



The Bromeliad Blade

Newsletter of the
San Diego
Bromeliad Society

April 2016

VOLUME LI

NUMBER 4

The President's Corner

by Robert Kopfstein

Consider symbiosis.

The word is derived from two Greek roots that mean "together" and "life," and in biology it signifies two or more organisms that mutually co-exist. Not only do they live together, but they depend one on the other for their very existence.

A prime example is lichen, a combination of a fungus (ascomycetes) and certain green or blue green algae. This duo has been so successful that you can find lichen almost ubiquitously, from tropical climates and deserts to the arctic—reindeer moss is a staple without which children in the West would have to do without all those goodies they receive on December 24, (that is unless Santa would locate another food source for Dancer, Prancer, and the rest of that herd).

Bromeliads too exhibit symbiotic traits. Those that are epiphytic most often live in concert with other plants, trees, shrubs, cactus. The lithophytes may use rock as a substrate, but they do not cling to the rocks alone. If you visit bromeliads in habitat you will find that most often the tree branch or

the rock has been previously colonized by lichens and moss. This biotic substrate allows the bromeliad seeds the necessary moist "cushion" to germinate, and it provides protection for the tiny seedlings to survive until they are large enough to fend for themselves.

Once the bromeliads are large enough, they too are the site of symbiotic relationships. The so-called "tank type" broms trap water, and these little reservoirs not only provide essential water for birds, mammals, and reptiles that live high in the forest canopy, but they are home to frogs and insects – alas, including mosquitos. If you grow any of the tank bromeliads in your garden you have likely observed the variety of critters that soon make themselves at home in your plants. Years ago when I first began to grow large neoregelias I was perplexed as to why the leaves near the center had elongated scratches; the smaller neos seemed immune to this problem. Then one day I noticed that the neighborhood birds were using my "big horse neos" as a birdbath. The scratches came their frequent ablutions.

Some tillandsias – especially the ones with bulbous bases are myrmecophiles; they provide a home for ants, who are safely tucked away in the dry shelter of the leaf bases. In turn, the plant has its own built in security force. Heaven help the hapless collector who might try to dislodge the tillandsia. The ants attack—stinging—and the collector, if he or she is wise, will best do a hasty retreat leaving the plant unmolested.

This concept of symbiosis apparently caught the attention of author Terry Pratchett, who writes mostly fantasy fiction. In 1998, he published (Harper Collins) *The Bromeliad Trilogy*, a series of three short connected novels telling the story of a group of nomes (not gnomes), little people who have been stranded on Earth for many, many generations. Apparently their exploratory spacecraft became separated from the mother ship. They eke out a miserable existence in a meadow until they decide to move on, ultimately winding up in a British department store. Then to their surprise they encounter another group of nomes, who can remember no other existence other than inside the store, and who have never had to deal with "outsiders."

In effect the trilogy is an extended metaphor for the human condition. Using a simile of frogs that know no other world other than the bromeliad that acts as their miniscule universe, the nomes face catastrophe when they discover that their miniscule universe, the

department store, is to be closed and then demolished.

While the book is entertaining it raises several very serious issues that we humans face today. Our bromeliad -- or department store -- is obviously in trouble: the Earth is facing climate change, global

warming, pollution, gross over-population (no need to go on).

Perhaps we have forgotten that we live in a symbiotic relationship with nearly everything that surrounds us, and every symbiotic relationship, if it is to succeed, has to work both ways. Each participant must work to the benefit of the other.

Velma Filippone

by Al Evans

In March, we lost a long time bromeliad enthusiast and personal friend, Velma Filippone. Velma began her interest in bromeliads when she joined the Bromeliad Study Group of Balboa Park in March of 1984. She became a member the same year the Study Group began their affiliation with the Kent's Bromeliad Nursery and the San Diego Zoo. She would work at the zoo bromeliad garden and the shade cloth house over the next 33 years. I spent many hours with her working at both venues and found her tireless



Velma was the first to arrive for the Study Groups' annual show and sale, doing a big part of the set up with tables and chairs, and one of the last to leave after clean up. She was so dedicated, several members noticed she was not looking well during set up for one particular show and sale. She had to be convinced to go home and relax. She ended up in the emergency room that night and was hospitalized for several weeks.

energy to be infectious. The many stories she related of her life during those work sessions were fascinating, to say the least. Just one example... As a young lady, she was hired by a company that was developing jet engines, which was top secret at the time. Her interview ended and she was hired when she admitted to having no mechanical background and no interest in it. Her job was so sensitive, that she was required to have a military chaperone on all dating events.

Probably Velma's biggest interest in bromeliads was in Billbergias, for which she received a number of awards over the years. At the Study Group meetings, she did the same job Mary Whittemore does for the San Diego Bromeliad Society. She came in early to set up the coffee and snack table and was again, one of the last to leave after clean up. Velma came over to the San Diego Bromeliad Society with the Study Group's merger and continued to work the Zoo Shade Cloth House until her surgery about a year ago.

Velma was one classy lady and she will be sorely missed by all who knew her.



March Meeting

The highlight of the March meeting was the exciting presentation by Pam Hyatt. While she was in Australia as a speaker in the Bromsmatta conference, she visited several tillandsia growers and hybridizers in the country.

It was fun to see how the aussies are growing their plants and how many beautiful hybrids they have produced, despite the tough restrictions for getting plants into the country. Pam included lots of great photos to illustrate.

Then she showed us how the hobbyists in Singapore are growing their plants -- an enthusiastic crowd who manage to find space for their collections in a country where having a yard is prohibitively expensive.

Finally, we got to hear and see about the Gardens by the Bay, the nature park spanning 101 hectares (250 acres) of reclaimed land in central Singapore. Amongst many botanic jewels, the park has huge displays of bromeliads.

March's Opportunity Table

Featured bromeliads from Birdrock Tropicals, with some outstanding tillandsias. A great opportunity to enrich our collections! Auction items included *Orthophytum lemei* and a mounted *tillandsia tectorum* clump.

Show and Tell

There were lots of entries!

Tillandsia Samantha – Don Nelson
 Dyckia estevesii x self – Bob Wright
 Dyckia estevesii – Bob Wright
 Orthophytum 'Starlights' – Bob Wright
 Tillandsia crocata – Lucia Velazquez
 Tillandsia leonamiana – Steve Salley
 Tillandsia exserta, Really Red, Purple Gem, Wonga neglecta, neglecta x recurvifolia – Andy Siekkinen
 Tillandsia stricta – Nancy Groves
 Tillandsia aeranthos – Nancy Groves
 Neoregelia Lovebird, Heart Breaker, Love Song, Lost Love – Andy Siekkinen
 Tillandsia Houston – Nancy Groves
 Billbergia Kurramine, Kohala – Andy Siekkinen
 Tillandsia hybrids – Pam Koide-Hyatt



Nancy holding her beautiful T ball.





Orthophytum 'Starlights' – Bob Wright



Tillandsia hybrids - Pam Koide-Hyatt

April Meeting

by Andrew Wilson

Companions for us - orchids and bromeliads

This month's speaker will be Tom Biggart, member of the San Diego Orchid Society since the beginning of time. He will tell us about how so many orchids and bromeliads share compatible growing requirements and provide ideas about the choice, staging and placement of both in our gardens and special growing areas. Tom's garden is in east El Cajon, a matter that will be of interest to those of us not living in immediate coastal conditions. With his many years of experience with growing, showing and traveling Tom should be able to answer your questions about these plants. This will be an interesting meeting.

Opportunity Table

by David Kennedy

April's opportunity table will feature a batch of broms from Tropiflora, including several bi-generics (it's worth repeating that I do love a genus that can swing both ways) such as xNeophytum "Andromeda", a Lisa Vinzant classic, and two unusual Ray Lemieux crosses: xOrthoglaziovia "Rosita" and XEnchotia "Ruby" (see photo; cat not included). Other spiny offerings included a Hechtia rosea hybrid (see photo) and Encholorium "Angelita". Don't worry, there will also be plenty of good Tillandsias!

Our speaker Tom Biggart will have for sale orchids, bromeliads including nice tillandsias, plus handmade pottery.



Some of April's offerings



SDBS 2016**Officers**

President

Robert Kopfstein

rwkopfstein@gmail.com

760-726-8300

1st Vice-President (programs)

OPEN

2nd Vice-President (plants)

David Kennedy

thedavekennedy@gmail.com

858-278-6532

Secretary

Ruth Contino

ruth.contino@baesystems.com

619-303-2144

Treasurer

Al Evans, Jr.

alevans001@earthlink.net

858-492-9866

Newsletter Editor

Juliana Raposo

julianadraposo@gmail.com

858-349-1405

Past President

Robert Vitacco

rvitacco@cox.net**Board Members**

Scott Sandel (2014-2015)

sandel-marich@cox.net

619-325-1990 x 110

Nancy Groves (2014-2015)

nancygroves@me.com

858-453-6486

Lucia Velazquez (2014-2015)

luciavmaccanna@yahoo.com

619-283-0500

Bob Walters (2014-2015)

cactusbobby@gmail.com

619-282-2246

Couldn't Show and Tell

From chez moi. Some combinations turn out better than expected. Lots of orange! – California poppies next to *Aechmea blanchettiana*.

*Portea alatisepala*

Next page: *Billbergia Brimstone*, *Neo compacta* starting to bloom.

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

San Diego Bromeliad Society
Juliana Raposo, Editor

6979 Sweetwater St
Carlsbad, CA 92011

858-349-1405

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**It's that time of the year again!**

To renew your membership, please contact Al Evans, Treasurer

alevans001@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

Upcoming Events

Highlighted Meetings

April 9, 2016 at 10 AM

San Diego Bromeliad Society
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 104
Tom Biggart, longtime member of the SD
Orchid Society presenting: Companions for
us – orchids and bromeliads.

www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html

May 14, 2016 at 10 AM

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

www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html

June 13 – 19, 2016

Bromeliad Society International World
Conference
Houston, Texas

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

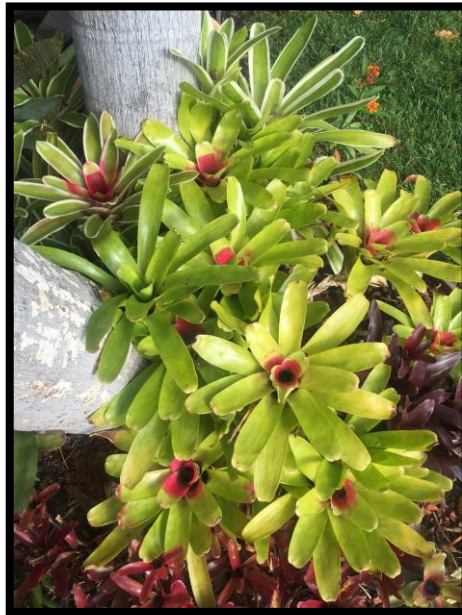
2nd Monday, 5 PM

San Diego Horticultural Society
Surfside Race Place at the Delmar
Fairgrounds

www.sandiegohorticulturalsociety.org



Depicted are *T. copanensis*, a beautiful species, *Orthophytum glabrum* after a good rain, and the obligatory *T. grandis* shot - now in flower.



More Couldn't Show and Tell

by David Kennedy

With the annual Show looming, it becomes a game of "beat the clock". Hitting Showtime with a bunch of prime-time plants takes as much luck as anything, if you throw a lot of product at the problem, as I do. Don't bloom now, I tell my better Dyckias . . . they don't listen! Okay then, hurry it up, I say to lazy Tillandsias that take months to stand tall. They have minds of their own. Maybe I should get a tank of acetylene and gas everything systematically. Naw!



A Visit to Nancy Groves' Garden

Nancy has lived in her University city home for a few decades, all the while collecting fabulous broms and mastering her bromeliad growing in sync with her garden conditions. While her yard is moderately sized, she makes the most of every nook and cranny.

The bright courtyard has a variety of sun loving landscape broms, such as *aechmea blanchetiana*, big neos, *billbergia hallelujah* and such. Lots of color to wow any visitor.

The little side yard is covered in shade cloth and hosts a huge amount of smaller collectibles, mostly tillandsias.

The backyard main feature is a pergola covered in wisteria. Most of Nancy's broms dwell under or near this structure. During the winter, the wisteria goes deciduous, allowing an extra amount of sunlight to come through. In the warmer months, the bromeliads enjoy the protection of the canopy as the vine grows back. A bed of colorful vrieseas captures the eye - the secret: she grows the plants in 100% lava rock. Details on that in the interview. She showed me an abundance of incredible plants, some

brought back from bromeliad conferences, some from her travels to see plants in habitat. All the walls and pillars are covered in tillandsias while pots of large bromeliads adorn the patio.

The other growing area is a small indoor garden, accessible by the living room. There is where she keeps her most tender plants. Some fabulous orchids were in bloom,

making the bromeliads happy. On a table there, lie a real oddity: a neo medusa unlike any other. It grew a cone structure that reminded me of a *guzmania* inflorescence. Wonder what that is...



Two large specimens of *tillandsia duratii*, one of them was in bloom, collected by Nancy years back in Argentina.



And an inspiring find: Nancy grows *guzmanias*! The hybrids from the store! I learned with her that you can grow these plants and they multiply and bloom for you as long as you don't water too much. My misconception was that these are lab bred, greenhouse raised, throw-away plants. Next time I go to Home Depot I'll buy a couple of and try.



Another telling moment: Nancy has an *Aechmea tayoensis* in her living room! The plant is just sitting there, beautifully resting on a piece of furniture. Never mind poor air circulation or the reputation of being a difficult one to grow.

Finally, I liked to see how neo green apple looks so different when grown in full sun, part shade, full shade. Three completely different looks, same plant. What a great garden!



Interview with Nancy Groves

How did you become interested in growing bromeliads?

As a kid in Chapel Hill, N.C. I spent much of my time at the arboretum and in college I took botany classes since I was interested in the science of plant structure. I had read about bromeliads but started going to the SDBS when I retired from UCSD. Kay Quijada roped me into being on the board.

Why do you garden?

Love being outdoors and watching the changes in my bromeliads. I have a small yard and little bench space so I have resorted to adding many tillandsia.

What is your favorite bromeliad and why?

My favorite bromeliad is the *Puya raimondii* in Peru. (see picture). It is hard to comprehend how it can grow so huge about 5-6 times my height in such a barren and wind swept environment high in the Andes and fascinated by the fact that it only grows in one place in Peru and Bolivia and blooms when it is about 100 years old. I really like seeing bromeliads in their natural habitat and that is why I have traveled in Peru, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Mexico. I also love to see how they are grown in different places. In Australia I saw some of the most beautiful Neos. I

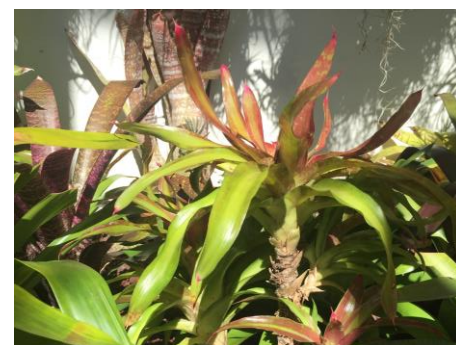
have ever seen in landscape. It is also interesting to hear from others who use different methods of growing. I have friends in Australia who use certain minerals in the watering of their tillandsia. My favorite domestic bromeliad is *Aechmea blanchetiana* which grows high and blooms in large pots or in the ground. I have an orangeade, a variegata, and a pinto noir. I find bromeliads with very different bloom structures fascinating such as *V. simplex* or *Quesnelia lateralis*.



Nancy and *P. raimondii*, detail of info with bird

Tell me again the story about that neo you brought back from the Australian conference and later found that they had used bobby pins to curl the leaves for the show.

At the WBC in Cairns, Australia in 2008 there were large, beautiful displays in the lobby with several people crowded around one in particular and discussing a neo with very curled leaves. Wow, what is that? None of us had ever seen one of these plants. At the plant sale we each bought one to ship home thinking that as it grew, the leaves would curl like the one on display. Later we found out that several Aussies take this particular neo Shell Dance and actually curl the leaves with foam curlers and bobby pins. The other funny part of the story is that after we returned home to San Diego, we found that the original plant had come from Shell Dance Nursery south of San Francisco!



Sometimes we grow a plant in conditions that are contrary to what's usually advised and the plant does great. Can you think of an example in your experience?

I have experimented with vrieseas finding that they actually grow better in nothing but red lava rock. I dug out all the dirt about 8 inches deep in

a bed under the eaves in my south facing back yard and filled it with lava rock. So they are shaded but get lots of light and my theory is that the lava rock holds moisture that the plants can draw upon when they like and it keeps humidity high without rotting the roots. My several V. hieroglyphicas, V. flammea, V. Red Chestnut, V. Redondo Beach, V. gigantea, VL Swampfire (Arden cross of V. inflata X T. multicaulis) all grow and bloom great in this bed with watering only once a week in summer and every other or less other seasons. I also planted Guzmania wittmackii and several other guzzies in this area; Guzmania grow wonderfully if you do not overwater them.



Neo green apple - sunny

Have you ever killed a plant by doing the same thing?

I have certainly killed my share of bromeliads, but I find that experimenting with one that you have several of is a good idea. I have a neo called Green Apple that is very prolific so I have cut off pups and grown them in many different ways. In full sun they stay small and turn yellow with light red striations, in shade they are deep and a beautiful dark green, in partial sun they are medium size and the leaves turn bronze red. You would never know it is the same plant.



Neo green apple - part-sun



Neo green apple - shady