



SAN DIEGO BROMELIAD SOCIETY

Established 1965

The Bromeliad Blade

Newsletter of the
San Diego
Bromeliad Society

October 2023

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Editor's Notes

By Juliana Raposo

The October meeting will be a busy one! Show and Tell will be about pitcairnia – those who participated in the September 2022 Pitcairnia Growing Trial should fill out the form sent by Dan Kinnard and bring your plant, dead or alive, and share your results.

We will go on a mountain trek with Juliana Raposo to the bromeliad-rich Atlantic Forest of Brazil.

Also, SDBS elections are around the corner. Todd Johnson, our nominations chair, will present the November elections candidates.

Make a note for the November meeting's location. The facilities we use in Balboa Park will be closed due to the November meeting falling on Veteran's Day (Nov 11). We will gather in Point Loma at member Sandy Valone's house. More on that on Saturday!



Nidularium Bahia and this vriesea hybrid are blooming now.

October Meeting

Saturday, October 14 at 10am
in Casa del Prado room 104,
Balboa Park

Bromeliads in the Mata Atlantica – Tres Picos State Park, Brazil by Juliana Raposo

Come along on a 3-day hike through the bromeliad-rich mountains of Rio de Janeiro. The Mata Atlantica, or Atlantic Forest, is the ancestral home of hundreds of species of bromeliads. Under the expert guidance of Rodrigo Freitas, we got up and close to them in Tres Picos State Park, all the while enjoying a breathtaking sunrise in the granite domes of Serra do Mar and hiking up to a 1,000-year-old tree.

During the trip, naturalist Rodrigo Freitas, who has also been a speaker for SDBS, was awarded the San Diego Bromeliad Society's Conservation Award. See article on page 5 for this important announcement!

The plant table will be provided by Cuffel Farms.



Vriesea billbergioides (above) and ranger station (below)



Sandy Valone, Juliana Raposo (speaker), Aline Fintelmam and Rodrigo Freitas starting the trek.



Seedling Growing Trial

By Dan Kinnard

At the October 2023 meeting, we will see the results of our plant trial for *Pitcairnia tabuliformis*, *Pitcairnia nigra*, and *Pitcairnia maidifolia* that we started in September 2022.

Originally the growing trial was going to be for six months with everyone bringing the trial plants back (Dead or Alive) for all to see the results. The trial time period kept getting extended for one reason or another and here we are, ready for the plants to be brought back in to share our results. The original participants should receive an email reminder to bring your results back in to share. We will each give our results in one or two minutes. It should be interesting to hear and see our results.

Additionally, we have a few seedlings of *Araeococcus flagellifolius* and *Acanthostachys pitcairnioides* to start another trial. These plants are also not too common in collections and might be a slight challenge to grow. Don't be afraid to try them if you think they will fit into your collection. SDBS members can pick up a plant and note your name and email on participant list.

Here's a little information about the plants in the new trial plus a bit extra.

Araeococcus flagellifolius

The seeds for these plants were started in May 2022.

This article by Victoria Padilla originally appeared in the Journal of the Bromeliad Society, September —



Araeococcus flagellifolius

October 1971 (Vol XXI: Number 5 p 120).

This is a genus consisting of but 4 known species: one (*A. pectinatus*) is native to Costa Rica; the others are from Amazonian Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, and Surinam. Only 2 species are in cultivation--*A. flagellifolius* and *A. pectinatus*.

A. flagellifolius, pictured above, is from the upper Amazon where it grows as an epiphyte near the banks of rivers at elevations of approximately 70 feet. In cultivation it is fairly hardy, thriving outdoors in southern California.

It is a unique bromeliad with long whip-like bronzy hued leaves about 2 feet long arising from a slenderly ovoid pseudo-bulb. The low-growing slender flower stem, pale red in color, bears many small pink flowers followed by blue-black berries. It is an attractive species.

Araeococcus is taken from the Greek *araeo*, meaning few, and *kokkos*, the genus having the smallest fruit and the fewest seeds in the family. *Flagellifolius* refers to the whip-like leaves. -V.P

The seed for these plants were started in October 2019.

These are notes from Carol M. Johnson (a Florida grower and owner of the old Pineapple Place nursery) originally published in the January-February 1991 (Vol 41: Number 1, p13) issue of the Journal of the Bromeliad Society.

Acanthostachys pitcairnioides

The genus *Acanthostachys* (a-cantho-stach-is, meaning thorny spike) was described by Klotzsch in 1840 and emended by W. Rauh and W. Barthlott (1982). There are two species only: *strobilacea* (conelike fruit) and *pitcairnioides* (resembling *pitcairnia*).

With the impressive-sounding name *Acanthostachys strobilacea*, this plant should be an outstanding beauty in form and size. It is none of these. The long, often to three-foot long leaves can be made to turn rosy red in full sun but with ordinary culture they remain a dull gray-green. The blooms appear in the leaf axils. They are approximately the size and shape of a small pinecone and have orange bracts and small yellow



Acanthostachys pitcairnioides

blooms. This plant is nearly always self-fertile, and the relatively large seed germinates readily. It is best grown in a hanging basket and allowed to clump, which it does freely. Careful! The leaves are well armed and the long, thin leaves tend to tangle.

The plant is native to eastern Brazil, Paraguay, and northern Argentina and has been in cultivation since before 1850. It withstands extremely rigorous conditions including drought, cold, low light, and full sun. It is also inexpensive. It does not sound like a winner, but it maintains a steady popularity with collectors and exhibitors. I recall several bromeliad shows where it appeared on the head table.

I use a sandy, fairly heavy potting mix including pebbles or turkey grit, keep the plant underpotted and grow it in full sun for best color. It grows with little or no water. Fertilizer would make the leaves greener and longer, so I don't apply any.

Acanthostachys pitcairnioides was first described by Mez and in 1982 W. Rauh and W. Barthlott amended the description of the genus and the two species. This newer species is being seen more often in collections and in shows. It was pictured on the back cover of the Journal(1989), but the picture does not do the plant justice. In our Florida full sun, the leaves turn dark red with a lacquered shine. The prominent black teeth and small, brilliant blue flowers at the base of the leaves make a striking and beautiful contrast.

This species forms clumps very easily, it is about 15 inches tall, and is a desirable addition to any bromeliad collection. Culture is the same as for *A. strobilacea*. It is a shame they could not have simplified the names of both members of the genus, although they are descriptive.

[NOTE: Actually, there are three species now, *Acanthostachys calcicola* was just described in 2020.

These growing notes are from Longwood Florida so adjust the growing hints accordingly. I have found that the plants do not get quite as large as she indicates probably because of our environment. For me, they work best in about 70% shade and high humidity (for us). Perhaps in higher light levels and higher humidity, the red leaves can be attained. Dan Kinnard]



Announcing the San Diego Bromeliad Society Conservation Grant

By Juliana Raposo

This article will also be featured in the BSI Journal.

One cannot talk about bromeliad conservation in Brazil without addressing the urgent need to preserve what's left of the Atlantic rainforest. This incredibly varied biome once covered the eastern coast of Brazil, with its southern reaches penetrating westward to reach the Misiones region of Argentina and part of Paraguay. The Atlantic Rainforest, or Mata Atlantica, is the ancestral home of most of Brazil's bromeliads species. To be precise, 925 bromeliad species, 70% endemic (Quintela, 1990 in Valladares-Padua, Padua, & Cullen Jr., 2002; JBRJ, 2016). That's roughly a third of all known species.

Unfortunately, centuries of devastation left only 12% of the forest standing. It hurts to think how much may be forever lost.

So when the San Diego Bromeliad Society learned about the work of naturalist Rodrigo Freitas of Rio de Janeiro, he became the first recipient of the SDBS Bromeliad Conservation Grant.

Freitas received the USD 1,000 award in September 2023 for his ongoing efforts to document and photograph bromeliads and other small flora in the Tres Picos State Park, where he works as a ranger. While the park protects the most sizable chunk of Mata Atlantica in the State, it is chronically underfunded and faces many challenges.



Rodrigo Freitas

In nearly 10 years of fieldwork extending far beyond the scope of his park ranger duties, Freitas has registered scores of species, including first occurrences in the area and even some presumed lost.

We at SDBS are honored to recognize his contribution to the study and public awareness of bromeliads, and the safekeeping of their home in the Atlantic Forest.

Next month, we will continue with an interview with Rodrigo Freitas, where he talks about his fieldwork and the bromeliads of the Atlantic rainforest.

A Compact Alcantarea - A. Acuminata

By Andrew Wilson

How about a modestly sized Alcantarea that will grow easily and not get too large for your garden? If so, then *Alcantarea acuminata* may be just what you want. I got mine but it was being named *A. odorata*. It grew and bloomed in a few years, but it was only after a Zoom talk at one of our meetings and then reading the book by Leonardo Versieux did I realize that it might not be *A. odorata*. So, I grew on a few of its hair pups and planted out a couple after they had grown to about a foot tall and across in a one gallon pot. Planted in quick draining soil containing one-inch pebbles and

diatomaceous material it grew without any real effort and dutifully bloomed in August, this year. Comparing its flower (indicate image) with what Versieux's book indicated it was clear that the plant I had bought originally was really *A. acuminata*. It could have been considered a disappointment as the flowers offered only a weak fragrant odor, but it did provide a pleasant surprise of being a compact species that can be easily managed in small gardens. It can even be grown in a container. The plant in the image is about six feet in height and not much more than two feet across. What is

more, it does not take a lifetime to reach flowering size and it remains a tidy grey-green leaved plant in the few years beforehand. It does like sunshine but if inland more than ten miles it may be better to place it where it gets some shade in the middle of day. I say 'may' because I do not have direct evidence of its growth there. Another bonus it offers is that it is easily generated from its multiple hairpups.



Hairpups

By Juliana Raposo

Alcantareas are different from other bromeliads in that they produce hair pups. They are tiny grass-like offsets that are produced at the base of the plant at certain times. If you notice that your Alcantarea has a hairpup, you can detach it by carefully sliding a butter knife or screwdriver in between the pup and the mother, taking care not to damage the delicate base of the pup. If you're lucky, it will come off with tiny roots. Repot these babies immediately and you will be rewarded with a Giant Alcantarea in a few years' time.

This procedure has a pretty high success rate. In my experience, I can get half of the pups to root and grow. The only tricky thing is to know when to harvest the pups. I try not to take them out when they're too tiny, but I also noticed that if you wait too long, the pups will simply wither and die. They never grow up to be big plants unless you separate them.

The *Alcantarea acuminata* I show here originated from a pup from Andrew Wilson's plant. A quick visit to my Alcantareas yielded 3 different pups.

So what are you waiting for? Go check your plants and see if you can harvest some hairpups today!



Repotting Task

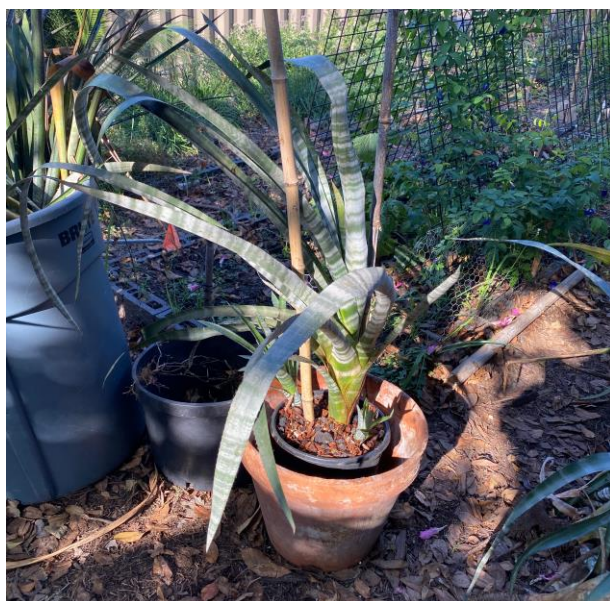
By Dan Kinnard

Sometimes a plant looks so good that we just let it grow into a large, handsome clump. Inevitably, there comes a time that it has to be cleaned up and brought back down to size. That is just what happened to a large pot of *Aechmea phanerophlebia* (inland form) after only four or five years in a large pot. An afternoon of hard work, lots four-letter words from the spines resulted in a reworked plant that now only

needs a year or so to be looking good again. Here are some photos of the process. It's a good thing that the blooms are so nice or the labor and blood loss might not be worth it.



Wrestled to the ground, and taken apart; for the trash and the “new” staked plant



SDBS Events 2023

www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org

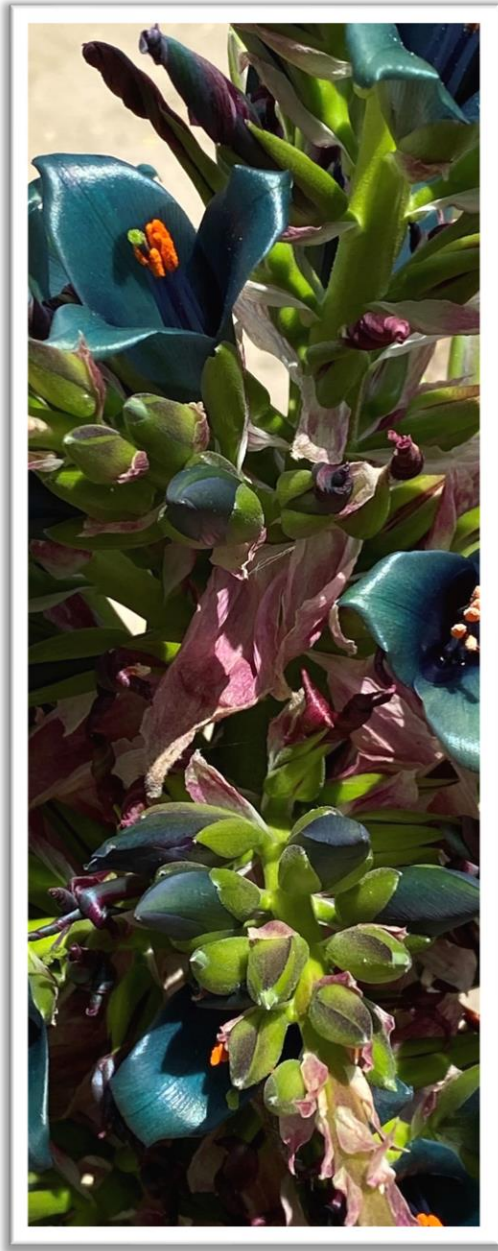
SDBS Monthly Meeting

October 14, at 10am
Casa del Prado room 104
Balboa Park, San Diego

November 11, at 10am
Sandy Valone's House
Point Loma, San Diego

In the Next Issue

SDBS member Scott Sandel travels to South Africa and visits Japie Esterhuysen's fabled bromeliad garden



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Essential Bromeliad Resources

Bromeliad Species Database – <https://bsi.org/members/?bsd> Species names keep changing due to new research. Consult the BSD for identification, photos, distribution, and spelling names of bromeliad species. For more granular information, log in as a BSI member.

Bromeliad Cultivar Registry – <https://bsi.org/registry/> The BCR lists information on bromeliad hybrids and cultivars. Here you can check the parentage of a bromeliad hybrid or the species of a sport that goes by a registered name. This is a free resource.

SDBS Library – Our bromeliad-specific library contains titles you won't find anywhere else. Contact our librarian, Eloise Lau, and check out a book.

DK ORNAMENTALS

BROMELIADS OF ALL SHAPES AND SIZES

<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Tillandsia Neoregelia Vriesea Orthophytum Bigenerics and more!</p>	<p style="font-weight: bold;">Purchase directly from an award-winning grower</p>
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To make an appointment email David Kennedy
thedavekennedy@gmail.com or find him on Facebook

THE BROMELIAD BLADE



Newsletter of the San Diego
Bromeliad Society

Juliana Raposo, Editor

Invitation

We are in constant need of 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 Meetings

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

SDBS Website

www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org

SDBS Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/sandiegobro>