



BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF GREATER CHICAGO

THE BSGC NEWS

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Lori Weigerding

Steve and I got back to Arizona September 13th. They have had a really brutal summer. The official rainfall was only 1". There were 53 days of 110 or above with 28 night temperatures of 90 or above. Many cacti and aloes didn't survive. The bromeliads I have here did fine, dyckia, hechtia and puya. Some are on a drip irrigation system and some are in pots. The puya bloomed at the end of August when it usually blooms in July. The week of October 18th is the first week we didn't have any 100°s. I joined the Michigan Society Zoom meeting and they were talking about bringing their plants in because of a frost warning.



Dyckia



Puya



Hechtia

President's Column

Well winter is sneaking in on us. Days seem to be fallish, but the evenings are darn right cold! I'm sure all your plants are inside, snug with you, happy to be nice and warm. Please remember that with all that snuggling your plants will need some extra care. Occasional misting to add moisture to the plant will help it continue to thrive over the winter.

I hope that you all are doing well with what's going on in the world. It is a hard time these days getting around, shopping, etc. I pray that soon things will get back to what was "normal" months ago. Unfortunately it may take awhile to get there. Take care of yourselves, family and friends.

Wishing you all safe and happy holidays!

Lori Weigerding

I enjoyed this poem from the May 1998 Bromeliad Society of San Francisco Newsletter.

Ten Little bromeliads
Dr. Louis Wilson

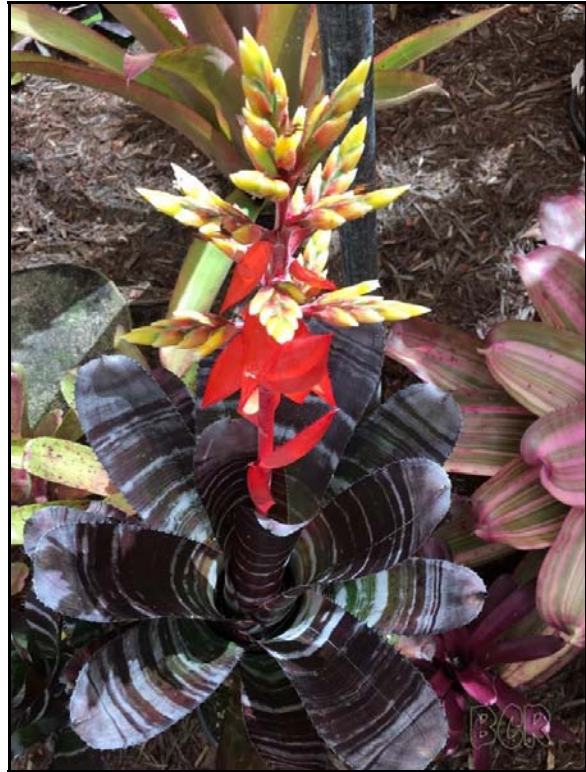
Ten little bromeliads placed throughout the yard,
I watered and tendered with the highest regard.
High up in a tree a neoregelia looked fine,
When drilled by a woodpecker, that left me with nine.
In full sun a dyckia I spotted too late,
Was nibbled by wood rats, so now I have eight.
Eating a vriesea's pups, rabbits sent them to heaven;
No new buds to grow up, there were exactly seven.
A raccoon, when he's thirsty, a red neo he picks,
by clawing out the center he left only six.
Fire ants often build a large mound to survive,
by burying a cryptanthus they left me with five.
A nidularium's leaves were missing by the score,
Grasshoppers come in groves reducing them to four.
To check on a tillandsia I raced to a tree,
But a squirrel beat me to it leaving me three.
Spying a downed aechmea, its injuries left me blue,
Uprooted by an armadillo, now I was down to two.

I dashed to check the ninth, planted under the sun,
But a deer ate it up, leaving me with one
To my lanai I retreated to watch my cats have fun,
Their play killed my “bill”, so now I had none.
I could have gotten angry and evened up the score,
But there in my shadehouse I’ve got over 5000 more.



Three Aechmea “Grey Ghost”

These two pictures are from the BSI Bromeliad Cultivar Register.



Aechmea “Black Zombie”

I thought the information in the Nov./Dec., 1984 BSI Journal by Mark Dimmitt on tillandsias was interesting. (abridged)

Growing Them Big and Fast

I firmly believe that the reputation of tillandsias for being slow and/or difficult is caused by a failure to recognize their differences from other bromeliads. There is no trick to growing them. If they are given their three main requirements – light, humidity, and circulation, healthy plants are guaranteed. The growth rate is proportional to their nutrition: they respond to generous feeding. I fertilize every week with 20-20-20 plus micronutrients at one-half to one-fourth the

recommended strength. Full strength doesn't harm them, but I don't think it does any more good. The accompanying photos show how fast some species can grow under these optimum conditions. Ages given are from a single mature rosette. The only significant problem I have had with this forcing program is that during dark or damp weather the plants may become covered with algae. If noticed early it is easily controlled with a copper bordeaux spray (without oil); the copper doesn't harm even tiny seedlings. Recurrence can be prevented by cutting back on watering. If you delay treatment until the algae spreads, the plants will be marred because the clinging dead algae is as ugly as live algae.



Tillandsia duratii var *saxatilis* with 17 spikes, about 8 years old.

The heavy clump is wired internally to hold it together. From the Nov/Dec 1984 BSI Journal.

If you want to grow large clumps, it's necessary to do it fast. The old, original stems which hold the clump together eventually decay, and the clump falls apart. Of course there is an upper limit — if you water and feed so heavily that the center of the clump stays wet, decay is accelerated. There is also natural variation in this trait within and between species (more about this in a future article).

In the noncaulescent species most of the growth occurs in the first three to five years, starting with a single mature plant. A healthy tillandsia after flowering typically produces three to five pups which flower the next year and also multiply three- to five-fold. (If only your savings account did the same!) As the clump becomes crowded, the number of pups decreases to one or two, and some of these get smothered by adjacent growth. *Tillandsia caput-medusae*, for example, reaches its maximum size in six or seven

years under optimum conditions. After that the clump becomes denser as more and ever smaller plants crowd the center of the clump, but the clump diameter doesn't increase. I have a 15-year-old clump which is now strangling itself and breaking apart.

Caulescent species such as *T. duratii* (fig. 2) and *T. aernanthes* don't ever slow down because the pups remain well spaced and do not compete. These species enlarge until the center rots or they break apart under their own weight.



T. meridionalis at 6 years.

It is slower growing than most, but will probably make a large clump in time From the Nov/Dec 1984 BSI Journal

More Specifics on Culture

It's difficult to provide specific details on cultural conditions because they vary among species and with the grower's climate. Light is the trickiest to quantify. Give them as much light as they can take without burning; one must learn the limits from experience. In the U.S. outside the arid Southwest about 50% of full sun is good. On the immediate coast and in very humid areas many species enjoy full sun. The higher the humidity, the more light and heat they can withstand. Beware of the exceptions such as *T. butzii* which requires rather shady conditions.

Humidity should be maintained above 50%. Few tillandsias will grow well if it is chronically less than this, especially at high temperatures. Air circulation should be provided by fans kept on 24 hours a day. At the minimum the circulation plus humidity should be such that when the plants are watered in the morning, they are dry by mid-afternoon. I have enough fans in my greenhouse to create a breeze that keeps leaf tips in constant motion.

I did not mention temperature among the major requirements because it is rather irrelevant. While cloud forest species such as *T. macdougallii* cannot tolerate temperatures above 90° F (32° C), most tillandsias can take 100° or more if the humidity is also high. The same species grow well at daytime temperatures in the 60°s. Night temperatures are even less important, except that most species cannot tolerate frost. I am growing tillandsias in a heated greenhouse at 55° F minimum and in an unheated one with winter lows in the 30°s; there is no noticeable difference in growth rates in the two houses. Presumably a 20 to 30 degree day-night differential is desirable, since tillandsias are CAM* plants.



T. paleacea, 8 years old.
This species breaks up easily, so it does not hang well.
From the Nov/Dec 1984 BSI Journal

Some of the Argentine tillandsias are another exception to the indifference to temperature. *Tillandsia aeranthos* and *T. duratii* rarely bloom in my heated greenhouse; they apparently require a cool winter to trigger flowering.

The first three of the following tables summarize my observations and opinions respecting the suitability of various species for being grown as clumps or as single specimens, and their appearance when blooming. The fourth table lists species recommended for cloudy climates.

Table 1 – Species which make large specimen clumps quickly.

Tillandsia aeranthos	P,B	T. funebris	
T. albida	P	T. geminiflora	
T. bergeri	P	T. incarnata	
T. bulbosa	P	T. ionantha	
T. butzii		T. ixioides	
T. caput-medusae	P	T. juncea	
T. circinnata (T. paucifolia)	P	T. meridionalis	B
T. disticha (non-stoloniferous forms)		T. paleacea	P
T. duratii	P,B	T. schiedeana	
T. fasciculata		T. stricta	B
T. filifolia		T. xiphioides	
		Vriesea espinosae	

Table 2 – Slower growing, but also make large clumps.

Tillandsia albertiana	B	T. crocata	
T. argentina		T. didisticha	
T. araujei	P,B	T. pruinosa	P
T. baileyi and pseudobaileyi		T. purpurea	P
T. cacticola		T. seleriana	P
T. caerulea		T. straminea	
T. concolor			

P = particularly beautiful as large clumps

B = spectacular in mass bloom

Table 3 – Best grown as single plants or small clumps of 3-5.

Tillandsia argentea	T. secunda
T. brachycaulis	T. streptophylla
T. gardneri	T. tectorum
T. hildae	T. tricolor
T. juncea	T. xerographica
T. mima	
T. punctulata	

Table 4 – These xerophytic tillandsias do well under darker, moister conditions than most other species, and are recommended for cloudy climates.

Tillandsia aeranthos and *bergeri*
T. butzii
T. filifolia
T. macdougallii and relatives

T. circinnata (*T. paucifolia*)
T. seleriana

[This article was originally prepared by Dr. Dimmitt as part of his talk given at the 1984 World Bromeliad Conference.]



Billbergia "Spider"



Dyckia "Spider Web"

These two pictures are from the BSI Bromeliad Cultivar Register.

We were sad to hear of the passing of Jay Thurrott, a past BSI President and a really nice guy. I found this article that he wrote and was published in the Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society Newsletter in December of 1996.

“Nice Plants”
by Jay Thurrott

I have been told that it's a natural tendency in people to want to place everything into nice, neat categories. That may be true. I know that I tend to do this, although my categories may not always match those of other people. For example, I place automobiles in only two categories: 1. Those that have features that annoy the heck out of me, and 2. Those that have fewer annoyances. Things that have to be done around the house (chores) fall into three categories: 1. Things that I look forward to and are fun to do; 2. Things that are not fun, but aren't particularly unpleasant; and 3. Things to be dreaded and avoided at all cost.

Despite other, more scientific groupings which have been established and revised through the years, I place the bromeliads in my collection into three categories. I should caution that these are my categories only. Don't expect to see reference to these in any of the more scholarly books on the classification of bromeliads.

1. “Nice Plants”

These are bromeliads that have particularly endearing qualities for me for reasons other than sentimental ones (the memories associated with some plants may make them very special to me, but doesn't necessarily make them “nice plants”). Often that means that they don't die easily or they don't snatch my clothes and tear big holes in them whenever I pass by. Most of my “nice plants” are ones that bloom reliably and require little or no care to stay looking nice. These are the plants that grasshoppers seem to pass over in favor of the more expensive, rarer species. That's not to say that some of the rarer plants are not “nice plants” In fact many of the less common species fit my criteria quite nicely. For example, to me, *Hechtia guatemalensis* is probably the closest thing to a silk plant I'll ever find- this plant is truly carefree! It requires no watering (other than rain), no fertilizer, and bugs don't eat it. It sits on my deck in full sun all year and rewards me by developing a nice rosy blush in its leaves each winter. This is a “nice plant.” In my yard, *Aechmea orlandiana* is another “nice plant.” The foliage always appears quite striking and I just don't seem to have problems with it. I have a large patch of *Ananas bracteatus* in my yard that I totally ignore, yet each year I have at least one bright red pineapple rising out of a clump. I like that- this also is a “nice plant.”

2. “Pain-in-the-neck Plants”-

These are the plants that require an extraordinary amount of care to keep looking nice. They can be exceptionally beautiful plants when grown well, but their leaves are like candy to chewing insects. They’re sensitive to too much sun, they don’t like too little sun. It’s too hot for them..it’s too cold. If they could speak these plants would be world-class whiners. I place many of the guzmanias in this category and a few neoregelias (neos just don’t do well in my yard). They can look nice, and I guess that’s why I put up with them, but sometimes I find myself wishing I had never begun this relationship.

3. “Bad Plants”-

These are bromeliads that produce a bloom that I consider unattractive or they have a sloppy growth habit. This category also includes plants that die despite my best intentions and imagined good care. “Bad plants” have no particular redeeming value to me. Some of these not only bite when you brush by them- they draw blood! I consider a number of the aechmeas to be “bad plants” and I’ve taken a dislike to a few vrieseas ((I find this curious because, generally, I place vrieseas in the “nice plant” category) but I especially dislike *Aechmea Burgundy* and *A. Pineliana*. I don’t like their looks, their spines seem to especially bother me and their inflorescences are hardly worth writing home about.

The funny thing about my method of classification of bromeliads is that some of my “nice plants” may fit your criteria for “bad plants” and vice versa. I am sure that everyone has their own favorites. By the way, I also reserve the right to move plants from one category to another at any time as my tastes change That’s my prerogative...and that’s a lot of the fun in growing bromeliads!

Editor’s Note: In also being a great guy, Jay Thurrott was a BSI JUDGE!



Cryptanthus 'Autumn Tones' photo by Bill Paterson



Cryptanthus “Bonfire”

These two pictures are from the BSI Bromeliad Cultivar Register.

Unfortunately, the taxonomists have their own system. I found out the Far North Coast Bromeliad Study Group had just put together a booklet explaining the Bromeliad Genera. It is “Bromeliaceae, A Layman’s Guide to the Bromeliad Family and Genera” compiled by Drew Maywald, and edited by Ross Little. Because the post is very slow between Australia and the U.S, it took two months to receive it. I will review the booklet in the next Newsletter after I have time to read it thoroughly. There are eight sub families in the Bromeliaceae plant group.

Since we are officially in the fall season and Halloween is coming up quickly, I have included the following pictures of bromeliads which I found on the BCR (Bromeliad Cultivar Register)



Neoregelia “Halloween”



These two pictures are from the BSI Bromeliad Cultivar Register.

Our little girl (Dad, I'm 43!) Sent us a link for a pineapple pattern for carving a pumpkin! She sent me the following link in case you are interested in carving a pineapple on a craft pumpkin.

https://www.hgtv.com/content/dam/documents/HGTV/2020/8/Original_Maggie-Miller-HGTV-pineapple-pumpkin-pdf.pdf

(You will have to copy and paste this into your browser)



Vriesea "Full Moon" also from the BSI Bromeliad Cultiver Register.

The full moon from the Bromeliad Cultivar Register. It is fun to note that this year we have a "Blue Moon" for Halloween. The lunar period is about 29.5 days. So you can't have a Blue Moon in February!