

The Bromeliad Blade

Newsletter of the
San Diego
Bromeliad Society

December 2016

VOLUME LI

NUMBER 12

President's Corner

By Robert Kopfstein

What would the holiday season be without a Christmas story?

He had been herding goats ever since he could remember. When he was quite small Josue Martinez had helped his father Jose with the animals at their collective farm in central Mexico, many kilometers distant from the nearest city, but near another ejido.

His father's real job had been at the old mine deep in the canyon which was not far from the communal ejido. Six times each week Jose had gone to his job, returning covered in dust and tired from hours of bending, shoveling, and hauling. Nevertheless, there was always some time to spare tending the fifteen goats which were always carefully fed and watered. Josue's mother Maria, even though she often was ill with health problems, would milk the nannies, and if she did not make cheese, she would sell the milk

directly to the other families in the area.

In all, it was not altogether a bad life and even though he was small, Josue helped however he could.

Then there was the accident.

One day when Josue was fourteen years old there was a commotion in the village. The teacher in the one room school told the children to wait while he found out what was the matter.

There had been a collapse at the mine and four miners were dead, among them Jose. Two days later the foreman of the mine, a kindly man, showed up at the Martinez house. He pulled out a wallet and counted out five crisp 200 peso bills to Maria.

"We at the mine are sorry about the terrible accident. This should help, and all accounts are settled."

The thousand pesos just paid for the plain pine box to bury Jose.

In the sad days after the funeral Maria told Josue that being the oldest now he would have to provide for the family, and he would have to leave school. This made her very sad, but what was she to do? She was not strong enough to work a job,

and there were the two little girls to care for.

So now Josue was a full-time goatheard. Every day he would lead the animals from their paddock to various spots around the ejido in order to graze. Now and again there were odd jobs in the ejido and in the neighboring ejido and he could earn a few extra pesos.

One December day when he was tending the goats near the highway a Jeep with three gringos pulled up. The man in the passenger seat rolled down the window and asked in somewhat wretched Spanish,

"Hola, son. Can you give we some informations about a plant? I here have a picture of her. We are botanists of the university."

Josue saw the photo and recognized the plant. He had seen it growing along the road going down to the mine on the steep canyon walls.

"Si senores, I know this plant."

"Can you takes we there?"

"Si senores. But I must take care of the goats. I can meet you tomorrow in the plaza of the village at six AM.

"OK. How well. We are there at six."

The next morning Josue met the gringos as planned. He drove with them the short distance to the canyon and slowly they made their way down the winding dirt road that led to the mine.

As the Jeep rounded one of the hairpin curves Josue told the gringos,

"Senores, it is here."

"Where?"

"Up there, senores"

Many meters above the roadway, growing on a sheer perpendicular granite rock face was the plant. The gringos got excited.

"Wow. There it is. *Hechtia argentea*, and what a fantastic specimen."

The plant looked like a large silver medallion against the dark rock.

The three botanists got more and more excited. They took out binoculars and expensive cameras, taking many photos of the plant—they even took one of Josue.

Afterwards they all drove back to the plaza, and the gringo driving the Jeep handed Josua a 200 peso note.

"Muchas gracias, chico."

Josue was very pleased. And as he looked at the 200 peso bill the picture on it of Sr. Juana de la Cruz seemed to be smiling . . .

Over the next few days, as Christmas approached Josue thought more and more about the silver plant on the canyon wall. How like a star it was in the night sky.

Then it came to him. The plant that excited those three smart gringos from the university looks just like a bright star . . .

It was Nochebuena, Christmas eve, and that morning Josue carefully cleaned out the old wheelbarrow and took an old blanket from the house. He headed for the plaza where, in front of the old church stood the pesebre, the nativity scene that the townsfolk erected every year.

The plaza seemed deserted so Josue carefully took the statues of the kneeling Mary and Joseph, the manger that held the infant savior, and placed them in the wheelbarrow.

It was only a couple of kilometers to the canyon.

When he went around the hairpin curve he stopped below the silver plant high up on the rock face, and reset the holy family statues so that the infant was looking up at the "star."

Esta mucho mejor aqui—so much better here than in the shabby hut constructed by the men in front of the church.

As he headed back up the dusty road Josue saw headlights coming toward him. Then he saw the flashing red lights . . .

The jail in the ejido was not often used; mostly, it housed rowdy drunks for a day or two. The cell that Josue found himself in was small, bare except for a lumpy cot, and a small barred unglazed window too high to look out of.

Rojelio Munoz, the only policia in town, turned to Josue.

You know, Juana la Loca saw you take the statues from the church. You must wait here until the judge can sort this out next week."

"Si senior."

(Juana, who seemed to have no surname, was the town gossip. She saw and reported everything. And sometimes she reported things she never saw or heard, but they made good stories anyway.)

"I have some leftover tamales and pozole if you want to eat."

"Gracias senior."

As Josua slowly ate the lukewarm Nochebuena fiesta food, he thought he could hear the faint sounds of people singing in the church across the empty plaza.

November Meeting

The subject of the November meeting was the fascinating topic of growing bromeliads from seed. The speakers were Pamela Koide-Hyatt, David Kennedy, and Lucia Velasquez.

Show and Tell



Bob Wright
Hybrid Hechtia
Hybrid Pitcairnia
Hybrid (unknown)



David Kennedy
Tillandsia "Amigo" (Jalisco-monticola x rothii) (J. Arden hybrid)
Tillandsia (ehlersiana x seleriana) x seleriana (P. Koide Hyatt hybrid)
Tillandsia milagrensis (Brazilian species)



Scott Sandel
Billbergia Casablanca (above)
Vrieslandsia "Spiraling Flame" Arden



Andrew Wilson – tillandsia

Club Elections

Elections were held on the November meeting. The new club officers for 2017 will be:

President: Scott Sandel

Vice President: Al Evans, Jr.

Secretary: Ruth Contino

Treasurer: Kerry Nelson

Director: Don Nelson

Director: Morlene O'Donnell

Time to Renew your SDBS Membership!

It's that time of year again for membership renewals. Check the latest membership directory that was sent by email to see when your membership is due. If it doesn't say 2017 or 2018, your dues are due in January. I publish the 2017 membership directory in March so your dues need to be paid by that time to be included.

1 year - \$13 single / \$17 dual
2 years - \$22 single / \$30 dual

Also, dues can be paid at the meeting or sent to my address at 2601 Palace Drive, San Diego 92123 or the SDBS address at PO Box 83996, SD 3996.

Thanks,

Al Evans, membership chairman

Upcoming Events

Highlighted Meetings

December 10, 2016 at 11 AM
 SDBS Holiday Party
 Balboa Park, Casa del Prado, room 104
www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html

January 14, 2017 at 10 AM
 SDBS Monthly Meeting
 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, 5:45 PM
 San Diego Horticultural Society
 Congregation Beth Israel (CBI)
 9001 Towne Centre Drive
 San Diego, CA 92122
www.sandiegohorticulturalsociety.org

Holiday Party

Party starts at 11am (one hour later than the monthly meeting).

Potluck

The club provides drinks, plates, utensils, and the meat (ham, turkey). The members should bring either a salad, a vegetable, bread of some sort, or appetizers.

Gift Exchange

If you wish to participate you need to buy a gift related to bromeliads or to gardening. You may choose to gift one of your better bromeliads as well. The present should be worth around \$20, give or take. Be sure to wrap the present. When you get to the meeting, we will collect all of the presents.

Schedule

After our meal, we will auction the Christmas tree, and then do the raffle table (Each person gets a raffle ticket, courtesy of the club.) Then we will arrange the chairs in a circle and place all of the presents in the middle of the circle. Each person who brought a gift will be given a raffle ticket. When your number is called, you may choose any gift that is in the center of the circle. Be sure to keep your raffle ticket. Once all of the gifts are chosen, we will go through the ticket numbers one more time. At this time, when your number is called, you may take any gift that the other people in the circle have in front of them--or you may choose to keep what you have. Once we have gone through the ticket numbers a second time, the gift exchange is over, and you may open the gift that is in front of you. Merry Christmas.

SDBS 2016

Officers

President
 Robert Kopfstein
rwkopfstein@gmail.com
 760-726-8300

Vice-President
 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
sandel-marich@cox.net
 619-325-1990 x 110

Nancy Groves
nancygroves@me.com
 858-453-6486

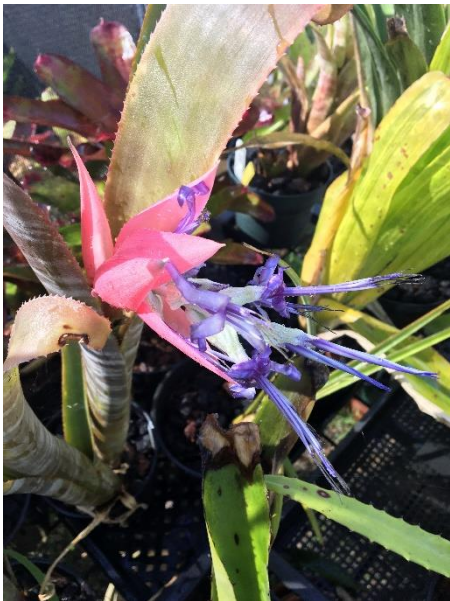
Lucia Velazquez
luciavmaccanna@yahoo.com
 619-283-0500

Bob Walters
cactusbobby@gmail.com
 619-282-2246

What's Blooming

by Dan Kinnard

In March of 2013 we planted some seed from the brom-I seed bank. *Billbergia brasiliensis* has always been difficult. Of course it likes warm temperatures and higher humidity — we have high temperatures during the day and it can get quite cool most nights; our usual 15% relative humidity most days doesn't help much either. Finally, a batch of seed grew well and now has flowered! Let's see if it will survive the winter and continue to grow well.



This x*Vrieslandsia* 'Inferno' from John Arden finally bloomed! Another first. Many have not made it into bloom for us before expiring. Either we are getting better at growing or the plants have decided not to hold out for better conditions and just adapted.



Several years after receiving this *Tillandsia atroviolacea*, it decided to bloom. These higher altitude, cool loving plants are a little difficult for us. We must have found just the right spot to make it happy.



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Juliana Raposo, Editor

Ph: 858-349-1405

To send material for publication, 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.

SDBS MEETING

The club meets on the second Saturday of the month at 10am in Balboa Park, Casa del Prado, room 104.

SDBS WEBPAGE

www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html

Scott in Northern Peru, Part 2:

Mid-elevation Cloud Forest Habitat

by Scott Sandel



Jim on the trail to Gocta waterfall

Northern Peru - In last month's Blade, I described our first week exploring cloud forests near the border with Ecuador. During the first two weeks of the trip, we put the miles (kilometers) on a 4-wd rental truck! Many of the rural mountain roads are single-width roads. For survival, I learned to instinctively honk the horn before entering blind curves.

After our hiking trip to Tabaconas Sanctuary, our next destination was Gocta Falls, in the province of Chachapoyas in Amazonas. The waterfall at Gocta is about 2,500 feet, making it the fifth-tallest cataract in the world. Interestingly, locals kept it a secret to the outside world, and it wasn't until 2005 that a German man visited it and persuaded the Peruvian government to announce its existence to the world. When we were there, we saw a few Tillandsias out of bloom (and thus not identifiable), but we did see some Pitcairnias and *Tillandsia rauhii longispica* in bloom.



T. rauhii var. longispica in bloom



Tillandsia rauhii var. longispica

Here are some links for further reading:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long-whiskered_owlet

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuelap>

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caraj%C3%ADa>

http://www.philipcoppens.com/nap_art14.html

Next, we drove to the Utcubamba Valley area to see the archaeological site of Karajia, an amazing group of all tall figures that are sarcophagi that encase mummified remains. Interestingly, these were built in the 15th century, at the time of the Inca conquest over the Chachapoyans. Here, we saw many more *Tillandsia rauhii*, clinging to the cliffs alongside Puyas and other *Tillandsias*.



Sarcophagi of Karajia

We drove to a rustic birding (and epiphyte) hotspot at Owllet Lodge, located at 2,300 meters in the Andean conservation area of Abra Patricia in the Department of Amazonas. There, we took advantage of a three-level tree canopy platform that they built in the forest. On the platform, you can climb up and at different levels where you are face-to-face with tree



Upper Canopy, Abra Patricia

branches holding all manner of epiphytes, including bromeliads, orchids, ferns, gesneriads, philodendron and aroids. From this perch, you can see *Tillandsia*, *Racinaea*, *Catopsis* that grow best with more light and exposure here in the upper canopy.



Tillandsias Growing on Rocks

Up here, the colors on the bromeliads are more pronounced and plants in the *Racinaea* genus exhibit crazy spot patterns and a blend of green and red.



Tillandsia in the upper canopy



Unidentified Tillandsia at Abra Patricia ; Unidentified Racinaea ; Guzmania victoriae ; Close-up of foliage and inflorescence

A few days later we went on a three day horseback trip to mountain cloud forests and Puya-studded high grasslands. A highlight of the horse trip was seeing a mating pair of Andean condors.

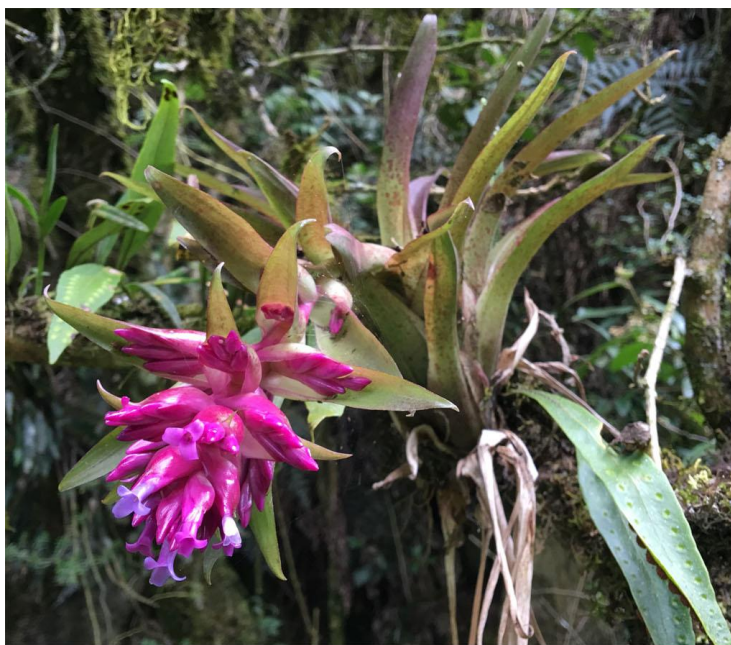
That part of the trip was based out of the beautiful mountain town of Leymembamba. Here, there is an excellent museum that houses over a dozen rescued Moche mummies. (This town is recommended as an

excellent base for seeing the surrounding area.)

In the weeks prior to this trip, we made plans for many different things that we wanted to see in northern Peru. Of course I fit in several different bromeliad habitats! But, of course, the trip wasn't just laser-focused on bromeliads. (Such is marriage.) Jim and I are both into archaeology, so we planned to see Inca, Chachapoya and Moche cultural sites. As I like to think of it,

archaeology spiced up our botanical trip.

A highlight of the trip was a hike up to and exploration of the mountaintop fortress city of Kuelap, built by the Chachapoya people in 800 AD at 3,000 meters. In the trees at Kuelap grew some giant *Tillandsia* (either *T. tovarensis* or *maculata*) with inflorescences over four feet tall.



Tillandsia biflora ; Puya ; Off the horses, searching for puyas ; Giant Tillandsia in bloom (probably *T. maculata*) ; The archeological site at Kuelap