedy

In the Garden

I wonder why *Aechmea purpureorosea* is not common around these parts. A tubular green plant no more than 12 inches long, it could be confused with a *Billbergia* or smaller forms of *A. nudicaulis*. This species evaded my radar for years until I saw an epiphytic clump erupting with pink-purple blooms on a palm in Florida that stopped me in my tracks. The species has a flower spike as big as the plant itself. I soon ordered 3 pups online and mounted them on a tree stump in my backyard where they were almost immediately claimed by frogs.

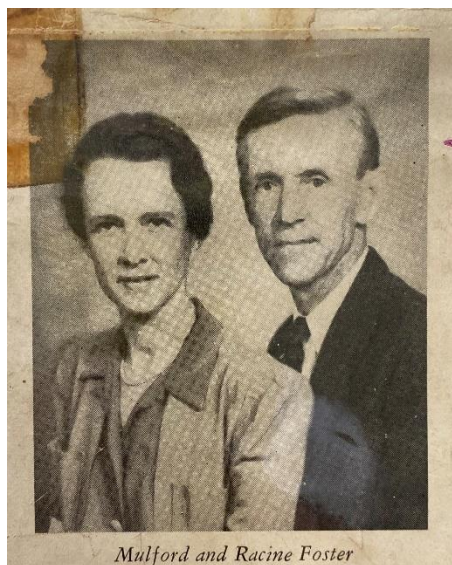
They are slow growers compared with pretty much everything else I grow epiphytically, which suggests to me they would like more heat and humidity. After 3 years only one pup was produced. And finally, the first flowering.



Aechmea purpureorosea is finally blooming. Photo by Juliana Raposo

Book Review: “Brazil, Orchid of the Tropics” by Mulford and Racine Foster

by Andrew Wilson



Mulford and Racine Foster

Mulford and Racine in the book jacket photo.

This is no modern bestseller. It contains no murders, no sex scenes, no garbled slanguage, no inside stories from Capitol Hill. Sounds boring? On the contrary, it is full of interesting information and impressions. It is a refreshing story told seventy years ago about plants, people, and adventures in the rainforests of Brazil. This is a book review but after seventy years why do we need it? Earlier this year Prof. Leonardo Versieux told us of his plant-searching travels in northeastern Brazil and said that reading this book today, even after those years of change, enriches an understanding of the area with its geology, its forests, and its plants.

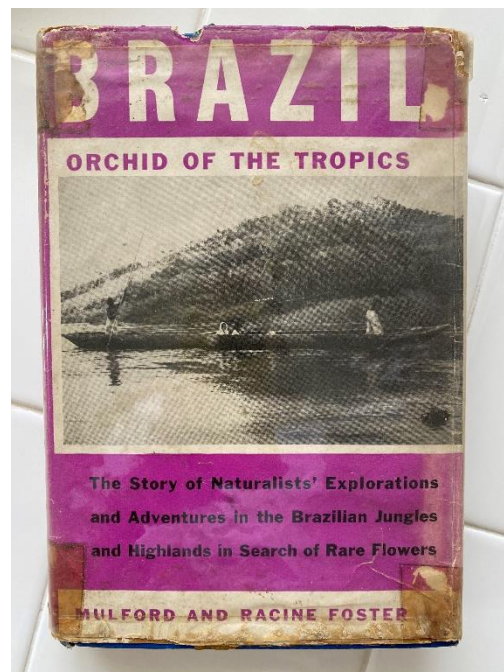
In 1940, soon after the start of WWII in Europe Mulford and Racine departed New York in a small cargo ship that would take them to Rio de Janeiro and to an unforgettable trip

in the rainforests of Brazil. This was no excursion planned by some botanical institute to search methodically for rare plant treasures with a team of porters to carry them back through dense, tropical forests. This was no team of trained scientists that had pored over the findings reported a century before by famed explorers. Apart from general directions about where to go from Prof. Lyman Smith at Harvard they were on their own, wandering through the greatest rainforests of the world. Instead of following any guidance he gave they explored where intuition led them. They had some interests in plants but were not professional botanists. Racine had taken some classes in botany and Mulford’s closest approach to plant knowledge was derived from his work as a landscape architect.

Nevertheless, bromeliads intrigued them. Reading the book, you’ll find simple descriptions of the plants they found and general facts about the family. If you don’t know them all you’ll find this a thoroughly readable description, written in a clear, charming style. If you’re an expert you’ll enjoy reading those words, leading as they did to deeper understanding that resulted from their ventures and perceptive eyes. They discovered many new species on that trip, species that we know and grow today. By the time further trips had been completed several years later they had introduced about 200 new species, a large fraction of those known to science at that time. It is not only the new

discoveries appearing on the pages that keep your attention but the anecdotes about how they found the specimens. Keen eyesight, determination, and intuition about where to look played their roles. Newly arrived in Bahia and exploring on a hot, sandy shoreline that had been visited before by many plant hunters and botanists Mulford, refusing to sit down and rest with his wife, charges off into a swamp where no bromeliad should be growing. He yells out to Racine that he has found one. It turned out to be new species, *Hohenbergia littoralis*.

One of the delights of the book is learning how Mulford would climb to the high branches of the giant trees that once dominated the Atlantic rainforest regions. This was not a



Definitely a collector's item!

man equipped with climbing gear or trained in the skills of arboreal ascent. He watched how the locals succeeded, or sometimes didn't, in reaching the uppermost limbs where the largest vrieseas, aechmeas and billbergias grew. Nothing would stop him from trying.

The book tells a lot more than about bromeliads or other plants. It describes the people who lived there and whose lives were formed by and set within the sylvan paradise, a study of human nature itself. It describes the difficulties reaching some of the remote areas and the terrible conditions they had to endure. Unsanitary conditions with little room for privation while aboard perilous rivercraft and trains that ran at the whim of their owners were part of their travails. This was Brazil of the forties. Despite personal ordeals and occasional losses of entire loads of plants collected over weeks of labor their enthusiasm for continuing did not wane. They realized that what they were finding



One of the species discovered is *Hohenbergia disjuncta* (now *Aechmea disjuncta*)
Photo by Andrew Wilson

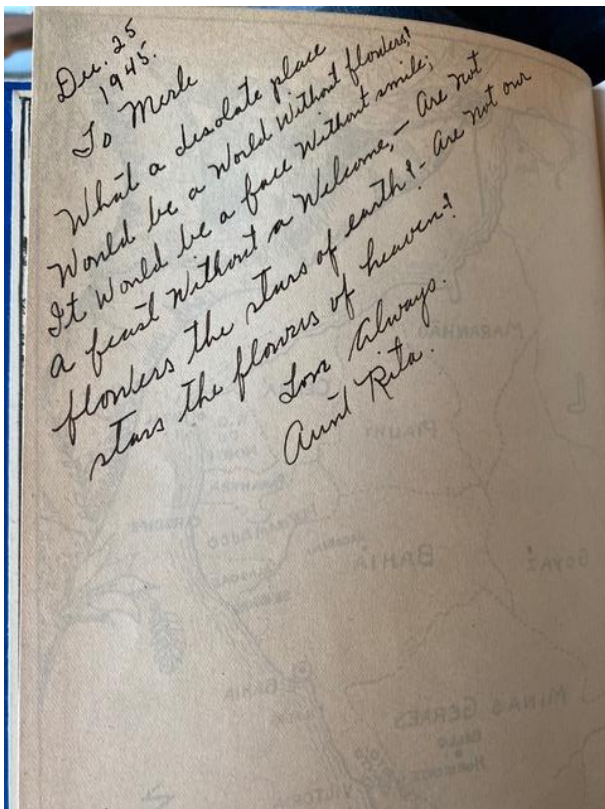
was for the world of science to unravel. It was a lifetime opportunity not to be wasted.

about bromeliads and other plants of Brazil, not only in the Atlantic rainforests but also on the drier Matto Grosso, from sand dunes of the coast to wind blasted mountaintops.

It is no textbook. The descriptions come in simple terms of what they saw, rather than of botanical detail. It is a source for all to read. The world of bromeliads is fortunate to have such a book to record its era of discovery.

Flaws in the book do exist but they are few. Black and white images from the cameras of those days, more detailed maps of places that few non-Brazilians know and plant name changes since 1950, could fix all these shortcomings. Even so, you can enjoy reading

Dated December 25, 1945, the inscription in this copy says:
To Merle
What a desolate place would be a world without flowers!
It would be a face without smile;
A feast without a welcome,
-Are not flowers the stars of earth?
- Are not our stars the flowers of heaven?
Love always,
Aunt Rita



SDBS Events 2022

SDBS Monthly Meeting

October 8, 2022 @ 10am
Casa del Prado room 104, Balboa
Park, San Diego.

www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org

SDBS Winter Sale

December 17-18, 2022



One More...



October bloomer Aechmea purpureorosea

SDBS 2022

Officers

President

Stephen Zolezzi
sazolezzi1946@gmail.com
 619-379-4300

Vice-President

Kerry Nelson
kanelsondesign@cox.net
 619-574-0987

Treasurer

Al Evans, Jr.
alevans31365@gmail.com
 858-492-9866

Secretary

Ruth Contino
ruth.contino1@gmail.com
 619-303-2144

News Editor

Juliana Raposo
julianadraposo@gmail.com
 858-349-1405

Membership

Charles Oelsen
cdoelsen@gmail.com

Past President

Morlane O'Donnell
morlane.odonnell@att.net
 619-422-8168

Board Members

Nancy Hoyt (2022-23)
nhoyt2662@yahoo.com

Mary Lee (2022-2023)
2kyanone@gmail.com

Bob Walters (2022)
cactusbobboy@gmail.com

Krista Mills (2022)
kmills1@sandi.net

THE BROMELIAD BLADE



Newsletter of the San Diego
 Bromeliad Society

Juliana Raposo, Editor

Ph: 858-349-1405

To send material for publication,
 please contact Juliana at
julianadraposo@gmail.com

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

DK ORNAMENTALS

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