



BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF GREATER CHICAGO

THE BSGC NEWS

March/April, 2017

President	Lori Weigerding	(630) 888-7516
Vice President	Martha Goode	(815) 459-1623
Treasurer	Paula Dering	(847) 295-2559
Secretary	OPEN	
Newsletter Editor	Steve Goode	stevegoode1@ameritech.net

WEB SITE
Webmaster

<http://bromeliad-chicago.org>
Lori Weigerding

We hope everyone has a wonderful Mother's Day. We will not have a meeting then. Our first time getting together this year will be our Show which is May 27th and 28th with set up on May 26th. Please look at your plants and see if you have any that you can repot or trim to make them show worthy. Please bring them on Friday, sometime after 10 am. As in the past there is no charge from the Garden to get in if you let them know you are working at the Bromeliad Society Show. You may drive your car to the area west of the Regestein Center and the Circle Garden and unload your plants. Afterwards, you need to move your car to the regular parking lot. If you have any questions please give Lori or me a call!

President's Column

Well this year has gotten off to a slow start for us. Other things going on we haven't had an actual meeting at the Garden this year. We will be having our show at the end of May with the Daylily and Iris Garden Club. We do need your support at the show. We need to have some plants for showing and people to sell the plants and educate the public.

We will be setting up for the show on Friday after 10AM and we need show coverage from 9:30 o'clock to 4:30 Saturday and Sunday. Sunday night of course is tear down where we have to put the room all back together. We need to coordinate having show coverage for the two days, along with help setting up and tearing down. We need to know when you'll be

available so we can put a schedule together and let you know the final outcome.

What we're asking is you to let Martha or myself know your availability to work so we can put a schedule together. You all worked hard to be able to have another show and selling the plants and educating the public is an easy job, no hard lifting! So please try to give us a span of hours that you can work so we can allow everybody a chance to work when it's most convenient for them.

Lori Weigerding

In March, Steve and I went to Singapore and Australia. We stayed at the Marina Bay Sands Hotel so we would be close to the Gardens by the Bay. We enjoyed going there again. We will present a program on our trip in the summer.



Bromeliad Tree in Darwin Botanical Garden

Bob and Lorraine of the NT Bromeliad Society of Australia were kind enough to take us on a tour of the Darwin Botanical Garden, their garden, Harry Hudson's garden and Tonia's nursery. They were very gracious hosts. It seems wherever you go you find gardeners who will share their gardens with you. The Society members go to the Botanical Garden a couple of times

a year to clean out debris in them, repot those needing it and checking to see if they are in good condition.

Bob and Lorraine lived on the Gold Coast previously where she was a member of the Bromeliad Society. Bob became a member after they moved to Palmerston. He now is an officer in the New Territories club. They live on an average size lot in a subdivision that is around 20 years old. Bob said



Lorraine's Palm Tree with Bromeliads

that he digs the holes and Lorraine puts in the plants. She has many plants in pots so she can move them around when the sun changes its angle. She also has some umbrellas up to protect some of the plants because some of the palms have a disease and are dying. She has attached some of her bromeliads to palms using liquid nails and sometimes staples.



Lorraine's amazing variety of Bromeliads

The second garden we visited was Harry Hudson's who lives way out of town. He is Bob's Brother who we first met at the BSI Conference that was held in Chicago. Harry has a large area under shade cloth. The pots are set on the ground. He doesn't really do any landscaping with bromeliads around the house.



Harry Hudson's Place



Harry Hudson's Crypts

The last garden was a nursery that Tonia does on the side called Territory Exotics and Water Gardens. She is only open to the public a few days a month. She has bromeliads planted under trees where they get a lot of leaf litter. She also had a small area under shade cloth. She would like to increase the shade cloth area.



Tonia's place



Tonia knows how to hang plants!

This time of year, we get a lot more light and realize that we need to move some plants to another location. Here is an article by Grant Tychonenko from the Central Coast Bromeliad Society Newsletter

“Light: Its importance in bromeliad culture” – Grant Tychonenko, Central Coast Bromeliad Society newsletter. Reprinted in Illawarra ‘Newslink’ October 2014.

Some growers may claim that their bromeliads may grow well because of their personally blended potting mix, or their strict fertilising regime or even because of the love they give to their plants.

I have found that although the above contribute, they play nowhere near as major role in the optimum growth of a bromeliad as light does. One of the major reasons bromeliads need light is to produce the colour in the leaves. *Hechtia texensis*, if grown in shade, stays green throughout the year; however, if it is grown in full sun it will take on a deep, blood-red colour. This usually applies to most *neoregelia* species as well. *Neoregelia cruenta*, if grown in full sun, will have shortish, fat leaves and great colouring as well; when it is grown in the shade it has long green leaves and less colour. Of course it is up to the individual on how he or she would like to grow this plant.

The bromeliad species that have visible scales – such as *Orthophytum gurkenii* and *Dyckia marnier-lapostollei* – should be grown in bright light. If they are, then the scales will be much more dense than if they are grown in shade, as some growers think they should be because of the fact that they are highly

ornamental. To find out which bromeliads can be grown in full sun ask

any members (because isn't that what the Society is all about?) or borrow books from our library (this is the reason why it's there – for research).

But books only generally tell us one place where a certain species grows in the wild. But this may not always be where they would grow to their full potential. The best way to find out is, if you have two plants of that species, to put one out in three-quarters sunlight and the other in shade, in amongst other plants (for shelter) and see which does best. If the plant in the three-quarters sun does best (say over a 6 to 12 month period) slowly increase the light level until it grows to its optimum level. This is something that not many growers do – experiment. Let's face it, it's the only way, if you can't find out from another grower or book. (You also find out how plants respond in your own special growing environment. Ed.)

Overall, I seem to think that light is the most important factor in the growth of bromeliads due to the fact that in two light extremes a bromeliad can either be knocking on heaven's door or flourishing.

So, go on, get the light level for bromeliads just right – it could help you take out Grand Champion at the next show. You never know!



On the left is Paula Dering's *Tillandsia duratii*. The plant is 30 inches long and 24 inches wide. Take care of your plants and they will bloom for you even if it takes several years or longer! Great Job!

Steve and I will be leaving Arizona soon and going back to Illinois. One of the jobs I do after we get back is to move the bromeliads out to my shade house. The plants really enjoy being outside for the summer.

If you are thinking of building a shade house. Graeme Barclay had this to say in the Nov. 2010 New Zealand Bromeliad Journal.

“What shade cloth to use?”

– Graeme Barclay

Last year I designed and constructed a new shade house, so I wanted to ensure I used the best cloth to allow me to grow well formed and colourful neos all year round. I found definitive information relating to shade cloth and bromeliads hard to find. I therefore embarked on an ‘ask-a-thon’, talking to fellow growers and conducting a survey on a bromeliad internet forum. Basically, it comes down to two main things– shade factor and cloth colour. However, common sense says there are also a number of other important considerations you need to be aware of when designing your shade house - more on that later.

STEP ONE: COLOUR

You need to select the best colour shade cloth to use for the types of bromeliads you are growing. There are a number of colours available from different sources. Here are the pros and cons from a technical point of view:

Green = Produces low levels of ‘PAR’ (PAR = Photosynthetically Active Radiation), which is the portion of the sun’s radiation spectrum that best promotes photosynthesis, thus plant growth. Reflects the green light (which is useless for plants in photosynthesis).

Black = Neutral effect on light transmission. Restricts ‘PAR’ only by size of holes in mesh, as no light passes through the mesh strands. Absorbs heat and solar radiation but reduces polarised (glare) light off plants.

White = Increases ‘PAR’ efficiency, and transmits the best balance of light colours. Optimises light diffusion and maximises yield by allowing the most light to reach the plants, for faster and bigger growth. Also reflects the most solar radiation. Can cause polarised light problems (glare) – although knitted types of cloth don’t seem to do this as much as woven types.

Red = Promotes good levels of ‘PAR’. Reduces the blue, green and yellow light and increases the red and far red light spectrum. Use for accelerated growth, early ripening, greater foliage volume and accelerated photosynthesis. However, can cause some plants to look a ‘different colour’.

Blue = Restricts 'PAR' levels.Reduces the red and far red light and increases the blue spectrum. Slows plant development, giving a more compact plant. Slows photosynthesis, delays ripening. However, can cause some plants to look a 'different colour'.

Sandstone/Beige = Allows good light transmission and 'PAR' levels and is best, especially where colour is required (eg: neos, billbergias etc) as it enhances the 'reds'. Has a lesser polarised light problem than with white, but greater than black.

So, the best colour cloth for growing colourful broms appears to be Beige/White/Black – probably in that order. Experienced growers I spoke to agreed and almost all use one or more of these colours in their own shade houses.

STEP TWO: SHADE FACTOR

Next, look at what shade factor or 'UV percentage block-out' level is best for your situation. Basically, this comes down to the size of the holes in the shade cloth – a lower percentage means larger holes and more light. My research showed that as a 'rule of thumb' the most commonly used shade factors were 30% or 50% for neos and hardy type broms, while 50% or 70% is best for vrieseas and other softer leaf genera.

STEP THREE: ASPECT

The shade house location, aspect to the north-facing and midday sun in both summer and winter; roof shape; wall height; shelter from wind; the proximity to buildings, trees, walls and high fences – are all other important factors that you need to take into account when selecting what cloth to use. The 'golden rule' is to ensure the shade house light level is not going to be adversely affected through the whole year by any of the environmental factors mentioned above. For example, if the shade house gets only morning sun and minimal midday and afternoon sun in winter – but, sun nearly all day long in summer, it may be advisable to use two layers of shade cloth in the summer, so you can remove one layer and allow as much light in as possible in winter. This would mean you need to select a lighter gauge cloth(say 30%) for two layers, rather than going for one heavy 50% -70% cloth.

Some other facts and tips:

- Always use knitted cloth, not woven. Knitted cloth won't rip and is very strong, UV stable and lasts for years.
- The higher the cloth is above the plants, the better the light diffusion (spread) and

air flow will be – which is better for growing.

- Two layers of , say, 30% cloth does not equal a 60% shade factor – it is more like 40%-50%.
- Use heavy white cloth (80%-90%) to line the inside of shade house walls to reflect extra light onto plants if required, but do not restrict air flow too much (i.e. leave gaps top and bottom).
- Use different coloured and shade factor segments of cloth over different plants if you need to – e.g. seedlings versus mature plants. Experiment over four seasons to see what works for you and your location. Ensure you design for your conditions and plants.

In the picture on the right, you will see Larry Clever's Tillandsia Tree which he made from a tree limb. If you look carefully at the right top corner, you will see two deer! I hope that they do not develop a taste for Tillandsias! Thank You, Larry for sending this wonderful picture.

Here are some bromeliad cultivation hints:

From Terrie Bert: All broms benefit from fertilizing to encourage blooming and pupping. Add a few pellets of slow release fertilizer such as Osmocote between the leaves.

From Larry Giroux: Put your plant for the show in a standard plastic green pot or terracotta. You can clean a terracotta pot with bleach or vinegar Try to trim the leaves as close to the Show date as possible.



A friend mentioned he used his wife's cool clothing steamer for his tillandsias.

Don't forget to renew your membership now, if you haven't already.

Bromeliad Society of Greater Chicago Membership Application

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