

# **FLORIDA COUNCIL of BROMELIAD SOCIETIES INC.**

## **Newsletter**

This Newsletter published by Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies, Inc. & mailed to all paid up members of those Bromeliad Societies of Florida which make up the Council. Non-members may subscribe for \$2.00 per year.

Make checks payable to:

Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies

Mail to:

Carol Johnson, Editor at cover address

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**Volume XVII - Issue IV**

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**November 1997**

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## Catching Up - Staying Even

**1997 EXTRAVAGANZA:** While attendance was down somewhat at the 9/20 event, nobody could fault the organization or execution of the featured events by the host societies, Broward and South Florida Bromeliad Societies. I was particularly impressed with the addition of the seminars.

It has seemed to me that instructing our membership is an area where we all fall down. It was a real fun time and I even enjoyed the fire drill at the hotel. We had to leave early Sunday A.M., so missed the Frazel open house, but the collection at the Kauffman's was very impressive. The rare plant auction brought in \$1,800.00 for the Weevil Fund. Many thanks to the hard-working hosts. Next year's Extravaganza will be hosted by Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society, in September, in the Daytona area.

**OCTOBER FCBS MEETING** was hosted by Treasure Coast Bromeliad Society at the home of Tim & Cassandra Barrett. Their home is a stilt house of the kind that has always fascinated me, and it was very attractive. The real impression was made by their blooming, gigantic traveller palms. They were gorgeous. Next FCBS meeting will be hosted in January 1998 by Bromeliad Society of Central Florida.

**WELCOME** a new member to FCBS, the Boca Raton Bromeliad society, which joined the Council at the October meeting. Incidentally, since we have new societies, let me make clear: The name and address of all new members should be sent to the Newsletter editor, but do not send any additional assessment. The assessment is billed in August of each year, and any new members in between will receive the Newsletter at no charge.

If we include dual members, our Newsletter membership is now 824. Only about 45 of these are out of state or complimentary. Complimentary members are BSI Directors and Committee Chairmen.

RECENTLY I received a telephone call from a man who said "They tell me you can settle an argument, and I will abide with what you say. The other guy says I can't grow Guzmanias in full sun, and I tell him I do. He was appalled. Now, you settle it." For once, I got smart and said "Where are you calling from?" He said: "Spokane Washington". "Well" I said, "you are both right." I spent 3 years in Alaska and Washington state has a climate very similar to that of Juneau. There is rain and overcast a disproportionate amount of time, so your Guzmanias are no doubt happy as clams when the sun shines." Just goes to show, there are no cut and dried rules when it comes to growing conditions for bromeliads.

SPEAKING OF GROWING CONDITIONS; At the time of the 1996 World Conference in Orlando, Nat DeLeon, Ervin Wurthmann and myself hosted a question and answer seminar. One of the questions asked was: "Which of the bromeliads is tolerant of exposure to salt water conditions?" That was a question which we were hard put to answer. Has there been any research on the subject? All you growers who reside in coastal areas, please let me know if you have any information on the subject. I am an inlander, so am egregiously ignorant.

WELCOME eleven new fully accredited Florida BSI Bromeliad judges as reported by Betty Ann Prevatt the Florida-Georgia Judges Registrar. They are: George Aldrich, Carol Breen, Anne Kauffman, Ed Prince, Moyna Prince, John Welsh, Marie Bessilieu Larry Giroux, Dianne Molnar, Jim Schrenker and Virginia Schrenker. Connie Johnson has been reinstated as a Master Judge and Gene McKenzie is the newly elected additional member to the Judges Certification Committee. Congratulations to all!

QUOTE FROM Henry Nehrling, pioneer Florida botanist: "Florida is at all times a most wonderful and, at the same time, a most mysterious state. The mysteries in air and sky, the setting of the sun, the bright moonlight, the roaring of the waves, the deep dense cypress swamps and the hammocks, the evidently monotonous pine barrens--

## ORTHOPHYTUMS ARE EXTRA-ordinary

by Carol Johnson

The latest binomial listing compiled by Harry Luther and Edna Sieff and published by the Bromeliad Society in 1996 lists 26 species in the genus *Orthophytum*. I now have in my collection 11 species and some additional varieties thereof, having lost some thru mismanagement or neglect. Also, there are some, such as *O. disjunctum*, which are confusing to classify.

*Orthophytums* respond more readily to light and culture than probably any other of the bromeliads. Generally quite spiny with brittle leaves, the plants (according to the Brazilians) are related to the *Cryptanthus*, but have a more pronounced bloom spike and elongated growth. Their native habitat is the area of Bahia and Minas Gerais states in Brazil, areas which suffer harsh, dry conditions much of the year. However, here in Florida, any attempted or accidental exposure to drouth conditions results in dismal failure for the plants. Over the years I have become convinced that the plants stall during our cold months, yet our recent cool, wet November has resulted in miraculous rejuvenation of all my *Orthophytums*. In the last 10 years Brazilian collectors have brought us several new species and there are probably many more yet to come. Beware of seedlings. When grown on the same bench, *Orthophytum* species have a tendency to cross-pollinate with like forms and produce some weird progeny. I use a heavy, rocky mix and fertilize heavily at least once a year.

My favorite species are:

*O. alvimii*. This is an erect form with the bloom carried on a fairly tall, bright red stem. The flowers are white. Fairly new in cultivation, I got mine from Elton Lemi in 1983. It pups freely but is not stoloniferous.

*O. burle-marxii*. This is an open, low rosette with brilliant red center leaves and white flowers. It is not easy to grow in Florida, and has a tendency to get progressively smaller with each generation of offsets, at least in Florida. I work a little lime into the pot periodically.

*O. glabrum*. This plant does very well in Florida. It has a raised bloom spike, is extremely stoloniferous and is a beautiful, glistening red in the summer sun. Too much fertilizer destroys foliage color. This *Orthophytum* is larger than most.

*O. gurkenii*. In 1983 I was offered a tiny plant of this species for \$220.00. Now, 14 years later nearly everyone has it. It is a large plant with brown and silver, wide foliage and a tall chartreuse bloom spike bearing tiny white flowers. The plant self seeds liberally, but seedling should be selected out carefully to avoid perpetuation of inferior forms.

*O. fosterianum*. This plant I have owned forever. It has softer spines than most of the *Orthophytum* but reminds me of the old "walking iris", as it puts out a stolon, the end of which a new plant grows, and when it becomes heavy enough, it drops to the ground, roots and moves on. In 1983 I received a plant from Brazil called *O. sucrei*. This has since been reclassified as a variety of *O. fosterianum*. It is a good bit smaller, but has the same "walking" habit and its foliage is a beautiful rose red in good light. The *O. fosterianum* are very tough. I have yet to lose one to cold. Droughth, yes.

*O. navioides*. This is another of the low growing open rosette type of *Orthophytum* which I find difficult to grow in Florida. Perhaps it likes air and soil with similar humidity to thrive. *O. navioides* is the seed parent of several beautiful bigeneric *Neophytums*.

*O. saxicola*. Everybody has this *Orthophytum*. *Saxicola*, which means "growing on rocks", does not work for me, as I tried growing it on a piece of feather rock. The plants all died. Prolific, colorful, tough as nails, the plant can become a beautiful Cinderella in the right conditions overnight. There is a variegated form. Quite small, I sometimes grow it around the base of tubular plants in larger pots to keep the weeds down.

*O. vagans*. This is another of the tall, stoloniferous forms of *Orthophytum*. Its lower leaves regularly deteriorate and expose definite sections of stem bearing roots. The plant can be broken off and the sections planted to produce new stock. It has a distinct tendency to sprawl and soil does not seem to support the stem. It turns fiery red, with fairly large (for the genus) white flowers. There is a variegated form of this plant.

#### Hybrids--

- O. Blaze* (*vagans* x *navioides*) Nat DeLeon
- O. Copper Penny* (*saxicola* x *vagans*) Hendrix  
(this is a good dish garden plant).

#### Bigenerics--

- Neophytum Firecracker* (*navioides* x *fireball*)  
Hendrix
- Neophytum Gary Hendrix* (*princeps* x *navioides*)  
Nat DeLeon
- Neophytum Ralph Davis* (*navioides* x *meyendor-  
fii*) Nat DeLeon
- Neophytum Medalist* (*ampullaceae* x *navioides*)  
Weckbacher

Remember, In Florida, throw away all the cultural advice regarding *Orthophytums*. "Things are Really Different Here".



11 October 1997

## REPORT TO FCBS

### Additional Florida counties where *Metamasius callizona* has been detected.

In May 1997, Bob Whitty, County Extension Director in Martin County, telephoned me to say that *M. callizona* had been discovered damaging pineapple at Palm City, near Stuart. This is the first record from Martin County. Thus, the weevil has been found in all east counties from Dade north to St. Lucie.

In August 1997, on a trip from Palm Beach to Ft. Myers, I stopped at LaBelle, Hendry County, and checked for the presence of *M. callizona* in fallen *Tillandsia*. I found one weevil larva inside a cocoon in a fallen *T. urticulata*. This is the first record for Hendry County. You may remember that I had failed to find the weevil at Labelle during a visit there in March 1996.

### Bromeliad Biota Web site.

These 1997 records for the weevil have been added to my Bromeliad Biota web site at <http://www.ifas.ufl.edu/~frank/bromel.htm>

Two other "chapters" have been added to the Web site. They are (1) about Crustacea (including crabs) known from bromeliads. and (2) about Rotifera known from bromeliads.

### Further surveys for the weevil in Florida.

On Sunday 12 October through Tuesday 14 October I expect to spend time surveying for the presence of the weevil in southwest Florida, from Sarasota County southward.

### Manuscripts for Journal of the Bromeliad Society.

In July 1996, the BSI board made it clear that it wanted me to send articles for publication in the Journal. So I sent one article, which was published this year (vol. 47, pages 60-64). My colleague Ron Cave has sent two articles, one on bromeliads in cloud-forests in Honduras, and the second on insects including weevils in bromeliads there.

### Shipment of *Metamasius callizona* to Honduras.

In August, Ron Cave was in Florida and I gave him larvae of *Metamasius callizona* to take back to Honduras to work on in quarantine. In September I shipped more larvae to him. These weevils are now alive and healthy and in a quarantine facility in Honduras where they are available for the work of student Diego Alvarez.

### Studies by Diego Alvarez in Honduras

The summer rains came late in Honduras, but when they started Diego was able to obtain plenty of weevils and flies in nature. He is now writing parts of his thesis and working on the flies. I expect Diego's examination and defense of his thesis will be in late November or early December. I expect to be invited to it as part of his committee.

FLORIDA COUNCIL OF BROMELIAD SOCIETIES, INC.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Third Quarter 1997 at September 20 30

Beginning Balance, General Fund \$ 4,952.10

Deposits:

Assessments (All Pd.)	1,460.00	
Other	10.00	<u>1,470.00</u>
		6,422.10

Expenses:

Quill, Supplies	81.10	
Selby Gardens (BIC)	300.00	
Cater (Reimb)	250.00	
1st Class Postage	65.00	
Extravaganza-Mail	84.00	
" Mail Serv.	45.00	
" Print Cards	19.92	
" " Letters	20.78*	169.70

Vol. XVII #3:

Print	535.30	
Mail	88.60	
Mail Svc.	45.00	668.90

Total Expense: 1,534.70

Balance, General Fund: \$ 4,887.40

Beginning Balance, Weevil Fund: 6,385.32

Deposits:

Treasure Coast	100.00	
Imp. Polk	100.00	
Caloosahatchee	68.00	
Seminole B. S.	<u>1,000.00</u>	
	1,268.00	
Rare Plant Auction	<u>1,799.00</u>	<u>3,067.00</u>

Sub-total, Weevil 9,452.32

Expense:

SHARE		<u>1,300.00</u>
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Balance, Weevil Fund, 9/30 8,152.32

BALANCE IN BANK, 9/30, Reconciled \$13,039.72

\* Outstanding, 9/30/97

Submitted: Carol M. Johnson, Treasurer

FLORIDA COUNCIL OF BROMELIAD SOCIETIES, INC.

Minutes of business meeting from October 11, 1997

Hosted by the Treasure Coast Bromeliad Society,  
Site, home of Cassandrs Barrett, Vero Beach, Fla.

The October meeting was called to ordder by  
Larry Giroux. The minutes were corrected and  
approved. The treasurer's report was accepted.  
There were 19 reps in attendance. Dr. Frank was  
present.

Polly Pascal gave a financial report of the '97  
Extravaganza.

	\$6,079.00 Plant Sales, Gross
-	4,559.00 Sellers Share
-	364.00 Sales Tax
	<hr/>
	\$ 1,156.00 Gross Profit
-	438.48 Expenses
	<hr/>
	\$ 717.52 Profit

Profit split for each society, Bromeliad Society  
of Broward County and Bromeliad Society of South  
Florida, \$358.76 each.

Carol Johnson reported that the rare plant auc-  
tion netted \$1,800.00. A vote was taken and it  
was approved that the funds go to the Weevil Fund  
Carol said that \$1,300.00 for the last quarter  
had been sent from the Weevil Fund to the U Fla.  
student assistant (SHARE) leaving a balance of  
\$8,152.32.

There was a discussion of the pros and cons of  
the red tags used at the Extravaganza.

Dr. Howard Frank reported on the Weevil. (See  
his full report this issue).

Karen Andreas said there had been over 1,000 visitors to the Council home page. Also, there are 7 to 10 hits a day. She reminded us to send info to her.

Larry introduced the Boca Raton Bromeliad Society members, Heather and Bryan Poltrock. A motion was made and passed to make the Boca Raton Society a new member of the Florida Council. Boca has about 18 members. Welcome, Boca!

Regarding BSI membership, Ron Schoenau relayed there were now 1,572 members, 118 dual memberships. Ideas were shared for creating new memberships at society meetings.

A motion was made and passed to purchase envelopes for the next year.

Joy Myers requests show date. Tampa and Miami have the same date, March 28 & 29, 1998.

A reminder to societies to include some new judges in their juried shows.

Host for the next meeting will be the Bromeliad Society of Central Florida - Boggy Creek Nursery in Kissimmee, Fla.

Larry closed the meeting thanking the hosts, Treasure Coast and Cassandra Barrett for a wonderful lunch.

Respectfully submitted,

MARTHA KENT

## POTTING SOIL & ROOT SYSTEMS

by Carol Johnson

It is amazing how many people ask me about the proper potting mix for bromeliads. Then they are amazed when I tell them I think the potting mix is the least important factor in growing the plants. Consider--we go into the jungles, climb to the tree tops and wrest the plants loose, carry them home and cover their roots with soil. In the wild the roots are hold-fast organisms, not feeders, and serve their purpose, which is to hold the plant in position to receive the bounty of the air, rotting foliage and bird droppings. The roots which form in potted plants are not the same as those of the wild plants. We now have feeder roots. But, unpot some of the plants and you will see a circle of root mass clinging to the side of the pot, trying to get purchase while in the center of this ball is a hole big enough to put your hand into. I call them homesick bromeliads.

Of course, potting is the only practical way to grow bromeliads in controlled space and environment, and then there are the purely terrestrial plants which must always be potted. However, I find that there are a great many bromeliads which grow beautifully in an empty pot, upright, with water always in the cup. There are some plants which do not like Florida that can be grown well in empty pots. I grow all *Vriesea fosteriana* cv. Red Chestnut in empty pots (clay), and keep them that way until they bloom. That is the only way to keep the lower leaves from continually going bad. I potted and exhibited a *Vr. Red Chestnut*, in bloom, which had absolutely no roots but a big club foot in their place. Other *Vrieseas* which can be grown this way are: *Vr. guttata*, *platynema*, *gigantea*, *heiroglyphica*, *bituminosa* and probably many more.

There are many other genera which do very well in empty pots, but I confess that many of those are "one of these days" jobs that I keep putting off. I picked up a beautiful *Neoregelia* hybrid

the other day and found it setting in an empty pot, rooted to the bottom and happy as a clam.

When the clocks go back to standard time, we stop taking offsets from our *Neoregelias*, especially the *concentrica* types. In those cases where we do take pups, we stand them in empty pots until the growing season rolls around. They rarely make roots when potted in soil during the cold, short days and very often may rot. Since the *Aechmeas* are the most reliably epiphytic, just about any of them can be grown without a pot. Right now I have an *Aechmea blanchetiana* and *Aechmea mulfordii* in bloom in empty field pots.

My son and I pot plants side by side. He has his favorite mix and I have mine. Both of us think our mix is the best, but, in the final analysis, it is what you do after potting that makes the difference in the finished product.

Cont'd from page 2--

extremely interesting to those who are accustomed to roam in them--are endless and form a lifelong study to those who find pleasure in the study of nature." Right on, Henry!

FCBS, as a courtesy to the Orlandiana World Conference, has just completed mailing the official handbook of the 1996 Conference and you should have received them in the mail by now.



## SHOW PAGE

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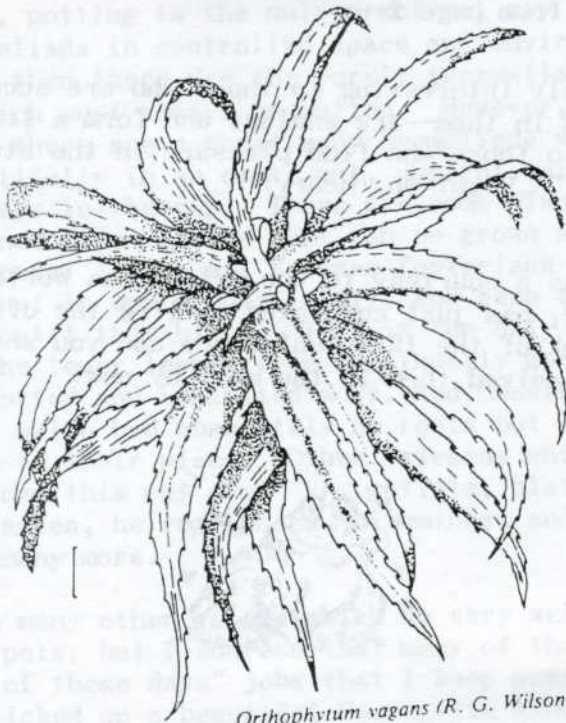
December 1997 - A Merry Christmas to all as you enjoy your society party.

March 27-29, 1998 Tampa Federation of Garden Clubs Annual Show. Participating with bromeliads will be Bromeliad Guild of Tampa Bay.

March 28-29 Bromeliad Society of South Florida Annual Show & Sale at Fairchild Gardens, Miami.

May 8-10, 1998 - Annual Mother's Day Show and Sale at Florida Mall, Orlando  
Tentative date.

July 1-5, 1998 - 13th World Bromeliad Conference "Bromeliad Roundup"; Houston, Texas.  
We have received NO press releases or requests for publicity re this event.



*Orthophytum vagans* (R. G. Wilson 578)