



THE BROMELIAD BLADE

Newsletter of the San Diego Bromeliad Society

Volume L, Number 4

April 2015

Editor's Notes

Spotlight on Puyas

The program by Betty Patterson will yield a great amount of information on this genus.

Andrew Wilson has furnished us with an article on Puyas of the Hunting Gardens.

Our trip to the Huntington with a tour of the Dessert Garden is to see the Puyas (hopefully in full bloom).

2015 Show and Sale

It is time to start thinking about the show and sale. June is just around the corner. The theme this year is: *SDBS at 50: Our Golden Anniversary* Start thinking about the plants you are going to enter, the artistic entries (decorative container and arrangement groups), bromeliad related artwork, and any educational exhibits you are going to put up. It is also time to think about your sales plants and repot any that need time to re-establish before someone takes them home. Last, but not least, think about how you can help the show by volunteering.

□

April Meeting

“Bromeliads in Ecuador: the Puyas” will be the subject of a talk by Betty Patterson. Her presentation will consist of slides and information from many trips to Ecuador. Betty has furnished the information below so that we may know a little about her:

I am a musician that played with the Dallas Symphony for 45 years. I started going to Ecuador in 1985 & have been there over 30 times. I translated Jose Manzanares book about the bromeliads of Ecuador and I traveled with him on many many collecting trips

I'm also interested in training dogs. I have 2 wire-haired dachshunds & a wire-haired pointing griffon. Now that I am retired I can travel & enjoy other activities such as hiking & reading. The photo is when I broke my ankle on top of Uritushing collecting broms. □



The Huntington Trip

Our bus trip to the Huntington will be on April 18, 2005. Registration was closed on April 1, as previously announced. Please:

- be on time at your pickup point. — fifteen minutes before the bus departs. To paraphrase Geoffrey Chaucer from “Time waits for no man” to The bus waits for no man.
- while at the Huntington, stay with the group until we are released for free time.
- again, for the return trip: be at the pickup point on time. It is a long walk back to San Diego from the Huntington.
- bring hat, sunscreen, and comfortable shoes as there will be lots of walking in the sun.
- there are eating places near where we will break for lunch.
- don't forget your camera if you are a picture-taker. We hope that a lot of the puyas are in bloom but if they aren't, there are lots of incredible things to see.

□



The President's Corner

by Robert Kopfstein

God does not send strange flowers every year.

When the spring winds blow o'er the pleasant places,

The same dear things lift up the same fair faces.

The bromeliad is here

(with apologies to Adeline Whitney)

Spring housecleaning also applies to the garden as well. It is a good time to check over your bromeliads: some may need splitting and re-potting; some may need the potting mix replaced, especially if it has broken down and is sodden; some pots may need to be weeded—my particular bugaboos are the hated oxalis and veldt grass, both of which seem to be the toughest and most prolific plants in Southern California.

And as long as you are checking over and tidying up your bromeliad collection, it is a good time to begin separating out the likely candidates to enter in our June 13-14 show. In the past I have been doubly guilty for waiting until the week of the show to scramble through my bromeliads trying to find suitable entries. I was guilty for unnecessary procrastination, and guilty for in my haste inadvertently overlooking some prime specimens that would have been good additions to the show.

If you do divide your plants, now is the time to re-pot them and get them ready for sale. The June show and sale is probably the best time during the year to find good homes for your orphans, and the extra cash could help offset the expenses of fertilizer, pots, plant tags, and potting mix. Unfortunately whenever I make any money on plant sales I usually blow it on more plants. Even though I know this is counter-productive, this seems to be the nature of being a phytoaddict. Nevertheless, if you pot up your offsets now, they will have a good chance of establishing themselves in their new pot, and established happy pups bring higher prices.

Spring is also a good time to check on the light conditions for your plants. If you move some of your bromeliads depending on the season, it is best to be sure that a plant, happy in one place in December or January, is not overexposed and possibly damaged by the intense sunlight of summer.

Personally, for me it is always a joy to witness the spring awakening. I have heard Easterners criticize California for not having "real" seasons. What they appear to miss is the difference between seasonal change in our Mediterranean climate, and the extremes of the prairie and eastern woodland.

March Meeting

The march presentation by John Traeger –**Stumbling Across Bromeliads and Other Succulents in Oaxaca** – gave a great insight to the habitat of the few tillandsias from the area explored. I heard a few grumbles that there weren't many bromeliad photos shown. That's true but the overview of the environment makes one wonder how those few do survive. It makes one think that we could just throw them out on the driveway and have them grow very well. I thought that the great photos and information about the area made the time more than well-spent).

Nancy filled us in on some of the workings of setting up the rules for a BSI sanctioned show.

Robert Kopfstein told about the progress in moving John Arden's collection to Qual Gardens (oops San Diego Botanic Garden).

The opportunity table was varied and drew a lot of attention.

See photos from the meeting below on following pages. □

May Meeting

Our speaker in May will be Nels Christenson. He will tell us about bromeliads growing in different parts of the Canary Islands off west Africa. Bromeliads do not occur there naturally but due to cross-Atlantic business over the centuries between there, Venezuela and north-eastern Brazil, plantings are present on the islands. For reference, the climate resembles that of coastal southern California. □

The bromeliads respond to the warmer weather with more pronounced growth and more intense color. Witnessing these changes in these sub-tropical to tropical plants should excite every grower who appreciates the cycles of nature.

On a more mundane note: cell phones are clearly a technological marvel; however, as a courtesy to everyone at our meetings please be sure that your cell phone is turned off while the meeting is in progress.

March Show and Tell

Plant

Aechmea 'Foster's Favorite'

Aechmea recurvata

x recurvata bentathii

Dyckia

Hechtia rosea x guatemalensis

Hohenbergia rosea

Quesnelia Lateralis

Quesnelia liboniana

Tillandsia

Tillandsia bulbosa

Tillandsia hybrid

Tillandsia kautskyi

Tillandsia ionantha 'Peach'

Tillandsia ionantha 'Peanut'

Tillandsia stricta

Tillandsia 'Stupendo'

(*T.* 'Houston' x *T. leonamiana*)

Brought by

Lucia Velazquez

Lucia Velazquez

Nancy Groves

Robert Kopfstein

Bob Wright

Nancy Groves

Bob Wright

Lorraine Cypher

Al Evans

Jim Wright

Jim Wright

Al Evans

Lucia Velazquez

Al Evans

David Kennedy

Please fill out an information Form for each plant and leave it on the display table after the meeting. A little research could reveal interesting facts to share about your plant and also will indicate the correct spelling of the name.

Library Notes

by Eloise Lau

Two from our library shelves, classics for the Bromeliad enthusiast, by Jose Manzanares, Jewels of the Jungle Bromeliaceae of Ecuador, Part I Bromelioideae and Pitcairnioideae, Part II.

If you haven't checked these books out you may want to take them home to enjoy a vicarious trip to Ecuador. These books feature beautiful color photographs of habitat and the plants in habitat. Arranged by genus with species description, observations, location and distribution.

There is an introduction into the world of Ecuadorian Bromeliads in Part I with histories of famous plant explorers and contributors including our speaker, Elizabeth Patterson who spend may years starting in 1985 with explorations with Mr Manzanares. She also helped with English translations and contributions of photos. She has also written the Preface to Part II.

If you look closely in Part II you will find photos of our members Pamela Hyatt (Koide) and Ed Doherty.

We look forward to the publication of Part III on the Tillandsioideae, which we hope will be soon. It will be a definite addition to our library. □

Companion Plants

by Dan Kinnard

One of my favorite companion plants for bromeliads is the genus *Rhipsalis* and friends - *Hatoria*, *Lepismium*, *Schlumbergera* and a plethora of others names through the years that are classified and reclassified per the current thoughts of taxonomists. It doesn't matter what they are called. A lot of mine have lost their tags or didn't have names when I acquired them. They are still a nice addition to the collection.

Most grow easily with our bromeliads and add an interesting texture, flowers and berries to the overall view. Most seem to prefer to be grown hanging (after all they are epiphytic) and grow in low to moderate light. They can change significantly in appearance with the light and humidity.

They can easily reach four feet or more in length (with time, say 10 years) and can make quite a statement like a curtain that moves with the breeze.



⇐ The yellow flowers of *Hatoria salicornioides*, called "drunkard's dream" after the bottle shaped sections of the plant, are highly scented.



Rhipsalis elliptica, can have leaves that are green, magenta or purple. ⇒



SDBS 2015

Meetings

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

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The Bromeliad Blade

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Items for publication are welcomed and should be received by the editor by the 25th of the preceding month.

UPCOMING EVENTS

WHEN WHAT, WHERE

HIGHLIGHTED MEETINGS

April 11, 2015 at 10:00 AM San Diego Bromeliad Society
Balboa Park, Casa del Prado, Room 104
Program: Betty Patterson on Bromeliads in Ecuador: the Puyas
www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html

April 18, 2015 Excursion to The Huntington
Registration closed March 31, 2015.

April 16-19, 2015 BROMSMATTA
18th Australian Bromeliad Conference
at The Novotel Parramatta, Sydney, Australia
www.bromeliad.org.au

May 9, 2015 at 10:00 AM San Diego Bromeliad Society
Balboa Park, Casa del Prado, Room 104
Program: Nels Christenson
www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html

June 12-14, 2015 SDBS at 50: Our Golden Anniversary SDBS
SHOW AND SALE
Balboa Park, Casa del Prado, Room 101
www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html

July 11, 2015 at 10:00 AM San Diego Bromeliad Society
Balboa Park, Casa del Prado, Room 104
Program: Aaron Sidvey, Denver Botanic Gardens
www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html

June 13-19, 2016 Bromeliad Society International World Conference
Houston, Texas

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 Del Mar Fairgrounds
www.sandiegohorticulturalsociety.org



Just too good to pass up:

Vincent Van Gogh's relatives:

The nephew who drove a stage coach:

Wells-far Gogh

An aunt who taught positive thinking:

Way-to-Gogh

The ballroom dancing aunt:

Tang Gogh

Meet Our Members

Karen Rudd



SDBS Blade: Where do you live?

KR: I live in the Kensington area of San Diego, on a canyon. The shade for my bromeliads comes from trees, I don't have shade cloth.

SDBS Blade: When and how did you get started growing bromeliads?

KR: I got started growing bromeliads when a family member moved and gave us his plants. Among them was a bromeliad (*Billbergia* 'Windii'). He said, it needed repotting. I had no idea what type of soil to use or how to divide the plants. I saw there was a bromeliad society in San Diego. The meeting was a few weeks away. I went and got a plant from the opportunity table and I couldn't resist acquiring more. I also grow epiphyllum and succulents.

SDBS Blade: If you could be a bromeliad which one would you be? Why?

KR: I enjoy many types of bromeliads, especially those that have red leaves all year. These include, *Neoregelia* (e.g., fireball), *Billbergia* (e.g., 'Simpatico') and *Aechmea* (e.g., burgundy) just to name a few. Because these plants aren't under shade cloth, they get more sun and perhaps are a little stressed. Therefore, they remain a radiant red all year. These red bromeliads look particularly brilliant when contrasted next to green or light green plants.

SDBS Blade: Tell us a little about yourself:

KR: I was born in San Diego and have lived in this area all my life. My husband, Bob, and I have been married 54 years. We have three grown children and one granddaughter. I earned BA in psychology and a MA in Communicative Disorders from San Diego State University. Before retirement, I worked teaching students with learning disabilities. My husband and I have traveled throughout the western United States and Canada. We have explored most of Baja California.

Scott Sandel



SDBS Blade: Where do you live?

SS: I live and garden in Mission Hills, in Sunset zone 24. The area gets plenty of marine influence, but the fog lifts earlier than it does in say La Jolla or Point Loma.

SDBS Blade: When and how did you get started growing bromeliads?

SS: I started gardening when I was 5 or 6. My dad and his family were big gardening folks. My paternal great-grandmother had a life-long obsession with growing things in Galveston and in her eventual home in La Marque, Texas. She and her husband bought an acre when they moved off Galveston Island not that long after the hurricane of 1900. They researched soils maps and bought their lot based on its sandy loam soil. When the town grew up around them, she was responsible for naming the streets after trees (Magnolia Drive, Cedar Drive, Chestnut, Cypress, Holly...). It seems most of her children and grand-children were gardeners or horticulturalists. I learned how to propagate by cuttings and how to swap plants with family and neighbors from these old-timers. It was natural that I stumbled upon bromeliads, which are one of the best plants for a kid without a regular allowance. By the time I was 8, I was carting around potted *Coleus*, *Liriope*, *Aloe vera* and *Billbergia pyramidalis* in my red wagon, going door to door (unsupervised I might add). Later I traded for *Billbergia nutans* and for *Neoregelia spectabilis*. I turned on my dad and a neighbor (also scout leader) on to bromeliads, and before we knew it we had backyards full of shiny Neoregelias, which grow very well on the Gulf Coast if you can bring them indoors or cover them when it freezes. By the time I was 12 or so, we were making monthly trips to the Houston Bromeliad Society to get new plants and to see some great programs. I was lucky to see some great presentations from folks like John Anderson and Don Beadle, who lived down in Corpus Christi. Dad still has a distinct fondness for *Cryptanthus* and bold, colorful Neo's like 'Peggy's each'. (Center of photo, below).



SDBS Blade: If you could be a bromeliad which one would you be? Why?

SS: I would be one of the cloud forest dwellers. Maybe *Mezobromelia capituligera*. (See photo taken in Ecuador, 2010). I love tropical habitats that are up in 1,220-2,000 meter altitude where it is rarely very hot and it is always moist. WAY different from San Diego?



SDBS Blade: Anything else to add?

SS: I find myself limited by space under shade cloth, but I am always on the hunt for a new *Alcantarea* or *Neoregelia*.

Mike Pretzer

SDBS Blade: Where do you live?

MP: Imperial Beach, CA

SDBS Blade: When and how did you get started growing bromeliads?

MP: I started growing them in 2014. I have long noticed them in the indoor garden areas of nurseries and at the beautiful collection in the Balboa Park Arboretum.



Other interesting Plants

from Dan and Eloise

Here are a few photos of some plants that we grow with bromeliads either in the shade house or planted in the ground.

Kalanchoe uniflora



Unknown Pereskia (Cactus)
in the garden



SDBS Blade: If you could be a bromeliad which one would you be? Why?

MP: Something with beautiful leaves in a cool shady garden next to a pond.

SDBS Blade: Tell us a little about yourself:

I love nature and have explored as a backpacker and scuba diver. I am also a musician and an elementary music teacher in the town I live. I look forward to exploring to the world of bromeliads and realize SDBS is will be a great group to help me do so.

□

Couldn't Show and Telled

From Scott Sandel in Mission Hills

It has been an especially mild winter, and we are obviously well into spring. I had some Billbergias that flowered last month, but they faded fast. Now some of the Vrieseas are going at it. Vriesea simplex is one of those dependable bloomer, with its hanging inflorescences. Recently, I tried growing a small group of three Vriesea simplex in a teak hanging box. Well, it didn't work out that well; it has been too difficult to keep it hydrated, and 1/4 of the leaves have significant brown tips. Oh well, it was an experiment. On the other hand, I have been rewarded with a big, fat spike on one of John Arden's non-registered hybrids, Vriesea 'Arching Flame'. it is pictured here just before its first yellow flower popped out. It looks like it will last into May.



Vriesea 'Arching Flame'

Couldn't Show and Tell

from the garden of Dan and Eloise

This xBilya is a cross from a friend in Florida. We received the seed in 2011. There were five seed; three sprouted; one survived. The parents are *Billbergia* 'Hallelujah' and *Puya mirabilis*. More photos will follow as the bloom develops. It is now planted in the garden outside. The fence in the background is to keep the rabbits away since they seem to have a taste for some Puyas.



Our friend's plant in bloom:

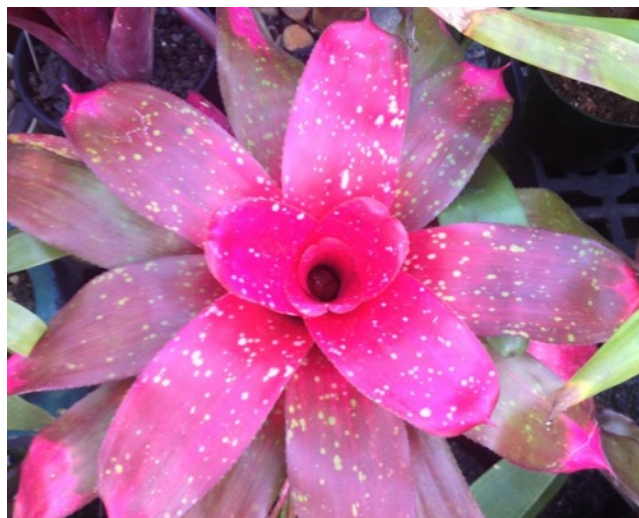


Another plant that has been flowering for the past month is a fairly common Aechmea, *Aechmea caudata*, maybe some of you have these flowering now? (This is a plant from the newsletter editor's collection.) I think that I purchased it at the show 3 years ago. The tag still has the \$6.00 price on it!



Aechmea caudata

Another sign of spring can be found in the rosettes of some of my Neoregelias. Flower buds are forming down in there, and some plants are beginning to show color. One of these is Neoregelia 'Monet'. It is a medium-sized Neoregelia, propagated by Bullis in Florida. I bought mine a year and a half ago from Jimbo's Bromeliad Nursery in Galveston County, Texas. The color of this one cannot be captured by any camera that I have. Its HOT pink peachy colored foliage with lime green speckles all over seem to freak out my lens. I had to tone it down a few notches in my picture editor.



Neoregelia 'Monet'

Couldn't Show and Tell

From Dave Kennedy's garden:.



Tillandsia lymanii



T. "Silverado"



T. didsticha

Lastly, here is a photo of my first *Alcantarea geniculata* to ever flower. Well – it has only just started to send out a spike that will be around 4 feet, which is not as large as some of the plants in this genus. Maybe I will send in photos in future newsletters to show its progress.

Happy spring everyone!



Alcantarea geniculata



Puyas in the Huntington Desert Garden by Andrew Wilson

History

In 1907 Henry Huntington met with his chief superintendent William Hertrich to discuss what the next garden in his 240 acre property needed. The story goes that Hertrich suggested “What about a cactus garden?” Huntington agreed but soon realized his mistake, for he hated the spiny plants he had encountered in the southwestern deserts. However, the agreement was made and Hertrich seized the opportunity to interpret ‘cactus’ rather broadly and proceeded to bring from all parts of the world large numbers of succulent plants, especially cacti, and terrestrial bromeliads. By 1920 the ‘cactus’ garden had grown to 11 acres.

Included in what is now termed the Desert Garden were puyas. The original plantings contained species from the mediterranean-type climate region of central Chile but species from Peru, Bolivia and other counties in South America have been added. The older specimens have developed into enormous clumps, nearly impenetrable to passage but magnificent when in bloom. Some species can take decades to reach the flowering stage; we are fortunate for the foresight of Hertrich.



This is truly a plant to be desired provided, of course, that it's not in your own yard. However, as an inducement, no weeding is required! As with other puyas there are three petals in each flower (below). The first flowers to open are at the base of the inflorescence and as the season progresses their petals coil up and close while those higher up expand. The period for pollination lasts a month or more.



Puya species

We can discuss just a few of the species expected to be seen in April. Above two color forms of *Puya alpestris*, the best known species. Note the unopened flowers. Botanists speculate that they serve as perches for hummingbirds.

Because of the tiny surfaces that compose the petals of puya flowers the color seen may depend on the angle you view them. No matter, all shades are stunning, but not easy to shoot.

Another Chilean species that is impressive when in bloom is *Puya venusta*. Here it is in a huge clump with dyckias blooming in the background.

Another puya from Chile to look out for is *P. coerulea*. Similar to *P. venusta*, its flowers cluster less densely around the inflorescence (top of next page).

The largest species now growing at HBG is *P. chilensis* (second photo on next page). The spikes can rise to over 15 feet. In full bloom,



this species may be the most impressive of all. Its size and imposing character takes charge of the scene. In nature, it is also the most deadly. The spines on its leaves are pointed backwards. An animal seeking protection from cold, rain or predators may find its way inside a short distance. The convergent geometry of leaves approaching a stem limits further advance and, by then, there is no turning back.

As with many bromeliads, puyas have undergone name changes. This is not a treatise on the matter, so we'll just mention a few names in case you hear somebody talking about them. Until a few years ago *P. berteroniana* was considered a species dis-

tinct from *P. alpestris*. A larger plant in every way, it is now lumped as *P. alpestris* ssp. *zoellneri*. Petal color in puyas, unlike in most plants, is considered a key discriminator. Zizka (*Brittonia*, July 2013) says "Petal color is the most consistent character to distinguish species groups among the Chilean *Puya*: Petals are (greenish-) yellow in the *P. chilensis* group, blue-green in the *P. alpestris*, and blue (or black) in the *P. coerulea* group (*coerulea*, *venusta*)". Meanwhile, the remnants of a plant collected by Mez in the 19th century may be all that remains of *P. berteroniana*.

In springtime there are other species (and hybrids) to be seen and there are others that will (eventually) bloom in summer. While he was the botanical director of Huntington, Myron Kimnach collected Peruvian species, some yet unnamed) and at times the garden offers these for sale.

Of course, Hertrich and his followers did not stop with puyas to display the dry-land bromeliad family members. Banks of dyckias, hechtias and deuterocohnias as well as intergeneric hybrids can be seen in bloom throughout the summer. There are few gardens in the world where terrestrial bromeliads grow cheek by jowl with giant cacti and nolinias (below), which they do in nature. The Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx called the Huntington Desert Garden "the most extraordinary garden in the world." □

