



# THE CALOOSAHATCHEE BROMELIAD SOCIETY'S MERISTEM *July-Aug 2026*



# CALOOSAHATCHEE BROMELIAD

## SOCIETY OFFICERS

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**PRESIDENT—** Julie Stein 919-522-1182 FLAGIRL56@aol.com

**Past— PRESIDENT—** Vicky Chirnside 941 928-3111 (dampearth@me.com)

**Vice-PRESIDENT—** Dale Kammerlohr 863-558-0647  
(dzdaze@embarqmail.com)

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**TREASURER—** Betty Ann Prevatt 239-229-7781 (bprevattppcc@aol.com)

### STANDING COMMITTEES CHAIRPERSONS

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR—** Larry Giroux 239-850-4048 (DrLarry7@gmail.com)

**FALL SALES CHAIR—** Dave Prall 239-699-6400 palmtreegardens@hotmail.com

**PROGRAM CHAIRPERSON—** Acting Chair: Julie Stein

**WORKSHOP CHAIRPERSON—** Acting Chair: Julie Stein

**CBS FCBS Reps.—** Vicky Chirnside 941-928-3111 (dampearth@me.com)

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### OTHER COMMITTEES

**DOOR PRIZE—** Debbie McPhail 239-332-4607 or 239-910-3836 ;

email- deb.mcphail@yahoo.com

**HOSPITALITY (Monthly Refreshments)—** Diane Cornelison 239-233-7037

Party Chair—Vacant

**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

**SHOW & TELL—** Dale Kammerlohr 863-558-0647

**FM-LEE GARDEN COUNCIL—** Alison Ackerman 239-851-3176 Alison@spikowski.com

**LIBRARIAN—** Vacant

**MARCH AUCTION CHAIR—** Larry Giroux 239-850-4048 DrLarry7@gmail.com

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# THE CALOOSAHATCHEE BROMELIAD SOCIETY

**July Meeting: Sunday, July 19th, 2026**

**August Meeting: Sunday, August 16th, 2026**

Our *July and August Meetings* will be 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

For the *July and August Meetings* Please bring food, raffle items, show and tell plants and friendship plants, Only Speaker Sales at our July and August meetings so there will be **NO** membership sales allowed at these meetings.

Alex Bello will be the July Speaker

Andy Siekkinen is the August Speaker

## **THE Normal Monthly MEETING SCHEDULE –**

12:30 – 1:15 Doors open, check-in, membership, door prize tickets, raffle ticket sales, members donate refreshments & raffle plants, Show & Tell area set-up, speaker or member plant sales

1:15 – 2:30 Call to order, announcements, at this time members will get their refreshments and enjoy their lunch during the featured Program

1:45—2:30 Featured Program

2:30 – 2:45 Door Prize. Plant sales continue.

2:45 – 3:15 Business meeting followed by Workshop

3:15 – 4:00 Show & Tell & Raffle drawing followed by Adjournment and Clean-Up

Surprisingly as of yet, a number of members did not pay their 2026 dues. Please catch up for 2026.

MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR 2026 ARE DUE in January Please contact Betty Ann Prevatt and RENEW. 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 Meeting– Alex Bello

Alex Bello of Miami, Florida, a Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society member, the Bromeliad Society of South Florida's President, the Bromeliad Society International Southern Regional Director and owner/ operator of Bello Tropicals in Miami, will be returning with a new program for our July meeting. Alex served as the Show Chairman for the BSSF Bromeliad Show in May; this might explain his topic "Vrieseas: Show Beauties". So, hopefully we may get to see some photos from their Show which is always packed with great plants and art. Alex says he will be bringing plants and some goodies from his nursery for sale, so there will be no membership sales allowed at this meeting.

## August Meeting– Andy Siekkinen

For our August program we are extremely fortunate to have Andy Siekkinen, from San Diego California, as our speaker. We are working with the Bromeliad Society of South Florida and the Bromeliad Society of the Palm Beaches to sponsor Andy's visit to Florida. The CBS will be the first society to host him in August; he is planning on bringing a nice collection of his plants for sale, including some of his own hybrids.

Andy is a trained chemist, and it wasn't until his move to San Diego in 2007 that he acquired his first bromeliad and became seriously interested in bromeliads and horticulture and has been working since as a botanist. Limited by the Southern California's Mediterranean climate and his personal interests in certain genera, Andy has been growing mostly *Hechtias*, *Deuterocohnias*, *Hohenbergias*, *Billbergias*, *Orthophytums* and *Tillandsias* with emphasis for the last decade and a half on the genus, *Hechtia*. Through his nursery business, Andy's Bromeliads, he has

introduced new species into cultivation from his explorations and several new hybrids from his breeding efforts with many bromeliad genera.

Andy has volunteered his time to serve as the President of the San Diego Bromeliad Society and the Bromeliad Society International's Western Regional Director. His profile includes programs at WBCs, Australian and

other international conferences as well as organizations throughout the United States.



***Hechtia* Wildfire.** One of Andy Siekkinen's early hybrids, made with *H. texensis* x *stenopetala*. Photo by Andy Siekkinen.

## AI vs The Artist

By Dr. Larry Giroux

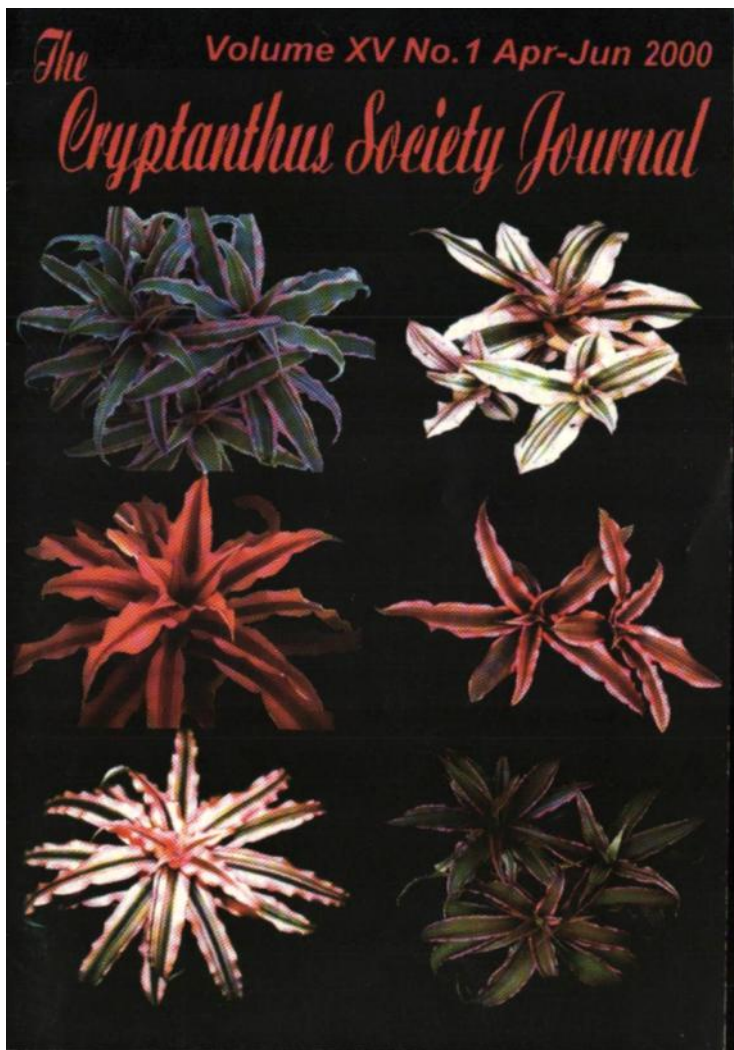
There is a lot of discussion right now about how AI (Artificial Intelligence ) will be affecting our entire future. Such things as replacing jobs in manufacturing, education, both in the teaching and students' performance aspects, finance, the law and even health care. Can you imagine telling a machine your signs and symptoms of your illness and having the treatment arrive at your door. Or receiving a ticket by e-mail for a violation that was documented by surveillance of your car's records and photos. Well surprise, we are already there. It seems that AI is also changing Art. 25 years ago I was enhancing my photos using an older Photoshop program; attached are a few altered *Cryptanthus* photos I created for the *Cryptanthus* Society Journal. But today making these changes have, pardon the pun, become an "art".



On the front cover is an AI creation by Lyle Bowen of a photo of his backyard. Above is the photo (by Lyle Bowen) from which it was produced. Below are the original picture (by Lyle) and the contrived AI version



Should we just accept Artificial Intelligence as a way to enhance and broaden our creativity. However, there is the possibility that AI could hamper creativity and the humanities. Included are drawings and paintings created, albeit, from a scene or a living plant by various artists. To others, the purpose of the artist is always in question, but regardless, the results are more than an enhanced copy, but the expression of the feelings and senses of a human. My grandmother use to call all cars and trucks, “machines”, which were meant to take us somewhere. Let’s not allow them to tell us where to go!



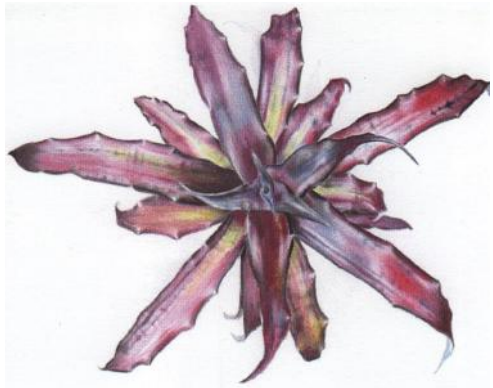
The front cover of an old issue of the Cryptanthus Society Journal showing a group of variegated Cryptanthus enhanced by Photoshop.



To the right is a Claude Monet painting demonstrating his iconic brush technic. They now have Artificial Intelligence Programs that allow you to convert any picture into a Monet, Picasso or any artist's style. I think it would be much more fun to personally paint one.



The late Penrith Goff was a professional artist who for much of his life worked on designing the covers of magazines, in particular, *Plant Life*. Later during his retirement, when he became interested in bromeliads, he drew numerous sketches of bromeliads for the covers of the Southeastern Michigan Bromeliad Society Newsletter. He would use live specimens and more often, photos of plants for his models. His uncanny drawings were sometimes indistinguishable from the live plant. Here is his rendering of Steve Hoppin's *Cryptanthus* Tropical Heat Wave. Photo by Steve Hoppin.





Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society member Kiti Wenzel, who died just months before her 100th birthday, was a prolific artist. Originally an abstractionist, in her later years, much of her art centered on botanical subjects, especially bromeliads, which she grew on her small patio in Ft. Myers or plants she was given to draw. Her major medium was colored pencils. Above is her drawing from a photo of *Aechmea orlandiana*, which was used for the poster of the 1996 WBC in Orlando, Florida. Drawing and photo by Kiti Wenzel.



Carolyn Parsons of Mission Viejo, California manipulated her art more than any Artificial Intelligence program could do. She took the best characteristics and true nature of a plant and made them her focus. In this drawing of *Cryptanthus* 'Pink Starlight' she enhanced its colors and patterns and in this "green" cryptanthus drawing, she honed in mostly on the flowers, both dying and blooming. Drawings by Carolyn Parsons.



## Minutes of the CBS General Meeting

### LC/FM Garden Council Building May 17th , 2026

**Call to order:** 1:02 by President Julie Stein

**In Attendance:** approx.. 25

**New Members:** Ava Roeder and Nick Simone

**Guests:** Karen and Mike Flanders, Gloria Hagedorn

#### **Business Meeting:**

Julie asked the members to vote on the following proposal in which our society would contribute about \$1,000 to make it happen:

Three Florida bromeliad societies (Bromeliad Society of South Florida, Bromeliad Society of the Palm Beaches and ours, the Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society) would like to sponsor bringing two well-known bromeliad experts, Andy Siekkinen and Pamela Koide Hyatt to Florida – one in August of this year and the other in November. Each would give their program to each society over the course of a week, and then return home to California. The Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies will also be contributing \$1,000 per speaker in order to make this all possible. During the discussion, Larry Giroux pointed out that we brought in a little over \$1,000 from our March Auction, so we can use those funds without dipping into our bank account; in addition we do not have Show expenses this year. The membership voted to go ahead with this proposal. More information about the speakers will be sent out prior to each meeting.

**Workshop/Program:** In lieu of having a workshop and program this month, members were asked to bring in plants and other items to swap or sell. Literally every table was filled – mostly with bromeliads of course – and everyone wandered around checking out all the possibilities. Before too long, folks were picking and choosing new treasures to take home. In the end, some even started slashing their prices! By all accounts, this new event was a big hit and there was talk that perhaps we could do this every year.

**Door Prizes:** Three beautiful plants were donated for our door prizes by Julie Stein, Geri Prall, and Larry Giroux.

**Show & Tell:** Members brought about 7 plants for Show & Tell, several by Dave Prall who helped to lead the discussion. Betty Ann Prevatt also showed



2 unique rustic orchid baskets, fashioned from reclaimed wood. The folks at LARC (Lee Association for Remarkable Citizens) are making these from bundled stacks of lumber washed ashore by Hurricane Helene. If interested, you can call (239) 334-6235 ext.253, or write to them at Woodshop@LarcLeeCounty.org.

**Raffle:** For our raffle, about 20 plants were donated by various members. Larry Giroux led the discussion for all the plants with Luli Westra assisting.

**Meeting adjourned:** 3:15 PM

Respectfully submitted by Alison Ackerman

## **Minutes of the CBS General Meeting** **LC/FM Garden Council Building     June 19th, 2026**

**Call to order:** by President Julie Stein

**In Attendance:** 21, with 1 guest.

**Announcement:**

Bill and Betsy Burdette have offered their home for our October 2026 general membership meeting. Their beautiful garden will be open for touring. They ask that everyone bring an appetizer. There will be more information about this in future newsletters.

Julie reminded us of the upcoming speaker, Andy Siekkinen from California, who is scheduled for our August meeting. Andy and Pam Koide, also from California, scheduled for later this year, are being hosted by The Bromeliad Societies of the Palm Beaches, The Bromeliad Society of South Florida and us with a grant from the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies. Watch your newsletters for more information.

**Membership Sales:** David Denholm and Diane Cornelison had a nice selection of plants for sale; each donated generously to the raffle table. Thank you both.

**Workshop:** For the workshop, Julie created a Bingo game based on pineapples. Everyone played two games and the winners took home a pineapple-themed prize.

**Program:** Larry Giroux created an interesting slide show highlighting various facts about all kinds of pineapples, ornamental ones and of course edible ones. He showed some of the more colorful ones available for purchase on the internet. In addition, methods for preparing and growing pineapples from the crowns of the fruits and offsets were displayed. The progression of a developing pineapple using serial photos was also included. Julie Stein contributed a fascinating tidbit: pineapples are graded using what's called a Brix Score, a measure of its sweetness. A pineapple with average sweetness typically earns a score of between 12 and 14. This means that 12-14% of the fruit is actually sugar by weight. Betty Ann also shared a story of some history



**Neo. Tossed Salad from BSI.org**

**Neo. Grant's Red Tiger from etsy.com**



about pineapples, namely that in 1493 they were first introduced to Spain after Columbus came back from his voyage to the New World and that they became a status symbol of the very rich due

to their rarity and expense. In today's dollars a pineapple in the 1700's could cost \$8000, making them objects for theft.

11 members brought delicious treats and their special recipes featuring pineapples for our **Judged Food Contest**. Kay Janssen, Luli Westra and Vicky Chirnside were our three judges. Judges sampled each entry and selected their best two dishes. Barbara Barton won 1<sup>st</sup> place with her homemade pineapple ice cream, Dave Denholm won 2<sup>nd</sup> place with his pineapple meatballs. Their prizes consisted of gift bags containing a selection of gardening gifts or kitchen utensils including a pineapple de-corer.

**Show & Tell:** Members brought about 8 plants for Show & Tell, including several beautiful *Billbergias* owned by Dave Denholm. Julie brought a blooming *Guzmania monostachia*, one of our Florida natives growing in the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park in southern Florida, not often seen in bloom. Larry Giroux presented a variegated pineapple plant resembling *Comosus* "Lava Blast". Edith Wenslaflf brought 2 unnamed *Neoregelias* including an older cultivar that could be one of the late Joe and Peggy Bailey's named plants distributed by Dean Fairchild at Bullis Nursery such as *Neoregelia* 'Tossed Salad' as well as a beautiful marked, glossy, banded Neo. ... possibly, *Neoregelia* Grant's Red Tiger.

**Raffle:** For our raffle, we gave away about 9 plants to the lucky winners including a pineapple, of course!

**Meeting adjourned:** 3:35 PM

Respectfully submitted by Alison Ackerman





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**July Speaker**

**Alex Bello**  
Miami, Florida  
Photo by Dr. Larry Giroux



**August Speaker**

**Andy Siekkinen**  
San Diego, California  
Photo from BSI.org

**This is your July-August 2026 CBS Newsletter**