

President's Message

We finally have our agreement signed for our October 22-23 Art Show and Sale. It will be good for us as a group to get back out there and show the public what the Bromeliad Society of South Florida is all about! Our Co-Chairs Barbara Partagas and Samantha Jones will need lots of volunteers to help make this a great success. I am also excited about our Tram Tour this Tuesday led by Carl Bauer and Suri Alexander, long time tour guides at Fairchild. Come before 7 pm for the 7 pm tour. Second tour is at 7:30 sharp. While you wait we will have refreshments and plenty of plants for you to peruse. Finally, see below for our Last Minute Field Trip back to Mounts Botanical Garden for their Exotics and Orchid Sale.

Tina Severson

LAST MINUTE FIELD TRIP

Where? Mounts Botanical Garden, 531 N. Military Trail, West Palm Beach.

When? Saturday, September 17, arrive 10 a.m. (Garden closes 3 pm)
About 1-1 1/2 hour drive. We'll meet at the entrance.

Why? Their annual Exotics and Orchid Sale

Admission is \$12.00, \$10.00 seniors, by credit card only. Bring your Fairchild membership card as they have reciprocity.

Lunch is again at the Gun Club Cafe, an old time diner we loved on our last trip. Address is 4631 Gun Club Rd.

Need a ride? Call or email Heidi Davenport, davenport_heidi@yahoo.com
Ph 843-860-3373.

See you there!

DEAR DR. BROM

Dear Dr. Brom:

In the last newsletter you said you would talk about attracting birds to your yard with non-bromeliads.

So I did.

You attract birds to your yard by giving them what they need: shelter from inclement weather, a safe place to build their nests, protection from predators, a source of food, and a source of water. Plants fulfill most of these needs, in particular, native plants which attract more insects than exotics. They also provide fruits, seeds and berries for our feathered friends. Most birds feed insects to their chicks. Wildflowers and native plants provide the most insects.

Start with trees. Plant them in groups, vary the type of tree and don't trim too much. The number one bird tree in Florida is *Quercus virginiana* – the live oak. Live oaks attract up to 534 species of moths and butterflies. That means a lot of caterpillars. "It takes 6000-9000 caterpillars in a season to raise a brood of 5 chickadees." (Audobon) Exotics (non-natives) have almost no caterpillars. Other good trees include slash pines, native fig, native palms and black olive. And of course you can fill those trees with bromeliads and tillandsias.

Got a dead tree? Keep it for the birds. Over 40 species of birds nest in the cavities of standing dead trees. They offer shelter and birds feed on the many insects attracted to dead trees. Can't keep the whole tree? Leave a stump 10-15 feet high. You can plant other things around dead trees to camouflage them. At one time Fairchild had a dead royal palm which was home to two macaws.

Next add shrubs. Smaller birds like to hide in shrubs. Low flying birds like cardinals also need shrubs for shelter. Again, vary your shrubs and try not to trim them too much. Some examples are firebush, sennas, stoppers and wild coffee, among many others.

Try to add vine or two for roosting and nesting. The number one bird vine in Florida is poison ivy, believe it or not. But let's leave that for

natural areas. Instead plant bougainvillea (birds like the thorns for protection), passionflower or honeysuckle, among others.

You may also want to leave some open ground, a small space with neither plant nor grass nor mulch to help the birds find the insects, worms, snails and lizards. Underneath a tree is a natural location.

Next you are ready for ground plants: milkweed, coontie, porterweed and wildflowers. Plant 3 or more of each species in a group and use plants of various heights. Leave the seedheads on the flowers after blooming for the birds. A wildflower garden with an unmanicured look is heaven for birds. It will also attract butterflies and bees – a trifecta. Some examples of wildflowers include tickseed (*Coreopsis*), sunflowers, salvia and blazing star.

Plants which bloom at different times will ensure a consistent source of food. You can also keep a pile of decomposing leaf litter in a little seen part of your yard which will provide even more insects. This pile could include old Christmas trees and prunings. Grass clippings left on the lawn are used as nesting material by birds. And of course limit the use of pesticides.

You can also use birdfeeders. The birds will not become dependent on them and they will draw the birds out where you can see and enjoy them. Despite the variety of birdseed in the stores there are only 2 seeds to put in your feeder: black oil sunflower seeds and white millet which you must order online. I recommend a baffle – a cone shaped cover you mount above the feeder to keep out squirrels and rodents. Place birdfeeders 10-15 feet away from trees and clean often to prevent disease.

Now the birds are fed and sheltered but what are they going to drink? No, not your wine. They need water, and multiple sources of water. When most people think of birds and water, a birdbath on a pedestal comes to mind, which is fine. But birds naturally go to the ground for water. Think ponds, canals, and streams. You could certainly put in a fancy pond with plants and fish. The birds will eat those fish by the way. A much simpler solution is to sink a plain colored, shallow bowl into the ground. Fill it with water and rocks for the smaller birds to stand on. Edge it with plants for a natural look. Try to place it near a hose to refill and clean the

bowl. Drinking from ground level puts birds at risk so put the bowl near a tree for a quick get-away. Birds are also attracted to moving water so you could place a bubbler or small solar fountain in your water source. Refill the water often.

A word about birdhouses. They are great but birds won't use those fancy, brightly painted and tiled birdhouses that we love. Use those for decoration. A plain wooden box that blends into the landscape is best and protects your birds better. Other animals might use the box but that's OK.

If you prefer certain birds in your yard, do a little research to find the plants they prefer. Hummingbirds like milkweed, firebush and honeysuckle. Mockingbirds like Gumbo Limbo, flowering jasmine and palms. Cardinals and bluebirds like wild coffee and jasmine. The list goes on and on.

Follow these suggestions and you will have a varied diet and habitat for multiple species of birds. Enjoy!

Sources:

BigEarthSupply.com

[Gardening Solutions, IFAS.ufl.edu](http://GardeningSolutions,IFAS.ufl.edu)

FloridaWildflowerFoundation.org

TheSpruce.com

AudobonEverglades.org

Attracting Birds to South Florida Gardens,

James A. Kushlan & Kirsten Hines



Florida Thatch Palm



Firebush





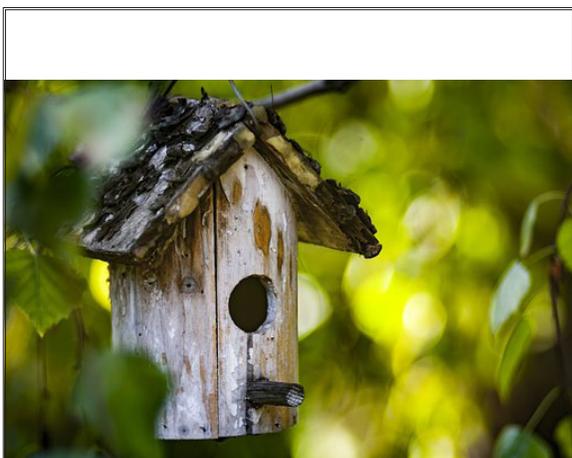
Wild Coffee



Salvia (Sage)



Milkweed



ABOUT LAST MONTH

Our July meeting featured Brad Beardsley from the Broward Bromeliad Society who spoke on vermicomposting, which is composting using worms. Many members were queasy about the subject matter and did not have high hopes that evening. Our audience was pleasantly surprised by how interesting worms can be!

Basic composting in the big bin, per Brad, is more successful in rural areas as it often attracts rodents. Vermicomposting on the other hand is useful for urban areas. You can even keep your worm condo in the garage for convenience though Brad keeps his in shade under the eaves of his patio.

Vermicomposting is faster than traditional composting as the worms do the work for you. Red wiggler worms, which you can purchase on the internet, eat half their body weight daily. Brad prefers his worm condo which is about 5 layers of shallow trays stacked on top of one another. The trays prevent having to filter out the worms and worm cocoons which end up on the bottom layer. There are lots of videos on YouTube to help you get started.

Feed the worms brown and green things, 2 brown to 1 green. They love mangoes and Amazon boxes minus the tape and threaded parts. Feed them leaves and newspapers, anything you would add to a regular compost bin. You will find out what they like when you open the bin. The things they like will be gone and the things they don't like will still be there with no worms around them. And don't overfeed. It may take time to get the chemical balance right but once established it is pretty easy. Brad produces 5 gallons of solid compost every 45-50 days.

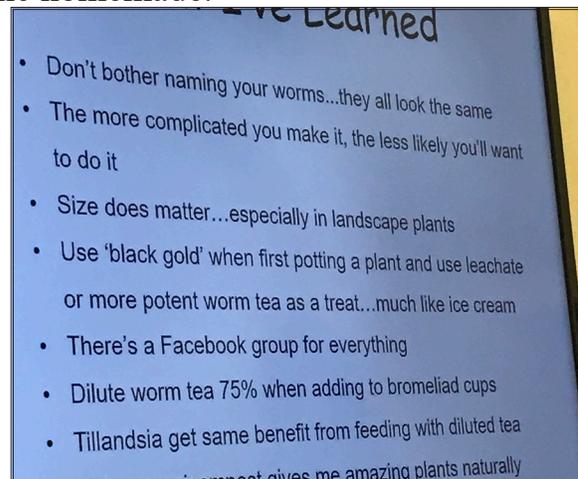
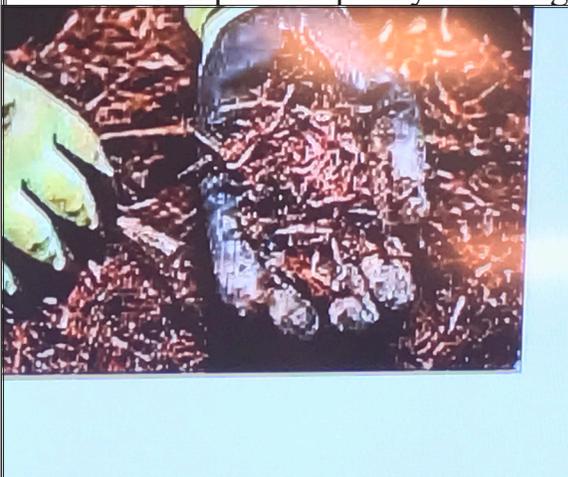
Things got interesting when Brad showed photos of his plants. The plants treated with vermicompost were larger and more colorful with better leaves that did not fall off the bottom of the plant. And the plants pup more. He had a *Neo.concentrica* that produced 32 pups. Now we were hooked.

So how does it work? The worm condo, available on Amazon, has 5 layers. The compost is taken from the 4th tray down. Each tray gets progressively wetter as you get closer to the bottom. The bottom layer is liquid, used for compost tea. Let the 4th tray sit in the sun and the worms will retreat so you can harvest the compost. After emptying the 4th tray, clean it off and put it on top with food.

Once you have the compost you can dress the top of plants with it or mix it in with soil when repotting or potting new plants. But Brad prefers to make compost tea. He puts about 1/2" of compost in a bottle, adds rainwater and shakes to make the tea. Some people also add molasses to the mix. Plants can then be watered at the base with the tea. Some genera prefer different strengths. Aechmea can take a stronger mix while billbergias prefer a weaker mix. Bromeliad roots benefit greatly from the tea. Tillandsias can be sprayed with the tea. When pouring into bromeliad cups, dilute the tea by about one third. Brad uses the tea on his plants every other month.

There are 3 Facebook groups to help you get started: Vermicomposting - Worm Farming; Vermiculture and Composting; and Vermiculture for Beginners.

If you want to give it a try before purchasing the worm condo, Home Depot sells Earthworm Castings Plant Food in 6 pound bags for \$8.78. But the storebought does not compare in quality or strength to the homemade.







BEWARE OF EMAILS

If you receive emails purportedly from the BSSF president or another officer asking you to purchase gift cards for some event or charity we support, please ignore. We, along with several other plant societies, have a longstanding problem with a cybercrook hijacking officer emails. We will never ask you to buy gift cards.

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 305 282 9333 and he will let you know if there is an opening for your plants. 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 when we have a speaker bringing plants. You will again be paid 80% of the sales 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.

We appreciate your cooperation so that there will be no hard feelings if members bring plants and are turned away because we have a speaker who brought plants to sell.

SILENT AUCTION: Rene Izquierdo
(rcizquierdo@bellsouth.net)
305 282 9333

MEMBER PLANT SALES:
Alex Bello (bellotropicals@
yahoo.com)
239 223 6155

UPCOMING EVENTS

BSSF Sale and Display - October
22-23, 2022

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden
Sept. 24-25, International Aroid
show and sale, 10-5

Fruit & Spice Park
9/10 - Summer Stargazing with
bonfire, 7-10 pm
10/7 - Redland International
Orchid Festival

Mounds Botanical Garden
9/17 - Exotics & orchid sale
10/1 - Fall Palm & Cycad sale

Pinecrest Gardens
10/15 Bonsai Auction, 8:30 am
Hibiscus Room

Flamingo Gardens
10/1-12/31 - Gallery Display -
The Everglades: Through the Eyes
of Clyde Butcher

MAKE MONEY WITH YOUR PLANTS!

We are in need of volunteers to supply our Raffle Table. Cut some pups from 8-10 of your plants and bring them to the meeting. If you are uncomfortable with public speaking someone else can talk about the plants, even if you don't know their names. You receive 80% of total sales. Contact Alex Bello 239-223-6155 or Bellotropicals@yahoo.com