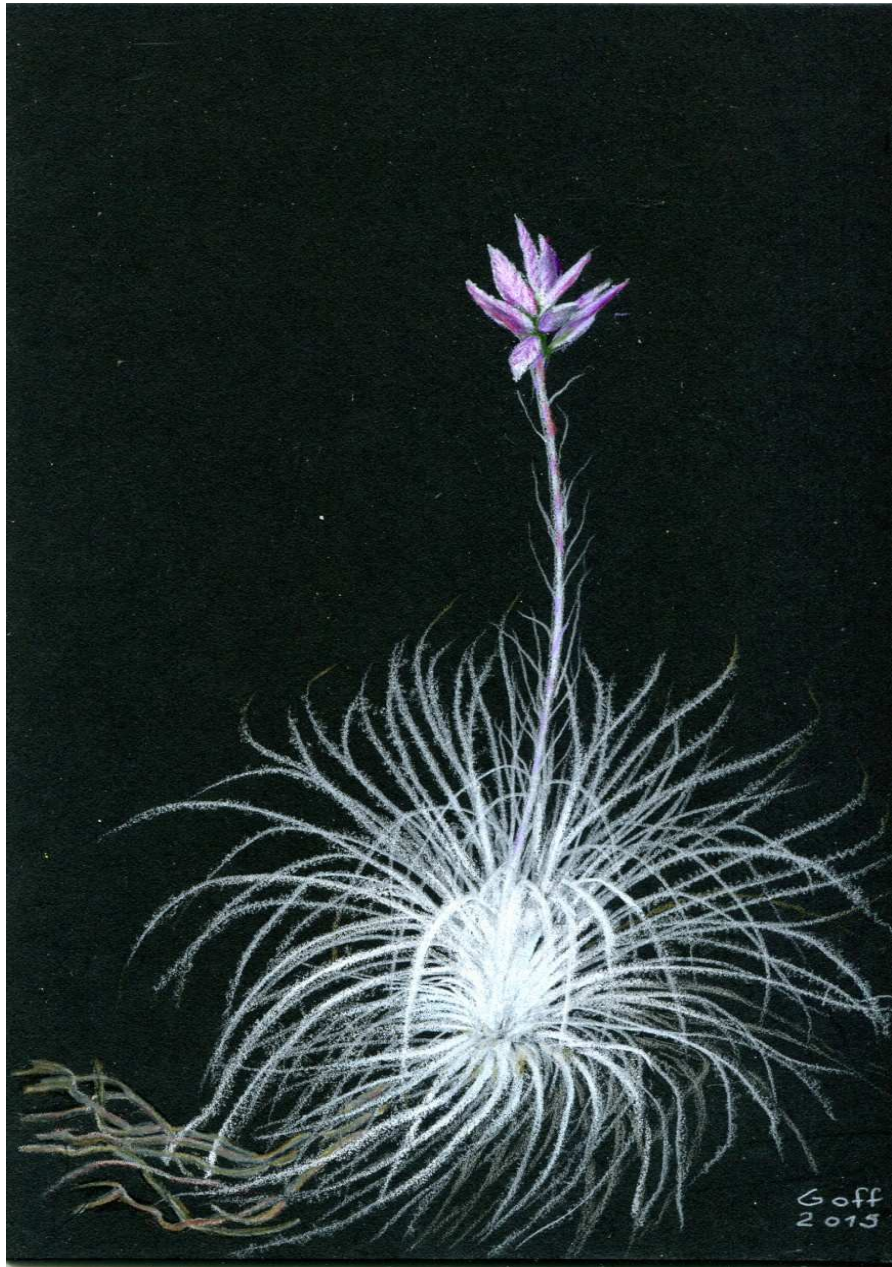


SEMBS

SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN BROMELIAD SOCIETY
AFFILIATE OF BROMELIAD SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

JULY / AUGUST 2015



Tillandsia tectorum Morren, 1877, on rock and rocky terrain in southern Ecuador to central Peru, often amid cactus. A number of distinct varieties have been collected and described (tillandsia complex).

Next Meeting: Saturday, July 18 at 1:00 pm

BRUNCH IN THE ECHLINS' BEAUTIFUL GARDEN!

Please note: We start at 1 pm



Hamburgers, hot dogs, and soda will be provided. There will be no dahlias. But there will be butterflies and many beautiful bromeliads.

Please email Lynne: lechlin@sbcglobal.net or telephone: 248-651-9521 to let her know how many you are and what you'll bring along to the party.

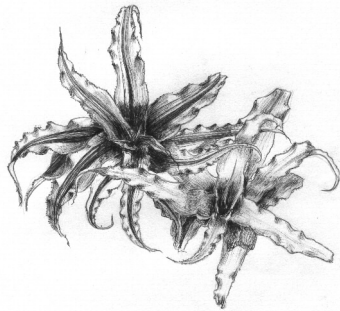
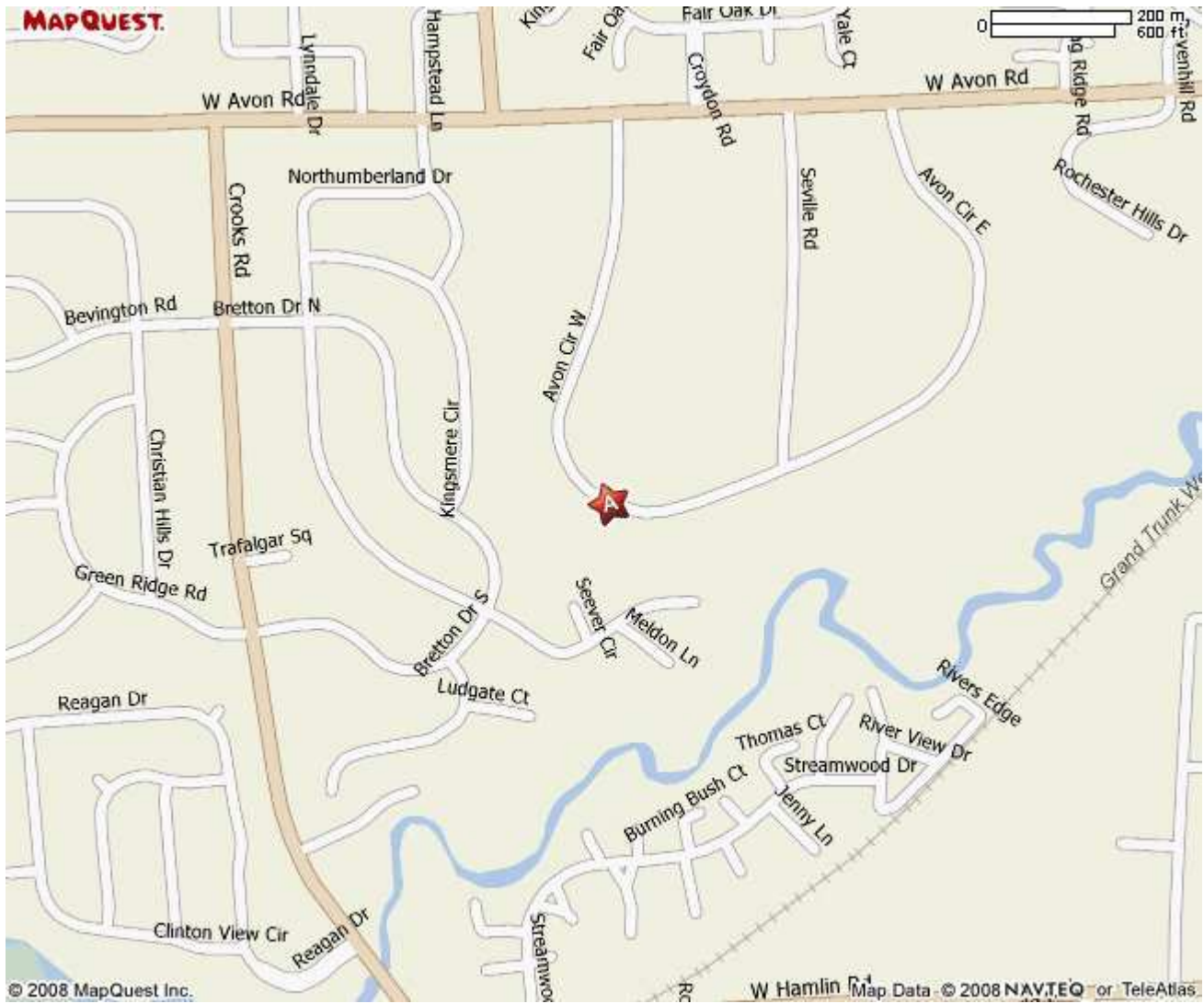
Guests welcome!

August Meeting

Our meeting on **Saturday, August 15** at 2 pm will be at Paul Wingert's shadehouse and patio, 27276 Edgemoor, Farmington Hills, MI 48334. Discussion topic: **foliage bromeliads**. Paul will discuss the group, some of his own hybrids and give pointers on their care. The plants in the shadehouse will be in their best color and quite a number of them will be in full bloom. Tillandsia 'Creation' (left) may not yet be in flower but it is a gorgeous, seldom seen hybrid; don't miss it! (Enlarge the page to get a better view.) Please bring along the seedlings Paul entrusted to our foster care last year so we can see what progress they've made. **Also, bring along your extra pups and seedlings to swap with other members. We haven't done that in quite a while.** A reminder will be sent a week before the meeting.



Tillandsia 'Creation'



In the following article member Drew Okla recounts the recent dash to Florida – a combination photo shoot and shopping spree – which he, Malorie, and their dog Murphy recently treated themselves to. Part 2 , the visit to Selby Gardens, will appear in the September – October issue of SEMBS.



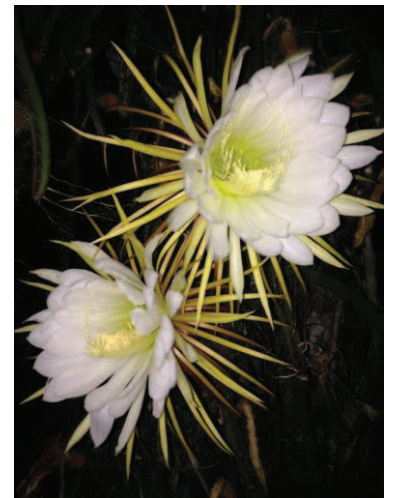
Murphy, our intrepid canine botanist, at 75 mph en route to Sarasota

The 1200+ mile drive to Florida is beautiful, grueling and bizarre. After the industrial and agricultural detritus that litters most of the Ohio landscape, the undulating blue hills of Kentucky, and a white-knuckle traverse through the Smoky Mountains in Tennessee and Georgia, the sight of palms and Spanish moss growing wild was exhilarating. The change of flora seemed instantaneous as we crossed state lines: deciduous forest in Kentucky became neat rows of towering pines in Georgia, then ominous-looking jungle. Though nowhere near the giant green swath that is the Big Cypress National Preserve, the vegetation along the highway appeared impenetrably dense.

By the time we'd reached Tallahassee, even truck stops were botanically interesting. When we pulled off for a quick dog walk, a closer look revealed *Tillandsia recurvata* to be nearly as rife as its more conspicuous cousin *T. usneioides*. We must have appeared eccentric wandering and eagerly pointing up into the trees; surely only the most incorrigible bromeliad addict could be excited by such a trifle...

When we finally exited the highway for good near Sarasota, it was a pleasure to see bromeliads feature prominently as a landscape plant. *Aechmea* spp. turned neon orange from the intense sun, immense *Alcantarea imperialis* and scads of *Neoregelia* were everywhere. Indeed it was rather bizarre to see the array of oft-cultivated tropical plants (philodendrons, crotons, birds of paradise, etc.) assume such a prosaic role.

Daily strolls around the key turned up more interesting discoveries. In addition to bromeliads, plenty of orchids and a variety of epiphytic ferns were to be found among the trees. The first afternoon we noticed a pile of large, hirsute spent blooms littering the base of a palm tree near the sidewalk. Gazing upward, the



Selenicereus grandifloris

tendrils of a cactus could be seen drooping from the canopy. Later that evening we found the same plant clamoring up and down a tree around the corner from our hotel, rife with emerging buds. We returned early the following morning eager to catch the nocturnal flowers open, apparently having missed them by a few hours. Late the next night we went back again, finally treated to a stunning display of gigantic flowers (10"+), betraying its identity as *Selenicereus grandifloris*.

We also managed to spot (presumably) another native bromeliad, *T. utriculata*, in situ—a pleasant surprise given their endangered status in Florida, the result of over-collection and decimation by the Mexican Bromeliad Weevil. The first sighting (near right) was inside a bird sanctuary near Mote aquarium; the second (far right) was high in a tree amid the otherwise dull milieu of a restaurant parking lot.

By Sunday evening we had already seen a fair share of bromeliads and other interesting flora growing wild (or at least being cultivated happily outdoors). Yet, our trip had not begun in earnest; Monday morning we were off to visit Michael Kiehl's nursery in Venice. It was Memorial Day, but the bromeliads didn't know...



Michael's Bromeliads



Nothing can prepare a bromeliad enthusiast for a maiden visit to Michael Kiehl's enormous facility.

Besides the sheer scale, the salient feature of Kiehl's operation is neatness. The Secret Garden—the "store-front" run by his wife Donna, and the first place visitors encounter when they arrive—is immaculate. Perfectly groomed bromeliads have plenty of room to breathe; even a rather stout *Tillandsia adpressiflora*, with its dense and perfectly symmetrical rosette, had a solid six inches of clearance all around. For anyone accustomed to the claustrophobic greenhouses that abound in a temperate climate (always packed well beyond capacity during winter), it was wonderful to appreciate the plants in this context. Even the relatively small Secret Garden shadehouse had a fairly expansive selection of broms on offer, plus a smattering of orchids, cactus and succulents luxuriating in a climate nearer that of their native habitat.

Coffee in hand, Michael arrived in a golf cart (the preferred mode of transport at sprawling Florida nurseries). We hopped aboard, zipping over a tiny bridge to the sprawling complex of greenhouses—fifteen at last count, excluding the scores of xeric varieties that bake outside in the full Florida sun.

The vastness and tidiness is all the more impressive for the paucity of his staff, all two of whom were off for Memorial Day weekend. Despite his admission that keeping a current and accurate inventory is a Sisyphean task, as we rattled off our list he ferried us from plant to plant with alacrity, enumerating how many of each from the 32-page list were likely available and at what price.

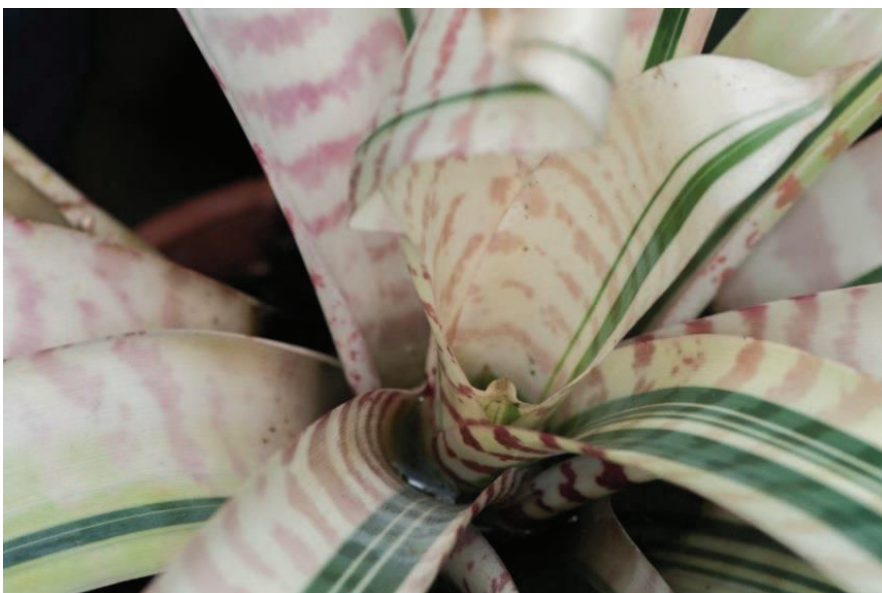
We expressed our envy of the year-long growing season, bemoaning our exorbitant heating bills this winter and near-freezing temperatures even after Mother's day. Kiehl, a Sarasota native, admitted that growing bromeliads where winter temperatures drop well below zero was incomprehensible—and offered kudos on maintaining an active club—but pointed out that a favorable climate



An immense and unusually bulbous
Hohenbergia catingae



An enormous *Hechtia lanata*



Among the foliage *Vrieseas* numbered many of David Shiigi's hybrids. The variegation on this plant is superb

and unlimited space facilitates an enormous collection, which poses its own problems.

"People always tell me, 'You live in paradise!' Yeah, well—paradise needs keeping up," he joked.

Though we encountered many bromeliads we'd never heard of (and a few whose identity had yet to be confirmed or established), even many species we'd seen previously were a world apart from their photos in the FCBS index. Consistent light, heat and



A stunning Tillandsia 'Marron' (cv. of capitata)

warmth make for incredibly compact, colorful and symmetrical plants (go figure). Many of the mature plants, so well-grown, had attained enormous size and developed astonishing form.

Malorie was taken with a few interesting species plants not yet in our collection (i.e. *Neo. Pauciflora* and *Vr. racinea*), and her favorite *Billbergia* 'Darth Vader'. The miscellany we had so far amassed, despite a rather specific shopping list, was telling of the overwhelming selection; I had set out to acquire some of the spiny xeric varieties seldom seen in Michigan—a few *Hecthia* spp., *Encholirium spectabile*, and a handful of *Dyckia* clones—but didn't even get to these before plenty of *Cryptanthus*, some interesting bigenerics and an *Acanthostachys strobilaceae* had inexplicably found their way into the box.

As the morning wore on, perusing the many succulent broms in the noontday sun (90s and humid), the heat became almost unbearable. At my exhortation Malorie retreated to the car to recuperate in the air conditioning, as I made a few final selections and hurried about shooting a last roll of film.

I returned to find Michael fastidiously grooming the *Acanthostachys*, trimming blemished leaves with a pair of tiny sheers. After settling our debts and thanking him profusely, we drove off thinking of all the plants we had forgotten look for.



One of many outdoor tables of spiny bromeliads—*Dyckia*, *Hechtia*, and a few *Encholirium*



Malorie dwarfed by an enormous Agave. Her happy expression belies extreme discomfort on the hottest day of our trip