



BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF GREATER CHICAGO

THE BSGC NEWS

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Lori Weigerding

At the last meeting of the year, Steve and Martha showed the BSI media program on *Aechmea*. Herb Plever, the Newsletter editor of the New York Bromeliad Society had compiled it. Martha did a little research on the *Aechmea* genus.

The *Aechmea* genus can be found throughout a large range of habitats in Central and South America. Many of them develop berries after the flowers have faded which are edible. Some are very cold sensitive such as *Aechmea allenii*, *biflora* and *chantinii* while others such as *Aechmea bromelifolia*, *caudata*, and *distichantha* can withstand drought and frost.

Many are named after people, Bert is a hybrid named after Mulford Foster's son. *Aechmea mulfordii* is a species named for the "father of Bromeliads", The Mulford Foster Best in Show for Horticulture is awarded in BSI Shows. *Aechmea racinae* is a species named for the wife of Mulford. It flowers at Christmastime.

Aechmea andersonii is named for John Anderson of Corpus Christi, Texas. He built several greenhouses and engineered their systems. He was also known as an auctioneer at BSI Conferences that kept us entertained. There is a cultivar of *pedicillata* which John named for his wife Nelwyn. *Aechmea* 'Morris Henry

Hobbs was named for an artist in Louisiana who also loved growing bromeliads. The Morris Henry Hobbs best in Show Artistic award is awarded at BSI judged shows.

Aechmea fasciata is one of the most widespread and well known bromeliads. I had one for several years and didn't get it to bloom so I took it to a meeting where Paula won it in the raffle. A few years later she got it to bloom. She has recently acquired one that is past blooming and will try drilling it to see if she can get it to produce pups. One hybrid of a cross between *fasciata* and *chantinii* is "Fascini" which produces a carmine-red flower spike.

Aechmea 'Friederike' is a patented cultivar that was developed through tissue culture at the Corn Bak Nursery. It is identical to 'Fascini' except having smooth spineless leaf edges. My husband took it to an event to be one of the silent auction items. Our son who also attended the event didn't realize Steve had donated it so he made a bid and won. He knew his Mom loves bromeliads.

Aechmea chantinii is very popular and widespread among growers. It has many cultivars. Some of these listed in the Bromeliad Cultivar Registry are; 'Amazonica', 'Black', 'Dwarf', 'Grey Ghost', 'Samurai', 'Stripes on Stripes' and 'Vista'. We know that Samurai was a tissue cultured plant that came from Japan but we don't know when or from whom. It was on Nat DeLeon's Miami nursery list in 1982. Originally it was thought that the cultivar 'Shogun' was from Japan but later it was said that it probably was not. It was available from Miami nurseryman Ervin Wurthman at the WBC in New Orleans in 1986 for \$100.



Aechmea 'Friederike' variegated Entered by Ward McCrory
1999 Mothers Day Show, BSCF

From www.fcbs.org

The species *mariae-regina* is endemic to Central America. It is one of the few bromeliads that is dioecious which means that there are male and female plants.

One of the unusual leaf forms of *Aechmea* is *tayoensis* which comes from the low mountain rainforest of Amazonia. I have tried growing it but haven't had any luck.



Aechmea tayoensis from www.fcbs.org



Anne's *Aechmea* 'Perez'

If you have started thinking about the Show next year (July 14&15, 2018) here is some advice about securing your tillandsia. The article was found in the Bromeliad Guild of Tampa Bay's October 2016 Newsletter written by Jay Thurrott (formally BSI President) of the Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society.

Did "Ya ever wonder?"

Q. Tillandsias always look great when they're mounted on driftwood and their roots grow around and over the wood to securely anchor them. Whenever I buy a nice Tillandsia and set it on driftwood, the roots don't "grow in" the way I see them on pieces of wood in Bromeliad shows. What am I doing wrong?

A. There are several possible reasons why you are having this problem and, in a fine bureaucratic Tradition, we will answer your question with a question:

1. Is the Tillandsia that you purchased a young plant or a mature plant? Remember that the roots on these plants don't serve to absorb moisture or nutrients like a typical houseplant. Most members of the genus Tillandsia only produce roots when they are young...and, if you think about it for a minute, this makes sense. These plants are epiphytes and only use their roots as holdfasts to anchor them to a tree or rock surface. Once the young plant attaches itself adequately to the surface, why should it produce more roots? If the roots don't do a good enough job, the plant falls to the ground and, at this point the last thing it needs is more roots – it probably won't survive anyway. If they work as intended, the plant is anchored in position for life and can put its energy into maturing, flowering, and producing seeds. So...back to the question at hand – if you are going to mount a bromeliad on driftwood, start with a young plant.
2. Have you been securely fastening your Tillandsias to the driftwood? Unless the young plant is tightly fastened to the wood (no "wobble factor" allowed) it will not produce the roots you are looking for. There are many ways to do this. You can try one of a number of types of glue on the driftwood and then hold the plant in position until the glue sets. You may also use wire (please no bare copper wire though – this may kill the plant) to anchor the plant...or twine...or a heavy weight (if the plant is mashed flat – use a lighter weight next time). The main goal is to hold the plant in a fixed position long enough until the roots form and take over for the glue, wire or twine. Then you can remove these aids and the plant will look like it grew onto your wood all by itself.
3. One last point – if you have a difficult time keeping your Tillandsias looking nice as individual plants, you will probably have just as difficult a time keeping them looking nice when they are on driftwood. Just because some

people call these plants "air plants" doesn't mean that they can get along without proper light levels, proper watering, proper air movement and everything else that goes into good culture of plants in this genus. That seashell on the refrigerator magnet with a Tillandsia glued inside is not going to thrive on the side of your refrigerator – unless you keep your refrigerator outside in a greenhouse. Article by Jay Thurrott, Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society newsletter. July 2000 issue.

Another article about tillandsias was found in the Saddleback Bromeliad Society's October 2007 Newsletter.

Caring for Tillandsia Clumps by Len Colgan

“In the common parlance of Tillandsia taxonomists, there are the lumpers and the splitters, By these terms, it is meant to distinguish those who always look for similarities between two plants under investigation (hoping to prove they are the same species or subspecies or linked varieties) from those who always look for differences, in the belief or hope that one of them is new.

“However, in a different context, the language of mere collectors like myself involves the ‘clumpers’ and the dividers’. The first term is commonly used to distinguish those tillandsia (and other genera) collectors who prefer to have their plants form large clumps rather than dividing them up on a regular basis. Those who have inspected my collection will definitely agree that I am a clumper.

However, there are inherent risks in such an approach. When asked what are the more important aspects in successfully growing mounted tillandsias. I always respond with the following five necessities:

- Good fresh air movement
- Good light
- Good fresh air movement
- Regular watering
- Good fresh air movement

There are a number of species that I encourage to form large clumps. These include the common *T. aeranthos*, *T. bergeri*, *T. crocata*, *T. ionantha*, *T. ixioides*, *T. jucunda*, *T. magnusiana*, *T. paleacea*, *T. recurvifolia* (including var. *subsecundifolia*), *T. stricta*, *T. tenuifolia*, and *T. X floridiana*, etc. These are invariably attached to natural cork bark and hung from mesh inside shade cloth covered frames. In one situation however, tillandsias are hung from both sides of a common shade cloth support and it is here that problems have arisen. At the end of the last wet winter, the back one third or many large tillandsia clumps in this situation were found to be dead. I had to remove large dead sections of *T. Aeranthos*, *T. Bergeri*, *T. Stricta*, etc.



Although one of the above necessities, namely regular watering, had been available, it proved that adversely, good light and (most importantly) good fresh air movement were missing. Clearly, all of the plants at the back part of the clumps-facing the shade cloth with plants on the other side were deprived of vital natural light and air and so rotted. No such problems existed for individual plants or sparsely growing specimens. What should we do to avoid this? Assuming you still wish to create large tillandsia clumps, I recommend.

from www.fcbs.org

- Before the wet season arrives, carefully remove old plants and leaves, especially near the center of the clump.
- Place the clump in a situation that maximizes the light and air movement from all directions.

In the future, all my clumps will be prepared for the wet season.

At Pinterest they always have some new ideas on displaying tillandsias. One I hadn't seen before was putting a tillandsia in a colorful whisk that you can find at the dollar store.

At the Southwest Bromeliad Guild, I saw the following and thought it would be good for a tillandsia instead of a cryptanthus.



Picture taken by Martha at Southwest Bromeliad Guild Auction.

If you go to the following you can find some fun facts about pineapples.
https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/facts-about-pineapples_n_4726366.html

