

Gainesville Bromeliad Society Meeting Minutes - March 22, 2026

Bob Stevens called the meeting to order at 2:03 pm, as Brian Dey was unable to attend. Bob welcomed the 23 attendees and opened the silent auction of 4 plants brought in by Nancy Mason.

Steve introduced the guest speaker, Marty Baxley of St. Petersburg. Marty has been growing bromeliads for 35 years and has owned Jungle Gems Nursery for 25 of those years, along with selling plants on eBay. Marty's talk is titled "Bromeliads, Fact or Fiction?"

Marty said though he owns Jungle Gems Nursery and intermittently sells his broms online, that is not his actual business. Rather, the bromeliads are a hobby gone crazy. His passion has driven him to amass over 4,000 different species and hybrids and he also enjoys hybridizing. Given the large number of bromeliads he is familiar with, he often encounters "new releases" or broms with different names that appear just like plants he already has. Are they really new? Is that a fact or fiction and how does that come about? Can you always trust the labels?

Marty gave a slide show talk to demonstrate his point. He spoke of many similar Neoregelia - 'Charms' and 'Cheers', 'Orange Crush' is now 'Freddie', 'Meltdown' and 'Sangria', to name a few. Marty said if Neo. 'Backstabber' reverts, it is Neo. 'High Intensity', and on and on! Neo. 'Dazzle' is a tissue culture clone of Neo. 'Magali'. Sometimes plants are given names (and high price tags) such as Aechmea 'Roberto Menescal' which is a variegated sport of Aechmea 'Black Zombie.' There is a variegated Quesnelia testudo named 'Farro', yet he has a very different existing plant named 'Farro' that is not as showy, so not as desirable. He has also seen species that have been given names.

Marty cites many reasons for the proliferation of names and subsequent confusion and errors. Sometimes, it is purely accidental. Often, it is a marketing consideration made by the nurseries to increase their slim profit margin, as new releases are more in demand. A very big reason is that the BSI registration process changed some years back to make naming bromeliads easier. Now, instead of registering crosses, anyone can register a plant name, resulting in an incredible number of "new" bromeliads.

It's hard to fix this, but Marty had a couple of suggestions that would help.

- If you get a non-variegated pup from a variegated mother plant, put the mother plant's name on the pup followed by 'novar'.
- Don't attach new names to species.

Someone asked Marty if he fertilizes his plants. He said he fertilizes his Tillandsias all of the time but does not fertilize his colorful Neos because too much fertilizer will cause them to lose their color.

Bob thanked Marty and opened the floor to Show and Tell.

JoAnn Winn showed two beautiful blooms from *Aechmea distichantha*. She has a very large clump of them with about 20 beautiful blooms now. They are very cold-hardy, so easy to grow and she really enjoys their gorgeous bloom. Marty, the guest speaker, said an *Aechmea distichantha* was his introduction to Bromeliads. Many years ago while clearing out his new property, he got a painful, hand-numbing stick from the spine of an unknown plant. His neighbor told him it was a Bromeliad and showed him his 18 varieties. Marty was intrigued and became hooked on them. Tootie admires the blooms but keeps hers in pots, as they do spread easily and the spines hurt.

Nancy Mason said we haven't talked about *Nidulariums* for a while, so she brought in two to show, *Nidularium rutilans* 'Leprosa' and *Nidularium innocentii* v. *innocentii*. In addition to their lovely foliage, they are good for the North Florida garden due to being cold tolerant down to about 28 degrees. They like partial shade and the bloom is nestled low in the center of the foilage. The 'Leprosa' will bloom pink, while *innocentii* will have a red bloom. Cold tolerance, she reminded all, does not mean frost-tolerance.

Steve then conducted a short business meeting.

- Steve asked for a motion to approve the February minutes. There was a motion to approve, it was seconded and all approved.
- Mary gave the treasurer's report. As of 3/19 we had \$1,172.02 in checking and \$4,071.93 in savings. Mary thanked all who have paid 2026 dues.
- Steve reported we made \$430 from the plant sale last month and thanked Bob, Brian, Elaine and Chris Waldman for handling that.
- Steve said the April meeting will be back at the Millhopper Library and the speaker will be Ray Lemieux. He will speak about *Tillandsia*.
- Steve said he has been compiling a list of plants with little or no cover that were unaffected by the freeze. His *Ae. distichantha* were uncovered and completely unharmed. His *Ae. comata* and *Ae. recurvata* were mostly okay. His *Dyckias* did fine, as did *Billbergia nutans*. Please continue to give him your observations so he can make a comprehensive list.
- Steve and Brian attended the Florida Council of the Bromeliad Society meeting on 2/28. The society is looking for a newsletter editor. If you are interested, let Steve know. The council meets 3 times a year and each society would be asked to contribute info for the newsletter.
- Steve reminded all of upcoming events
 - April 14 - 18 is the World Bromeliad Conference in Costa Mesa, California.
 - Fall plant sale at the Alachua County Agriculture and Equestrian Center will be October 17 from 9 - 4. As Steve is a member of the Gainesville Garden Club, we will have a booth. The main speaker will be Brie Arthur. She has been featured on the PBS show, *Growing A Greener World*, has many gardening You tube videos and is known for foodscaping -mixing edibles with other plants.

The raffle followed and went two rounds, thanks to everyone who brought in plants. The meeting was adjourned at 3:20pm