

# BROMELIANA

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## THE 2010 WORLD BROMELIAD CONFERENCE IN NEW ORLEANS

by Herb Plever

“Bromeliads In The Big Easy”, the 19<sup>th</sup> World Bromeliad Conference was held at the Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel from July 26<sup>th</sup> to August 1<sup>st</sup> in New Orleans. This was the third time the world conference was hosted by the Greater New Orleans Bromeliad Society, for which we are all grateful. To put on a WBC is no easy job, especially in these difficult times. It was attended by about 270 people, mostly from the United States, but many registrants were from abroad including 29 from Australia and 17 from the Bahamas.

Conferences are typically held in the summer time when the weather is hot and tourism weak, and the hotels are willing to give a decent discount for rooms. And yes, the weather was beastly hot in the high 90°s F. (on 2 days it was over 100°F) and very humid, but the room rate was a special \$124 a day. Les Graifman, David McReynolds, Betsy Sherwin and I attended from New York and we all had a good time. The hotel corridors and lobby were kept very cool. Les and I who shared a large room kept the air conditioning

off. Herb Hill and I took a long afternoon walk to the new Insectorium, and we reveled as we warmed up in sunny, 90° + heat.

The crowded events schedule over the week was enough to keep one fully occupied, besides the great joy of meeting up with old friends - and making new ones. Optional tours included a Casino bus tour, a bus tour of New Orleans, a Dinner & Jazz evening riverboat ride up the Mississippi and Plantation and Swamp Boat tours. On Saturday there were free bus tours to visit local bromeliad collections. There was a nice welcoming party with a good buffet



Prize winner table at the judged show

supper on Wednesday, July 28<sup>th</sup>. The keynote speaker, was Dr. Gregory Brown; see discussion on page 4.

On Thursday afternoon both the plant sales room and the judged Show opened at the same time. As expected, hundreds of people rushed into the sales area while only a few went to the judged Show. Vendors, including Grant Groves, Michael Kiehl, Tropicflora (nice to see both Linda and Dennis Cathcart), Rainforest Flora

**NEXT MEETING** - Tuesday, September 7th, 2010 promptly at 7:00 P.M. at the [Ripley-Grier Studios 520 8th Ave. \(between 36th & 37th St\) Room 16A - 16<sup>th</sup> floor](#)

**THE WORLD BROMELIAD CONFERENCE IN NEW ORLEANS** - Reports by our four New York Attendees, complete video coverage of the show plants, garden tours and bromeliad personalities. Please bring in plant(s) for sale and for Show and Tell. Come early as the program will be long and we'll try to sell sale plants before the program on a first come basis, as well as afterward.

and Duroflor (Chester Skotak) brought many hundreds of plants, and those were mostly sold before the week had ended. There were some beautiful plants to be bought from every vendor.



Grant Groves' sales table being set up



Art Boe's greenhouse

Despite my usual vow not to bring home any more plants, I succumbed and bought from Grant Groves a stunning, new, albomarginated *Guzmania* 'Denise' with dark green leaves and very white, broad margins, and a pot of 5 *Billbergia* 'Poquito Mas' with strong red and white blotches that came from a tissue culture developed in Herb Hill's lab. I also found a pup of *Aechmea recurvata* 'Aztec Gold' buried under a pile of tillandsias at Tropaflo's table for \$10! and I bought a bunch of tillandsias. The above photo of some of Grant Groves plants shows *Neo*. 'Donna', an albomarginated *Alcantarea* on the left, and an *xGuzvriesea* 'Garden Party' and an *xVriecantarea* 'Inferno' with huge inflorescences (behind the yellow vriesea spikes).

The judged Show was disappointing as there were only 142 plant entries, more than half of which were entered by commercial nurseries and one large local grower. *Neoregelia* and *Tillandsia* were the genera with the most plants: *Dyckia*, *Cryptanthus* and *Aechmea* had about 10 entries each as did *Billbergia* - but most of these were *B. 'Hallelujah'* or its hybrids. There were about 10 *Vriesea* entries, most by David Shiigi. Perhaps *Guzmania* presents cultural problems in New Orleans, because there was only one *Guzmania* entered in the show. However, when we visited Art Boe's greenhouse, we saw many beautiful guzmanias in bloom.

Show plants I liked were: *xDyckcobnia* 'June' a new bigeneric cross of *Dyckia* and *Deuterocobnia* with dark brown leaves, *Tillandsia jalisco-monticola* in bloom, *Dyckia* 'Yellow Glow', a robust *T. ehlersiana*, *Neo*.



*Vriesea* 'Eva' x *V. 'Sunset'* (Wingert)

*Vriesea* 'Eva' x *V. 'Sunset'*

'Lorena Lector' a gorgeous new cultivar of *N. 'Hannibal Lector'* (see p. 3), *Vriesea* [( 'Memoria Howard Yamamoto' x *V. fosteriana* 'White Lightning') x *V.*

'Snows of Mauna Kea'] by David Shiigi, *V. 'Eva'* x *V. 'Sunset'* by Paul Wingert, *Cryptanthus* 'Ruby Star' and *Dyckia marniere-lapostolle* x *D. damsonii* (see p. 3).

The Show featured some beautiful original artwork by Stephen Littlefield, Penrith Goff and Calandra Thurrott, and a quilt by Michael Young( p. 4)

Six excellent seminars were presented. I review them here in more detail than the usual one line listing to give members an idea of how informative and interesting conference seminars can be, and as a courtesy to the speakers who came from afar at great expense to give these talks for the BSI.

First up was Peter Tristram (Australia) with a witty and ironic presentation of "Bromeliads: Popularity, Variety and BioSecurity in Australia". The range and diversity of the broms shown grown "down under" confirms the impression I got in my trip to the 2008 WBC in Cairns, that Australia is a veritable hotbed of extensive bromeliad activity.

BioSecurity concerns the complex bureaucratic regulations for bringing plants into Australia and the requirement that they be gassed with deadly methyl bromide - except for mindlessly chosen plants on some exempt list. Peter described having to fill out a 21 page document, and trying to comply with - or

get past the regulations so that the plants he is bringing back won't be gassed with methyl bromide and be killed. He tries to buy 3 of each brom in the hope that at least one might survive the gassing even if damaged. He is just on his way back to Australia with a ton of plants and we wish him luck.

Len Colgan of Adelaide (South Australia)

discussed the bromeliad genera, and he showed photos of the **type** species for each genus that were selected by the taxonomist who had described the genus, ostensibly with characters that best reflected the genus.

Len then went on to show the virtual revolution that has been caused by the DNA studies of molecular biologists. Where we used to have the three bromeliad sub-families described by Dr. Lyman Smith: *Pitcairnioideae*, *Bromelioideae* and *Tillandsioideae*, we now have **five additional** sub-families: *Puyoideae*, *Navioideae*, *Hechtioideae*, *Lindmanioideae* and *Brochinioideae*. Among other things, the latest DNA data confirms what Elton Leme had previously suggested, that the genus *Aechmea* is not a natural genus and is in fact a mess that remains to be clarified by further studies. Prof. Len gave a humorous and easily understandable description of a complex scientific topic.

Cristy Brenner of southern California is an intrepid explorer/collector who has ventured into rugged and often dangerous terrain with only a guide and a few companions. They sleep in small tents and/or sleeping bags and brave the elements to photograph and collect bromeliads in habitat. She has given seminars at prior WBCs about her adventures on the mesa tepuis in Venezuela and other places.

At this conference she gave an exciting photo account of a trip to northern Peru. Cristy is a professor of geography at Saddleback College. She sat at our table at the banquet - friendly and easy-going. But she is also an adventurous and daring explorer who is already planning another trip to South America next year. You won't want to miss her talk in 2012.

Alan Herndon of south Florida is a biologist who has been doing research on *Aechmea* species. His seminar was



*Vriesea correia-araujoii*  
Best In Show

Multiple *Vriesea correia-araujoii*

on "The Awesome Orthophytums". He showed photos of the species, the inter-relationships between them and some of the newly described species. Alan was successful in getting his point "awesome" across, because Les Graifman has now decided to order some orthophytums in the next plant order.

Kerry Tate, from New South Wales, Australia, gave a seminar entitled "A Frosty Experience: Before, During and After". Kerry grows and researches broms on a rural, sub-tropical property, and she described with photos the devastating effect of "black frost" resulting from a drop of temperature to 17° F. (-8° C). When cold air below freezing contains moisture, it precipitates onto the leaves in the form of tiny ice crystals, giving them a protective hoarfrost coating. But when the air is very dry and no hoarfrost forms, the leaves can freeze internally, turn black and die, and that is what happened to Kerry's plants.

The "before" pictures showed a large, lush collection of terrestrial and epiphytic plants and beautiful trees like a rainforest in South America. The "during" photos showed how the leaves turned black, and the "after" pictures revealed the absolute devastation. But there was also a follow-up "after" which showed that some plants and trees had survived enough to produce offsets. Then a further "after" series displayed how Kerry has brought her sub-tropical garden back to its original lush, natural beauty. That took back-breaking work!

Paul Isley, co-owner of the Rainforest Flora tillandsia nursery with Jerry Robinson, in a talk entitled "Where In The World Are Tillandsias Going",

showed great photos of the tillandsia species he is growing and the many hybrids he has made. Many of these photos can be found in his books, *Tillandsia*



*Dyckia marniere-lapostolle x D. dawsonii*



*Neoregelia 'Lorena Lector'*

and the new Tillandsia II.

The personable David Shiigi of Hilo, Hawaii, spoke on "Growing and Hybridizing Bromeliads in Hawaii" with a great video of the vrie seas, neos and guzmanias at his Bromeliads Hawaii nursery. Modest as always, David alluded to his appreciation of hybridizers like John Arden and Herb Hill. Later in the talk he made a special tribute to our own Henry Turner. Those who stayed after the talk were treated to a music video of people and scenes he took at past world conferences. David is a good friend and he will be happy to become your friend if you come to the next WBC in Florida.



Vriesea [(V. 'Howard Yamamoto' x V. fosteriana 'White Lightning') x V. 'Snows of Mauna Kea']



Quilt - "Bromeliads on Parade" by Michael Young - original art section

The rare plant auction used to be mostly for the benefit of BIC. For the second time, the Cryptanthus Society again directly participated in the auction. About \$17,000 was raised, but it was unclear to whom the money would go or how it would be divided. Is money being held pending clarification of BIC's position at Selby?

In his keynote address at the Welcome Party, Greg Brown directly raised an issue that was on most attendees minds - the uncertain future of the Bromeliad Identification Center at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens in Sarasota, Florida. Harry Luther, the Director of BIC left Selby early this year with criticisms of its management and took a position with the Singapore Botanical Gardens. This was followed by an article in the Sarasota Times Herald that reported Selby's finances and staff were in disarray.

In contrast Dr. Brown was optimistic about Selby's future and he strongly disputed that report, saying the staff was better organized than before and that the Selby CEO was firmly committed to supporting BIC research. Some questions were raised about how much reliance could be placed in Selby's Board of Directors, which has many real estate invest-



Best Artistic Arrangement

ors on its Board. The BSI Board of Directors appointed a committee to meet with Selby's CEO and Board to evaluate the current situation at Selby, the likely future of the BIC, and the role that BSI should play in that future. At its meeting on Tuesday, the BSI Board elected Jay Thurrott to a 3 year term as President.

The Saturday night banquet was a nice event with few speeches and the opportunity to talk with many attendees and take pictures. The next World Bromeliad Conference will be held in 2012 in Florida, hosted by the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies. The date and place will be announced in the near future. If you enjoyed this brief account of this year's conference, plan to join in the fun in 2012.



Calandra and President Jay Thurrott

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