

The Bromeliad Blade

Newsletter of the
San Diego
Bromeliad Society

March 2020

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President's Message

By Morlane O'Donnell

Spring is just around the corner. Have you noticed your plants taking on a more vivid hue? With the alternating cloudy and sunny weather, I've noticed some of my plants becoming more colorful. Please bring your beauties to the meeting for Show and Tell and we can all enjoy their beautiful transformation.

This month we will have a couple of people from the San Diego County Fair give a short talk during the first part of our meeting. Speaking of the Fair, Nancy Groves is looking for volunteers and ideas for our display themed "Local Plant Heroes." The deadline for the design in April 17th. The Fair will be held from June 6th through July 4th, but the set-up is May 16th through the 31st. We don't have to begin on the 16th but we must be finished by the 31st.

Don't forget that our society is also having its annual show and sale the second weekend of June in lieu of



Great color on Scott Sandel's Vriesea fosteriana hybrid

the meeting. Again, this year there will be no judged show as most of the judges and many of our members will be attending the BSI World Bromeliad Conference at the same time. We are looking for someone to be in charge of the exhibition. It doesn't have to be as large and elaborate as last year, but we need someone to step up and take the helm. More information regarding the sale will be given next month. It

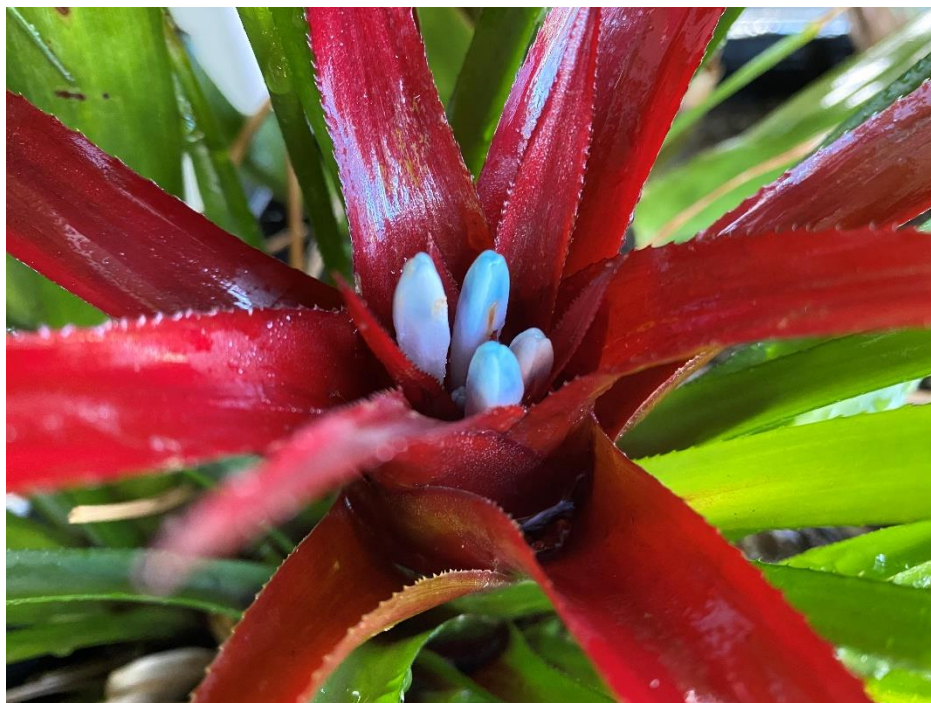
will pretty much be the same as last year, so start looking over your collection and decide what you would like to exhibit and what to sell.

This month's speaker will be Jeff Moore of Solano Succulents. His topic will be "Incorporating Bromeliads into Cactus and Succulent Gardens." He will provide the Opportunity Table and sell

plants. Once again, I'd like to thank the Speaker Committee and all those who volunteer for the various committees in our club for doing an excellent job. Safe and happy growing everyone.

Why Doesn't My Plant Look Like That?

by Morlane O'Donnell



Nidularium scheremetiewii in San Diego. Photo by Juliana Raposo

We have all seen pictures of neoregelias with intense color and amazing conformation consisting of many layers of perfectly shaped leaves. We've seen giant tillandsias with brilliantly hued leaves of orange, pink, and red. We've seen breath taking patterned vrieses with a pallet of colors, the stuff of which a grower in southern California can only dream. Yet many of us have the same plants and they are but a whisper of what we've seen someone else grow. Why is that?

There are several factors that affect size, color, and shape of bromeliads. We have some control over a few and some we have no control over. Humidity, light, air movement, and water exert the most influence over the appearance and health of our bromeliads.

Humidity is a major factor in the growth of bromeliads. Consider where most bromeliads grow in nature - in the tropics of Central and South America. If that kind of humidity can be replicated, the plants will grow larger and retain better conformation. A plant grown in Florida, Louisiana, Hawaii, Singapore, or the Philippines for example, will most likely be more shapely and colorful than a plant grown here, unless the plants are regularly misted or grown in a greenhouse. An indicator of not enough humidity is when the leaves curl inward. Setting plants on saucers of rocks and keeping water in the saucers so that it doesn't wick into the plant will help.

Light is also extremely important. The more light a bromeliad can endure without burning, again, the

better the color and conformation. A plant grown in mostly shade will have longer strappier leaves and lack the color of what is grown in brighter conditions.

Some growers use artificial lighting especially during winter. Some are lucky enough to live in areas with good, consistent, natural light. Periodic rotation of the plant helps as well as elevating its position in the growing area. An upside-down pot works.

Bromeliads appreciate an area that receives good air movement. This helps the plants to dry out between waterings and factors in on preventing pest infestation. Some of us are fortunate in being located where we receive an ocean breeze or on a hill where there is a lot of air circulation. Some growers use fans to move the air, especially in a greenhouse.

Bromeliads do not like to be wet nor do they like a buildup of salt. The plants should be allowed to dry out between waterings. Remember that with the exception of terrestrials and cryptanthus, bromeliads are epiphytic. Those that are potted should be in a fast-drying mix. Some are content to grow in nothing but porous rocks. Some tillandsias do better in no mix at all.

Experimentation with different kinds of mediums may be necessary until the right one is found. There are so many combinations of bark, peat, perlite, rocks - I once saw a grower use only chipped glass for one of his neos. Different genera may require different amounts of ingredients than others. What works for one grower may not necessarily work for another.

Justin Allen, our speaker in February, emphasized how important water quality is in the growth of

bromeliads. Our tap water is too alkaline in most parts of San Diego County. The further south, the worse it becomes. Bromeliads like acidity. Tap water can be used to a point but salts will build up and eventually harm the plants. Salt build up is especially noticeable in neoregelias where frosty looking rings will appear on the leaves around the center and in the cups. An occasional flushing of tank type bromeliads is beneficial. Justin suggested a 50/50 mix of tap and reverse-osmosis water. Having a filtration system that produces reverse-osmosis water is ideal, but expensive. I purchase mine in smaller quantities at the grocery store. If distilled water is used, nutrients must be added. A fertilizer made specifically for bromeliads would work. During the winter months, too much water combined with cool temperatures can be lethal. Lucky are the ones who are blessed with pure water and warmer temperatures year-round. Fertilizer can be a factor. Some growers fertilize frequently, some sparingly. It's a matter of preference. David Kennedy suggests a pinch of Epsom salts along with the fertilizer to help plants absorb the nutrients. Neoregelias and billbergias tend to lose their color and get longer leaves when fertilized - best to grow them hard, unless they are being propagated. Over fertilizing can lead up to a buildup of salts, so a lot of growers recommend cutting the amount of fertilizer suggested by the manufacturer. Most major bromeliad wholesalers and retailers sell fertilizer for bromeliads. I'll mention one more factor. That is to start out with nice plants in the first place. Buy the best that can be afforded. If possible, select the plant personally. Remember all the factors mentioned here influence the appearance of bromeliads. Some of it is luck, some is skill. Not all plants with the same



Case study: This vriesea is a pricey David Fell hybrid - blame the dog for losing the tag - purchased in the WBC 2018. At the time, fresh from Hawaii, the plant had fantastic pink hues, strong fosteriana markings and intense margination. Two years after, the pink is gone, and the margination is all but disappeared. Photo by Juliana Raposo.

name will look alike. Not all conditions are equal. Regardless of what you have just read, most bromeliads are easy to grow and provide many rewarding experiences. They can live many years with just a bit of care.

Big Loss to Theft

Last year we visited Norm Nakanishi's gardens and saw all the wonderful plants that he grows, orchids, clivias, palms, begonias, gingers and, of course, bromeliads. You'll recall his hospitality in showing his two gardens and his willingness

to sell some of his hard to find specimens. Recently, as he described it, people broke in and stole several of his huge staghorn fern specimens. They were many decades old and worth a fortune. He is well known for allowing people to visit to see his plants. He is now considering what must do in future. Our sympathies go out to a great horticulturist.

Upcoming Events

SDBS Meetings

SDBS Monthly Meeting
Saturday, March 14, 2020 @ 10AM
Balboa Park Casa del Prado, Room 104
1650 El Prado, San Diego 92101
www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org

SDBS Monthly Meeting
Saturday, April 11, 2020 @ 10AM
Balboa Park Casa del Prado, Room 104
1650 El Prado, San Diego 92101
www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org

SDBS Events

35th Annual Spring Home/Garden Show
Fri, Mar 6, 10 AM – Sun, Mar 8, 6 PM
SDBS Members are invited to come sell their plants.
Del Mar Fairgrounds
2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd, Del Mar, CA

SDBS Annual Show & Sale
June 13 & 14
Balboa Park Casa del Prado, Room 101
1650 El Prado, San Diego 92101
www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org

SDBS at San Diego County Fair
June 5 – July 5, 2020
SDBS will create a bromeliad display for the horticultural contest.
Del Mar Fairgrounds
2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd, Del Mar, CA

Other Monthly Meetings

1st Tuesday, 6:30 PM
San Diego Orchid Society
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 101
www.sdorchids.com

2nd Saturday, 1 PM
San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 101
www.sdcss.net

2nd Wednesday, 7 PM
San Diego Epiphyllum Society
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 101
www.SanDiegoEpi.org

2nd Monday, 5:45 PM
San Diego Horticultural Society
Congregation Beth Israel (CBI)
9001 Towne Centre Drive
San Diego, CA 92122
sdhort.org

Event Highlights

35th Annual Spring Home/Garden Show


March 6-8 from 10am to 4pm
SDBS Members are invited to come sell their plants. Talk to Nancy Groves for details.
Del Mar Fairgrounds

The San Diego County Orchid Society Spring Show & Sale March 27-29.

Scottish Rite Event Center
Mission Valley, San Diego
Friday, 3pm-7pm
Saturday, 9am-6pm
Sunday, 10am-4pm
sdorchids.com

Mission Hills Garden Walk Tickets on sale now – May 9 from 10am-4pm

A leisurely 2.5 mile stroll through Mission Hills, known for its variety of home and garden styles.
www.missionhillsgardenclub.org



San Diego County Orchid Society Show and Sale

March 27-29, 2020	Friday 3-7 p.m.	Admission \$10
Scottish Rite Event Center	Saturday 9 a.m.-6 p.m.	Weekend Pass \$12
Mission Valley, San Diego	Sunday 10 a.m.-4 p.m.	Children under 12 Free
	sdorchids.com/bb	Free Parking

SDBS 2020

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March Meeting

By Andrew Wilson

Speaker for our March program - Jeff Moore of Solana Succulents

Jeff will tell us about incorporating bromeliads into succulent gardens. We might ask him about introducing succulents into bromeliad gardens. Both ways, it's interesting!

Jeff is the owner of Solana Succulents, a specialty nursery in Solana Beach since 1992. He is best known for the "undersea" succulent gardens he has created and exhibited for over twenty years at the Del Mar fairgrounds (or whatever they're called now) and at home and garden shows. He is also author of four books on succulents. The cover of the most recent one, *Spiny Succulents*, is pictured below.



The book includes a chapter on terrestrial bromeliads. Take a look at his website at Solana Succulents.

Spiny Succulents

Euphorbias, cacti, and other sculptural succulents and (mostly) spiny xerophytic plants



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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.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org