



S.F.V.B.S.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BROMELIAD SOCIETY

JULY 2020

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next meeting: **Saturday July 4, 2020 IS CANCELLED**

Message from our President. Unfortunately SFBVBS will not have a July meeting and August is an unknown due to the virus being alive and well. In this month's newsletter, Joshua Siskin has generously granted us permission to reprint his article. As a note, one of our past members Bill Paylen did do some work with the Bromeliads in the Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden. I have sent in a photo of Bill Baker showing Bill Paylen his *Dyckia* hybrid that he named in Bill Paylen's honor. From left to right are Frank Hayen, Bill Baker, Bob Friedman and Bill Paylen.



I am looking forward to when our meetings can be held again. Please be safe and stay well!

Bryan Chan

Please pay your 2020 Membership Dues

NEED TO RENEW ?.....

Pay at future meetings to: Treasurer - Mary Chan or Mail to: SFVBS membership, P.O. Box 16561 - Encino, CA 91416-6561

Yearly Membership Dues - \$15 for monthly e-mail newsletters or \$20 for snail mail

Please Put These Dates on Your Calendar

Here is our 2020 Calendar. Rarely does our schedule change..... however, please review our website and email notices before making your plans for these dates. Your attendance is important to us. **As noted earlier, some future meetings, as well as the June show and sale, may be cancelled.**

Saturday July 4	Cancelled
Saturday August 1	STBA
Saturday September 5	Cristy Brenner
Saturday October 3	Ray van Veen
Saturday November 7	Woody Minnich

STBA = Speaker To Be Announced

Speakers Let us know if you have any ideas for Speakers about Bromeliads or any similar topics?

We are always looking for an interesting speaker. If you hear of someone, please notify **Joyce Schumann** at 818-416-5585 or ropojo@pacbell.net

Gardening: This botanical garden is a hidden gem with free admission

By Joshua Siskin (perfectplants18@yahoo.com) (as appeared in the LA Daily News. Article printed with the permission of the author.)

Can you imagine going to Westwood and finding an amazing botanical garden where admission is free? I am talking about the Mildred Mathias Botanical Garden on the campus of UCLA, the hidden gem of local horticultural delights.

The only thing more amazing about your trip to Westwood will be the availability of free parking (2-hour limit on Hilgard south of Le Conte) since the university is shut down due to Covid-19 and the students and staff who would normally have taken the street curb parking spots have all gone home.

The Botanical Garden is open to the public from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. The entrance is on the corner of Hilgard and Le Conte Avenues. It's a great outlet for the whole family with many exotic plants to ogle, especially in the cactus and succulent section.

There are benches next to a large pond where you can sit and have lunch a few feet away from what is probably the biggest ongoing convention of turtles — who sun themselves unabashedly on the pond's edge — for miles around. You can even bring a group and gather with appropriate social distancing in a small amphitheater that is secluded within the garden.

One of the outstanding features of the garden is a large slope near the pond that is planted entirely with bromeliads. Last week I wrote about a bromeliad that I had never seen before (*Puya chilensis*) and I am about to do that again. The plant in question is *Quesnelia testudo*, or turtle-head bromeliad. Its genus name honors the plant explorer Martin Quisnel and its species name *testudo* means turtle in Latin, a moniker given on account of the way the bromeliad's bulbous flower head extrudes from the foliage. How ironic that it should be situated just a few feet away from the turtle convention mentioned above. It can grow in either sun or shade but its leaves are spiny so wear gloves when handling it.

In truth, what we call a bromeliad flower is really a collection of bracts, the same appendages which are actually modified leaves and give color to a variety of plants from poinsettias to bougainvilleas to Anthuriums, those long-lasting indoor plants whose heart-shaped plastic-textured horizontal red bracts enclose vertical yellow flower spikes known as spadixes.

Planting bromeliads on a slope makes sense for two reasons and both have to do with drainage. You do not want standing water around bromeliad roots which are typically only for structural support since these plants take in water through the cups formed by their rosetted leaves. Water on a slope is always moving downwards so rot induced from standing water on such terrain is not an issue.

The other reason for bromeliad slope planting is the sensitivity many of them have to cold. Cold air, like water, drains off a slope so bromeliads will be less likely to freeze in such a location. In any event, *Quesnelia* is one of the more cold-tolerant bromeliads, withstanding temperatures down to 25 degrees Fahrenheit.

I have learned that this outstanding plant and other *Quesnelias* are available through vendors on eBay. Another way to procure uncommon bromeliads would be to make contact with members of the **San Fernando Valley Bromeliad Society** (sfvbromeliad.homestead.com) which meets once a month in Encino or with the La Ballona Valley Bromeliad Society (bsi.org) that holds

monthly meetings in West Los Angeles although such public meetings will probably be on hold for now.

The Mildred Mathias Botanical Garden is famous for its dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*), thought to be the tallest representative of its species in North America. It was only in 1944, in a remote part of south-central China, that the first living dawn redwoods were discovered, a species known beforehand exclusively from fossils. That mountainous region of China is the sole habitat of this tree, which is also the only deciduous redwood species. A seedling was planted in this garden in 1948, will grow to one hundred feet tall, and may live for more than a thousand years.

Another arboreal beauty with a long lifespan is the dragon tree (*Dracaena draco*), two examples of which are growing on the eastern edge of the Mildred Mathias garden in a section devoted to arid zone plants. In their native Canary Island habitat, dragon trees are known to live for several thousand years.

Two of the plants in this section are especially noteworthy because of their blooms. One is a sun-loving Bolivian bromeliad (*Puya spathacea*) with startling orange-red candelabra branched flower clusters. The other is the Australian silky net-bush (*Calothamnus villosus*); each of its flowers is a shaggy scarlet mustache.

Tip of the Week: In the Mildred Mathias Garden, a group of tropical *Vireya* Rhododendrons from Malaysia are congregated in a special planter whose soil appears to consist solely of peat moss and perlite. *Vireya* flowers are vibrant yellow, orange, pink or red, long-lasting and often fragrant. Overhead, the high branches of mature trees serve to protect these *Vireyas* from the ravages of sun and wind. In our dry climate, rhododendrons and azaleas – which are members of rhododendrons’ nuclear family — should be grown in high shade, under the cover of tall trees, where the scorch of sun and wind cannot be felt, yet where the ambient light is good and the humidity is somewhat higher than in the open.

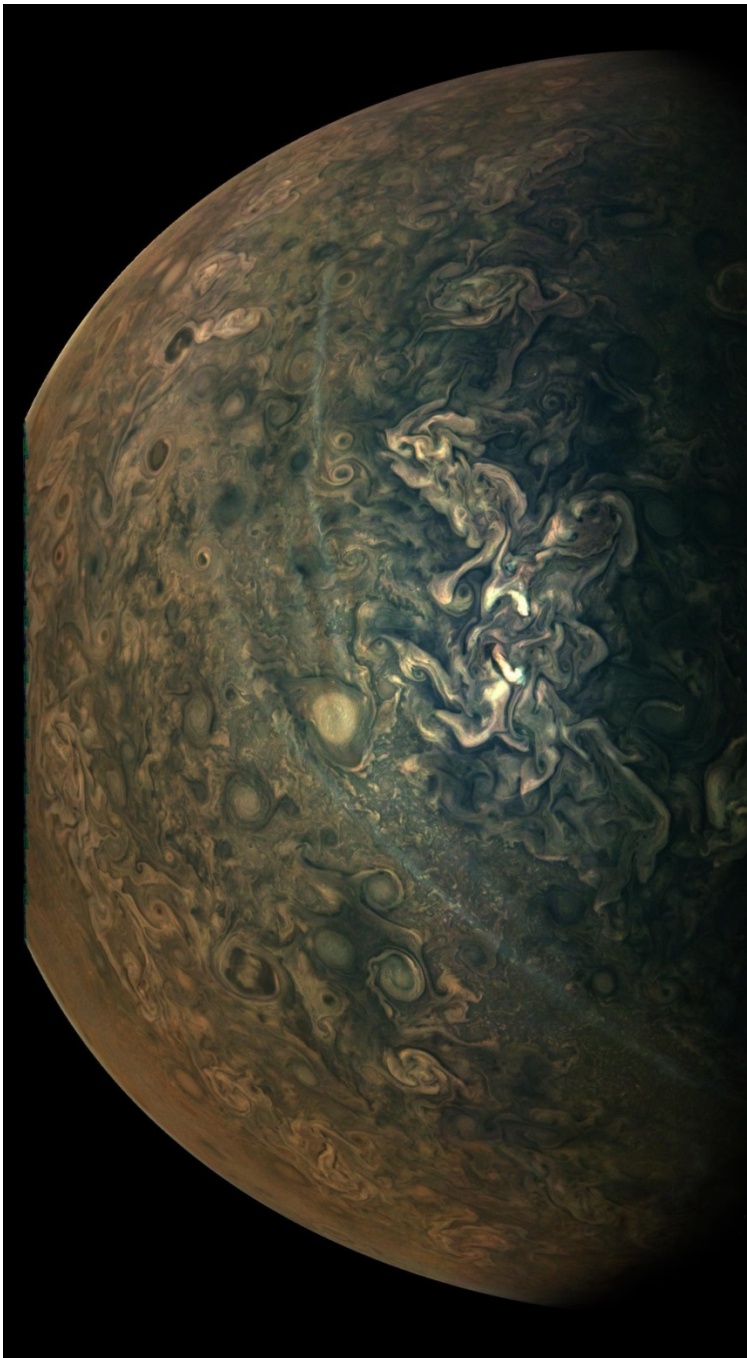
Placement under trees will also trap a measure of heat that may help *Vireyas* survive a frost since they are cold sensitive.



Quesnelia testudo Turtle Head Bromeliad (photo: Josh Siskin)

Thank you Joyce for
finding the article

This section is open for any
Member-contributions of photos or articles



Last month I showed Mars. So this month continues a bit further into our solary system

High-Altitude Hazes on Jupiter

NASA's Juno mission captured this look at Jupiter's tumultuous northern regions during the spacecraft's close approach to the planet on Feb. 17, 2020.

May 14, 2020
via NASA <https://ift.tt/2WwjiWn>

Submitted by M. Wisnev

Billbergia hybrid
(*D.M. x Sangre*)

Submitted by Bryan
Chan





Vriesia hybrid
(*Midnight x*
Inflata)

Submitted by
Bryan Chan



Tillandsia
"Silverado"

Submitted by
Bryan Chan



Tillandsia caulescens submitted by Bryan Chan

Taxonomic Tidbits: *Tillandsia* for Beginners *By* *Mike Wisnev SFVBS Editor (mwisnev@gmail.com)*

San Fernando Valley Bromeliad Society Newsletter –July 2020.
All photos by Wisnev.

For a change of pace, this article is for new bromeliad collectors. If you don't have at least a handful of *Tillandsia* species, you should. So you also know, *Tillandsia* (often called airplants) is a genus of the bromeliad family.

The genus *Tillandsia* has some unique characteristics. For starters, it has more species than any other bromeliad genus. With almost 750 currently recognized species, it has about 20% of all species in the bromeliad family. While more are being discovered, but some have been moved to new genera, so it isn't clear if the overall number will increase over time.

Second, unlike most other bromeliad genera, the leaf shape of different *Tillandsia* species can look wildly different from each other. I am not sure there is as much variation in another genus.

Despite that variation, in most cases, it is really easy to identify a *Tillandsia* once you get familiar with them. No flowers are needed. Again, I am not sure you can say that about any other bromeliad genus (other than some with only a few species). Yet there are some that will truly surprise you (and me). The variation is so great that you would never guess some of them are *Tillandsia*.

There are some great reasons to grow *Tillandsia*. First, they are very easy to grow. Second, they don't need pots and weigh almost nothing, so no problems moving them around. Many of the common ones are very pretty and dirt cheap! Many have bluish flowers, something not seen for those of us in the cactus and succulent hobby. The inflorescences and flowers last for weeks. Finally, they don't have any spines!



Here are two different forms of *Tillandsia ionantha* I got online a few years back. This is one of the most well-known *Tillandsia* species. Most *Tillandsia* are green to grey-green to grey. The white spots on the leaves are trichomes – all bromeliads have them.

This species, like many, can take a lot of sun, and need very little water. But you do need to water it – you can just mist it, or if you have a lot run a hose over them. Unless you have them outside in a very humid area (maybe Florida), you will kill them if you don't water them.

So you might wonder what they do over time. Well, they flower annually, though may not do so if you keep them inside or they don't get enough sun. Not only do they have rather interesting flowers, but the leaves change color when the plant flowers.



Here are three different forms of *Tillandsia ionantha*

wired to a tree. As you can barely see, the one at the very top that is mostly on the other side remains green. But the other two are flowering. Most forms have leaves that turn bright red when the plant blooms. The top one is aptly named *T. ionantha* 'Peach'.

Both have the same flowers that are quite common – they have tubular royal blue petals. You can also see

the yellow pollen, and the long white stigma (the female part of the flower). Plants in the wild will often grow on trees and root into them. The roots usually are meant to anchor the plant and don't generally take up water. Instead the leaves absorb water. For reasons I don't really understand, most of mine won't root into the tree although some of them do.



Here you get a better view of the typical *Tillandsia* flower. This is rooted into the tree. I imagine I would kill much of it if I tried to take it off.

Tillandsia ionantha

While it is easy to see all plants shown so far are the same species, you can also see they do vary to

some degree.

Tillandsia aeranthos is also very common. It is a larger plant that has longer and wilder looking leaves. It grows quite rapidly and forms a large clump. This particular clump below has 5 different plants that are flowering. The entire long stalk with flowers at the end is called an inflorescence – there are five of them. The flowers consist of the blue petals and surrounding sepals and pink flower bracts.

Tillandsia aeranthos

As you can see, the inflorescence and flower are very different



from that of *T. ionantha*.



While the two species shown above are small, some have leaves over a foot long. Here is a clump of *Tillandsia fasciculata*. This one can take a lot of sun, it gets full western exposure. It is looking a bit ragged after the winter.

It is actually potted, one of the relatively few species that can be. The pot is jammed into some branches, so it is fairly secure.

Tillandsia fasciculata (left and below)

Below is the inflorescence. As you can see, the flower itself is very similar to that of *Tillandsia ionantha*, but the paddle like inflorescence is completely different.



Tillandsia fasciculata has a huge distribution, and as a result is quite variable. In addition, there are many very similar species that are hard to tell apart.



Some species have leaves that are more green than grey. These usually need a little more shade than the grey ones.

Tillandsia bulbosa. This is named after its bulbous base, which is hollow. In habitat, ants live in

the base!



Tillandsia bulbosa.

While its leaves look very different, the flower (but not the inflorescence) is similar to *T. ionantha* and *fasciculata*.

The good news is that it is very easy and inexpensive to acquire lots of species. Of course, you can get them at any bromeliad show and sale and often at a cactus and succulent sale as well. But you can also usually find them at swap meets and the like. Finally, and perhaps best during these trying time, you can easily find them from a large number of vendors online. Looking today, one place I have bought from before has a 10 pack of different species for \$22! How can you go wrong with that?



Above is *Tillandsia stricta* (or perhaps a hybrid of it). With its large pinkish flower bracts and blue flowers, it is a stunner.

As I mentioned it is easy to grow them. You can hang them from anything or place them on trees. If it isn't too windy, you can just lay them on your other plants, but a windy Santa Ana might move some around. As a general rule, I water once a week by running a hose over them when I water my other plants. Less in winter (none in a rainy one) and more frequently if it gets to the mid-90s. Some folks in the San Fernando Valley

water daily during particular hot spells, but remember it just takes a few minutes. Some who sell off their collections often keep Tillandsia since they are so easy to water.



Tillandsia harissia is one of my favorites, with its very white and fairly soft leaves. Above it are lots of different forms of *Tillandsia ionantha*. As you can see, they are wired (or glued) to a lattice and can all be easily watered in a minute.

The genus has a huge range from much of South America, through Central America and Mexico and into the southeast U.S. Some grow on beaches, others in deserts, others in high altitudes. So it is very hard to generalize how much heat and cold they can take. But a few cautionary notes are useful. In my experience, most don't like blazing afternoon sun – better to give them shade, or morning sun. As seen above, trees are great places to put them since it shades them from too much sun. I also suspect that most

don't like a freeze, so it is probably best to bring them inside if you have a cold winter, or on potentially freezing nights here in the Valley.



Tillandsia brachycaulos is another easy to find species. As you can see it is very green, and doesn't like as much sun as some of those shown earlier. However, it is lovely when it blooms, as shown below. You can see it now has 3 heads, but the ones not blooming are still green.





Tillandsia straminea. I have intentionally shown only species with blue flowers. But *Tillandsia* flowers come in all colors, though orange is not very common. *Tillandsia straminea* is another easy to grow species with a very different inflorescence and flower. As an added bonus, the flowers are fragrant! The red leaved potted plant is a *Neoregelia*; it is also a bromeliad but is in a different subfamily.

You can often find *Tillandsia* at swap meets, and many times they are growing in sea shells. They are very cute! As a general rule, however, most of them like air circulation and don't like to stay continuously wet. Watering them in a shell keeps the base wet and is a great way to kill your

plant! Similarly, over time, most won't do great indoors for a long period, and may be less likely to flower. However, bringing them for a cold winter shouldn't be problem, nor for periods where they are blooming.

Lastly, be forewarned they can be addicting. If you already grow plants, you probably already know this. But it is a great addiction to have and very rewarding.



Tillandsia juncifolia (left) and *usenoides* (right) at a local show (neither is mine!). You can easily buy a single head of *T. juncifolia* and it will grow over time. But I had never seen anything like this award winner at a local show. For that matter, mine don't even turn red. Congratulations to the unknown owner. The silvery one on the right is often called Spanish moss, but is a *Tillandsia*, not a moss. It grows wild in the southeastern U.S. and forms huge clumps hanging from trees. *Tillandsia usenoides* will not harm the tree. It is very different than tree moss or bear lichen (which is

the genus *Usnea* after which *Tillandsia usenoides* was named); these other plants are not bromeliads.