



BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF GREATER CHICAGO

# THE BSGC NEWS

JULY, 2018

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Lori Weigerding

The next meeting is August 12<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in the Lakeside room which is in the visitor center at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

## President's Column

Well we were off to a slow start on Saturday for the show because of the on again off again rain! However, we made up for it on Sunday! We made \$217.54 after all our expenses. That's pretty good in this economy.

I want to thank everyone who helped with the show! Without you, there wouldn't be one. I also want to thank Russell's again for listening to our concerns and the excellent plant types they sent!

We still have quite a few plants left to raffle off at our next meeting. We'll be meeting August 12, 2018 at 2pm. Hope to see you there!

Lori Weigerding



Til. Googly Eyes



Til. 'Big Boy'

We will use the plants that were not sold and mount them at our meeting. Then we will raffle them off. Please bring something which we can use to mount them on: driftwood, grapewood, cork, rock, seashells, coral or whatever else you can think of.

Many of the people buying plants at our show asked us about fertilizing tillandsias. I have included several responses to this question from various sources.

In "Bromeliads A Cultural Manual" by the Bromeliad Society International, it says that tillandsias will survive without fertilizer but will grow more slowly and won't flower as often. They suggest feeding once a month using 1/4 tsp./gal of water of fertilizer once a month. If you do this in the water you soak them in that takes care of two jobs at one time. They also say that if you are going on vacation if you place the plants in a shady place and soak them one hour that will keep them hydrated for up to three weeks.



Anne's Neo. 'Christopher Robin'



Martha's X Neophytum 'Cosmic Blast'

The following information is from the October 2014 Journal of the Bromeliad Society of New Zealand. He says that you can use a granule form for potted 'green leaf' tillandsias at 20% of the recommended dosage. All tillandsias feed through the leaves and some through their roots as well. Over fertilising can damage your plant. It is better to use a liquid feed with a weaker solution more often. They are best used in spring and summer. They will not absorb much in the way of nutrients in cold months.

In Paul Isley's book, **Tillandsia**, he discusses fertilization. He says that a consistent fertilization program during the warm months will produce larger, more robust plants when combined with strong light and frequent thorough watering. For optimum balanced growth, he suggest a ratio of N (2): P(1): K (3). Potassium and phosphorus are important in enhancing flowering and seed setting, help the plant to resist disease, promote root growth and strengthen cell walls.



Paula's Tillandsia duratii



Anne's mounted harisii, zebrina & caput medusae

In the June 2017 Bromeliad Society-South Africa, I found the following article:

### **Fertilising your Bromeliads**

We received some interesting input from our member Craig Nicholas in Durban. If you ever venture that way, do organise a visit to his sprawling nursery Kentia Palm Grove, you will not be disappointed. He also does mail orders.

Craig Nicholas, Durban: I have been using slow release fertilizer similar to Osmocote called Planticote for about a year now on my broms. I am only now learning quite a bit from the results, such as how many round pellets to use depending on the variety of bromeliad. At the beginning the thought was to put in a lot of pellets around each bromeliad, but because the pellets are so small it is easy to want to put too many in a pot. This has resulted in some bromeliads becoming too green with stretched out leaves. I have found that with some varieties it is best to not feed or only put maybe small amounts, eg. 5 or six pellets in the pot.





*Neoregelia* 'Amazing Grace' which has been overfed. (from ELBS newsletter)



*Neoregelia* 'Amazing Grace' in all its glory!

A few examples above:

Be careful with overfeeding lineated varieties such as *Neoregelia* 'Amazing Grace'. You end up losing the great form and shape of the plant as well as the boldness of the lineation. *N.* 'Amazing Grace' should be grown hard for best character. I also like *Neoregelia* 'Shamrock' for its compact shape and markings. I overfed a couple of offsets and they grew up a bit bigger with loss of form as well as colour intensity. I like to see a plant that is grown to its best shape and colour that truly represents that specific variety.



*Neoregelia* 'Domino' overfed.



*Neoregelia* . 'Domino'

Some miniature varieties, if overfed also lose form and colour e.g Neoregelia 'Domino'. It is best to grow it hard or with few pellets. Other blotched types such as N. 'Pheasant' will always look better with little to no food.

Marmorated foliage will also be affected and faded out by overfeeding. Best to grow these varieties hard with none to very little feeding.

Albomarginated neoregelia can get a fair amount of food. Just remember, too much may not affect the colouring of these albo types, but some will lose their form.

Neoregelia - variegated: In general give mild feeding, however some food is good due to the fact that variegated plants are weaker due to lower levels of chlorophyll.

Banded neoregelia such as N. 'Hannibal Lector', N. 'Shockwave', N. 'Touchdown', N. 'High Voltage' etc. can take more feeding while still retaining their bold markings.

Large neoregelia types such as N. carcharodon 'Tiger', N. 'Spines', N. 'Rainbow' etc can also take more feed.

Although if you really want that hard form and toothy look, medium to smaller doses of food will ensure that look.

Billbergia: –These do not respond well to feeding. The softer leaf varieties which are heavily mottled can lose character and boldness of blotching although the plants do still look healthy. Eg: Billbergia 'Connie Tim' when grown hard, is shorter and the boldness and roundness of the white blotching is striking, while taller well fed plants don't have that same intensity of markings. The heavier thorned, thicker leaved billbergia seem to be able to be fed more.

Alcantarea: – can be well fed with Osmocote pellets as well as liquid fertilizer such as Multifeed. They still need to be grown in optimal light for best results.

I also want to add that another alternative to slow release pellets would be foliar feeding such as Multifeed 2:1:2 which is mixed with water and can be either used with a sprayer or drench using a watering can. This can be done once every 3-4 weeks. This will give the bromeliads a boost with lower concentration of food which is unlikely to change their leaf form and colour but will help with vigour and contribute to healthy foliage.

In conclusion, I think the aim to feeding should be to give the plant a slight boost, especially when younger to get it to a growth stage where the plant can kick on by itself. There are however some varieties which do respond well to more food such as alcantarea, vriesea, guzmania etc. You still want to grow your plants in optimum light conditions, especially when feeding as a plant grown in too lower light plus feeding can result in over elongation of the leaves. An overfed plant may also become a weak plant, thinner flower spikes and poorly shaped offsets which may take two generations of pupping to get those pups back to their true form and

colour. For me personally, plant vigour is important and what one must aim for is a healthy plant which represents the true nature, form and colour of the species or hybrid.

### **More fertilising comments .....**

- Lyn Wegner: My fertilising 'efforts!' - I don't spend too much time fertilising my bromeliads but it has been my intention for some time to pull up my socks and make more effort! I need to experiment with 2 of the same plant in the same position, feeding only 1 and monitoring the difference if any. I just want healthy plants with good form, shape and colour. Currently I add a few granules of Vitaboost either to the top of the soil mix if I am just tidying a plant or when repotting I place a few granules at the root level. I probably use about half a tablespoon. I especially like to add the fertiliser to my vriesea, nidularium and guzmania. I sprinkle it on the soil of my cryptanthus and alternate with Epsom Salts. I also try to fertilise the crypts monthly with SeaGro when I water. What you put in is what you get out! I need to make time to fertilise!

- A member advised he used to use Osmocote but has switched to Avison which was previously known as Bounceback.

- Another comment..... Osmocote is a bead of concentrated fertilizer with a ceramic coating - when it gets warm and wet, some of this fertilizer leaches out and can be taken up by the roots of plants - so - you need an active root system and water wetting the potting mix. This is fine for small pups and seedlings, which make roots to establish - but after that, the tank takes over the role of nutrient absorption. Some people put a teaspoon of Osmocote on the top of the potting soil, but unless the watering reaches this, it will always remain dry. If you do buy Osmocote, then it must be mixed in with the potting mix when potting up new pups ( 1 heaped teaspoon per 15cm pot) - their roots will absorb this nutrient and use it to establish and grow - it only lasts about 6 - 9 months, once exhausted, the mature plant will then colour up. I pot up with an enriched potting mix that includes some well rotted chicken manure and also Bounce Back/Avison pelletized chicken manure - that is to give the new pups or seedlings a kick start - once depleted, I feed with a dilute inorganic, soluble fertlliser, like Phostrogen or Multifeed, drenched over the plants with a watering can.



Priscilla's cryptanthus hybrid



Guzmania that Lori won in the raffle.