

Gainesville Bromeliad Society Meeting Minutes - May 24, 2026

Brian Dey called the meeting to order at 2:08 pm, welcoming the 27 members and 1 visitor, Jessica Martin. He opened bidding for the silent auction, pointing out that there were many items available.

Steve introduced the speaker, Kenneth Stokes. Though not a commercial grower, Ken is a life-long bromeliad aficionado and has been a member of the Bromeliad and Tropical Plant Society of Tampa since 1995. He grows many bromeliads in his Tampa yard and has made several collecting trips. By trade, he restores fine furniture and antiques and utilizes some of his treasures to display bromeliads. He will speak on bromeliad collecting considerations.

Ken said collectors used to be ultra-wealthy and used to have to travel the world to acquire unique bromeliads. Today, bromeliads are more widely available, thus broadening the ability for all to collect them. All can be collectors, but to be a good collector, consider the following:

- Focus on what you can properly take care of and nicely display. If your yard is all sunny, don't get rainforest plants. If you have mostly shade, avoid those plants that require full-sun.
- Create mini-environments - grouping shade plants together, sun plants together, etc.
- Consider getting a greenhouse, as they greatly expand the breadth of collecting.
- Start with the more common plants and upgrade. A good collection is always growing and upgrading.

Ken said now that you have a collection, you need to consider how to best display the plants. As an antique collector, Ken is uniquely able to show off both his plants and containers together. To demonstrate the value of properly displaying, he brought a table-full of lovely containers filled with unique bromeliads. There was a rare 18th century basket, various old, interesting metal containers, a rams-head pot, and old clay pots with decorative drawings. Ken gave the following advice on displaying your bromeliads:

- Be on the lookout for decorative containers that you can use as an outer container for potted specimens.
- Remember that copper and other heavy metals are toxic to bromeliads. To display in them, put your plant in a pot first and then put the pot in the metal vessel.
- Pressure treated lumber has been treated with chromated arsenicals. Don't use it.
- Be on the lookout for old wood stumps and tree limbs to use to mount broms. He brought a piece of a log from a camphor tree with a hole in the top and side - just ready for a couple of plants. Camphor stumps are rot-resistant and cedar limbs are also a good mounting material.
- For a large spectacular tillandsia display, don't always pull them apart and separate them. Allow them to clump and cascade.

- Remember that the pot size will influence the plant size. The plant will be smaller in a small pot and mounting can change the size, too. He demonstrated with two *Hohenbergias*. The older one was smaller, had a more compact, vase shape and was mounted on a stump. The younger one was in a good size pot, was larger and had a more open shape.

Ken encouraged all to become collectors. The commercial growers are always going to focus on what is profitable. They will not grow plants that are slow growers or slow puppers or a plant that requires special care. Do pick your battles and get what you can take care of, but do get some plants that require special care and make an extra effort to take care of them so they will continue to exist.

Steve said many of you know that Ron Schoenau has been in poor health and is transitioning to assisted living. He is giving up his home and has donated items to our society. Board members spent time at the Oak Hammock greenhouse last week organizing his bromeliads and separating those with pups. Ron is donating the pups to the society to sell at the Fall festival. Additionally, he donated bromeliad-related artwork and books and some of those are in today's silent auction. Thanks to Ron for the donations.

Show and Tell

Steve brought in a beautiful *Nidularium rutilans* in bloom. He pointed out two pups coming in between the leaves instead of from the bottom of the plant.

Nancy Mason showed the bloom of the *Portea petropolitana* on the silent auction table. It's beautiful for months. After it flowers, long-lasting berries appear.

Brian said:

- March and April minutes were sent to all prior to the meeting. There was a motion to approve, it was seconded and all approved.
- He is working on the new Gainesville Bromeliad Society trifold brochure. He is updating it and will have it printed before the Fall plant sale.

Mary gave the treasurer's report.

- As of 5/23/26, we have \$925.02 in checking and \$4,467.65 in savings.

Steve said:

- The June meeting will be at the Tower Road Library and the speaker will be Steve Beaudoin. He will talk about *Hohenbergias*. July, we will be back at the Millhopper library.
- The GBS board met 5/19 and discussed the dispersal of Ron's bromeliads and related material. Also discussed was the decline in membership. Our membership dues and plant sale proceeds adequately cover our expenses, but the declining numbers is of concern. We'd like to know why it has happened and make sure we are doing things of interest to the members. If you know any former members, please give us feedback as to why they did not return. Steve will reach out once more to invite them back and ask for feedback.

- Steve reminded all of the Fall plant sale at the Alachua County Agriculture and Equestrian Center on October 17 from 9 - 4. As Steve is a member of the Gainesville Garden Club, we will have a booth. Brie Arthur, (The Plant Lady on YouTube) is the main speaker. She has been on the PBS show, Growing A Greener World and is known for foodscaping -mixing edibles with other plants.

The business meeting was followed by the Raffle. Thanks to all who donated plants.

The meeting adjourned at 3:42.