

The Florida East Coast Bromeliad Society

Next meeting Sunday, November 14th, 1:30p.m.

Wm. A. Finney Memorial Garden Center
837 N. Oleander Ave., Daytona Beach 32118

November, 2010

Hurricane Season Results: No Storms This Year!

President – Jay Thurrott – 386/761-4804

Vice President – Jerry O’Keefe – 407/767-2442

Secretary – Audrey Hayes – 407/421-4026

Treasurer – Eve Krauth – 386/763-2084

This year’s Hurricane Season isn’t quite over yet. We still have a few weeks left *officially*, but *statistically*, our chances of getting our ears boxed by a storm this late in the year are pretty remote. All in all, 2010 was a mild hurricane year for Florida. Oh sure, there were a few idle threats as storms formed in the Atlantic and the news media reminded us constantly to “not let our guard down” (although I’m not quite sure what that means) but I think it’s safe to say that we’ve made it through another year in paradise without incident. Don’t relax too much though – “don’t let your guard down”! Our concerns now are going to be with approaching cold weather as we move into the Winter months. Have you thought about a plan or, better yet, do you have a plan *in place* to protect your bromeliads when those cold fronts start sweeping down from Canada to threaten our peace of mind? If your answer is ‘no’, I suggest that you get in touch with some of our club members to see what measures they take to protect their collections from cold weather. Winter is on its way and you need to prepare your

collection to survive the cold that is sure to come.

Last month’s meeting -

Dennis and Linda Cathcart presented a fascinating program on Singapore’s Gardens By The Bay, due to open on 11/11/11 – and what a field trip that would make!

A great program and a great selection of plants for sale. If you missed it, shame on you. Thank you Dennis and Linda for your visit with us and thank you for your donation of a beautiful blooming *Tillandsia duratii* for our raffle! Thank you also Sudi, for your generous (and frequent) donation of plants for the raffle and thank you Charlotte for the donation of materials that should make for some interesting and beautiful mounts.

We did very well last month regarding the on-going parking difficulties at the Garden Center. Parking at an angle on Oleander in front of the building allowed us to park quite a few more cars without having to risk some of the “no-parking” zones. Let’s try that again this month.

This month's meeting –

Dean Fairchild and Craig M. Allen will be visiting us this month. Dean will be talking about that sometimes mysterious, sometimes mystical process call *hybridizing*. What is it? How do we do it? Why do we do it?... and what can we hope to see as a result of it? Listen and learn – and, as a bonus, he will also teach us a little about how to use a 'key' to help identify bromeliads.

Then (we're going to keep him busy at this meeting!) Dean and Craig have agreed to look at and critique our entries in the "Artistic Challenge". I hope that you have all taken advantage of the past few months to think about this month's "Artistic Challenge" where we've asked you to come up with your very best artistic expression using bromeliads as a focal point. What are we talking about when we say "Artistic Challenge"? That's not exactly a category referenced in the BSI Judges Handbook, but I think by being much broader than what is described there we should be able to have lot of fun with this. In September's newsletter we said that this challenge is to include:

1) original art featuring bromeliads of course, but using whatever media you prefer (wood carving, painting, fabric, fiber arts, pencil drawings, etc.).

2) photography using prints from digital images, poloroids or good old 35mm camera prints.

3) decorative containers - and this is a category that is covered in the Judges Handbook where it is defined as "...a display of skillfully grown plant(s) with emphasis on harmony or contrast between the plants(s) and the container..." Originality and uniqueness are very important. This also includes decorative baskets and decorative dish gardens. Plants may be arranged or placed in the container just prior to bringing the container in for display. Do you have a seashell that you've always wanted to place a bromeliad in? This is your category – but pay attention to the comments above. It's more difficult to do well in this category than it seems!

4) artistic arrangements must have a theme for the arrangement and this should be listed on a 3 X 5 file card placed where the arrangement would be viewed. You can use entire plants, portions of bromeliads, and other non-bromeliad items in the arrangement, but bromeliads should predominate. List the bromeliads used in the artistic arrangement on the back of the card. We will be departing somewhat from the Judges Handbook on this category in that we will not be using niches of specific dimensions. Keep in mind, however that we don't want your display sprawling over an entire table. If you can't fit your arrangement in an area 2ft by 2ft, it's getting out of hand!

So, that's 4 separate categories that you can consider for this 'challenge' and please, don't think that you are limited to one entry – if you're very ambitious or you simply can't make up your mind on which one to enter, you may have more than one entry.

Epiphytes – Part 2

Last month we discussed a number of different materials that you may wish to consider when mounting some of the epiphytic varieties of bromeliads. One that was not mentioned and was brought to my attention is **seashells**. Everyone has seen the poor *Tillandsia ionanthes*, fastened to small seashells with a big glob of glue and left to fend for themselves on the shelves in the "big box" stores. Some of these find their way into homes to be stuck to refrigerator doors until they finally succumb to lack of water, lack of adequate light, or a combination of the two. Others never make it out the stores alive.

Before you roll your eyes at the very thought of the bromeliads mounted on shells, let me just say that a well grown bromeliad mounted in or on a seashell, done correctly and well-cared for can be a very nice decorative display. The key words are "well grown" and "well mounted". This is not the easiest type of mounted bromeliad display to care for since it needs to watered, fertilized, and placed in a location where it sees appropriate temperatures and humidities. These very same conditions, although ideal for bromeliad growth also foster algae and mold growth on seashells that can be difficult to

control and difficult to clean without dislodging the plant.



Vriesea mounted on old garden trowel

When we say “well-mounted”, what is meant is that the bromeliad should be fastened to the shell securely enough and for a long enough period of time to allow for the development of roots that will permanently anchor the plant to the shell’s surface.



Close up of roots firmly wrapped around the wooden handle

This is in contrast to the oversized dab of glue that those *T. ionanthas* are often seen sitting on. Not that there is anything wrong with using glue to mount a bromeliad to your favorite substrate. The function of the glue, however should be only to hold the plant in place long enough that roots can form to take over that function. In other words, there should be only enough glue to accomplish this and if your eyes are immediately drawn to the glob of glue rather than to the plant, the plant either hasn’t been growing mounted there very long or it is a variety that is very reluctant to form roots and probably should be

mounted in a different manner and on a different material.



Tillandsia utriculata mounted on tree trunk at Edison estate in Ft. Myers – “natural” mount

What bromeliads should be selected for mounting? That question is probably best answered by simply stating what not to use. First of all, **don’t chose terrestrials!** There are quite a few *Dyckias* and *Cryptanthus* that you may be tempted to use as mounted plants due to their size or shape, or simply because they are what you have on hand. These are plants however, that have extensive root systems and those roots serve more than to simply anchor the plant like the epiphytic bromeliads. Terrestrial bromeliads need their root systems just as much as non-bromeliads like tomato plants and you can imagine what the result might be if you were to mount a living tomato plant on a piece of driftwood.

Secondly, **use young plants** for your mount. Why? Young bromeliads are much more likely to produce roots to anchor themselves to your mounting medium than old plants. Remember, when you are dealing with epiphytes the main purpose of the roots is to anchor the plant. Once that is accomplished, the plant is free to attempt to reach maturity, bloom and release seeds before the branch it is anchored on breaks and crashes to the ground. Older plants are more likely to direct their energy into blooming and reproducing (forming offsets) rather than forming root systems.

A third suggestion - have some idea how large the plant you wish to mount will become at maturity so that you can match the size of the

mount with the ultimate size of the plant. If you fasten a small *Aechmea recurvata* form like var. *benrathii* to a large piece of driftwood, the overall balance of the piece will never be good. The opposite is also true. Attaching a specimen of *Ae. blanchettiana* to a small seashell can be done, but the overall appearance will that of a clumsy curiosity rather than an attractive mounted epiphyte. Also keep in mind that in some cases, a large bromeliad can trap and retain a substantial volume of water after one of our downpours and the sheer weight of that much water will need to be supported by the hanger attached to the mount. The hanger may fail or the tree branch or line that you hang the plant on may break from that applied strain. I've had large Vrieseas attach very well to driftwood pieces only to have the roots ripped out of the driftwood by the weight of water retained in the tank of the bromeliad with the result of the plant either crashing to the ground or hanging upside down by a few remaining roots.



Photo courtesy of Shell Horizons

Upcoming Events:

December 4th, 5th, 2011

Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society Plant Sale
(no show this year)
Terry Park, 3410 Palm Beach Blvd., Ft.
Myers

April 16th, 2011

South Florida Bromeliad Society show and
sale at Fairchild Gardens in Miami

April 30th, 2011

Sarasota Bromeliad Society show and sale at
Selby Gardens in Sarasota

