



THE CALOOSAHATCHEE BROMELIAD SOCIETY'S MERISTEM *July-Aug 2023*



CALOOSAHATCHEE BROMELIAD SOCIETY OFFICERS

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RAFFLE TICKETS—Greeter/Membership table volunteers—Dolly Dalton, Luli Westra

RAFFLE COMMENTARY—Larry Giroux

GREETERS/ATTENDANCE—Betty Ann Prevatt; Dolly Dalton (dollyd@comcast.net), Luli Westra

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THE CALOOSAHATCHEE BROMELIAD SOCIETY

July Meeting: Sunday, July 16th 2023
August Meeting: Sunday, Aug 20th 2023

Our Meetings are at the
Ft. Myers– Lee County Garden Council Building
2166 Virginia Ave. Fort Myers.

The facility is north of the Edison Gardens parking lot and about 1/2 miles north of our previous meeting location— Covenant Presbyterian Church. Virginia Ave is approximately 3 miles north of the intersection of Colonial Blvd. and McGregor Blvd. and is the 2nd Street north of the Edison Gardens

The CBS Board has established a more structured schedule for our meetings, which we will adapt as necessary—

***12:30-1:15:** Doors open, check-in, membership, distribution of door prize tickets and sale of raffle tickets, membership or speaker plant sales.

***1:15-1:45:** Workshop **1:45-2:00:** Break, plant sales continue

2:00-2:15: Business Meeting **2:15-3:00:** Program followed by door prize

3:00-3:30: Break for refreshments **3:30-4:00:** Show and Tell and Raffle
4:00: Clean up

Please bring food, Friendship, Raffle and Show and Tell Plants

There will be no membership sales allowed at the July and Aug meetings

MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR 2023 ARE DUE BY THE END OF JANUARY

Membership renewal fees are \$15/20 single/dual; New member dues: \$20/25, single/dual payable by check or cash at the meeting or by mail to

Betty Ann Prevatt, CBS Treasurer 2902 Second Ave. Fort Myers, FL 33916

The Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society is an active Affiliate of:



Cryptanthus Society



BSI



FCBS



FM/LC GC

July Program: Alex Bello “Tillandsias”

CBS member, Alex Bello, owner of Bello Tropicals (bellotropicals@yahoo.com) in Miami, Florida will be our guest speaker Sunday, July 16th. Alex will be discussing Tillandsias. On the front cover (photos by Alex Bello) are 4 elaborate tillandsias growing at Alex’s nursery and as you can see in the backgrounds, Alex has a vast assortment of species and hybrids. He has told us that he will be “coming loaded with collector grade and nice stuff not seen around” (so there are NO Membership Sales allowed at this meeting). In this issue I will be giving a primer on tillandsias and showing a selection of photos of some of the more common tillandsias and former tillandsia species you will see in collections, at shows and for sale. I encourage you to bring a printed copy of this issue to the meeting to supplement Alex’s presentation.

Volunteers Needed

PROGRAM CHAIRPERSON—Currently Julie Stein has been filling in and has arranged for most of 2023. And although she is the acting Program Chairman, she is requesting an assistant to work with her and eventually assume the duties. So we still need a permanent Chair who’s duties will entail arranging lacking programs for 9 meetings a year (excluding March, Auction month; April, Birthday Party and December, Holiday Party); to confirm date with speaker and arrange for any equipment needed; to contact Editor with program information by the Monday preceding the first Sunday of the month and to greet and assist speaker; making their introduction at the meeting.

WORKSHOP CHAIRPERSON— **Duties:** Request members with "expertise" about the pre-selected topics to attend workshops and participate in discussions each month except, March, Auction month; April, Birthday Party month and December, Holiday Party month. Call Editor with program information by the Monday preceding the first Sunday of the month. Call Editor with program information by the Monday preceding the Sunday of the month. Encourage members to attend and bring plants, organize meeting room, announce the meeting and introduce topic at meeting.

WORKSHOP PRESENTERS— We need volunteers to give 20-30 min. presentations on a variety of topics of interest to the members. It can be a slide show, Q & A or a hands-on session from topics previous compiled or of your own choice.

PLEASE CONTACT President JULIE STEIN and discuss volunteering.

On the back cover is a picture of *Tillandsia usneoides* . See page 5 for additional *Tillandsia* pictures. Photo by Dr. Larry Giroux.

Bromeliad Expose by Dr. Larry Giroux

Tillandsias (Photos and text by Larry Giroux)

At the Program this month Alex Bello will be discussing the *Genus Tillandsia*. This article along with pictures of many of the *Tillandsia* species in cultivation will hopefully give you information to help you follow along with Alex's discussion.

The *Genus Tillandsia* is one of the *Genera* of the *Subfamily* of the *Family of Bromeliaceae: Tillandsioideae*. This *Subfamily* of Bromeliads has undergone a major reorganization and now consist of twenty *Genera*; five of which are commonly grown and contain the most species. These include *Alcantarea*, *Catopsis*, *Guzmania*, *Tillandsia*, and *Vriesea*. The other *Genera*, *Glomeropitcairnia*, *Mezobromelia*, *Racinaea*, *Goudaea*, *Gregbrownia*, *Jagrantia*, *Lemeltonia*, *Lutheria*, *Psuedoalcanterea*, *Stigmatodon*, *Wallisia*, *Waltillia*, *Zizkaea* and *Werauhia* contain very few species or have received species from the more common *Genera* or they are relatively rare in cultivation. Most growers of bromeliads consider this *Subfamily* user friendly since they lack the spines on the leaf edges found on many other bromeliads.

Tillandsia has the largest number of species and the greatest range of any of the *Genera* of the *Family* of Bromeliads. *Tillandsias* grow from the southern states of the United States, south throughout the islands of the Gulf of Mexico, Latin America, and all of South America. Bromeliad growers here in Florida are familiar with this genus with the majority of our native bromeliads consisting of *Tillandsias*. Spanish moss or *Tillandsia usneoides* is found in all areas of Florida and everyone that crosses Alligator Alley (I-75) from Naples to Fort Lauderdale, have commented on the flame red inflorescences of native *Tillandsia fasciculata*, which grow high in the trees throughout the Everglades.

The variety of sizes, shapes and other characteristics seem unlimited in this genus. Plants may range from less than one-half inch in size to 3 ft. diameter rosettes with 10 ft. inflorescences. Although most of us are familiar with the violet-blue petals seen with *Tillandsia ionantha*, many species have white, pink, yellow or even chartreuse petals, as seen with *Tillandsia usneoides* (see back cover). Some *Tillandsias* have fragrant flowers; which is an oddity among bromeliads. The colors of the bracts are also quite variable, ranging from pale gray to bright red.

There are generally two types of *Tillandsias*. They are the soft leafed species, which come from moist (mesic) forests. These resemble many of the plants in the genus *Vriesea*, tend to be wide leafed, do not tolerate full sun and form small rosettes, which may retain some moisture in the cups produced by overlapping leaves. The second group and the most common, are the *Species* with silvery scales. It is the presence of these scales or highly developed "trichomes", which permits this group of xeric plants to exist in areas where many other plants find it difficult: for example – arid sandy deserts, full sun exposed treetops and dry, rocky outcroppings and cliffs. Although all bromeliads have these trichomes, it is their density, shape and mechanism of action, which adapts specific plants to different environments.

The majority of the members of this *Genus* are epiphytic. Most people are familiar with the term "airplants". These are plants, which are found growing attached to other plants or objects such as rocks, wires or rooftops. The major function of their roots is to provide support or anchorage and they derive the majority of their water and nutrients by absorption through their leaves. There are exceptions, of course; some *Tillandsias* such as *Tillandsia novakii* or *Tillandsia duratii*, do not develop roots at all and twist around their "host" for attachment; while some tillandsias like *Tillandsia cyanea* (now called *Wallisia cyanea*) seem to have more functional roots and do better when potted in a mix. Regardless of their

appearance and density on a tree branch, *Tillandsias* are not parasitic and do not harm their living mount. So please tell your friends who are prone to strip off “Ball Moss” (*Tillandsia recurvata*) growing on their trees, that these bromeliads are innocuous to the trees and benefit the ecology.

In reality, other than *Tillandsia usneoides* and the handful of *Tillandsias*, which do not form roots, *Tillandsias* are not obligatory epiphytes, particularly the soft leaf types. It is my experience that these bromeliads will do better growing in a epiphytic mix consisting of charcoal, coarse perlite or sponge rock, tree fern fiber, pine bark and peat. They benefit from the added absorption of moisture and nutrients from the mix besides their predominant source from their leaves. Just as in nature, in cultivation, *Tillandsias* require air circulation, water and particles of materials containing nutrients to land on their leaves and appropriate light for their leaf type. Unless you have your plants growing out in the trees in the yard, they will be hard-pressed to receive these factors naturally. Misting, watering or soaking *Tillandsias* as well as spraying with a weak solution of water-soluble fertilizer on a regular basis, will enhance their growth and appearance. Your efforts will be somewhat less for those plants, which you choose to grow in a lite mix (as mentioned above), inside a well draining container. I should emphasize that more frequent, dilute feedings are preferred over excessive dosing. Mounted *Tillandsias* can do just as well as potted plants, but again understand that for the same reason you use a lite media to pot *Tillandsias*, you need to mount your plants in such a way as to avoid retention of moisture around the base of the plants, thereby avoiding rot. Mounting a tillandsia horizontally or hanging it upside down will seldom retard the plants’ growth, and it prevents a damp base.

Most of us will have to rely on offsets, offshoots or pups to replenish or increase our collection of *Tillandsias*. These baby plants, which will resemble the parent, are produced from the base of leaves, from the base of the inflorescence, on short stems called stolons, from the inflorescence stem or flower or from the base of the mother. The progeny of this *Genus* are generally slow growing; taking from one to four years to reach maturity. Leaving the pups on the mother, produces in most cases an attractive clump, which will reward you with multiple, simultaneously blooming plants. Cautiously removing old bloomed-out mothers, will maintain a more appealing clump as well as avoid rotting of the bases of the mounted plants.

Of course you can grow *Tillandsia species* from seed. In the yard, shadehouse or greenhouse this may occur without really even trying. Many *Tillandsias* are self-pollinating or easily pollinated by insects like ants. Within the capsule produced from the ovum (at the base of the flower) hundreds of very fine seeds form. When ripe and under dry conditions, the capsule will burst and release seeds suspended by a feathery parachutes; these resemble dandelion seeds. Many will stay around the mother plant and eventually developed into small plantlets, while many others will be carried by a breeze and attach to surfaces to begin their development. A trick which I have seen used for collecting the seeds in order to grow them yourself or donate to others, is to tie a paper bag around the inflorescence when it appears that the capsule is ready to explode.

Of course, growing from seed is the only way you can produce a new hybrid. There are many new hybrids appearing in cultivation. Although I still think that making a cross and producing a new hybrid is one of the great challenges in keeping bromeliads, at least with *Tillandsias*, there are so many unusual species available and being introduced all the time, which can provide just as great a challenge for the hobbyist.

Many techniques have been suggested for growing *Tillandsia* seeds. One method I found effective it is to purchase a plastic embroidery hoop and cover with nylon mosquito screening. Smear the seeds evenly over the surface; spray the surface with a weak solution of Captan (an anti-fungal pesticide) to adhere the seeds to the screen. Although hanging the hoop horizontally or vertically and misting occasionally, will work quite well; using the hoop as a cover over a small plastic bowl such as a Cool Whip container, will provide more consistent moisture as water

in the container evaporates. I give *Tillandsia* hybridizers a lot of credit, for it will take four to seven years of patience, perseverance, occasional separating and frequent remounting before they know the results of their efforts. Seeing a new plant with the best characteristics of the two parents, will make this endeavor well worth it.

There are few pests, which affect *Tillandsias*. Outside, squirrels and rats may eat the leaves; scale and mealybugs, as with many other bromeliads, are a constant nuisance. The latter problems are easily treated with weak solutions of insecticides such as Imidacloprid (use with caution in unenclosed areas due to harm to bees!). A major exception to this rule about effects of pests is the devastation of the larger native *Tillandsias* of Florida such as *Tillandsia utriculata*, which are declining in population in their habitat due to the “Evil Weevil”, (*Metamasius callizona*), which was introduced from Mexico several years ago. Although the weevil can be treated in the confines of our own growing areas with insecticides, the range of this insect is so great in Florida, that the best we can expect, according to the experts, from the biological controls currently being developed at the University of Florida, is to contain the destruction at a decreasing level.

It is no wonder that many people have become infatuated by *Tillandsias* and that these plants represent a large portion of their collections. They come in all sizes and shapes; and can be grown under many different conditions. They can be potted, hung from wire or fishing line or be mounted to almost any material. Space is seldom a problem for these plants. As a matter of fact while I was in Hawaii, I visited growers who had their *Tillandsias* hanging in sheets; with each *Tillandsia* hanging from the one above it, from the roof to the ground, row after row. They require minimal care and eventually reward you with their unique foliage and colorful petite flowers.

CBS has been asked to donate at least 5 plants to the Rare Plant Auction at the Extravaganza. If you are attending, donations will be accepted on Friday at the Hotel. If you are unable to attend and want to donate, please bring your donation to the July meeting and someone will transport it for you. Thanks

Since I first published the included pictures there has been some creation of new *Genera* with several *Tillandsias* transferred to these. I have attempted to include the old and new names as best as I can; I refer you to www.bromeliad.nl/encyclopedia/ for up to date revisions of these and other bromeliad names.





- 1. *T. pruinosa*
- 2. *T. triclepsis*
- 3. *T. araujei*
- 4. *T. stricta*
- 5. *T. lieboldiana*
- 6. *T. chiapensis*

- 7. *T. pruinosa*
- 8. *T. imperialis*
- 9. Old: *T. dyeriana*
New: *Racinaea dyeriana*





10



11



13



12



14



16



15

10. *T. gardneri*

14. *T. novakii*

11. *T. lolicea*

15. *T. punctulata*

12. *T. lorentziana*

16. *T. aeranthos*

13. *T. multicaulis*



17. *T. roland-gosselini*

20. *T. brachycaulos*

18. *T. seleriana*

21. *T. tenuifolia*

19. *T. streptocarpa*

22. *T. kegeliana*



23. *T. xerographica*

24. *T. aff. somnians*

25A, B *T. duratii*

26. *T. globosa*

27. *didisticha*

28. *T. hammeri*



29. *T. x nidus*
 30. Old: *T. platyrhachis*
 New *Barfussia platyrhachis*
 31. Old: *T. cyanea*
 New: *Wallisia cyanea*
 32. *T. ionantha*
 33. *T. guatemalensis*
 34. Old: *T. narthecioides*
 New: *Lemeltonia narthecioides*



- 35. *T. chiapensis*
- 36. *T. capitata*
- 37. *T. bulbosa*
- 38. *T. seleriana*
- 39. *T. capitata* 'Yellow'
- 40. *T. fasciculata*
- 41. *T. pseudobaileyi*



Minutes of the CBS General Meeting LC/FM Garden Council Building May 21st, 2023

Call to order: 1: 12 by President Julie Stein

Guests: Carolyn Egana, John Leeway, and Marian Christensen. New Members: None
In Attendance: 25

Announcements:

Julie called for a vote to approve the half-page ad we want to place in the Extravaganza Brochure. Larry created it and will supply it to the printers. The purchase was approved. The Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies sent a thank you note for our \$654 donation we sent them. Julie asked for volunteers to help us host the June 24 meeting of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies which will be held at the Berne Davis Garden Center. People can sign up during our break. Julie called for some volunteers to help clean up the bromeliad area here at the Berne Davis Garden. People can sign up during break. Julie encouraged the membership to attend the upcoming Extravaganza this July in West Palm Beach. Members can pick up an information postcard on the back table. There was a lively discussion of ideas for future workshops including how to cultivate the various genera of bromeliads. Another idea was that members bring plants to ask questions about. Two members could also do a workshop together. Submit your ideas to Julie Stein and volunteer to present a Workshop. Larry Giroux announced that the Cryptanthus Society has thanked us for our recent donation.

Workshop and Program: CBS member Betty Ann Prevatt gave a very informative workshop and program on potting mixes and how to pot bromeliads. The gold standard for the perfect mix is 1/3 bark, 1/3 perlite, 1/3 peat. A bag called Bromeliad Blend has no bark in it, and Better-Gro Orchid Potting Mix is mostly bark so for both of these you would need to add other materials to balance the mix. LECA (Light Expanded Clay Aggregates), Aliflor or Hydroton is a product of little porous clay balls and can be used in place of perlite for water retention and soil aeration. Mini pine bark can be found at Lowe's. For terrestrials, like Cryptanthus, she recommended adding potting soil to the above mix, half and half. Concerning her pots, she used what's called azalea pots; they are shorter than standard pots. Smaller pups of Neos or half-grown Neos can take a little fertilizer sprinkled on the soil, but not full-grown plants because they will produce a spurt of growth which won't match with how they've been growing and loss of color. Larry mentioned a product called Turface that many growers are using for their terrestrials. It can be purchased at SiteOne Landscape Supply (call first because they may have to order it special). Another tip was to use wooden skewers, hair pins, or even rubber bands to hold a plant in place in its pot after it's been planted. It's important that young plants are firmly secured or their roots will not develop.

Door Prizes: Debbie McPhail donated a beautiful *Aechmea* 'Burn Notice' for our door prize (and another one for our Raffle Table).

Show & Tell: Dale presented several plants, including a *Portea* hybrid, which Dale made from crossing two *Portea* species, plus a *Neoregelia* 'Blueberry Crisp' made by Lisa Vinzant of Hawaii with gorgeous colors and patterns.

Raffle: Larry Giroux and Dolly Dalton awarded about 10 donated items to the lucky winners.

Meeting adjourned: 3:10

Respectfully submitted by Alison Ackerman

Minutes of the CBS General Meeting

LC/FM Garden Council Building June 18th, 2023

Call to order: 1:15 by President Julie Stein

Guests: Kathy Shaw . New Members: Crystal and Bryan Brodesser. **Renewing**

Member: Marsha Crawford. In Attendance: 25

Announcements:

President Julie Stein thanked the Board Members for their service with a special thank you to Larry Giroux for the most informative newsletter he writes every two months. She also thanked Debbie McPhail for bringing our door prizes to all our meetings – much appreciated. On another note, she asked that everyone sign the visitor's log when the FMLCGC Garden is open to the public, as the funding the Garden receives is partly based on how many visitors it gets throughout the year. The Extravaganza is only 6 weeks away and they are limiting registrants to just 200. Larry encouraged everyone to refer to the newsletter for more details so they can sign up. He also asked for donations for plants that the CBS is expected to donate to the Extravaganza. Anyone can bring their plants to the next CBS meeting if they are not attending the Extravaganza in July.

A longtime member, Ed Wenzlaff, recently passed away and his wife, Edith, would like to sell his bromeliads. Anyone can call her for an appointment. This is important since she lives in a guarded gated community. Her address is 3035 Big Bend Circle, Burnt Store Marina, Punta Gorda. Her number is 941 575-9262 and email is ewenzlaff@gmail.com. Larry will email this information out to all our members.

Workshop: President Julie Stein brought a slew of her plants mostly damaged during Hurricane Ian to demonstrate how she trims them up. The first thing she does is cut back the oldest leaves along the base to see what's what. As long as the center is firm and looks intact, she will take the time to trim it up and replant it. She suggests using sharp scissors and shaping the tips of the leaves. If you are just trimming the lower leaves then don't spend your time, just cut them across. But if the center is squishy, she knows the plant is not viable and most likely will not grow any new leaves or give offsets. For plants she wants to plant again in the landscape, she leaves the lower trimmed leaves attached; if she will be entering the plant in a show, however, she would remove all the damaged lower leaves in their entirety. Try to do this several days before a show so the exposed caudex will have time to darken.

Program: CBS member Jason Mellica presented a program highlighting his full-sun hybrids. Most of the bromeliads that grow in trees like filtered light, or morning sun. The ones that take full sun have thicker foliage as a rule, and are often more upright. The cruentas and the *carcharodon*/Tiger hybrids can handle the sun, so he has crossed these with others that have interesting colors with great success. Some of his creations include *Neoregelia* plants he has named Vampire Blood, Crimson Sun, Clairvoyant, and Artemis, among others. He is starting to work with genera other than Neos to produce additional, interesting sun-loving hybrids. Jason brought dozens of his hybrids for sale.

Door Prizes: Debbie McPhail brought 2 beautiful plants for our door prizes: *Ananas comosus* var. *bracteatus* 'Tricolor', also known as Pink or Red Pineapple.

Show & Tell: Dale presented six plants brought by members, including a gorgeous *Wittrockia cyathiformis* in bloom.

Raffle: Larry Giroux and Julie Stein awarded about 10 donated plants to the lucky raffle winners. Meeting adjourned: 3:10

Respectfully submitted by Alison Ackerman



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Tillandsia usneoides, (Spanish Moss) a rootless epiphytic bromeliad with 1/2" chartreuse green, fragrant flowers found throughout Florida.

This is your July-Aug 2023 CBS Newsletter