



The Bromeliad Blade

Newsletter of the
San Diego
Bromeliad Society

July 2016

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The President's Corner

by Robert Kopfstein

Greetings from Houston

The 2016 World Bromeliad Conference in Houston, Texas is now past tense. After two years of preparation, many hundreds of hours of serious work, too many nervous moments, and much cooperation and coordination (or not . . .) the event proved a success. Likely some may question whether or not it is all really worth it. Why would anyone get involved in a world bromeliad conference?

Three reasons come to mind: the people, the plants, the gardens.

The conference gives all bromeliad lovers the chance to rub shoulders with like-minded people—They come from all over the U.S., Europe, Brazil, Peru, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa. All share a common interest in growing and promoting bromeliads.

This enthusiasm is contagious. And being able to chat freely with such a diverse group of brom lovers is nothing short of electric. A person's perspective broadens, and the brom garden at home is no longer the sole

center of attention but rather a tiny piece of a global movement.

Meeting and chatting with people who have different resources and growing challenges give anyone who attends a WBC a less parochial attitude toward the plants. We in San Diego are extremely fortunate to be able to grow most bromeliads with relative ease. Elsewhere the climate is often a serious challenge for bromeliad growers.

On the other hand, the brom growers in places like Houston and Florida can outshine anything we can do in San Diego when it comes to color in genera like *vriesea* and *neoregelia*. The humidity and warm nights are a sure-fire combination for producing stunning colors and robust growth in the plants. With other plants—like terrestrials—we seem to do better on the whole. In the World Conference show there were 341 entries, two of which were *Hechtia marnier-lapostollei*. One was grown in Houston, one in San Diego; both were radically different to the point that a non-brom person could conclude that they were unrelated species. Because of the moister

conditions the Houston plant was stretched out scurfy, but green. The San Diego plant was much more compact and displayed the reddish-brown color typical of the species.

In all, the plants in the WBC show provided a dazzling array of genera and species. The shapes and colors were amazing to see, and how each grower demonstrated the skills necessary to produce a show quality plant was evident throughout.

Andrew Wilson kindly took photos, so there will be a "show and tell" at the meeting.

The garden tours, a must at every WBC, were really educational. Seeing the various landscapes, greenhouses, and brom collections is always interesting, and Houston was no exception. It is remarkable how so many plants can be contained in urban gardens. And the hospitality of the owners paid due homage to the old tradition of southern cordiality.

WBC 2016 is now only a collection of memories, and WBC 2018 is underway. In Houston Nancy and Scott distributed flyers advertising the 2018 San Diego conference, and 51 people have already registered using the early-bird forms (the early-

bird rate is \$250, good through June 30, 2016). According to the folks at BSI, this is a record number of early registrants.

So far the signs look good: the contract is signed for Paradise Point, BSI is on board, registration has begun, and we are on our way to

being the next hosts of the World Bromeliad Conference.

June Meeting

General

We discussed current affairs including the SDBS participation in the World Bromeliad Conference Houston, and our own preparations for the WBC San Diego 2018. We also went over the numbers from our Annual Show and Sale, and the awesome brom display that Nancy and Bronwyn Groves created for the Del Mar Fair, which earned more than \$1,200 in prizes for the club!

Program

The June program was delivered by David Anderson, bromeliad Jedi from New Zealand who stopped by on his way to the WBC Houston. The talk was a well-illustrated account of bromeliad gardening in New Zealand. Sadly, I missed it. But had enough time for a brief conversation with David and his wife Joan, who told us that our NZ colleagues read the SDBS Bromeliad Blade. Nice!

June's Opportunity Table

Auction items were 3 great tillandsias, a big clump of *T. bergerii* from Justin Allen, *T. 'El Camaron'* and *T. 'Serval'* (*fasciculata* x *capitata*) from Tropiflora.

The raffle table was full of tillandsias from Justin and Tropiflora, plus cork and tree fern mounts, the perfect addition for the table plants.

Show and Tell

by Robert Kopfstein
Neoregelia Medusa

Orthophytum alinum (below)



by Nancy Groves
Billbergia zebrina

by Esther Sivila
Tillandsia globosa
Tillandsia paucifolia

by Don Nelson
Tillandsia bulbosa

by Sonja Wicker
Ancanthostachys strobilacea

by Lee Baker
Tillandsia ionantha

by Dan & Eloise
Tillandsia bulbosa hybrid
Tillandsia albertiana (below)



by Bob Wright
Hechtia sp.

Billbergia 'La Vie en Rose'
Hechtia guatemalensis – There's a great story about this one. Bob collected a few plantlets and seed in Guatemala in the 70s. The plants perished later, in a frost. The seeds, which sat in an envelope for 5 years, gave origin to many plants including the one shown.



Upcoming Events

Highlighted Meetings

July 9, 2016 at 10 AM

San Diego Bromeliad Society
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 104
Our own Scott Sandel on plant travels to Colombia.

www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html

August 13, 2016 at 10 AM

San Diego Bromeliad Society
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 104

www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html

Monthly Meetings

1st Tuesday, 6:30 PM

San Diego Orchid Society
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 101

www.sdorchids.com

2nd Saturday, 10 AM

San Diego Bromeliad Society
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 104

www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html

2nd Saturday, 1 PM

San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 101

www.sdcss.net

2nd Monday, 5 PM

San Diego Horticultural Society
Surfside Race Place at the Delmar
Fairgrounds

www.sandiegohorticulturalsociety.org

July Program

Our own Scott Sandel will be presenting a slide show of a trip he made to Colombia. He visited the central and southern parts of Colombia in the mountains and valleys of the Andes. Several bromeliad habitats were seen, including the famous coffee-growing areas. Highlights include seeing Purace National Park, the Valle de Cocora, archeological sites and a 3-day horseback trip along the Rio Magdalena.

In addition, Andrew Wilson will be giving a brief summary report of the WBC in Houston.



Vriesea tequendamae, detail, and flourishing on a tree in Colombia

July Opportunity Table

by David Kennedy

This month's opportunity table features plants from a garden I am quite familiar with: my own! I'll bring well-grown examples of Vriesea, including John Arden hybrids, Orthophytum, Puya, Hechtia, Neoregelia, and of course some super-swell Tillandsias. Some will be taken from recent award-winning show plants. Plus, a great live auction!

SDBS 2016

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Growing Bromeliads from Seed

Continuing the conversation on growing bromeliads from seed, this month we hear from Andy Siekkinen.

Andy has grown species from habitat collected seed, from his own garden, and from gardens around the world.

In your experience, are there any genera that are easier to propagate than others?

In general, I find the plants in the Bromelioideae subfamily seem to be the fastest and easiest to grow...of course if they grow well in our climate to begin with. I have had good success with Billbergias, Orthophytums, and Hohenbergias in particular. But Neoregelias, Porteas, Canistrum, Aechmea, etc generally do well. Puyas are generally pretty fast if they are a species that does well in our climate. Ursulaea tuitensis grows fast and easily from seed, U. macvaughii is very slow in our climate just like the mature plants.

Sometimes some plants just don't grow well or fast. That could be due to the particular seeds; whether they are fresh, what time of year they were planted (night time low temps being the limiting factor, but I plant stuff year round anyways), if they like the potting media or not, and even just whether it is an easy species to grow or not. As for terrestrial plants, most are easy to grow if the seeds are viable. The terrestrial genus that I have had the least success with has been Encholirium, but I don't know how fresh the seed has been.

SDBS MEETINGS

Meetings are held at 10 AM on the second Saturday of each month at Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 104.

San Diego Bromeliad Society Webpage

www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html

THE BROMELIAD BLADE

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To send material for the newsletter, 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.

2016 SDBS Membership

To renew your membership, please contact Al Evans, Treasurer

alevansoo1@earthlink.net

858-492-9866

Renewal Fees: 1 year

Single email \$13

Dual email \$17

Single USPS \$28

Dual USPS \$32

Renewal Fees: 2 years

Single email \$22

Dual email \$30

Single USPS \$52

Dual USPS \$60

For the hobbyist, what is the merit in growing from seed? Don't you end up with lots of funny looking plants?

The cool thing about growing species from seed is that you have the opportunity to see more of the variation that actually represents a species. Very often we only have one (or very few) clones/individuals in cultivation representing a species. From an ecological/conservation perspective, a single clone (even if it is an ornamental standout) is not very interesting. While we may be drawn to the 'pretty' clones, I always like having different clones of a species. Each will have its own character. But, since we are always drawn to fancy select clones, when you grow species from seed, you always have the chance to produce a superior plant! It is sort of like playing a slow lottery.

One difficulty of growing species from seed of cultivated plants is that it may be difficult to tell whether the plants are 'true' species or are garden/hummingbird hybrids. It is expected to have the seedlings display a range of characteristics, but if we don't know how variable they are within a population in the wild, we might think that they are hybrids. Seeing the variation in plants in Brazil was pretty eye-opening.

I have been a part of several discussions on the identity of plants in the *Gravisia* subgenus of *Aechmea*, and *Ae. leptantha* in particular. Many have been grown from seed by many people around the world as it

is a robust and good looking landscape plant. Before seeing them in habitat, my general reaction was to toss my hands in the air and say they were most probably open-pollinated garden hybrids. After seeing (only) a couple of populations I now say I have no idea! Basically we don't have enough familiarity



Tillandsia eizii in habitat – photo by A. Siekkinen

with the plants in habitat and their natural variation to even waste time arguing and debating about some things like that. And with so much of the Atlantic Forest gone in Brazil, we now have no way to know for sure as the populations many of the plants we have in cultivation are now probably gone.

But back to the point, generally if you are growing species they won't be too much more odd or gangly than the parent and sometimes that adds to the charm! My opinion is that usually that is more of a problem when growing hybrids, when you can produce a lot of less than mediocre plants that should be culled. Even ignoring more complex hybrids and considering F1 hybrids (first

generation hybrids between two species), you can just get an average between the two and lose the character that you like of both parents--a strong color, a certain shape, leaf pattern, or impressive spines as examples.

Growing from seed can be a solution for propagating monocarpic bromeliads.

The term monocarpic can be used in a couple of ways. Generally, in the bromeliad hobby we use it to refer to the plants that bloom and die without producing vegetative offsets. But it can also be used for a plant that produces a terminal inflorescence that kills the main plant even if it does give offsets as is the case for the far majority of plants in the Bromeliaceae.

The best examples of these types of plants are some of the large and beautiful higher elevation *Tillandsia* species. There are some in South America as well, but there are many spectacular species in Mexico like *T. eizii*. The problem with growing them from seed is the length of time to grow them and it take the right climate or climate-controlled facilities to produce them. It is best done as a niche hobby as it isn't a large enough of a market of people willing to pay high enough of a price for a commercial outfit to grow them.

Some of the species in the genus *Encholirium* are also like that but grow faster and are commercially grown like *En. horridum*. But there are other cases where the plants

don't bloom and die completely where growing from seed is the best option. There are plants that typically only produce a single offset (or rarely more) so it is best to grow from seeds to get any number. Again, there are some plants in the Tillandsioideae subfamily. I think *Werahia sanguinolenta* is one like that. *Hechtia laevis* typically only gives the one pup to replace the mother and often *Hechtia lanata* is the same. Then there are plants that produce lateral inflorescences (so they don't die after blooming) but don't produce offsets. Several species of *Hechtia* are like that, my favorite being *Hechtia myriantha*. There are some *Dyckias* that very rarely split heads (much slower to propagate than the usual basal pups) or don't split at all, so seed is the best method. There are lots of different modes of growth within the family and within each genus, so hard to summarize or generalize too much.

Overall, growing from seeds is a lot of fun and when they first start to develop spines or start to show their color it is pretty awesome. And when you see the first flowers of a plant that you have grown from seed it is quite a feeling of accomplishment.



Greenhouse seedling production



Hohenbergia hybrids



Hechtia Wildfire, a registered hybrid by Andy.