

The Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society

Next meeting Sunday, February 9th, 2014 1:30pm.
Colony in the Wood – club house
4000 S. Clyde Morris Blvd., Port Orange 32129

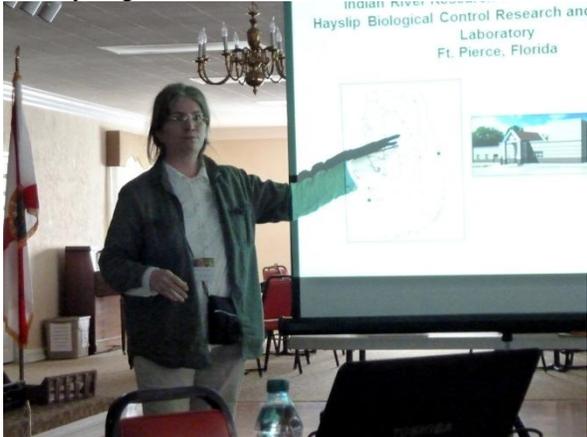
February 2014

How Many More Weeks of Winter?

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 –

Dr. Teresa Cooper told us everything we wanted to know about the Mexican weevil, but were afraid to ask. It was a really excellent program and served to remind us all to stay vigilant.



Dr. Cooper's presentation on the Mexican weevil – photo by Calandra Thurrott

The weevil is in our neighborhood now, so we all need to closely monitor the health of our bromeliads and be prepared to treat those plants with systemic insecticides at the first sign of trouble.

This month's meeting

Spring is just around the corner now, and with it comes Everybody's Flower Show in Daytona Beach. This is a good time to get your plants in prime shape for entry in the show and it's also a good time to review some of the basics of cleaning plants,

separating pups, and repotting after those months of neglect that we refer to as "Winter". This month's meeting will be a workshop where we will demonstrate how to go about some of these activities as well as critique plants that you may be considering for entry in the show. So, bring in your bromeliads that you have questions concerning how best to present their best features and we'll make good use of those club members who have demonstrated their expertise by becoming accredited bromeliad show judges. It should be a lot of fun and, who knows – you may learn something in the process! And don't forget Show and Tell – let's see some of those bromeliads that you have been growing!

February in the bromeliad garden

This can be a difficult month for bromeliad growers. Winter is almost over and, if you're like most of us, you can't wait to get started with folding up and putting away that frost cloth (is that wonderful stuff or what?) separating pups, repotting plants and generally cleaning up your collection. Unfortunately, Winter isn't necessarily over for us in Central Florida quite yet, so if you can put off getting started on these chores for just another couple weeks, it may save you from a few problems. We may still see some cold weather this month and it's not unheard of to have a freeze up until the middle of the

month or so. I know – you’re getting tired of seeing those snowdrifts of frostcloth in your yard, but I wouldn’t recommend putting it away quite yet.



Due be... due be due...

Dues are due – it’s that time of the year once again. If all of the sudden, you notice that you no longer are receiving the newsletter – there could be a reason for that. Now it’s time to pay your dues for the privilege of being a member of FECBS. How much is a membership? \$15/single member, \$20/family membership. If you haven’t already done so, see Eve with your check, money order or cold hard cash for 2014 dues...or, if you would rather mail in your check, send it to Eve Krauth at 1904 Poppy Lane, Port Orange, Fl. 32128. Don’t be left out as ‘Strangers in the Night’!

Tips and Gadgets -

Every now and then a new “gadget” appears in the marketplace and lo and behold...it actually works! Bill Hazard and I had recently talked about how difficult it is to sharpen garden shears. Unless you take them apart, you just can’t sharpen the blade as easily as you can a straight knife blade. After they’ve been tossed around for a few years and in many cases used for things that they were never intended to be used, my shears had gotten pretty dull. Instead of giving a nice, clean cut on some especially thick bromeliad stolons, I found that I was having to almost saw my way through them. Bill mentioned to me that he had recently picked up an inexpensive sharpener that is intended for garden tools and wondered if I had seen one before.

Let me just say that I’m usually a bit skeptical about new products like this, but Bill loaned me his sharpener and I gave it a try on my old Fiskars pruners.



Amazingly...it works! The Corona company has produced this small (it’s only 5” long) sharpener that consists of a piece of steel that is rubber coated at one end (that’s the handle) with a piece of carbide attached to the opposite end. A few swipes of the carbide along the edge of the shears and they were like new again...well, not really – they still look pretty beat up, but the edge of the blade is razor sharp once more and that’s the important part.



This tool goes for under \$20 in stores and can be obtained for much less online. For that kind of price, you really can’t go wrong!

Plant Profile – *Neoregelia carolinae*...or will the real *Neo. carolinae* please stand up!

Hybridizers of bromeliads have produced a bewildering array of plants that are simply stunning in their leaf patterns of spots, bars, stripes and electrifying colors. Nowhere is this more evident than in the

Genus *Neoregelia*. Generally speaking, the species in this group are not particularly colorful or attractive and that's why there is always so much interest in the latest and greatest new hybrids. But...did you ever wonder where those hybrids came from?



Neoregelia carolinae tricolor – showing the 3 colors of green, white and red (in good light)

Somewhere along the line, there had to have been some wild species involved and one of those species in many, many cases was *Neo. carolinae*. In fact (and I use the word “fact” rather loosely when referring to the internet) Wikipedia lists several hundred *Neoregelia* hybrids that can claim *Neo. carolinae* in their parentage. And that's not even counting some of the outstanding Bi-Generic hybrids out there that have been created using *Neo. carolinae* - including x*Neophytum* ‘Ralph Davis’ and its variegated cousin x*Neophytum* ‘Galactic Warrior’. Any plant that important in today's hybrids deserves a closer look.

Named for Caroline Morren, wife of Charles Morren - the famed illustrator and editor of a horticultural periodical in the mid 1800s, *Neoregelia carolinae* has been in cultivation for over 100 years – which may be why some casual gardeners think that this is a plant native to Florida. It isn't of course, and in fact, there are no *Neoregelias* native to the state. This is a plant that was reportedly found in Rio de Janeiro growing quite happily at sea level as well as at elevations that would leave many of us gasping for

breath and everywhere in between. This general tolerance of a wide range of growing conditions means that *Neo. carolinae* fits Florida's climate quite well. In the early days of bromeliad cultivation when the variety of available plants was quite limited, most commercial growers in the state were growing what were considered to be three distinct varieties of *Neo. carolinae*, namely: *marechalli*, *meyendorffii*, and *tricolor*. Today, only *tricolor* is recognized as being different enough to warrant listing as a separate form or *forma* of *Neo. carolinae*. In fact, there can be quite a bit of confusion over the identity of this plant due largely to the ease with which it can be crossed with other bromeliads, the high degree of variability in appearance from one plant to the next (particularly under different growing conditions), and the many years these plants have been in cultivation. As a result, plants believed to be “pure” *Neo. carolinae*, are most likely hybrids of unknown origin. Throw in the usual problems of lost tags, guesses at correct names, and even incorrect tags in commercial nursery plants and you can see why some have concluded that there are no “pure” *Neoregelia carolinae* bromeliads to be found other than in the wilds of Brazil...and even those may be suspect.



Neoregelia – identified only as “*Neoregelia bromeliad*” purchased from a local grocery store 20 years ago.

Some years ago I came across a particularly abused plant in the discount section of a Winn Dixie store and took pity

on it. In the years and many generations of this plant since then, it has proven to be remarkably consistent in its appearance (a very attractive little plant by the way) and although I am quite sure that this is a variety of *Neoregelia caroline*, I am reluctant to call it anything other than Neo. 'Winn Dixie' and certainly don't want it to go into circulation as yet another incorrectly identified bromeliad, and so, it is confined to my yard and shade house. There's probably a "real" Neo. *carolinae* out there in someone's collection, but without clear documentation of where it came from, the world may never know and this could be another plant species lost to posterity.

Birthdays for February:

This month's birthdays - not many members were born in February, so we could use some help here! Thank you, McBrides for heading up the refreshments committee this month. If anyone else can spare a little something for our snack table (it's not a dinner buffet!), it would be greatly appreciated.

Happy Birthday to:

Linda Burgher and Gary Signs!

Looking ahead:

March 1-2, 2014

Bromeliad Society of South Florida show and sale at Fairchild Botanical Gardens, 10901 Old Cutler Rd., Coral Gables. Call 305/667-1651 for more details

March 15-16, 2014

Leu Gardens Spring plant sale
Free admission!
Leu Gardens 1920 N. Forest Ave., Orlando

March 22-23, 2014

Kanapaha Gardens Spring Garden Festival.
\$8 admission, free parking
Kanapaha Botanical Gardens, 4700 SW 58th Dr., Gainesville

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 5th, 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 26th, 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 for the latest.

