

FLORIDA WEST COAST BROMELIAD SOCIETY

1954-2020

Celebrating over 66 Years in Bromeliads

fwcbs.org



September 2020 Newsletter

NEXT MEETING

Date: Tuesday, ~~September 4~~ CANCELLED

Once again, our monthly meeting has been cancelled due to the ongoing health concerns associated with the COVID-19 epidemic. In addition, the church where we meet continues to keep their campus closed, which includes the rooms and facilities that groups such as ours use. Monthly meetings appear unlikely until the church opens their campus and it is safe for our group to meet.

LAST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

LAST MONTH'S PROGRAM

There is no program to report for the previous meeting that was cancelled due the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. This issue of our monthly newsletter features a summary of a program from June 2009 by Mike Owen, biologist with the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park. The park is located about 20 miles east of Naples between I-75 (Alligator Alley) and US Highway 41 (Tamiami Trail).

Florida Native Bromeliads

The Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park it is about 19 miles long (north-to-south) and 5 miles wide and home to 14 of the 16 bromeliad species native to Florida: 12 *Tillandsia*, three *Catopsis* and one *Guzmania*. One of these, *Catopsis nutans*, is considered rare and occurs only in the Fakahatchee Strand. Bromeliads and other epiphytes thrive there due, in part, to the tree canopy and surface water below that work together to moderate extremes in both high and low temperatures, resulting in a narrower range of year-round temperatures that is more suitable for their growth and survival. Two of the bromeliads in the genus *Tillandsia* found there are *Til. utriculata* (also known as 'Giant Airplant') and *Til. fasciculata*, pictured below.



Tillandsia utriculata



Tillandsia fasciculata

Bromeliad Weevil

The exotic Mexican weevil (*Metamasius callizona*), which eats native bromeliads such as *Catopsis nutans*, *Til. utriculata* and *Til. fasciculata*, was first documented in Florida in 1989 and discovered in the Fakahatchee Strand in 2002. By 2008, the weevil was devastating *Til. utriculata* and other *Tillandsia* in the extreme northern boundary of the park, just south of I-75, and was moving south. In 2009, Dr. Howard Frank [who was with the University of Florida at the time] and other researchers released a natural predator, *Lixadmontia frankii*, a weevil-eating fly to combat the weevil. Mike stated that while this parasitic fly also attacks native weevils, if the Mexican weevil was allowed to go unfettered, it would destroy native bromeliads and the micro-environment they foster, such as arthropods that live in them, lizards that sun on them and eat the arthropods, and so on up the food chain.



Mexican weevil nesting debris
inside *Catopsis nutans*

At the time of his talk, Mike had initiated a *Til. utriculata* monitoring program at the park to document impacts from environmental factors such as the Mexican bromeliad weevil, hurricanes, droughts, and frost events. He was tracking about 532 specimens of *Til. utriculata* over an area of 84 acres and planned to document annual winter survival and spring seed production.

2020 Update:

The introduction in 2008 of the parasitic predatory fly did not stop the bromeliad-eating weevil, and *Til. utriculata* destruction continued to the point where there was a 90 percent decline in its population within the park. Park staff subsequently intervened and by 2014 had gathered up 140 *Til. utriculata* from the park and sent half to the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens in Sarasota and the other half to the Naples Botanical Garden in Naples, effectively removing the weevil's food source. As a result, the weevil population declined and the *Tillandsias* were later returned to the park, along with over 2 million seeds they had produced.

NOTES:

For more information about the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve, check out their website: <https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/fakahatchee-strand-preserve-state-park>. The park was reopened to visitors this past July after the state had closed it temporarily in the spring due to coronavirus issues.

For information about Florida's native bromeliads, you can use this link, <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw205>, to the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) website and their article *Florida's Native Bromeliads*. The article lists all of the natives along with their descriptions, pictures, distribution, and other facts.

For even more information about Florida's native bromeliads, there is a comprehensive book on the subject titled *Native Bromeliads of Florida* in our society's library. Published in 2014, it was written by David Benzing and the late Harry Luther.

THIS AND THAT

Mexican Weevil Found in Port Orange

Excerpts from an article by Jay Thurrott in the Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society newsletters for November, December 2013, and March 2014

Here's something you don't want to hear: the presence of the Mexican weevil – the “evil weevil” – has been confirmed in a fallen *Tillandsia utriculata* in Port Orange. This is the first time that the invasive weevil (*Metamasius callizona*) has been positively identified in Port Orange. Tell-tale signs of the infestation are shown in the fallen *Tillandsia utriculata* in the picture on the right. Most noticeably, the central leaves of some of the fallen plants could be pulled out when tugged on gently and the leaves had raggedy bottom edges where they had been chewed. Others had browned areas where they had been chewed through and in some there were cocoons where the beetles had emerged.



What does this mean to you? It means that you should keep an even sharper eye on your collection to look for evidence of the weevil before it ruins your plants. (The picture on the right shows the relative size of the weevil.) Fortunately, the weevil is relatively easy to control and the same systemic pesticide that you may have used for control of scale on bromeliads will also protect your plants from the weevil. This also means that you should be very careful in picking up any fallen Tillandsias – they may harbor weevils and you may inadvertently bring them into your or your friends' collections.



Mexican weevil, relative size

Guidelines for detecting the presence of weevils in bromeliads



If you tug at the central leaves of a bromeliad and the leaves come free to show what look like chewed bases of the leaves (photo on left, note also the brown cocoon), you might have a weevil.

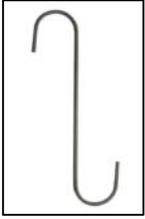
If what looks like a small cocoon (photo on right showing enlarged image) falls out of the central leaves of a bromeliad you might have a weevil.



If you have a black bug with a “Jimmy Durante” nose and yellow or orange markings like the one on the left (image enlarged), you might have a weevil.

NOTE: More information about the Mexican bromeliad weevil can be found on the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies website fcb.org, under “Weevil Information”.

Making 'S' Hooks for Hanging Plants



'S' hook

You do not need to spend a lot of money buying 'S' hooks (picture on left) for your hanging potted plants. You can make your own using galvanized, 9-gauge chain-link fence tension wire. This wire is available for purchase in a 170-foot long roll (picture on right) at Home Depot (\$32), Lowe's (\$25), and similar stores. To make the hooks, you will need a pair of bolt cutters (to cut the wire), a pair of pliers (for bending the wire into an 'S' shape') and a short piece of approximately 1 ½-inch



Role of chain-link fence tension wire

diameter (or larger) metal pipe around which to bend the hook to help shape it. The advantages of buying the wire in bulk are: 1) you can cut it any length you want/need; 2) you can make a hook whenever you want/need one; 3) the 170-foot length will last a long time and make many hooks; and, 4) it is ultimately far cheaper than buying individual, ready-made 'S' hooks.

IN THE GARDEN THIS MONTH



Aechmea "Spring Beauty"



Aechmea 'Frappuccino'



Tillandsia mallemonitii, which has a fragrant flower

BROMELIAD EVENTS, 2021

This section will be updated as information regarding future sales and shows becomes available. Those listed below have been scheduled at this time.

March 26-28, 2021, Tropiflora's 21st Annual Spring Festival

Tropiflora Nursery, 3530 Tallavast Road, Sarasota, 941-351-2267

(<https://tropiflora.com/pages/events>)

June 8-12, 2021, 24th World Bromeliad Conference, *The Big Show*, Sarasota, FL

Celebrate BSI's 70th anniversary, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Sarasota

(<https://www.bsi.org/new/conference-corner>)

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