

# The Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society

Next meeting Sunday, January 12, 2014 1:30pm.  
Colony in the Wood – club house  
4000 S. Clyde Morris Blvd., Port Orange 32129

January 2014

## Happy New Year 2014!

**President – Jay Thurrott 386/761-4804**  
**Vice President – Bill Hazard 386/882-3850**  
**Secretary – Jillian Ragia 386/801-2500**  
**Treasurer – Eve Krauth 386/763-2084**

**Last month's meeting –** was our annual Christmas party, and what a party it was! In addition to the outstanding array of food (thank you once again – Francisco - FECBS *chef extraordinaire!*), the centerpiece competition once again demonstrated what an artistically inclined group we have. This year there were even more centerpieces displayed than last year and I don't know how our 'celebrity' judge (Bud Martin of Blossom World Bromeliads) could pick from among such a group of beautiful entries, but he did and Ann Alberti was the winner of this year's competition. Congratulations Ann!



Ann Alberti's winning centerpiece entry

This meeting was also a bittersweet one, as it was the last meeting conducted by president Rick Ryals. I don't think anyone will disagree when I say that Rick has done an outstanding job over the past year!



Outgoing president Rick showing Mary McBride's Christmas gnome.



**This month's meeting –**

Dr. Teresa Cooper of the University of Florida will be joining us to bring

everyone up to speed on the status of the “evil weevil” project – the search for a control for this pest that is threatening Florida’s native bromeliads...and your own bromeliad collections. The Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies has been instrumental in funding research on this invasive insect and has recently recognized the efforts of Gainesville’s Al Muzzel by naming the council’s weevil fund in his memory.



Weevils have been known to attack without warning, so monitor your collections carefully and keep your pets and small children out of harm’s way!

### January in the bromeliad garden

Well, we’ve made it through November and December without any serious threats from cold weather, but there is still a very good chance that we’ll see at least one day in January or February when we hear our favorite weather-man say “better bring in the cats and dogs and cover your plants tonight!” Be ready when a frost or freezing weather is expected because, no matter what you may hear to the contrary – there are very few bromeliads that can survive more than a few hours of temperatures below freezing. We’ve talked about it before, but you need to have a plan for protecting those cold-sensitive varieties and you need to be prepared to implement it on short notice. That plan can be anything from: the “do nothing” approach and replacement of those plants lost to the cold, to bringing your entire collection indoors until the threat of freezing temperatures passes. Most likely, you will have something between these two extremes

in mind. Whatever plan fits your situation best and you are most comfortable with is what you should follow. Let’s all hope for a mild winter!

### FECBS goes to the movies!

It was really nice to see so many of our members at Hedy and John Quirk’s screening of “Spies Beneath Berlin” - an excellent documentary of a secret intelligence operation during the cold-war that John had a role in. Exciting stuff and a fascinating show! Thank you both for inviting the club and for the delicious food that you provided... and John, you look like a real movie star on screen!



Hedy and John’s Christmas lights are reflected in a pond on the lower left of the picture. Photo by Calandra Thurrott

### Plant Profile – *Billbergia saundersii*

Our Winter months are the time to look for blooms in *Billbergias*. These blooms have often been described as some of the most beautiful of all of the bromeliads but unfortunately, *Billbergia* blooms are also among the most short-lived of all of the bromeliad Genera.

*Billbergias* are sort of the “sleepers” of the bromeliad world. Many varieties, and especially species, do little to attract your eye until they begin to bloom – and then, you just can’t look away!





Pot of *Billbergia saundersii* in bloom

One such *Billbergia* that is often overlooked until it produces its dramatic and colorful display is *Billbergia saundersii*. Can't find it listed in your bromeliad books? That may be because it was formerly called *Billbergia chlorosticta* – named for the spots that are usually present on the leaves. Why do the names keep changing on some bromeliads? You'll have to ask someone far wiser than me, but you learn to live with this minor annoyance if you grow these plants for any length of time.

Like most *Billbergias*, the leaves of *B. saundersii* are arranged in an upright, tubular rosette – and in this case, the leaves also end in a sharply tapered point. Roughly 12 to 18 inches in height, *B. saundersii* won't take up a lot of room in your garden, although it is so prolific that in a few seasons a single plant will quickly become a large clump of plants...and when they all bloom at the same time, the effect is quite dramatic!

The cold hardiness that this plant has demonstrated makes it ideally suited for the central and northern Florida landscape where it can survive very low temperatures, high temperatures, low light conditions or full sun – and still look good. Not many bromeliads can make this claim! This plant has been around so long and is so often seen in gardens that it is widely believed to be a Florida native plant, but alas, there are no native *Billbergias* in Florida...or anywhere else in North America for that matter. Rather, *B. saundersii* is a Brazilian native species.

This plant is also epiphytic, which means that if you are looking for a candidate bromeliad to mount on your favorite piece of driftwood or coral rock, look no further! I have seen some very effective displays of *B. saundersii* mounted on coquina rock that gather top ribbons at bromeliad shows year after year.



Flower of *B. saundersii*. Note the green petals edged in blue and the brightly colored bracts.

Whether your label says '*Billbergia chlorosticta*' or '*Billbergia saundersii*', this plant is certainly a worthy addition to any bromeliad collection and to any landscape in our area!

### **Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies**

By now you should all have received your copy of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies (FCBS) newsletter and you will have noted that the Council is going paperless for 2014. This was an excellent issue and Karen Andreas, editor, certainly deserves kudos for her work on it. Please note that from now on the FCBS newsletter will be posted online at the Council website ([fcbs.org](http://fcbs.org)) only. This will not only save the Council continued printing and mailing costs (the major expense each year), but will also mean that photos will now be able to be added to that publication! However, you will no longer have it mailed to you – so, if you do not have access to a computer and still wish to receive the quarterly newsletter, you

will have to ask your local society to furnish a copy. See Jillian and leave your name with her if you don't have computer access. That will tell us how many copies to print and hand-deliver at the FECBS meeting following the posting of the quarterly Council newsletter.

**Birthdays for January:**

This month's birthdays:

*Virginia Dornbach*

*Erna Jones*

*Anthony Little*

Happy Birthday all!

**Looking ahead:**

**January 11, 2014**

Quarterly meeting of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies – hosted by the Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society

**February 28-March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014**

Bromeliad Society of South Florida show and sale at Fairchild Botanical Gardens, Coral Gables.

**March 22-23, 2014**

Bromeliad Society of Broward County 'Garden Fest' - Volunteer Park, located at 12050 W. Sunrise Blvd, Plantation Fl. 33323. Call 954/530-0076 for more details.

**March 28-30, 2014**

Everybody's Flower Show at the Ocean Center in Daytona Beach.

**April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

Volusia County Master Gardeners Spring sale at the Volusia County fairgrounds, Deland. ½ day sale that FECBS has participated in for many years!

**April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

Council of Garden Clubs of the Halifax Area garage sale fundraiser. Finney memorial

garden center at the corner of Jessamine and Oleander Avenues.

**September 8-14, 2014** – BSI World Conference. Ala Moana Hotel. 410 Atkinson Drive. Honolulu, Hawaii 96814. Register now for what is sure to be an unforgettable event! Check the BSI website: go to [www.bsi.org](http://www.bsi.org) for the latest.

