



BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF GREATER CHICAGO

THE BSGC NEWS

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Lori Weigerding

We all did a great job at the Show and Sale. We want to thank all of you for your hard work. Our next meeting will be on August 12th at the Chicago Botanic Garden at 2 pm in the Annex building. We will be showing the DVD "A Garden of Grace". It is Grace Goode's garden in 1985. She has been a prolific hybridizer in Australia. We will also discuss the Show. I will be bringing some plants, fertilizer and plant hangars for a raffle. Hope to see you there.

President's Column

Well we had a great show this year! We sold all our plants and didn't have to reduce them like we've done before. Thanx to everyone for their help in putting the show and sale together. It was nice having our old friends with us again, the Cactus and Succulent Society.

I hope everyone enjoyed themselves and maybe added a few new plants to their collection. Thank you to our most loyal contributors Ardie & Jack, their plants are always the best! I'm sure Priscilla's garden was a great hit again this year. Thanx again Martha for all your hard work. Thanx to everybody that gave of their time and energy to make our show a success!

Lori Weigerding

Handy hints

Reprinted from 'Newslink', April 2012 – the newsletter of the Illawarra Bromeliad Society. (In Australia-their winter is our summer)

- Try to avoid removing pups until winter is definitely over. Pups taken off from mid September to late April will usually develop roots and commence active growth more quickly than pups removed during winter. Losses due to rot and other problems are also likely to be less.
- If you are mounting tillandsias onto wooden or cork mounts, try to do this well before the plant flowers as this will improve the chances of the plant sending out roots onto the mount, as flowering often do not do this. Instead, flowering plants are probably using their energy to make flowers, then seeds and pups.
- Treat your mounting wood with citric acid to acidify the wood and encourage shy rooting plants to put out roots.
- You will find that the cork used for mounting tillandsias is much easier to work with when it's wet because it's softer. Soak the cork in a plastic container of water the day before you plan to use it and you will find it much easier to break. Cork looks softer and more natural if broken rather than cut. Score the cork on the back to make it easier to break. Of course,if using glue when mounting, you will have to ensure that the cork has dried out completely before applying the adhesive.
- Before applying liquid fertiliser to bromeliads, thoroughly wet the leaves with water as this helps to ensure the leaves are in the best condition to absorb the nutrients.
- When preparing soluble fertilisers, a dash of vinegar or a small amount of sphagnum or peat can be added to the water before the fertiliser. This will acidify the water and increase its ability to dissolve the fertiliser.



Topiary in Chicago Botanic Garden Greenhouse



T. Duratii

- When dividing *Neoregelia* 'Fireball', pups put directly into new potting mix have a tendency to turn green. Try rooting them in a tray of moist perlite. When a good root ball is formed, pot in soil but do not shake off all the perlite from the new roots. This way the new plants will not lose colour.

Many of the plants outside are looking better now that they have received some rain. Many of the colors seemed to fade from the bright sunshine and heat in July.

Now that we have more clouds, their colors appear brighter.

Now is a good time to separate any pups that you have. The following two articles gives some good suggestions. If you have extra pups, you can always bring them to a meeting to share.

Odean Head had a good article in the August 2011 edition of the Houston Newsletter.

Pup Removal – 2011 By Odean Head

One of the most exciting memories I have of my early bromeliad growing days was seeing my favorite plants beginning to form new pups. In fact, one of the first things I did when I got home from work was to check for new pups and pup

growth. I was also looking down in the centers for bloom spikes on the older plants. I remember that it seemed to take longer to bloom or pup than it should. Most plants seem to bloom and pup faster now than they used to. Guess I was watching too closely. (It's been many years now and I still enjoy seeing my favorite plants putting on beautiful new pups.)

Since most bromeliads have a life cycle that includes blooming only one time, propagation becomes very important. The plants make it easy for us to do that by producing vegetative offsets, or pups, for us.

THE BEST TIME TO REMOVE PUPS

When is the best time to remove pups? This question raises other questions to be considered before taking action. Are they large enough to remove? Are you more interested in maturing the pup or propagating the plant? If the plant is stoloniferous you may prefer to allow it to form a clump. Pups should be at least one-third to one-half the size of their mother. These pups can be removed and potted at any time of the year if they have roots. Rooting pups is not a problem but takes longer in lower temperatures. The mix tends to stay wet longer during these times and with no roots to take the water into the plant, increases the chances of rotting. This is especially true with plants that have tender caudexes such as vrieseas and guzmanias. In fact, I am more cautious with these pups year round. First, I usually let them grow a little longer on their mother, then I let the removed pup's caudex harden before I pot it. Some people also use Rootone as an extra precaution against rotting.



The question of maturing the pup vs. propagating the plant. They grow faster while on their mother (some will mature in only one year) and if they are cut too small, could stunt their growth. However, if you remove them as soon as they are large enough the plants energy will go toward producing more pups. If the plant is stoloniferous (plants formed on the end of extended caudexes/stems from the mother) you may prefer to leave the pups on allowing them to form a clump. This

will create a pleasing display of your plant when the stolons are long enough to give them room to form their normal shape and size. When the stolons are not long enough, the fast growth could cause the pup to become leggy and lose the compact shape you would prefer.

Some vrieseas (i.e. *Vr. splendens* and its hybrids) may have only one or two pups which form and come up through the middle of the mother plant. Since these are the only pups that the mother will have and the mother is pretty much destroyed when removing the pups, you should allow the pups to grow full size and remove the mother as her leaves die. This almost guarantees the survival of the pup or pups. If more than one, they can be separated when their roots are established.



Neoregelia 'Jeffrey Block'

PUP REMOVAL

Removing pups can be an easy task unless you have never done it. It is normal to be a little apprehensive the first few times you cut a pup, especially when it is jammed up next to the mother plant. The pup should be severed somewhere between the pup's roots and the mother plant. When the pup is jammed next to the mother its best to cut as near the mother plant as possible leaving the best foundation available for potting the pup firmly in the pot. If I happen to cut into the soft tissue of the pup I will seal it with Rootone and let it harden off a little

before potting it. Roots will form at the base of the plant (between the plant and the caudex/stem). Pups are easily rooted if potted properly.

I use three different methods for removing pups. Most of the time I will use a pair of hand snippers when they are available and there is plenty of room between the pup and mother to make the cut. Sometimes the pup will just snap off when I place the thumb of one hand against the base of the mother plant and apply some side to side pressure on the pup with the other hand. Be careful that you do not apply so much pressure that it breaks too close to the pup plant. When this happens, use your rooting hormone to harden it off before planting. There are times when the plant is so close to its mother that you cannot get to it with snippers and it does not respond to the hand method. In these cases you need a good sharp knife to

cut it off. A serrated knife is usually more effective when a sawing motion is needed. Take a long knife with a sharp point and stick it down into the leaves until the point of the knife rests on the spot where the pup connects to the mother. Apply some pressure and with a little twisting motion try to pop the pup off. If it does not pop off after a few tries you may have to use the sawing motion to sever it. This procedure would also apply on many of the large clumps of tillandsias.

Cryptanthus pups that grow between the leaf axils on top of the mother should be removed when of good size. A little side to side movement will cause these pups to release when they are ready. If they do not release easily, let them grow a little larger before you try again. Most tillandsias form pleasing clumps even when the pups are not stoloniferous. I will usually wait about splitting mounted tillandsias until they get real crowded. I will demonstrate the pup removal methods at the meeting and hopefully we can have some questions and discussion that will be of benefit to the group.

Houston, Texas



Ananas comosus 'Ivory Coast' Chicago Botanic Garden

Herb Plever had some more ideas on pup removal in his May, 2010 Newsletter of the New York Bromeliad Society.

MORE REFLECTIONS ON PUPS AND THEIR REMOVAL

by Herb Plever

Here are some other ideas about this important subject, particularly for the benefit of indoor growers who don't have the advantage of the high humidity available in greenhouses. These concern the best ways to remove, pot and stabilize an offset. Even if the offset is onethird the size of the parent, when you pot it there is a narrow time frame for it to establish itself so it can survive on its own. This is especially true if it has no roots as with the typical Vriesea or Guzmania pups which are usually found growing in a leaf axil or with a stoloniferous Aechmea offset. You have to exercise care in removing pups that are growing in a leaf axil as their bases are very tender and brittle. On the other hand, some Aechmea offsets have such woody bases as they grow, they become difficult to cut off. When this occurs I use a small saw to do the job. The key is to use a very sharp, strong knife. To remove an axillary offset, that is a pup growing inside a leaf axil, cut down on the parent side of the pup; lean the knife toward the parent, away from the pup, and cut all the way down until the offset is freed. Do not pull the pup or apply pressure on it away from the mother as it may snap off and lose its base if too much pressure is applied. Without an intact base, no roots can develop and you have lost the pup. Offsets growing up from the base of the parent may have contact with the medium and they will usually make roots by the time before they are large enough to be removed.



Some Aechmea and Billbergia pups have tiny, very tough, sepal-like leaves around their bases. It will be difficult for the growing roots to penetrate and push through this hard, dry tissue. If you remove these you will be able to visualize the root follicles. Stripping off those leaves will enable the roots to more quickly grow out and establish the plant. It may seem melodramatic to say, but

a pup in this early, trying period is in a race to survive.

Broms are indeed hardy, but don't take survival for granted. Once you've potted the pup, you should keep water in its center if it will hold water. If it cannot do so, frequent misting will help it survive until it makes roots. Until that time the offset may need you to supply water it can absorb through its leaves or from its center cup and leaf axils. I think it also helps to feed pups with fertilizer from a foliar spray or in their centers if they can hold water.

Epiphytic bromeliads were programmed by evolution to produce hold-fast roots; they will be unhappy if they are shaky in a pot. If you have lots of plants crowded in your setup, you can easily brush against newly potted pups while you are watering or pulling off a dead leaf, etc. Movement of the pup will usually break off some newly formed roots and set back the process to establish the pup firmly in the medium. Since I am often in a rush and have many plants crowded in every available space, I brace pups that have neither roots nor a long stolon with two strips of masking tape, so they won't move around and break roots no matter how careless I get.

Once the plant is firm in the pot I pull off the tape. I like to keep newly potted pups shaded from direct sun until they have produced enough roots to firm themselves in the medium.

(Abridged)



From Herb Plevier's Article