

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

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Carol Johnson, Editor at cover address

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MAY 1998

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CATCHING UP - STAYING EVEN

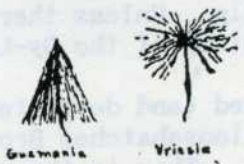
THE NEXT issue will contain the 1998 state roster. Membership assessment invoices (\$2) per member will be mailed about August 1. It is important that I have complete, up to date rosters from all societies by that time. Area and zip codes have been a real problem the last couple of years. I can only list everyone correctly if I have the proper information. Please help. Unless there is insistence, there will be no reprinting of the By-Laws in August.

Just recently, I received (and deposited) a check for the Weevil Fund from the Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society in the amount of \$1,316.00. This is the proceeds from their annual plant auction held especially to benefit the Weevil Fund. Many thanks. Donations have been slowing down drastically--it would be pleasing to see some action from some of our other societies.

When you read Dr. Frank's Weevil Report, please note that Wally Berg of Sarasota has a weevil named for him: "Wally's Weevil", but this one turned out to be no threat. Dr. Frank sent me an illustration (beauty is in the eyes of the beholder), but I could not get it to reproduce properly, so cannot show you what it looks like. Also, it was reported at the January FCBS meeting that the "Evil Weevil" has been discovered in Corkscrew Swamp, feeding on our native *T. flexuosa*, an extremely rare Florida species. If you have *T. flexuosa* in your collection and it self-seeds, please save the seed, plant them or give them to someone who will.

Make plans to attend the Extravaganza in Daytona in Sept. and also the World Bromeliad Conference in Houston in July. See details elsewhere in this Newsletter about both. The August issue will feature our Extravaganza.

SALT TOLERANCE: In a recent issue I asked for comments regarding salt tolerance of bromeliads. Jim Boynton of Florida West Coast Bromeliad Society (he does a beautiful newsletter, by the way) was to send web page comments to me. When I saw the comments, I knew I could not use them, as 90% were regarding the genus *Tillandsia*, which, of course, considering the habitat, would be the least likely of all bromeliads to be affected by salt. Terrestrial bromeliads stand the greatest chance of salt damage, and that is the information we seek. I did get some valuable comments from Florida growers, and these were published.



Ananas



Cryptanthus



Aechmea



Dyckia



Puya



Pitcairnia

DYCKIAS

by

Carol Johnson

It seems that whenever Dyckias are discussed, they are lumped with the rest of the subfamily Pitcairnioideae and given little attention. They are, however, very much different and deserve special attention. Terrestrial plants with wicked spines and tremendous root systems, they really should be grown in the ground and not in pots, as they conform poorly to potting. All (at least 90% anyhow) are indigenous to Brazil, and 100% from South America. While the bloom spikes may be susceptible to frost, the plants are extremely hardy and seem to thrive during the cold season in Florida.

Blooming occurs in Florida, normally, between February and May. I am probably wrong, but I swear many of my Dyckias seem to bloom more than once from the same plant. Blooms are yellow thru orange, stand well above the foliage, and are susceptible to chewing insects while in bloom.

Of the more than 100 Dyckia species named in the bi-nomial alpha list, it is doubtful that more than 10 or 12 species exist in our Florida collections, and these species are (to me) of doubtful authenticity if grown from seed, as the plants enthusiastically cross pollinate and produce some strange progeny.

Culture: As I have said, Dyckias do best in the ground. In Brazil, they grow in arid regions and on rocky outcroppings, but over the years I have found that if you are going to grow the plants in pots, overpot to accommodate the root system, keep well watered and fed, and furnish small amounts of lime as a top dressing twice a year. Soft and orchid scale seem to be fond of Dyckias, and the best treatment for this is a 50/50 spray solution

of alcohol and water.

Growing from seed: The Dyckia seed are the only bromeliad seed which I make a habit of covering at planting time. Lightly, lightly, or perhaps just push the seed into the soil with toothpick. Taking Dyckia seed is quite an experience. The seed is produced at the top of the tall bloom spike, where the three part capsule turns dark brown and eventually splits open. Stacked in the pods like pennies in a coin wrapper, seeds must be taken just when the pod splits. Delay even one day and the seed are gone with the wind. Take seed when the pod is not completely ripe and germination will be poor or non-existent. The plants do cross-pollinate, so if you want to keep pure species, stick with the offsets.

Bigenerics: While the Dyckias cross pollinate freely, it is beyond my understanding how it is possible to manage a bi-generic cross with any other Pitcairnioideae considering the physical makeup of the various seed. Hazel Quilhot swore she had what she called "Dyckipoo" Dyckia X Puya but I always maintained that any resulting seed must be a selfing of one side or the other, and I have yet to see a bloom on any so-called bi-generic.

There is one hybrid resulting from *D. encholirioides* x *D. brevifolia* which has no spines on the leaves at all. It is called *D. Naked Lady*. It is apparently sterile, as I have never known one to bloom.

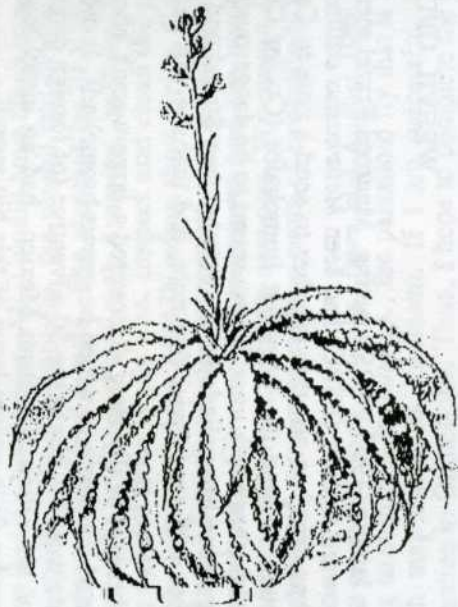
Many Dyckias are not suitable for a collection where space is limited. Recommended species are: *D. brevifolia* (+ orange glow), *dawsonii* (which does not readily self-seed), *fosteriana*, *choristaminea*, *remotiflora*, *platyphylla*, and *marnierlapostolle* (a little difficult in Florida). I have yet to authenticate any of my supposed hybrids. I inherited a very nice, red plant from Geo. Anderson which I named *D. Nola Red*. Also,

I am growing seedlings from Mr. Foster's Lad Cutak, which should be quite an adventure.

Hint: When you boil eggs, save the water, and (when cool) pour in on the soil in the Dyckia pots. Calcium.

Dyckias are attractive, different bromeliads, and belong in every collection. Just remember that you are in Florida and don't try to grow them as you would in Brazil.

Note: I have a *Hechtia marnier-lapostolle* which is setting copious seed which look viable. It will be interesting to see what results, or did it just cross pollinate with the Dyckias which were in bloom at the time?



Dyckia fosteriana



18 April 1998

WEEVIL UPDATE

At the January 1998 FCBS meeting, Maureen Frazel mentioned that a member of the Bromeliad Society of Broward County (BSBC) had seen *Metamasius callizona* in Collier County (at Corkscrew Swamp?). She was urged to ask that member to send a note to Carol Johnson for publication in the Newsletter. Although I found the weevil at Immokalee (Collier County) in March 1996, I did not know it had moved farther south - and it now seems to be dangerously close to the center of distribution of Florida's rarest native bromeliads in the Fakahatchee Strand and the Everglades. I hope that the BSBC society member will send Carol that note, and that she will put it in the next Newsletter.

In February, Wally Berg discovered a large weevil, about twice the size of *Metamasius callizona*, in a screened enclosure in which he grows bromeliads. It did not belong to any of the 526 native species of Florida weevils, nor to the 50 adventive (of foreign origin) species now living in Florida. He found that one of his *Tillandsia*, from Mexico, had an insect-made mine, but the mine was too small to have harbored a fully grown larva of this big weevil.

Wally's weevil belongs to the genus *Cholus*, estimated to have more than 100 species, but quite a few of them undescribed. Two are known as pests of pineapple: *Cholus spinipes* in Grenada and *Cholus vauriae* in Venezuela respectively (see <http://www.ifas.ufl.edu/~frank/wvbrom.htm>). The entomologists who studied those pests did not study their effect on native bromeliads in those countries, so the host-bromeliad range is unknown. No other described species of *Cholus* is known to feed on bromeliads. Wally's weevil belongs to an undescribed species. It seems to have come from Panama, because a very few similar specimens - without any bromeliad-host data - exist in insect collections and are from Panama. Wally did collect bromeliads in Panama in 1996, and he brought those plants to Florida.

Wally's weevil has been photographed. It is still alive in a glass jar behind locked doors, and is provided with bromeliads and apple slices as food, both of which it eats. It seems to be a virgin female - incapable of laying fertile eggs.

Wally is a careful collector of bromeliads. He obtains permits to collect in the countries he visits, and he obtains USDA/APHIS importation permits. Further, and very importantly, he cleans the plants he collects and treats them with chemical pesticides. Nevertheless, this weevil specimen got by him. We almost had a new disaster. All it would have taken in addition would have been one male weevil of the same species. Or, alternatively, the weevil that Wally inadvertently brought to Florida might instead have been a fertilized female. The message is: **PLEASE, if you collect bromeliads in Mexico or the West Indies or Central or South America, or if you import bromeliads from those places, be even more careful than Wally was. Inspect and clean the plants abroad. Dip them in pesticides abroad. Dip them in pesticides AGAIN when they arrive. Keep them isolated in screened enclosures (use standard 16-mesh window-screening with no gaps anywhere) to prevent all but the tiniest insects from escaping. Observe the enclosures and the plants within them for at least a year in case you have inadvertently imported a new pest. We cannot afford any new pests of bromeliads - and there are plenty of extremely serious pests of bromeliads that we do not yet have in Florida.**

I plan to spend up to 6 weeks, from mid-August 1998, in Honduras. There, I will spend all my time trying to culture *Admontia* sp., the parasitoid fly that is known to attack *Metamasius quadrilineatus* and which may attack *M. callizona*. If I am successful, I will be able to bring a stock of this fly to quarantine in Gainesville. Thus, I hope to complete the project that was begun by Dr. Ronald Cave and FCBS-supported student Diego Alvarez.

Howard Frank

DIGEST OF MINUTES; FLORIDA COUNCIL OF BROMELIAD SOCIETIES, INC.; APRIL 18, 1998, AT THE HOME OF LARRY GIROUX, Rep. from Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society.

Following a very sumptuous luncheon, the meeting was called to order by FCBS Chairman Joy Meyer. Corrections to mailing addresses and additions of E-mail addresses, if available, were added to said list.

BSI membership reported at 1729 as of 3/1/98, up from 1422 on 11/96.

FCBS website has received 2311 hits. New material is always appreciated; send to Karen Andreas.

Extravaganza 98 finalized and information is to be mailed to all members on FCBS bulk permit in due course. Bromeliad Guild of Tampa Bay volunteered to host Extravaganza 99.

Ed Hall has volunteered to become FCBS slide co-ordinator to provide programs to FCBS members. Submissions are welcome if properly identified. FCBS is to finance copies of said slides.

Karen Andreas will continue grant application process for next fiscal year for Endangered Plant council grants.

Next meeting is to be hosted by Tampa Guild and the date has been postponed to 7/18/98 to allow reps to return from the Houston World Conference.

Respectfully submitted,

Geoffrey C. Johnson, Sec'y
Bromeliad Society of Central Florida

