



BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF GREATER CHICAGO

THE BSGC NEWS

March, 2015

President	Lori Weigerding	(630) 978-7340
Vice President	Martha Goode	(815) 459-1623
Treasurer	Paula Darning	(847) 295-2559
Secretary	open	
Newsletter Editor	Steve Goode	stevegoode1@ameritech.net

WEB SITE

<http://bromeliad-chicago.org>

Webmaster

Lori Weigerding

Our next meeting is April 12th at 2pm in the Annex at the Chicago Botanic Garden. There will not be a May meeting as it falls on Mother's Day.

President's Column

Wow I was really excited to see everyone at the last meeting! I think we had a good discussion about what we can do for the upcoming show. It's great to have all those ideas and exchanges like we used to. Keep the ideas flowing!

I hope everyone is staying well, unfortunately I haven't been so lucky and I'm really under the weather. All these changes in temperatures is part of the reason I think. I'll be glad when the temperatures stay in the 70s.

I sent an email to the Gardens asking about using their equipment, however, she wasn't going to be in the office until this coming Monday, so I'll let you know if I've gotten an answer at the meeting.

Hopefully we'll have another great meeting in April and we can see where we stand on getting things arranged. I'm sorry that I haven't looked at the DVD yet to see which program we will watch at the meeting, but we can always decide then if the one I pick isn't what everyone wants to watch.

On that note, I look forward to seeing you at the meeting and getting an update on where we stand from and to you..

Lori Weigerding



Anne's picture

We had a great March meeting. It was good to see everyone after the winter. We shared our plant problems. Audrey had the worst catastrophe with coming home after 3 weeks away and her furnace had gone out. Her plants were dead except a little bit of green on an ioantha so she will see if it is able to recover. Anne has found that if she removes the dead areas on a tillandsia clump that it will recover and is less likely to get pests. Martha brought in a vriesea with rot. The top looked great but rotten in the roots and center. This shows what happens when water is left in the cup for a long time.

We had a lot of discussion of our Show which is scheduled for August 29th & 30th. Priscilla mentioned that the Daylily Society has a slideshow during their Show. Marjorie is going to look into our Club doing that. Lori said she would assist her. Anne showed us some ideas for displaying our Tillandsias which she found on Pinterest.

[Http://www.pinterest.com/acoughlan0379/tillandsia](http://www.pinterest.com/acoughlan0379/tillandsia)



Tillandsias in Anne's Greenhouse

She suggested we could make some of these at a meeting. Priscilla moved that Anne look into buying a 25 plant assortment of terrestrials up to \$300 including shipping from Michael's Bromeliads. Martha seconded the motion and it passed. Everyone felt it was a good idea to sell terrestrial bromeliads as well as tillandsias.

The members appreciated our treasurer being at the meeting so we could pay our dues there.

Martha passed around the book [Air Plants, The Curious World of Tillandsias](#) by Zenaida Sengo which the Club had purchased. It has many suggestions on displaying tillandsias. Larry is hoping to make a stand which he

can put outside to display his bromeliads.



Anne's Display

Martha showed her pictures from the Southwest Bromeliad Guild visit to David Klein's two greenhouses. One was for tropical plants including bromeliads and the other one was for his cacti and succulents.

Julie won the raffle of the subscription to the BSI Journal. The raffle plant was the cultivar Dyckia "Lad Cutak."

The Bromeliad Society of Houston has an article on the characteristics and care of the genus dyckia.

Dyckia
(dick' ea)

Dyckias, are generally one of the most cold hardy of all of the Bromeliad genera. While most people are scurrying around trying to bring in the last of their plants before the first blue norther hits, Dyckia growers can sit back and enjoy themselves knowing that most of their plants can take temperatures down into the low twenties, or even the upper teens. Those Dyckias are tough plants!

Dyckia is one of the genera in the subfamily Pitcairnioideae. This subfamily contains some of the most primitive Bromeliad species. Most Pitcairnioideae genera are saxicolous (living on or around rocks) or terrestrial (growing in the ground), with Dyckias into both categories (e.g. *D. saxicola*), although most are strictly terrestrial and all do well when grown as strict terrestrials. The majority of the approximately 120 different species of Dyckia are native to central Brazil, with some being found in Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Bolivia. Most are found growing among rocks in warm sunny areas ranging in altitude from sea level to 2000 meters.



Dyckia elizabethae (species)

The genus was introduced into Europe during the nineteenth century, and was named for Prince von Salm-Dyck, an early expert on succulents. Although Dyckias have no internal water storage tissue like true succulents, they are xerographic and survive long periods without water by going dormant. Their rosette of thick succulent leaves will eventually wilt, but recovery is rapid when watering is resumed. These plants are tough! They

will withstand more neglect than almost any other commonly cultivated plant and still pup and bloom every year. Their only demand is a little water and a lot of sunshine. In the spring they bear multiple red, yellow or orange flowers on a thin stalk that emerges from the side of the plant. The stalk length can range from about 10 centimeters for a small species like *D. choristaminea* to more than 2 meters for *D. maritima*.

Although the flowers aren't large, bees, wasps and *hummingbirds* find them attractive. The plants themselves come in a range of colors (green, rose, maroon, tan, or silver), and a variety of leaf shapes (long and thin, short and fat, deeply lobed, or almost smooth). In an outdoor setting with considerable sunshine, these plants may be a welcome addition to your garden.



For the most part, Dyckias are not demanding in their culture. Generally I have found the following conditions work well.

Light:

They like full sunlight. 5000 foot-candles, 50% shade, is probably the least amount of sun that they can have and still flourish.



Dyckia X Burgundy Ice

Temperature:

They prefer temperatures in the range of 40-90 degrees Fahrenheit, but they will withstand much lower and higher temperatures. Most species will not be harmed by freezing weather if they are planted in the ground and given minimal protection.

Fertilizer:

Use a dilute fertilizer solution (1/4 strength or less) with every watering spring through fall, but eliminate fertilizer during cold weather. When plants are actively growing in strong light, it is hard to over fertilize an established plant, but they don't appear to suffer if they are not fertilized, they just grow more slowly.

Water:

Although they will tolerate drought, they thrive on frequent watering while actively growing, however keep plants on the dry side during cold

weather or during periods of reduced light. In the summer time they tend to dry out rapidly; it is helpful to keep them in a shallow container of water.

Medium:

Grow in a heavy mix that contains water retaining polymers and a large quantity of organic matter. A mix similar to what would be used for a Cryptanthus or a Hechtia would be appropriate.

Containers:

Dyckias probably do best when they are grown in the ground. Their ability to take temperatures in the 15-20 degree range makes them one of the best

Bromeliads to use for landscaping in the Houston area. They should be able to take all but our most severe winter weather with only minimal protection. If you do choose to grow them in pots, use one that will accommodate the plant's large root system. This is one plant that appreciates a pot that is about as wide as or wider



Desert Terrace Garden
Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix

than the plant itself. But **WARNING**: usually the larger the pot and the more the fertilizer the bigger the plant.

Propagation:

Most *Dyckia* species have leaves armed with sharp spikes that make working with the plants painful. It is often difficult to separate pups from the mother plant. It is helpful to remove the plant from its pot and try to work on it from the bottom. You want to bring out the heavy equipment when dealing with your *Dyckia* collection. Leather gloves, a sturdy knife, a small saw, and, in extreme cases, a hatchet could all come in handy when it is time to separate and repot large clumps of plants. When you separate a pup, try to preserve as much of its root system as you can. If it has no roots, treat its base with rooting hormone before potting. In either case pot the plant in a fairly small pot using a well drained mix, and leave it there until the plant has a chance to establish itself. Most pups are slow to root and start growing, but when the plants root system fills the pot, move the plant into a larger pot using a heavier mix.

If you want to try your hand at hybridizing, *dyckias* are good candidates. You need to remove any blooms that you don't pollinate, and make sure that the plant is in a protected location since the birds and insects will be more than willing to give you a hand. When the pods are ripe, collect the seed and sow them in a well drained sterile mix. As the plants grow move them into increasingly larger pots. Grown from seed plants will usually take 3 or more years to bloom.

Problems:

Other than an occasional slug stopping by for a midnight snack, or a case of brown scale, or snails eating the delicate bloom stalks, insects don't appear to bother *Dyckias* much. The most common disease problem is rotting off a plant because it was over watered during the winter.

Almost all species and hybrids grow well in the Houston area with little care. Some of the more popular species are:

brevifolia ("Yellow glow")

choristaminea

fosteriana

marnier-lapostollei

platyphylla

Some of the more popular hybrids are:

Brittle Star

Cherry Coke

Naked Lady

Red Devil

I moved my Dyckia ‘Cherry Coke’ (Cherry Cola in the Cultivar list) under a tree where it gets filtered light. It was in full sun before and I had to cover it with shade cloth in the summer because it’s color would fade.

The Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society had 2 articles on light. One was in their November, 2014 Newsletter and the other one was in their January 2015 Newsletter. The articles have been edited.

Plant Profile – What’s light got to do with it? Part 1

You hear it all the time at bromeliad society meetings – “this plant can be grown in full light”; “this one is good for low light conditions”; “grow this plant in ‘dappled light’...what the heck are they talking about? One person’s “bright” light is another’s “medium” and what about a plant facing bright light in the morning, but shade the rest of the day? Why can’t this term “light” be better quantified? Years ago, before digital cameras, there was an effort made to discuss light levels in terms of “foot-candles”. In short, this was a measure of the intensity of light that can be given off from one lit candle, as measured one foot from that candle. Add more candles, that measured intensity goes up...so the higher the number, the brighter the light. 100 foot candles of light then would be the equivalent light generated by 100 candles if you stood one foot away. Seems like a good idea on paper for describing the amount of light striking a given spot (that spot being where you place your bromeliad), but the problem is that in the real world light intensity usually varies with the time of day, the season of the year, the cloud cover and even the humidity – so we can end up with two identical plants, placed in locations where a light meter says that the light intensity is exactly the same, but one can develop a bad case of sunburn while the other loses its optimum color because it doesn’t receive enough light. How can this be? One plant may receive shade as the angle of the sun’s rays changes during the day while the other, set in a treeless area, receives the same amount of light from morning until dusk – big difference! Even though the measured light intensities were the same at a given moment, one plant received far more of the sun’s radiant energy than the other. And so, we still struggle to describe how much light appears to be optimum for a given plant. If foot-candles measurements of light intensity don’t really help us in talking about where to place bromeliads for optimum color and growth (unless you are growing indoors under artificial lights), what do we do? Maybe a good starting point in such discussions would be to agree on the extremes. Let’s start with extreme bright light conditions. We often hear requests from those new to the world of bromeliads for plants that can be planted in full sun.

Plant Profile – What’s light got to do with it? Part 2.

We often talk about plant selection for “full sun” or “shade” with regard to how well a bromeliad can be expected to survive given those light conditions, but there’s another consideration we haven’t talked about yet – overall appearance of the plant based on its exposure to light. It’s not enough to just be able to keep a plant alive in your collection. You want that plant to look good – and by that we mean we would like to have optimum shape (conformation), color and markings on our bromeliads. Many bromeliad varieties will develop long and strappy leaves when grown under low light conditions while the same varieties will become much more compact with shorter, stouter leaves when grown in brighter light. Judges look for this when evaluating plants for awards in bromeliad shows. Another variable in the appearance of bromeliads that is dependent on proper lighting is that of color and markings. As an example of this, I’ve included photos of a *Vriesea* that I’ve grown in my yard for many years. *Vriesea phillipo-coburgii* is usually recognized by its yellowish-green leaves with dark red marking on the leaf tips, but these markings only become noticeable when the plant is grown in bright light. The first photo shows an example of an offset from this plant grown under a heavy canopy of oak trees and the second is an offset of the same original plant, but grown under nearly full sun. *Vriesea phillipo-coburgii* grown in shade – note the plain green leaves. In addition to having lost its distinctive leaf tip markings, the shade-grown plant is nearly twice the diameter of its sister plant grown in full sun. Which plant was grown under the right light conditions? That depends on your objective, but it may be difficult to define ‘right’ for light conditions. The shade grown plant was not only much larger than the sun grown *Vriesea* – the patch of shade grown plants has bloomed every year with a spectacular, colorful, branched inflorescence, while the clump of sun-grown plants has yet to produce a single bloom spike – probably the reason that this plant is known by some as “the bromeliad that never blooms”!

Penrith Goff had the following article on Spring Housecleaning (of your plants) in the March/April Newsletter of SEMBS

Spring Housecleaning by Pen Goff

Dead Plants – if it was a valued plant make sure it really is dead before you throw it out. Many a plant with no leaves left will continue to grow a pup or two. Growth will be slow but what the heck.

Lost its roots – when you straighten up a plant which has fallen over you discover with dismay that it has separated from its roots due to rot. If the base of the shoot is

firm and healthy it can be planted in moist (not wet!) potting mix and it will grow new roots.

Yellowing leaves – a dying or dead leaf no longer manufactures food for the plant and should be removed. Dead sheaths (leaf bases) can shelter scale!

Leaf edges curling together – plant is dehydrated. Water copiously and leaves will flatten out again. A leaf or two may have been damaged by the drought and not recover completely.

Quilling pups – the leaves of a new shoot may stick together at the tips, due to wax or other material on the leaf surfaces. If the tips are carefully separated the shoot will develop properly. When shoot leaves grow tightly wrapped together forming a “quill” which shows no intention of unfurling, the shoot is unlikely to develop properly and should be removed. Removal will encourage the plant to form new pups which hopefully will develop properly. Low humidity is frequently the cause of quilling but it can happen for no obvious reason.

Growing a trunk – New roots emerge at the bases of the leaves. As the plant grows taller the leaf bases move away from the soil and new roots do not appear. The end of the old rhizome can be cut away and the plant sunk back into soil to encourage growth of new roots.

Divide or leave it alone? If the plant is tubular it will probably look better with several shoots in the pot. If it is a flaring rosette it may display better as a single plant, allowed to develop symmetrically. I always repot neoregelias. Many neoregelia pups mature in less than a year. If left in the pot they will be in bloom before the mother has died. I have one which has produced four pups, one in bloom, the others blooming size, and the mother, bedraggled but very much alive, is busily producing two more pups. Guzmanias, on the other hand, mature more slowly and by the time the pups reach blooming size the mother will have died. Since the guzmania pups grow close to the axis (stem) of the mother plant, it is very difficult to remove them without injury until they have grown fairly large. If you decide to separate them I would recommend waiting until they are blooming size. They will usually have developed their own roots by then.

Please take the time to renew your membership now.

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