

# SEMBS

SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN BROMELIAD SOCIETY  
AFFILIATE OF BROMELIAD SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

**MARCH / APRIL 2016**



Vriesea 'Dreamsicle Orange', P. Wingert 1999

## April Meeting



The April meeting will be held on Saturday, April 16, 2pm at the Conservatory Greenhouse of the Cranbrook Home & Gardens Auxiliary. We last had a workshop at the Cranbrook lathe house in April, 2010. The greenhouse was renovated later that year and is now very much improved. So come admire the rejuvenated greenhouse and enjoy a spring afternoon observing the collections of orchids, bromeliads, succulents, and other assorted tropicals! We will have a workshop on dividing and repotting bromeliads. This is a wonderful time to give pups a fresh start on their own. So, if you have a plant or two that might be a good subject for dividing, consider to bring 'em along. Not sure whether or not to divide a plant? We can discuss the pros and cons of growing specimen clumps. Some bromeliads are better suited than others for growing a multigenerational specimen. For more information about the Cranbrook Greenhouse, check out this link: <http://housegardens.cranbrook.edu/conservatory-greenhouse> For directions, click here: <http://housegardens.cranbrook.edu/directions> From the Lone Pine entrance, go right at the first fork, and follow that drive down to the greenhouse.

Consider bringing some plants for “Show and Tell”. We may discuss some fun ways to expand on that concept for future meetings.

We'll also discuss whether there is interest in placing a spring plant order to various bromeliad/ tillandsia nurseries as we have in past years.



## Leaf Arrangement and Architecture in Bromeliads *by P. Goff*

We generally think of bromeliads as rosettes because most of them are. Exceptions include *Aechmea brevicollis*, *Dyckia estevesii* and most of the tillandsia subgenus diaphoranthema. Their leaves alternate in two rows, an arrangement which is called distichous.



*Aechmea brevicollis* - photo P.Goff



*Dyckia estevesii*

photo by  
George Allaria

Tillandsias may have more than two rows of leaves but not form a spiral. These are termed polystichous.

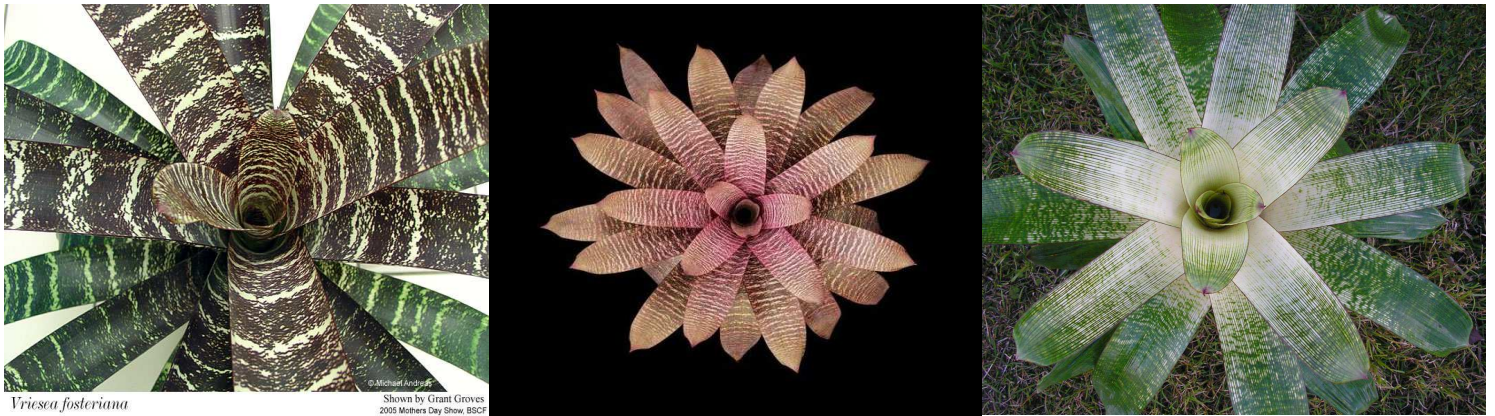


*T. gilliesii*, distichous form



*T. gilliesii*, polystichous form

Spiral rosette, the most common bromeliad leaf arrangement



Left: *Vriesea fosteriana*; center and right two complex *vriesea* hybrids

Two well (over-?) grown neoregelias display the spiral leaf arrangement (phyllotaxy). In Michigan they would have bloomed long before ever becoming so buxom. The spiral allows each leaf maximum light exposure For more information on bromeliad spiral phyllotaxy (leaf arrangement) see: John



Catlan, The Fibonacci Sequence and Pineapples, [fcbs.org/articles/fibonacci.htm](http://fcbs.org/articles/fibonacci.htm).

As Spring growth burgeons all around us, we can hardly help thinking leaf growth is an explosive, random response to warm sun and April showers. In reality leaf arrangement and all aspects of plant growth relentlessly follow plant-specific genetic rules. This is beautifully clear in cacti and succulents. And in many bromeliads. The researcher is interested in the efficiency of phyllotaxy and in the relationship to the flora and fauna which inhabit it. We collectors value leaf arrangement for its beauty.

Leaf arrangement, however, is only one factor in the aesthetic appeal of bromeliads. The total plant – the architecture – is often a masterpiece of intricate design. Compare the epiphytic orchids or the finest hybrid tea roses: their flowers are gorgeous, their architecture is totally uninteresting.



*Vriesea erythrodactylon*



*Tillandsia imperialis* - photo Wingert

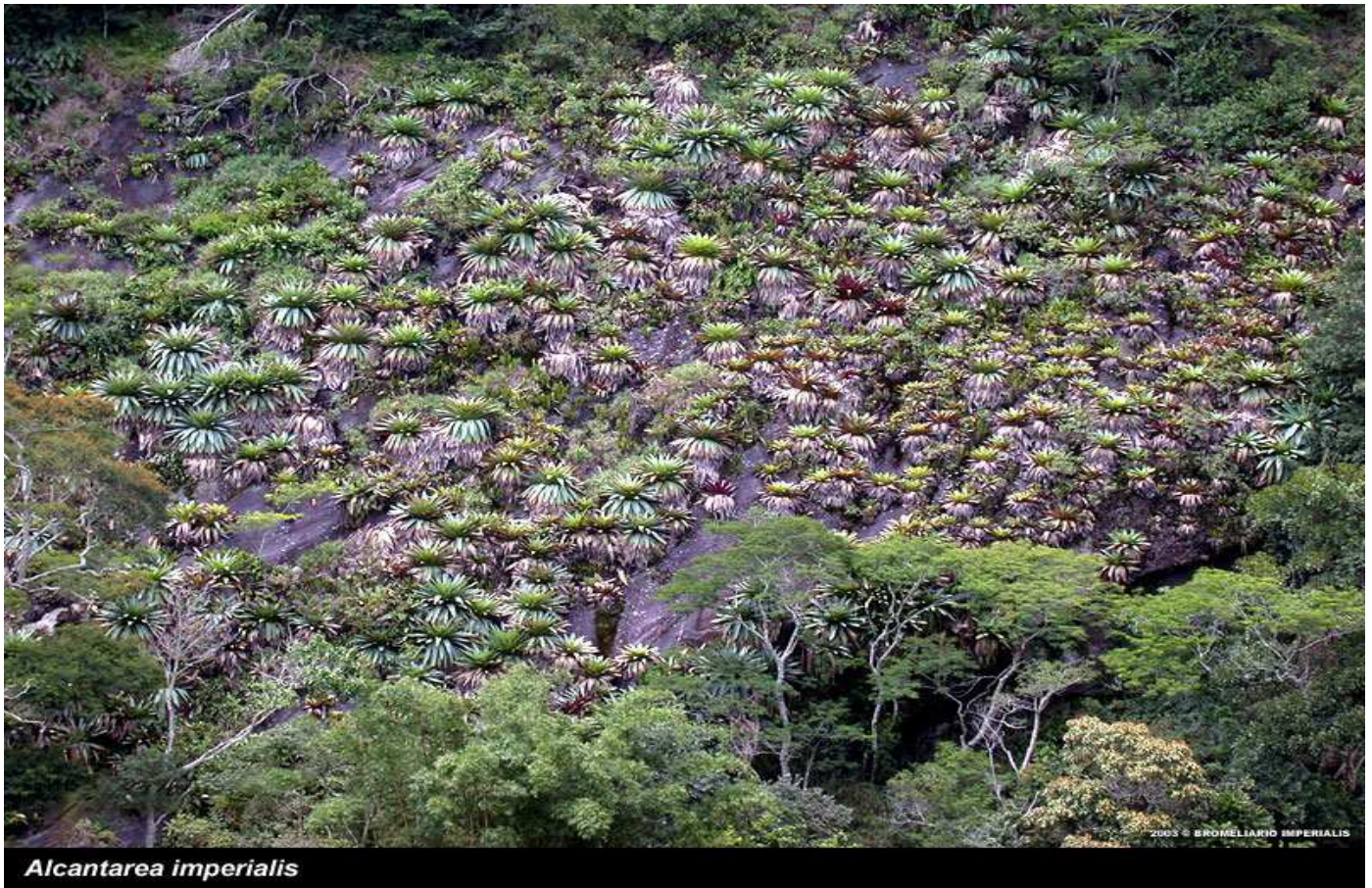


*Tillandsia deppeana* - photo Wingert

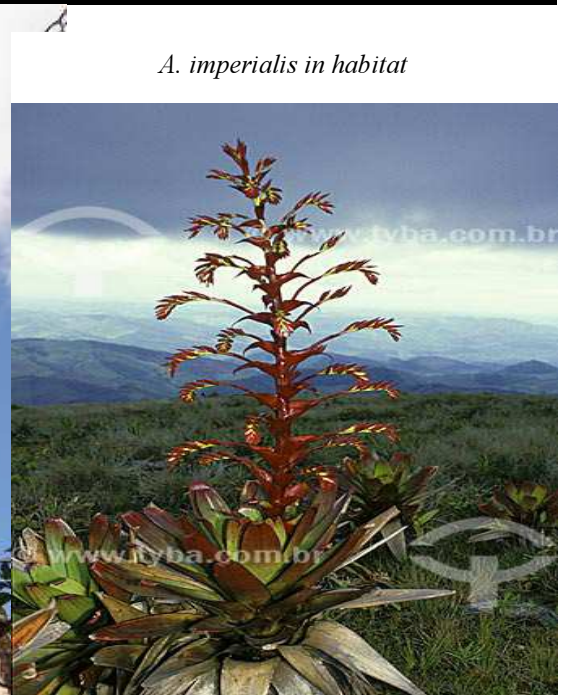


*Tillandsia grandis*

Some bromeliads grow very large and develop an imposing architecture despite the challenges of their location. Below: a lush community of *Alcantarea imperialis*, each one 5'+ diameter, and below a closeup of *A. imperialis* on rock face. A dense skirt of dead leaves protects the roots from washout; but the leaf axils can store gallons of water.



*Alcantarea imperialis*



*A. imperialis* in habitat

Years ago Paul Wingert planted *A. imperialis* seed from the BSI seed fund. About 5 years ago he gave two well established seedlings to the conservatory at Matthaei Botanical Gardens. When they became too large for the greenhouse benches they were brought into the conservatory and sunk into the ground. There they soon attained a diameter of some 5'. We watched expectantly as they grew steadily taller but they showed no sign of blooming. Then, January 26, Paul discovered one of them in spike.



The first flowers opened April 5, 2016, 15 years after the seed germinated

