



July 2021

WEBPAGE: <http://www.bssf-miami.org/>



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Bromeliad Society of South Florida

http://www.facebook.com/groups/BromeliadSSF/?bookmark_t=group



Facebook - Members
Bromeliad Society of South Florida

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bromeliad-Society-of-South-Florida/84661684279>



FCBS Newsletter

<https://www.fcbs.org/newsletters/FCBS/2021/05-2021.pdf>

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JULY 20, 2021 LIVE MEETING 7:30 PM
GARDEN HOUSE – NOT CORBIN BLDG
SPEAKER: DR. BRIAN SIDOTI - Research and Out-reach Activities on Long Lived Large Leaf Florida Broms.

FOOD OR DRINK WILL BE SERVED
MEMBER PLANT SALES ALLOWED IN JULY

BSSF Covid Rules

- To Insure Your Safety the Following are Covid Rules for In-Person Meetings:
- Masks are no longer required if you have been vaccinated.
 - If you have not been vaccinated, you must wear a mask and social distance.
 - There will be one entry and one exit at the back of the Garden House. The kitchen entry will be locked.
 - If you do not feel well or have a temperature – please stay home.
 - Seating will be 6 ft. apart. Family members or social bubble members may sit together.
 - Plan to arrive early to purchase plants.
 - Masks, disinfecting wipes, and hand sanitizer will be available at the entry.

GARAGE SALE

Cleaning out your closets? Save all those goodies for our garage sale, Saturday, August 28, 8 am - 2 pm.

NEW WORLD CONFERENCE DATES

June 7 2022 to June 12, 2022

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

If you booked rooms for this event, remember to cancel and rebook your reservations starting June 6, 2021

President's Message

On June 26, I had the pleasure of attending the Florida Council of Bromeliad Society's June meeting at the home of Mike Michalski and Patti Gonzalez, our FCBS reps. It was very interesting to hear from societies all over the state about what they are doing and how their meetings are going. FCBS has scheduled their next Extravaganza for 2023 in Palm Beach so it will be very easy for our members to attend. Several societies are just starting to have live meetings as their buildings have finally opened up. One society will not have live meetings until September! Listening to the reps made me feel very fortunate that our society is already on its way back to normal with our 4th live meeting coming up July 20. At this time last year we were inaugurating our first zoom meeting. We've come a long way in one year. This month we have a brand new speaker, Dr. Brian Sidoti, from Fairchild Garden. Dr. Sidoti did his dissertation on Tillandsia Fasciculata and I am sure we will have a lot to learn from him. He will not be bringing any plants so if you are interested in bringing plants for either the silent auction or member plants sales please contact Rene Izquierdo (silent auction) or Alex Bello (member plants sales). So please join us for a wonderful talk and lots of plants. See you at the meeting!

Maureen A

Speaker: Dr. Brian Sidoti

Dr. Brian Sidoti is the new program coordinator for the Fairchild Challenge. The challenge is an educational outreach program of Fairchild Garden that is now emulated worldwide. It brings plant research into classrooms throughout south Florida. It consists of a number of challenges issued to south Florida grade schools, middle schools and high schools. Schools answer the challenges to earn points and at the end of the school year the winners are announced at a get together where they receive gifts, such as new computers, for their schools. Dr. Sidoti has more than 18 years of experience working in botanical gardens and museum settings. Brian received his Ph.D. in botany from the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he studied the evolutionary history and conservation genetics of the Caribbean Basin Cardinal Airplant (*Tillandsia fasciculata*). Brian also has his M.S. in biology through Florida International University and Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden's graduate program.

Silent Auction and Member Plant Sale Rules

When we have a speaker bringing plants, we will only allow 4 plants for silent auction in order to give our speakers who travel here and pack up their plants a fair chance to sell their plants. If you would like to sell a plant at the silent auction you will need to contact Rene Izquierdo (rcizquierdo@bellsouth.net or 786 246-5813) and he will let you know if there is an opening for your plants(s). You will be paid 80% of the sale price and BSSF will receive 20%.

We will likewise defer to our speakers for member plant sales and will hold no member plants sales when we have a speaker bringing plants. When we do have member plant sales, all plants must be double tagged with 2 plant id tags, one for the buyer and one for us to total up the sales. You will again be paid 80% of the sale price. To participate in member plant sales, please contact Alex Bello (bellotropicals@yahoo.com or 239-223-6155) to schedule your sale so that we are not overrun with plants.

BSI World Conference
June 7-12, 2022
Sarasota, FL

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 23-24, 2021
BSSF Annual Show
@ Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden

October 1-3, 2021
Tamiami International Orchid Festival
<https://www.facebook.com/tamiamiorchidfestival/>

Ask Dr. Brom

Dear Dr. Brom: We recently had a speaker who said she hadn't fertilized her plants in 5 years, then said how well her plants were doing once she finally fertilized them. I am confused. To fertilize or not to fertilize?

Fertilizing bromeliads is indeed a confusing subject. Bromeliads are slow growers and only need a small amount of fertilizer. Also the cups on bromeliads supply them with a steady supply of organic matter. Bromeliads in the ground should not need any fertilizer as they get their nutrients from the surrounding soil. Also, remember bromeliads grow in the wild without any fertilizer at all. Many people like to grow bromeliads "hard" using as little light, water, and nutrients as possible for more variegation, more color and a more bushy and compact plant. More fertilizer will lead to larger, less compact and less brightly colored plants. With that said, all commercial growers use fertilizer to grow those large, robust plants that none of us can resist. Many have mechanized systems which takes the guesswork out.

What type of fertilizer to use? The consensus is to use slow release fertilizer in the spring and early fall. Time release comes in 3, 6, 9, and 12 month release. So if you only fertilize 2 times a year, the 6 month time release would be your choice. Time release fertilizer can be moisture release or temperature release. Osmocote is moisture release and Nutricote is temperature release. The exception to time release would be epiphytes like tillandsias which might not hold the slow release pellets well. In that case a liquid fertilizer would be the choice. Aside from time release a well balanced fertilizer such as 14-14 -14 is a good choice. Palm special fertilizer is a good choice also. Fertilizers with a high nitrogen content such as 30-14-14 will result in less color and longer strappier leaves. Too much nitrogen will also suppress a plant's ability to bud and flower. The exception to this is Alcantareas which benefit from high nitrogen. Whatever fertilizer you use, be consistent. Inconsistent use of fertilizer will show up in leaves of different length and color, something the judges will catch and penalize you for.

Do not fertilize your plants near showtime if you are going to enter them. Stop fertilizing several months before the show to maintain optimum color. Do not fertilize your plants during their dormant season – winter. Fertilizing during the winter can burn the leaves. It is also a good idea to fertilize a plant when you originally pot it up, when you repot or when planting a pup. A lot of our experienced growers and sellers only fertilize when potting a new plant or pup and never after that.

Bromeliads require a weak fertilizer, about ¼ the strength recommended on the label. For time release, about ¼ tsp. per plant will suffice, ½ tsp. for larger plants. Do not fertilize the central cup, instead top dress the soil around the plant. Be careful with copper in your fertilizer. Bromeliads do not like copper, especially cryptanthus.

Several of our experienced members and members who sell, as well as members of the FCBS Board from around the state were surveyed for this article. A few do not fertilize at all. Most fertilize when repotting or potting new pups. One grower says be careful fertilizing billbergias which seem to like less. One member believes fertilizer is not necessary for backyard growers.

Many environmentally conscious growers are worried about the phosphorous footprint on the environment. Phosphorous from fertilizers flushes into lakes and oceans and can be toxic for aquatic life. It is a source of algae blooms. For those who feel strongly this way, organic fertilizers or a compost tea are recommended. The most environmentally friendly commercially sold fertilizers are the time release which are coated and break down slowly.

So the bottom line is fertilize if you compete in shows or want your plants to look like they just came from Bullis Bromeliads. Fertilize when repotting. Or pick a few promising plants and fertilize them only. Just be consistent.

Sources: BSI website, The Spruce.com, PetalRe-public.com, Florida Extension Office, FCBS Board, BSSF members and growers.

Please email your questions to

mhadelman@comcast.net

In Case You Missed It

by Leonard Goldstein

The uninitiated might ask, “What could a marine biologist possibly know about bromeliads?” In the case of Terrie Bert, the answer is, “Plenty!!!” – because *this* marine biologist has also presented more than 175 programs on the Bromeliaceae to audiences around the world. On June 15, in her latest of many visits to the BSSF, Terrie spoke to a rapt group on the topic of “Growing Bromeliads in South Florida.”

This was not a slide presentation. Terrie brought ‘props’ in the form of 200 or so live plants from her home in Bradenton to help her survey the bromeliads which she feels perform well in South Florida. The plants were grouped by genus. After the program, attendees rushed the plant tables, without throwing elbows, to buy plants that had caught their eye.

Years of experience growing bromeliads have given Terrie insights that she shared with the audience as she moved along her plant tables. Alcantareas, she reported, like to retain dead leaves, but Neoregelias perform best when those leaves are removed. She gives high marks to grower Chester Skotak, Jr., for his Neoregelia hybrids and their imaginative names. One of her favorites is *N.* ‘High Intensity’, a cross whose seed parent is *N. carolinae* variegated red *X lactea* and whose pollen parent is *N. magdalenae*.

Terrie’s nominee for best tree-climbing Neo is *N.* ‘*carmoniana X compacta*’. As it multiplies and ascends, it creates the appearance of shelves. Another plant featured highlights of blue, a color found rarely in Neoregelias; she particularly likes *N.* ‘Blue Buckle’. Terrie then singled out *N.* ‘Alex Holmes’, a cultivar that is both large and colorful.

Terrie paused to emphasize the importance of recording information about cultivars on plant tags. Other experts have made the same point; most recently it was Pam Koide Hyatt, our speaker in February.

Before resuming her journey though the plant tables, Terrie talked about complex hybrids – hybrids created from other hybrids. They can be tricky. Sometimes they lose variegation in succeeding generations, and they can exhibit a tendency to sunburn. But they can also be the source of great beauty.

Lighting is, of course, a very important consideration in growing bromeliads well. Terrie has found that morning sun provides sufficient intensity for the plants she raises. She then provided another useful tip: One benefit of buying a pup is the ability to grow it under *your* conditions. Older plants, on the other hand, have grown up under conditions to which the purchaser might not be privy, and that can lead to problems.

Terrie’s survey then moved to Orthophytums. This genus does not really possess variegated species, but *O. gurkenii* comes close. What looks like variegation is actually trichomes – epidermal cellular structures that absorb water and minerals from the surface of leaves. Orthophytums are very responsive to fertilizer; don’t fertilize an Orthophytum if you want to keep it small. In recent times, she went five years without fertilizing her collection of this genus.

Although the climate of the Tampa Bay area is capable of supporting many bromeliad species, it nevertheless differs significantly from that of southern Florida. In particular, there is less cloud cover in her home area, and that creates some limitations in what she can grow and how much she needs to pay attention to lighting conditions. And 2021 has made her deal with an additional problem – drought. In one recent eight-week period, rain fell just once.

Moving on to Aechmea, Terrie observed that identification of plants in the genus is often fuzzy, because genetically it is a little undefined. Their variable forms make Aechmeas look like a lot like plants of other genera. For instance, *A. chantinii* hybrids can vary a lot from the species. Many dark-colored hybrids need filtered light to look their best. *A. mollis* is very unusual. The center turns black and rotten-looking before producing yellow flowers. *A.* ‘Pinot Noir’ must possess *A. blanchetiana* genes. Terrie is not sure why it has so much red in its makeup, but it can take full sun as well as *A. blanchetiana*.

Returning to the subject of optimum lighting, Terrie noted that lots of bromeliads grow well under palms, because the crowns don’t cast heavy shade. However, palm seeds can sometimes be a problem. The texture of a bromeliad’s leaves – *Canistrum seidelianum*, for example – can provide a hint of its sun tolerance, but there are exceptions. *C. allaganum* is perhaps the most sun-tolerant member of its genus. It looks like an Aechmea.

Nidularium is an underrated genus in Terrie's opinion. Purple-hued bromeliads cannot take as much sun as red or pink ones, but *N. innocentii* has purple on the undersides of its leaves. The purple lower surface is capable of absorbing whatever little sunlight is reflected from the forest floor.

Moving on to Hohenbergias, Terrie singled out *H. solana* var. *rubrum*. It is from dry regions such as the Coatinga of Brazil. Featuring round, curly leaf tips, it grows large and turns red when mature. It serves as a water reservoir for desert fauna. However, the plant cannot take all-day sun. In areas of strong light, the genus *Portea* provides color.

Hechtias, Dyckias and Orthophytums are formidably armed. The way to clean them is to remove them from their containers and attack them from below. This advice is consistent with that of our April speaker, Kenneth Stokcs. Terrie added that plants of these genera must be graduated to larger containers regularly to achieve optimum growth. She waters plants of these three genera – and especially Orthophytums – weekly during the dry season. *D. 'Cherry Coke'* becomes deep red in the sun.

Members of the genus *Cryptanthus* tend to be shade-lovers, and they like water.

Terrie moved on to Vrieseas and singled out *V. 'Volcano'*. She bought her first one during a bidding war. The cultivar serves as a good example of the importance of taking pups only from the variegated side of a plant.

Next came Tillandsias. *T. hildae* develops a large inflorescence after years of growth. *T. concolor*, from Mexico, has several varieties that are both sun- and drought-tolerant, and it's also a very good species for hybridizing. *T. concolor* X *streptophylla* takes full sun. Terrie believes that *T. 'Maria Teresa'* must have a *T. capitata* parent.

T. bergeriana is a natural hybrid. It grows large and produces a large orange inflorescence. It also pups well. *T. limbata proliferata* pups 'insanely' along the stem. The species features a long inflorescence. The Venezuelan form of *T. flexuosa* also produces pups along the stem.

Terrie concluded her program with comments about the genus *Pitcairnia*. Most of its 250-plus species are shade-lovers. *P. undulata* has undulating edges and broad leaves. of Terrie Bert, the answer is, "Plenty!!!" – because *this* marine biologist has also presented more than 175 programs on the

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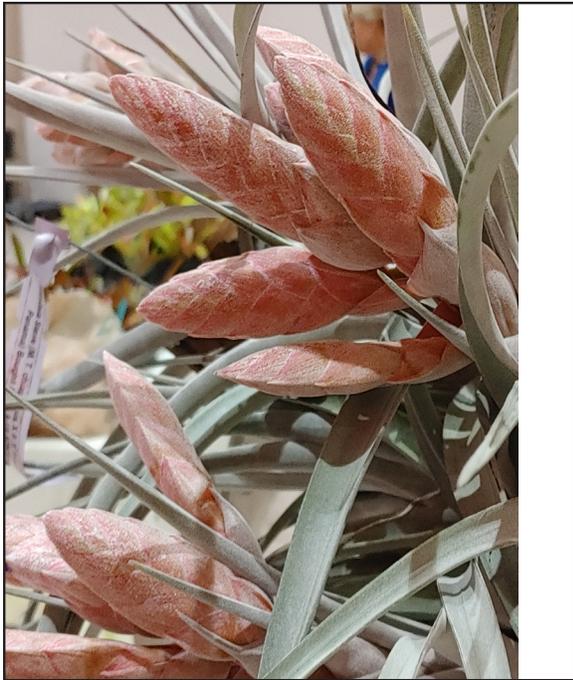
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Garden Notes

Stephanie LaRusso

30% 50% 70% Shade- What does it all mean?!

So you have fallen in love with a beautiful plant and you just HAD to buy it! There is just one problem. Now that you have brought it home, where do you plant it? You've done your due diligence and asked the grower all the right questions. What kind of soil does your new plant need? What type of fertilizer should you use? And last, what kind of sunlight/shade does your plant require. The answers to the first two questions were very straightforward but the sunlight answer has left you a bit confused. What exactly is 50% shade and how does that translate to a place in your yard? In this article I will explain where these shade percentages come from and how to figure out which parts of your yard are right for each shade type.

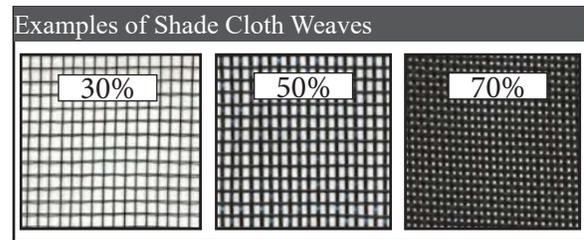
Most commercial growers try to grow plants under perfect conditions. They have, through years of experience, found the perfect lighting, watering, and fertilizer regimen and often use green houses or shade houses to keep these conditions optimal year round. Creating zones of even lighting is ideal when trying to keep plants growing fast and symmetrical. To keep lighting even all day, commercial growers often build canopies out of commercial shade cloth to cover their plant crops.

Shade Cloth Canopy in a Commercial Nursery



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Commercial shade cloth is a woven material that is resistant to sunlight and is usually suspended between poles or over greenhouse structures. This cloth can be purchased in a variety of shade percentages. The shade percentage of each cloth literally represents what percentage of light is blocked from passing through the cloth. For example, 50% shade cloth blocks 50% of the light coming through. The looser the weave the more light comes through. The tighter the weave the less light.



Weave styles and colors can vary with slightly different results but all of them have the same purpose which is to control how much light is blocked and to help make this light distribution even.

To sum this all up, when a vendor sells you a plant and says it should be grown in 50% shade, they mean that in their growing area, under their environmental conditions, blocking 50% of the sunlight was the optimal light conditions for that plant.

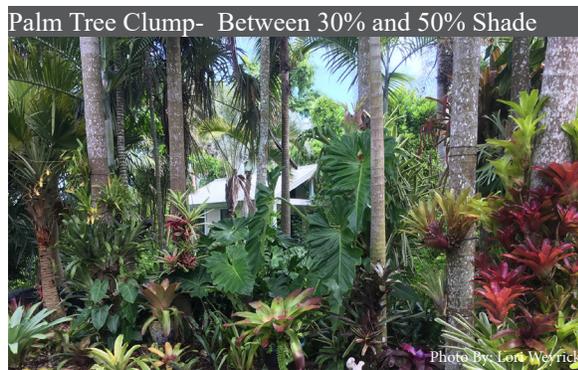
So how does this translate to your yard? So let's start with the bad news. Unless you have a covered shade cloth greenhouse or a screened in pool patio with no tree cover, you will not be getting even lighting throughout the day. The good news is that most plants can take a range of sunlight conditions so you only need to get close to optimal for a plant to be happy.

To start you off with a baseline, here are some approximate shade percentage matches for conditions you may have in your yard. These are just examples to help you start to recognize sunlight zones and should not be used alone to verify if your plant will survive in these places. There are many other factors to consider but you have to start somewhere!

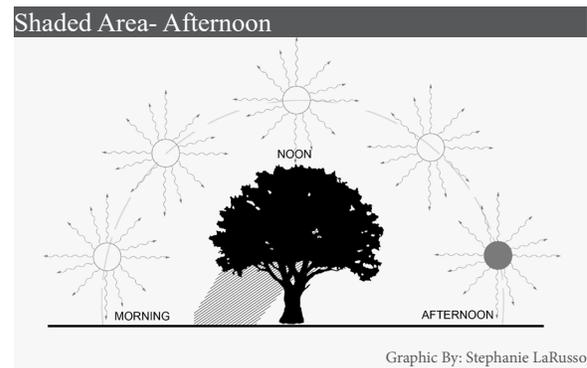
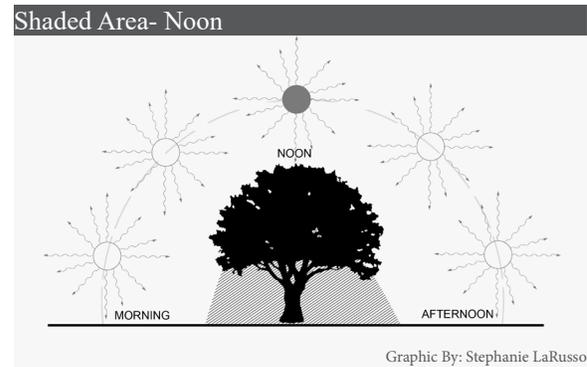
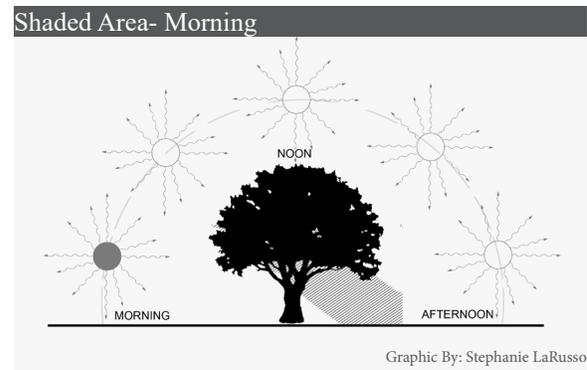
Open Lawn- Full Sun



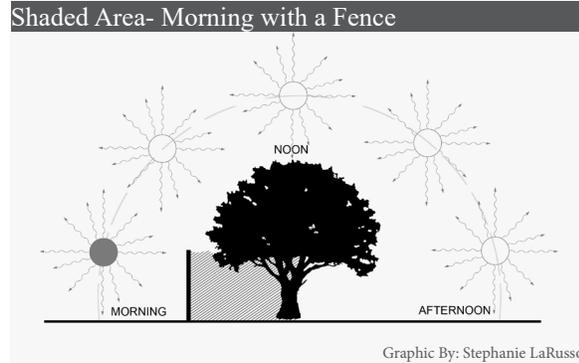
Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso



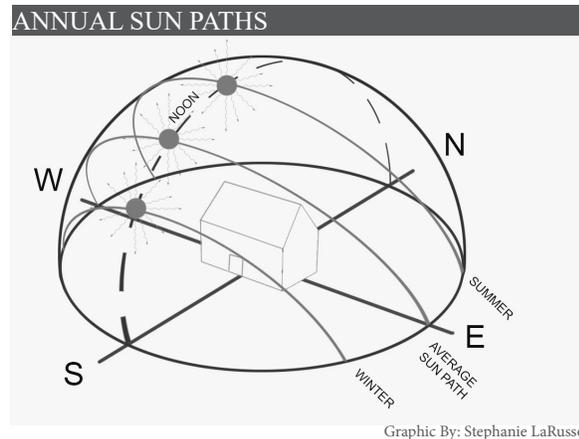
DON'T START PLANTING YET! Once you have identified areas in your yard which may fall into your shade percentage zones there are a few more things you should consider. As the sun rises and sets the angle of the sun's rays move from low to high. Because of this movement your shade trees may not provide the sun protection you want all hours of the day. The graphics below show the shade provided by a tree at different times of the day. Notice how in the morning and afternoon the low sun angle sends rays directly under the tree. Any plant planted under this tree would get full sun in the morning and afternoon and a lot of shade at noon. While most plants can take morning sun, afternoon sun, particularly in summer, can be too much! When planning your zones consider all times of the day.



Your yard may have structures such as a wall or a fence, which can block low angled sun. This diagram below shows how the addition of a fence or screen can block the morning sun creating a more evenly shaded area to the right side of the tree.



In addition to daily sun changes, the path of the sun over your yard changes seasonally. The diagram below shows a home facing south and marks how the paths of the sun cross over the home seasonally. As you can see, in winter the front of the house gets a lot more sun while the north backside is in shade. In summer however the sun path is much higher so the back of the house will get much more sun in the warmer months and a lot less sun in the colder winter months.



Forgetting to take these changes into account can cause a lot of problems in your yard. For example, a gardener who decides to plant in the Winter may feel that the back patio is a high shade zone. When summer comes around, and the sun path rises, the plants on the back patio may end up in full sun at the hottest time of year!

To figure out how the sun paths crosses your home you can use a diagram like this. Simply rotate the house to face whatever direction your home faces and then see how the paths line up with your shade zones.

TOTALLY CONFUSED? DON'T WORRY!

There is another more fun way to figure out how sunlight changes in your yard daily and monthly! Just look at all your old garden photos!

If you are a crazy gardener then you probably take LOTS of photos of your yard. If you take these photos with your phone, it automatically dates and timestamps them for you. If you go back and review your old photos in order, you can watch how the sun changed all last year. If you haven't been taking a lot of photos start now! It is a great way to record, not only your garden's progress but how it changes seasonally.



Last but not least, the easiest way to tell if you have chosen the right place for your new plant is to leave it potted and place it in the new spot for a few days. This will not help you to test it out in all seasons but it will allow you to see if the spot had any serious problems before you commit to the ground. Remember that ground planting a potted plant is always stressful. You will inevitably damage roots by removing it from the pot and your conditions will be different and less controlled than they were at the nursery where you purchased it. Make the best decision you can when you chose your spot and give the plant time to adjust. Even in the right place it can take a plant a year or more to truly flourish in its' new home! Keep Growing Everyone!

What's Blooming

by Stephanie LaRusso

This month in the Herndon Collection the Neoregelia are finishing up their bloom season while other genera are just getting started. Aechmeas, Orthophytums, Nidulariums, Tillandsias and Nudicaulis all show off their unique inflorescences. Many of these plants have long lasting blooms so the excitement should continue throughout the summer! Enjoy!





