

The Bromeliad Blade

Newsletter of the
San Diego
Bromeliad Society

September 2016

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The President's Corner

by Robert Kopfstein

It is always refreshing to encounter someone who is just starting out as a fan of bromeliads. All of us can likely remember what it was that tripped something in our brain that registered delight and fascination, later possibly to morph into obsession, with the family bromeliaceae. In my case it was a *Billbergia pyramidalis* that I had bought from a small nursery that specialized in unusual plants. I had absolutely no idea what the inflorescence looked like until one day I went out on the patio and there was the most striking bloom that I had ever seen; and this was on a plant from which I had expected very little.

I was instantly hooked, but had no idea where to go or whom to talk to in order to get more information—and indeed more plants. Eventually, quite by accident, I discovered the Saddleback Bromeliad Society and BSI, both of which more than cooperated in aiding and abetting my epiphytoaddiction.

This last summer we accompanied my son Paul, his wife Christine and their two boys on a five week

vacation to France and Spain. Just before we left, Dan Kinnard and Eloise Lau, who had just returned from Barcelona, Spain told us of an encounter they had with a young fellow named Oscar Llovera Lopez. They were put in contact with Oscar by Lynn Hudson, who lives in Cairns, Australia (such is the wonder of the internet...)

Both Dan and Eloise told me how enthusiastic Oscar was about bromeliads, and how anxious he was to get more information in hard copy: apparently Oscar prefers the printed page to staring at a computer screen. This detail certainly caught the interest of this old retired reading teacher, so I suggested that I could bring Oscar some back issues of the BSI Journal. Meanwhile Eloise sent along via mail several bromeliad books.



Oscar in his rooftop garden

When we finally arrived in Barcelona (via Moscow and Madrid) I telephoned Oscar to let him know that the Journals had arrived. We agreed to meet at a well known coffee shop on the Placa Catalunya downtown.

Oscar is in his mid twenties, wears his hair in a ponytail, and waxes enthusiastic when he talks of bromeliads, and especially tillandsias. He lives with his parents in a top floor apartment in central Barcelona. That the apartment is on the upper floor is important because that gives them access to the roof. Most of Oscar's collection of tillandsias and other broms makes up a bromeliad garden on the top of a multi story building in the heart of the city.

After coffee we agreed to meet Oscar the next day at the Poble Espanyol [Pueblo Espanol in Spanish] where he volunteers helping with the landscaping and also teaches a class in gardening to handicapped adults. The Poble Espanyol (the Catalan name) is a village that was constructed for a 1929 exposition, giving examples of all of the architectural styles one can see traveling through Spain. It reminded me of our own Balboa Park here in San Diego.

Oscar showed us how he had used some existing chains hanging on a

wall to create a vertical tillandsia garden. [see photo]

Afterward we went on the Metro to his parents' apartment (Oscar has no car—in Barcelona you do not need one). It was easy to see that Oscar was absolutely hooked on tillandsias.



He told us that he was moving his collection to a rental shade structure near Girona, a city midway between Barcelona and the French border. With more space there will be room for more plants . . .

Oscar's plans are to start a plant business, and given the fact that many Europeans live in apartments with perhaps only a small deck or

balcony, tillandsias seem a good botanical fit.

Before we left I urged Oscar to consider starting a bromeliad society. As near as I know there is none in Spain (or Portugal or France for that matter). The Costa Brava and Costa

Dorada have a Mediterranean climate, as does the south coast of France. The Atlantic coast of Portugal is also mild. Recently BSI has welcomed several new societies to its roster.

BSI should consider actively cultivating the formation of additional bromeliad societies in Europe and elsewhere. Australia and New Zealand have very active groups. South Africa has begun to develop brom groups (The current president of BSI is from South Africa). What about Thailand? The Philippines? Taiwan? More of South America besides Brazil? Mexico?

There is a genuine excitement and enthusiasm in witnessing others becoming aware of the multitude of

possibilities, not to mention the satisfying pleasure, of growing and promoting this most wonderful plant family.

As we left Oscar I mentioned to him that he should consider attending the World Bromeliad Conference in 2018 in San Diego.

For our sake I hope he makes it.

August Annual Picnic

This year's picnic was hosted by Bob Walters in his beautiful garden. It was a great opportunity to chat with club members - unlike during monthly meetings when we usually just listen. With great food, and a nice plant raffle, the sunny August afternoon went fast. No plant pictures for show'n'tell this month, just people!



Robert Kopfstein, Deb Kennedy, Pam Peters, Bob Vitacco, Al Evans



Don Nelson, David Kennedy, Dallas Bradford

*Our host Bob Walters with blooming
vriesea philippo-coburgii*



Dan Kinnard and Bob Walters;
Bobbi Evans; Sandra Reus and
phal; Eloise Lau; Juliana Raposo
with Bob's broms



Upcoming Events

Highlighted Meetings

September 10, 2016 at 10 AM
San Diego Bromeliad Society
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 104
www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html

October 8, 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

September Program

The September talk will be given by Carole Richtmyer, from the Cryptanthus Society. This will be a splendid opportunity to learn more about the genus from a true a specialist.

This will be an education for me. The peculiar cryptos seem to grow in reverse in my garden – they only “grow” smaller. Raccoons appreciate them as snacks, too – but only the expensive ones. Let’s not forget that Orthophytum and Lapanthus, two genera we know even less about, are also part of the Cryptanthoid

complex. These two are the drier growing counterparts to the “earthstars”, but they can be just as spectacular. I hope they become more available in the nursery trade here in San Diego. They will probably enjoy our climate better than the forest floor dwelling cousins.

With more and more species being described every day, the Cryptanthoid complex is undergoing major changes right now, being split in 3 different sub-genera even harder to pronounce.

Here’s a photo that will give everybody Cryptanthus dreams. I took it in the collection of Elton Leme, the leading bromeliad taxonomist in Brazil.



Sneak peek: a constellation of Cryptanthus at Elton Leme's collection in Brazil.

September Opportunity Table by David Kennedy

This month, members have an excellent opportunity to enhance their collections. There will be a raffle and a for-sale table composed of plants from our speaker, Carole Richtmyer, who will bring Cryptanthus and other choice broms.

We'll also have gorgeous plants from Betty Patterson of Dallas (that's in Texas, kids), including many rare species she once collected from Ecuador from genera like Pitcairnia, Guzmania and Ronnbergia. Also a large Orthophytum and super-nice Tillandsia copanensis. Plus, a bunch of other stuff even harder to spell.

SDBS 2016

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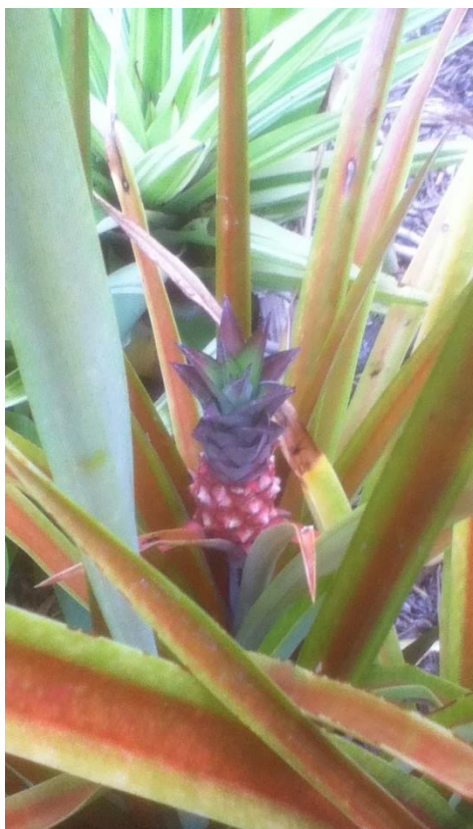
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Happening now: San Diego Zoo Bromeliad Garden

Thanks to the hard work and skill of our SDBS volunteers, the Zoo bromeliad garden keeps getting better and better.

The garden's goal is to introduce bromeliads to the general public. What could be a better bromeliad ambassador than the pineapple? This one was spotted a few days ago during a work session in the garden. Picture taken by Deb Kennedy.



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

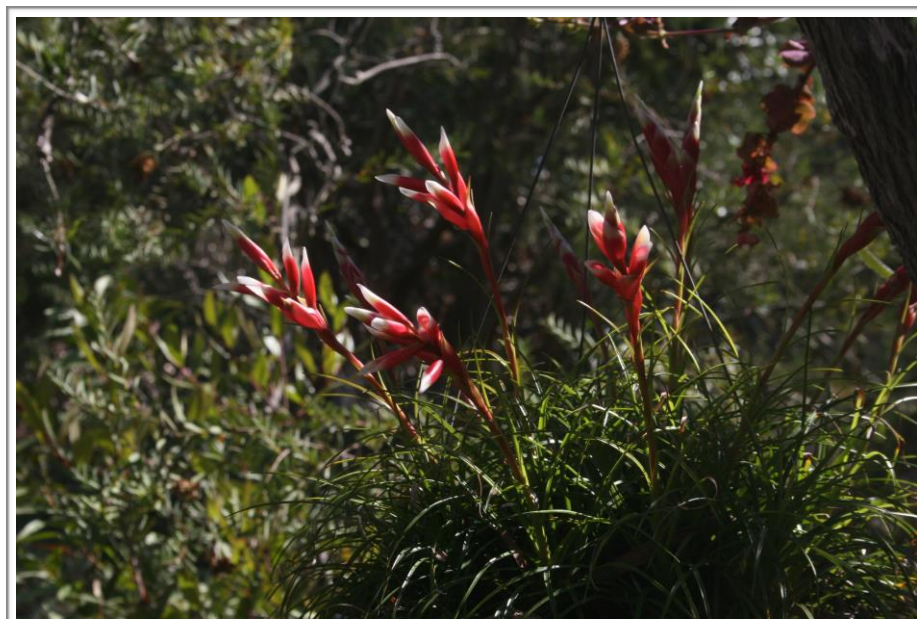


In memory of John

by Andrew Wilson

Several years ago John Arden, a longtime member and internationally known hybridizer of vrieseas and tillandsias, passed way. No ceremony to mark the event took place; his memory resides in the wonderful plants that he grew and hybridized. One of them, the species *Vriesea correia-araujoi*, stood out when I visited him just over three years ago. He divided a plant, with one part for me and the other for Bob Vitacco. Quite small then, the part I received has grown steadily and blooms more and more each year. Here it is today, suspended in the shade of a small tree.

John recognized it as a gem and used it as both a pollen and a seed parent for some of his crosses, including those with *Vr. gigantea* X *lubersii*, *Vr. corralina* and *Vr. 'Sunspot'*. These creations date back to over twenty years ago. That's a real memorium.



Impressions in Houston

by Andrew Wilson

The World Bromeliad Conference was held this year in Houston. At our meeting last month, I reported on many of the activities there, the location, show, plants, sales, presentations, visits to gardens, the standard of the event and so forth. In last month's newsletter Dan Kinnard gave his opinions on the event and commented on the positive aspects associated with attending it. A lot more could be said and more images could be shown but instead of offering that type of information, here are some personal impressions from the event.

Houston is a huge city, larger than San Diego, not only in population but in area. Coming in to land at Bush International the extent of the place was impressive. This year heavy rains had fallen in the months preceding the conference and the whole area was impressively verdant. Slow winding rivers were full and flooded adjacent lands. These events affected the planning and running of the conference. On account of the large size, the travel time between airport and conference was long and the time spent in traveling between conference and each of the garden sites was considerable. Flooding led to the cancellation of a visit to the botanic gardens and to the need for mosquito kits at every place we visited. However, the greenery of the whole area was impressive and despite its flatness the landscapes of loblolly pine woodland and houses widely spaced between them were attractive. This was not the Texas scene of the dry plains and oil pumps. Instead, it was the sight of fat cattle feeding on rich grass pasture or knee-deep in water.



Roger Lane inspects the show tables at the WBC

The lengthy distances between conference and gardens visited allowed time to establish, in cool comfort, interesting conversations with fellow travelers. One of these, a resident of the Houston area, provided opinions freely. He described how the city had not expanded its small metro line but had continued to find money for freeways, several of which were under construction even as we travelled. The bromeliad club was spread thinly over many areas, which made attending meetings time-consuming, especially for younger members who may live far from the meeting sites. While Houston does not usually have very cold winters and Queen palms could be seen growing in many areas the heating of glassed-in areas was necessary if you wanted to grow bromes beyond specimens that are bullet-proof frost hardy. Apart from Galveston, a distant suburb close to the Gulf, a deep freeze would come about every ten years and all the Queen palms would die. In addition to providing protection against cold some people were installing swamp coolers to

reduce the high summer temperatures, an expensive proposition in high humidity areas like Houston. While the large drop in oil prices had changed how he grew his plants it had also changed how he led his life. An engineer in the oil business, he was now commuting twice monthly to Iraq.

The day of departure provided its own impression. The night before, I ordered a shuttle pick-up at a time that should have left plenty to spare but, thirty minutes beyond that time a shuttle has yet to appear. Phone calls, confusion and irritability results in a shuttle arriving an hour late. That would still be fine but other travelers, also waiting for their shuttles, jump aboard despite protestation by the driver who had been told to pick me up. She calls out my name and checks the time needed to arrive at the airport. Then she announces that all others should leave the shuttle. Chaos results. People, packed in tightly, refuse to leave. One passenger at the front of the cab begins a series of observations about the driver along the lines" How does it feel to be the



charge of somebody who knows all about the area, but not about how to get you there?" "Yeah, it seems we have the time right but not the direction" comes the reply from the heart of the cab. This is followed by some people struggling to get out while others are knocking on the door to get in. "It's a multiple choice issue" says the guy at the front, now standing up. "More like Reality TV" comes the reply. The driver, after conversing with home base yells "Get out, y'all. I'm not insured for this". "Insured for what? For travel? We're not moving" comes from the front. The double entendre is not appreciated. Names, incrimination threats and taunts ensue. More discussion follows between driver and home base. Driver of a second shuttle appears and asks if these are his customers. "Who cares? It's only thirty minutes so far" comes from the front. I cringe, realizing they are

enjoying it. Eventually, some of the silent few are ejected, the shuttle stirs into motion and a Bronx cheer goes up. Travel to the airport is uneventful, marked only by wry comments from the front and the solicitous statements of an airline official who happens to be on board and can tell how many are on my flight, the gate schedule and other data that do little to allay my concerns. Arrival at the airline departure gates provides no balm. The line stretches over a hundred yards long outside the building and then proceeds indoors in serpentine fashion. At each turn of the snake I am cheered on by the loquacious companion from the shuttle and for the next hour trudge on with the burden of bromeliads and all my other luggage. After ten turns of the snake I can deposit the luggage and proceed with the bromeliad carry-on but without the continued support

from Mr. Loquacity who evidently will depart for foreign lands. At security the bromeliad carry-on must be opened up and examined. While the security inspector is searching tillandsia, neo and encholirium specimens for hidden weapons the loquacious one reappears. He expressing great interest in the contents, asks for my name and adds "Good to meet you today, I'm Chester". "Skotak?", I ask. He nods. To someone who had named neo hybrids 'Hannibal Lector' and 'Norman Bates' I suggest him commemorating the day's events by naming one 'Zika', and add "Just get 'turmoil' in there" as we go our separate ways.

Attending the WBC involves more than looking at the show, buying plants or listening to talks. You miss a lot if you don't go.

Lotusland

by Juliana Raposo

This March I visited Lotusland in Santa Barbara. The 36-acre estate is a wonder of landscape design, created in the 1940s by Ganna Walska, an opera singer and socialite. Madame Walska had the means and the imagination to put together what I describe as Disneyland for garden nuts. The estate is really a collection of themed gardens, each with its personality and beauty, where horticulture and art come together like nowhere else I've seen. Just to name a few, there is a cactus garden, a Japanese garden, a fern garden, even a blue garden. But we will focus on the bromeliad to garden, which is one of the best.

The bromeliad garden is among the oldest ones in the property. It was built under the supervision of Ganna Walska herself and has been tended by the same master gardener for over 30 years. The largest bromeliad displays there are the tank types, that do extremely well in the Santa Barbara climate. If you liked the Huntington for puyas, you will love Lotusland for aechmeas, neos and vrieseas.

Plants are arranged in raised beds, edged by rocks in a beautiful, natural look. The raised beds are surrounded by walkways that are designed to provide the best viewing of the individual plants as well as the garden as a whole. Tree ferns, palms and coastal live oaks provide shade to the bromeliads.

The brilliant design showcases every single way bromeliads can be grown and displayed. There are bromeliads growing on the ground, mounted on the trees, attached to rocks. By highlighting the epiphytic character of the family, the end result is eye-catching and educational. Terrestrials are also featured, from *Cryptanthus* to *Orthophytum* and *Dyckia*, although in lesser numbers.



They also make great use of mass planting. Bromeliads are the champions of foliage color and variety, and this garden showcases that by massing plants with contrasting colors and shapes. To make everything even more interesting, the beds of *Billbergia* and *Aechmea weilbachii* were in full bloom.

The visual effect is majestic, especially because the plants seem to be really grown in place. It's not that type of casino display where someone just planted a bunch of 4-inch pot nursery plants in the morning. I can appreciate when a garden looks "for real". Less manicured. The large clumps here and there convey the passage of

time, the patience and serenity that hands on gardeners can fully understand. For example, compare the stack of *aechmea fasciata* in the picture, and a group with the same number of individual plants straight out of the grower. Which one has the most charm?

I also had to notice other types of bromeliads that you don't see in

landscaping, at least not in California. For example, they had a beautiful bed of *Nidularium* (fulgens?) under the shade of an oak. A chunky *Ancanthostachys strobilacea*, a plant that always reminds me of Mr. Kopfstein, sided with masses of colorful *billbergias* and *neos*.

Every single possible way of

displaying broms is done well. The bromeliad tree would look great in any rainforest. The cave dressed in broms is no less visually attractive. I looked and looked and couldn't find nylon ties, sphagnum moss deception or even burned leaves and rot. It looks like the plants are in bromeliad heaven in Santa Barbara, which is a bit cooler and more humid than San Diego.

Here's a place the club could visit. The docent who led our tour is a bromeliad collector himself and would be happy to arrange something special for our group with the participation of the master bromeliad gardener. What do you think?

1- the cave; 2- bromeliad tree; 3- color contrast: *A. ornata* v. *nationalis* and mounted clump of purple *A. fasciata*; 4- tillandsia on a mossy rock; 5- *A. weilbachii* colony on rock.

