



BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF GREATER CHICAGO

# THE BSGC NEWS

June, 2016

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Lori Weigerding

Our next meeting is July 10<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm at the Chicago Botanic Garden in Annex 1. We will have some raffle plants that I purchased with the Club's money at the BSI World Conference in Houston. I will show some pictures from the Conference. We will also share stories of how we got interested in Bromeliads. Do you remember the first one you bought?

## *President's Column*

*We had a bunch of people show up for the meeting in June - Del, Paula, Jeff, Lori, Priscilla, Larry, Ilona, Julie, and Jenifer. We talked a little about still looking for a venue for our show. If you have any other ideas of a place for us to do it, don't be shy, pass it along to Martha or me, or check it out yourself and let us know. We tried to watch the DVD program, but they must have had some problem on their end as the screen stopped showing and when it finally came back up it wasn't full screen. I guess we'll just look at pictures of plants to show from now on. It did spark a small conversation about the different methods of finding out about Bromeliads.*

*We did have 4 plants that we raffled off and I think it was Del, Paula, Julie and Priscilla that won the plants. Larry, Jeff and I declined taking one. We'll be seeing some wonderful shots from Martha and Steve at the next meeting in July on the 10th. We hope more of you will be able to join us on that date.*

*Stay cool, be safe on the 4th and please remember to respond to the email that asks if you're coming. Thanx to all those that do respond! Oh if getting an email response from you isn't feasible or the best method for you, then please let us know what is.*

*Lori Weigerding*



Display by the Bromeliad Society of Houston

Steve and I flew to Houston for the BSI Conference. It brought back memories of our first conference which was in Houston in July 1998.

It is nice to see old friends and meet new ones at a conference. The conference included speakers, garden tours, a BBQ (Remember that it was in TEXAS!), a show, sales, auction and Banquet.



Jimbo's Nursery

The BBQ was held at Jimbo's Nursery in Santa Fe, Texas. We were unable to buy bromeliads there but I did get a variegated crown of thorns. Their website is [www.jimbosnursery.com](http://www.jimbosnursery.com)

On Thursday we visited the Klein estate in Spring, Texas. We had been there for the Southwest Guild Show in 2014 But it was nice to see how things have changed in his two greenhouses since then. We tried to have someone identify his Puya but since it wasn't blooming, no one was able to positively identify it. He only has tags on a few of his plants so there were a lot of people trying to identify various plants.



Klein's Greenhouse



Unidentified Puya at Klein's Greenhouse

This year the speakers were focused on plant studies involving morphology, DNA and molecular information. In the near future, there will be many plant name changes in the genera.

Since there were two different garden tours on Saturday, Steve went on one and I went on another one so we would be able to get more pictures.

Steve only bought 10 raffle tickets the first day but his luck was good again and he won two baskets. We had donated several items for the raffle and since a couple of things we donated were in the basket we won, we turned them back in. We always look for pineapple items through out the year to donate.



Pineapple Panties from Victoria's Secret

Our daughter had visited us right before the conference and had given me some panties with gold embossed pineapples on them. Steve decided he should get some for the BSI auction. Since the Conference was held at the Westin which was attached to the Galleria Mall, he was able to buy them at the Victoria's Secret store there.

The Back story on this, was that Steve donated a pair of Joe Boxer shorts (from Marshall Field's), which had a pineapple on the fly, with a reclining lady behind the pineapple. That pair of shorts went into a basket at the Chicago 2004 Conference. The first winner turned them back in to the raffle. An Australian fellow (who will remain nameless) won the pair. He wore them on the outside of his pants at the Newsletter Editor's meeting at that Conference. He brought the pair with him to the 2006 Conference in San Diego, CA and to the Cairns Australia Conference in 2008!

Steve decided to be fair to the fairer sex so he donated female pineapple panties! He told Charlie Birdsong about it but they were auctioned off by Larry for the Cryptanthus Society. (Note: Martha is a director in the Cryptanthus Society). Poor Larry's face was as red as some of the Bromeliads in the show! The four pairs were sold as one lot and brought in Seventy Dollars for the Cryptanthus Society.

Martha is already planning on going to Australia next year for the Bromeliad Conference. Steve intends to have fun in Australia and donate to their auction! (It's why we go there!)

The auction went well and everyone enjoyed the fun. The money goes to a great cause, the BSI which now has 51 affiliates and the Cryptanthus Society. It was great because it was on a different night than the Banquet so everyone didn't have to wait all night for their prizes.

The Conference was hosted by the Bromeliad Society of Houston. One of their members who turned 90 earlier this year had an article in their August 2012 Newsletter.



Steven Reynolds Racinaea Crispa  
Show Plant!- It grows that way!

Odean Head talking  
about bromeliad culture at a  
BS/H meeting. From the  
August 2012 Houston  
Newsletter

## CULTURAL TIPS—2012

### Tips for Summer Growing By Odean Head

Thank goodness we got off to a much better summer than normal. Our rains have put us over the average for this time of year and with the cloudy conditions has kept our temperatures much lower. We sure needed it after the terrible summer we had last year. I probably shouldn't be talking like this because I think that it is beginning to show us that it can still get hot and dry. Anyway, we need to get ready for 'hot and dry' because we usually have more of it than we ever want. First, we need to observe more closely as to how each plant is responding to the amount of light it is receiving. This is especially true for those plants that have been getting several hours of direct sun. Plants that show signs of color fading or burning need to be moved to lower light. We don't want to make extreme changes. Small changes help us to determine the ideal lighting for each plant. We may even want to swap places with some of the plants that could use more light. Again, avoid extreme changes. We may want to add some shade cloth to areas that receive too many hours of hot sun.

Next, and possibly the most important need is water. This need includes not only more frequent waterings but also more moisture added to the air. Moisture can

be added to the air by daily sprayings or by installing a mist system. (Ed. Note: in humid environments, this is not necessary.) Bromeliads will survive without water longer than most plants. However, they will thrive better with more water than we tend to give them during hot, dry weather.

Bromeliads are like most other plants in that they will tell you when they become stressed from being too dry. Leaves will begin to curl and the plant will become dehydrated and look sick. You can correct this condition if you catch it quick enough but it will take some TLC. Put them in a convenient place and water them good several days in a row. This will help get water back into their leaves. If the center leaves have quilled (stuck together) extra steps will be required. After pouring water in the restricted cup, let it set for awhile then try opening the leaves by sticking your finger down through the center. Don't force too hard or you will split the leaf. You may need to pour more water and try again later. A drop of detergent in the center will help the quilled leaves to turn loose. The roots also need to be saturated by either continuous wetting from the top of the pot or by setting it in a container of water.



Tillandsia at Klein's Greenhouse  
Or how red Larry's Face got during the auction!

You can take your dehydrated Tillandsias (and mountings) and immerse them in a bucket or tub of water and let them stay there for several hours. It is hard to get water back into the plants' leaves, where they need it, by just misting because the water will probably evaporate before the leaves can absorb it. Sit dehydrated terrestrials such as Cryptanthus, Dyckias and Hechtias in a container of water and allow the medium to remain saturated for a few days. (This is my normal watering procedure for these plants when they have clumped because it is hard to get water to them from the top).

Don't forget air movement. If you have some dead air spots, either move the plants or place some fans so that they will move the air. Even though the odds are pretty good the plants will survive, it is better to avoid long periods of stress which

can cause permanent cultural damage. We need to watch our plants a little closer during these hot days in hopes that we can keep them happy. Houston, Texas

Odean won the Wally Berg Award which was well deserved. Here is the explanation of the award and the requirements for winning it.



Jerry Raack's *Tillandsia hamaleana*

The concept of the Wally Berg Award of Excellence was formulated in 1999 to honor the late Wally Berg (1927-2000) of Sarasota, Florida. Wally and his wife Dorothy were extraordinary bromeliad growers, frequently winning top Awards and Best in Show at World Bromeliad Conferences and Florida local/regional bromeliad shows, providing display specimens also.

Here are the suggested requirements for the individual to be nominated.

1. The individual should be a bromeliad grower who is nationally or internationally recognized for diversity of species cultivated and excellence of cultivation.
2. The individual should actively pursue one of the following activities:
  - i. collecting and identifying bromeliads in natural environments, including collecting new species/varieties/cultivars; the members of the various bromeliad societies and organizations, including the BSI and the BIC, should benefit from this activity;
  - ii. promoting the appreciation and cultivation of bromeliads at the international level, including such activities as organizing and participating in collecting trips with international representation, giving presentations and seminars to national and international

audiences, and writing manuscripts for publication in national or international books, journals, or other media (e.g. Internet, CD ROMS).

3. The individual should actively support efforts to further the scientific, taxonomic, or cultural understanding of bromeliads through donation of time, effort, or money to recognized organizations (e.g., the BSI), institutions (e.g., the BIC, or Selby Gardens), or groups of individuals (e.g., bromeliad clubs, statewide or regional bromeliad councils).
4. The individual should be active in a local, regional, or national bromeliad society and be recognized by other members of that society for his/her contributions to the functioning of that society and its activities. The individual should also be a member in good standing of the BSI.
5. If the individual is a bromeliad hybridizer, he/she should be internationally recognized for excellence in one or more of the following categories:
  - i. innovation in creating bromeliad hybrids,
  - ii success in cultivation of bromeliad hybrids,
  - iii. promotion and distribution of bromeliad hybrids.
6. The individual should be generally recognized as an expert in one or more of the following aspects of bromeliads:
  - i. ecology, evolution, or taxonomy,
  - ii. cultivation or hybridization,
  - iii. display or exhibition.
7. The individual should be generally recognized for his/her generous nature in sharing his/her knowledge of bromeliads and for giving of himself/herself for the benefit of other people interested in bromeliads and for bromeliad organizations at all levels.



The Show was fantastic. There was a great variety of genera represented from people from all parts of the country. There were blooming plants and foliage plants. It would be nice to get our plants to flower when we want them to but that isn't always possible.

In an early Bromeliad Society Bulletin (Nov.-Dec. 1959), there was the following article.

## A STEP AHEAD OF MOTHER NATURE

Mulford B. Foster

Reprinted from the National Horticulture Magazine (of Washington), October 1943

Ever since time began, plants have sort of had their own idea of when to flower and fruit. Naturally, that urge to reproduce their kind has generally come after some period of cold, drought, or unusual conditions when there has been possibly some danger of a stoppage of growth or an extended rest period. Of course, if plants just grow year after year with no danger of extinction, then there would be no necessity for the developing of reproductory parts such as flowers which produce the fruit that contain the seeds of the next generation.

Time goes on and man steps into this great moving picture of life. He finds certain fruits and flowers that he consumes as food or places in a corsage for his spring bride. He likes some of them better than others for various reasons. He finds them growing wild in certain sections but wishes the whole world to know their value. He raises them by the thousands, he is a farmer; he raises them by the millions, he is a corporation.

Many years ago in the Azores where they grow pineapples in enclosures under glass, a carpenter accidentally set fire to a pile of\* shavings while working in one of the pineapple houses. To the surprise of the owner, the plants instead of being destroyed burst into flower a few weeks later, quite out of season for their regular crop. The fruit, being marketable at an off season, was readily sold and the extra profit nearly paid for the loss from the fire. From then on the natives in the Azores made a frequent practice of smoking pineapples.

About twelve years ago when Rodriguez was working in the U. S. department of Agriculture Experiment Station in Puerto Rico, he observed that one of the big pineapple growers was shipping his fruit to the American market some months in advance of the other growers. Rodriguez found that his culture was the

same as that of other growers except that each year he would erect over certain areas a cloth tent, building a smudge fire underneath for the duration of twelve hours. Flower and then fruit followed in a short period. Curiosity soon led Rodriguez to experiment with wood smoke and he found that it was the action of the ethylene gas contained in wood smoke which caused the flower bud to form within a few days after being exposed to the gas. He published these findings in January 1932.

The government experiments of forcing and hastening pineapples into fruit prematurely in Florida have been based on the findings of Rodriguez's use of ethylene gas. Although similar work has been done with acetylene gas in Hawaii by Collins (published in 1935) and in Australia by Lewcock (made known in 1937), the difference in climate and soil conditions make ethylene more effective in Florida than in Hawaii.

These facts I had been aware of through the friendship of Dr. W. C. Cooper, plant physiologist (member of the Experimental Station of the Dept. of Agriculture in Orlando, Fla.) whose interest in forcing pineapple blooms coincided with mine of getting other bromeliads to bloom prematurely. We made many experiments with bromeliads other than pineapples, such as *Aechmea*, *Vriesia*, *Billbergia* and *Quesnelia*, using the carbide method and the acetylene method (both used in Hawaii), but found that the results of ethylene were more predictable. Later we collaborated on the idea of a predictable forced bloom for a very special occasion.

In the summer of 1939 on my first plant collecting expedition into Brazil I had had the great pleasure of discovering a new bromeliad (along with many others) belonging to the genus *Aechmea*, which because it was such a striking plant of light green leaves embossed by black splotches with its flower head of orange bracts topped by white flowers, I made the request of Dr. Lyman Smith of Gray Herbarium at Harvard who was making all identifications of my collected material, to name this particularly beautiful plant for the city of Orlando, Orange County, Florida, which is my home. Although he said this was a bit irregular in the rules of botanical nomenclature, botanists of old have done it for even less appropriate reasons. Orlando, whose city and school colors are orange and white was, as Dr. Smith said, fast becoming the home of the world's largest collection of living bromeliads, my collection containing more than four hundred different species, including many of the "species novo" I have discovered in Brazil in the summer of 1939 and 1940.

I was very anxious to make public to the city of Orlando this unusual plant and chose the propitious time of the 1941 Annual Meeting of the State Horticultural Society to give out the announcement. To make complete the effectiveness of the presentation I wanted to have the plant in full bloom with its orange bracts and white flowers. So, on March 4th, six weeks before the convention with the assistance of Dr. Cooper acting as anaesthetist in this delicate operation, the ethylene gas was administered to two of these beautiful plants by placing them in a special room where a continuous flow of atmosphere of 1 part of ethylene to 1000 parts of air was kept constant for a period of twenty-four hours. Our patients were given every care and consideration and watched carefully. Suddenly during the first week in April we had the great thrill of seeing the flower head pushing up from the center of both plants. And greater was the thrill to discover on the morning of the opening day of the convention, April 15, that the flowers were actually open, which I was proud to announce to the convention that evening.

When we decided to carry out this particular experiment I thought it best to use two plants, one a mature plant that had already developed a new side shoot but which I supposed had not yet bloomed as we had just a few months previous brought it from Brazil, and the other a half-mature plant which would not ordinarily bloom until December. Apparently those plants were as anxious to show off at the convention as I was to have them, even though the mature plant (which I later found on closer observation) had already bloomed before I brought it from Brazil. Not wishing to be outdone by the younger plant, this oldster promptly proceeded to send its flower head out of the new shoot attached to its side and indeed this display was much larger and more complete than the one on the smaller plant. This urge to reproduce its kind is difficult to repress. Mother Nature will have her way.

This is only an example of what are the possibilities in forcing blooms of bromeliads. Mr. T. Ralph Robinson, president of the Florida State Horticultural Society, and formerly senior physiologist in the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, was very much impressed with the timing of our forced bloom. He suggested that when making herbarium specimens of bromeliads which had no flower at the time of collecting, the living plants could be forced and identification made, long before the normal bloom would appear. Mr. Robinson himself has done some definite work in forcing blooms, by ethylene treatment for pineapple breeding work from immature plants to hasten the making of reciprocal crosses, work that led to his suggesting the enlistment of Dr. Cooper's aid in securing bloom in time for the meeting of the Horticultural Society. He was particularly interested in the success

of this first attempt with an ornamental bromeliad, as he had invited the author to give the feature lecture at the opening meeting of the society.

Thus man adds his knowledge to the affairs of the plant world and keeps one step ahead of Mother Nature.

718 Magnolia Ave., Orlando, Fla.

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\* H. C. Adams, Nat. Geographic, Vol. LXVII - No. 1, Jan. 1935.



Robert Kopfstein's *Hechtia pretiosa*

Terrie Bert had the following advice since ethylene gas is not available to the hobbyist.

Time to fertilize. I fertilize with a slow-release pellet fertilizer (Nutricote; sold in Home Depot and other places as dynamite). Use at least a 4-month-release fertilizer. Put  $\frac{1}{2}$  - 1 teaspoon on the potting soil for terrestrials, put 2-3 pellets in some outer leaves for epiphytes.