

President's Message

I hope everyone is staying cool this Summer while still enjoying your bromeliads in your garden! I hope to see you all in the next meeting, We will have a very knowledgeable speaker, Brad Beardsley, who has some surprises for us. Be prepared to get your hands dirty! Feel free to bring your show and tell items. We will also be discussing our Tram ride that is scheduled in August, the same night as our meeting. This should be exciting and a time to relax and enjoy the benefits of being a member of our club that meets at Fairchild Tropical Gardens.

Tina Severson

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Brad grew up on a family farm in Illinois in the 70s raising cash crops like soybeans and corn. His family kept aside 8 acres exclusively to raise sweet corn and every type of vegetable and edible plant imaginable to feed their family throughout the year. Beyond growing crops, they also raised hundreds of chickens and even more pigs every year.

These animals created a tremendous amount of waste that had to be dealt with. Both of his parents grew up in the rural northeast during the Depression, so Brad was taught the value of not letting any raw material go to waste, no matter how bad it smelled! They used the animal waste to fertilize their crops naturally and to reduce the amount of synthetic chemicals they put in the ground.

Brad attended college in Illinois where he studied botany, chemistry, and other related subjects. He soon developed a love of indoor plants with cacti and succulents becoming his favorites. After college, he moved to Clearwater, Florida and quickly adapted to the tropical climate and all it could offer his addiction to growing plants.

Fast forward to 2017 and now living in Boca Raton, he and his family decided to become a plant-based household. One of the unforeseen byproducts of this culinary transition was a tremendous amount of plant scraps. Together with his daughter, Bria, they decided to try vermicomposting as she had read about the increased value it offers over traditional hot composting.

They started out using a simple plastic tote, but these required more maintenance and harvesting the compost was time consuming. They realized they needed more worms and more surface area not to mention a better process. So they switched to a 6 story "worm condo". This saved space while handling the increase of material they were collecting. Best of all, the flow-through of this system speeds up harvesting, leaving more time to enjoy the black gold the worms provide.

Brad purchased a bromeliad on Ebay at about the same time and his interest in broms quickly went from a hobby to an obsession. He joined the Broward County Bromelad Society in 2018 and today is their president, editor of their newsletter and even webmaster for the group. His presentation is the result of years of reading and experience raising worms and how they transform and impact his collection of bromeliads.



Brad Beardsley

DEAR DR. BROM

Dear Dr. Brom,

I like attracting different birds to my yard. Do bromeliads attract birds or should I look into other plants?

Bromeliads do attract birds but not in the way you might think. As far as pollinating bromeliads, the only bird that can be confirmed is the hummingbird. The number one plant it pollinates is *Aechmea pectinata*, a clumping bromeliad from the southeast Brazilian rainforest. This bromeliad is pollinator dependent and 90% of its pollinators are hummingbirds. It flowers from October to January when its leaves turn red and its greenish white tiny flowers appear. Its highest nectar volume is between 6 and 10 am and that is when you will see the hummingbirds.



Aechmea pectinata

Member Mike Michalski reports seeing hummingbirds at his *Pitcairnia*s when in bloom, from November to February. The flowers are elevated and red in color.



Two forms of *Pitcairnia*s

Many species of bromeliad are pollinated by hummingbirds which are attracted not just by the flower but by the colored leaves, called phyllo-flagging.

Aside from hummingbirds, most birds use bromeliads for water from its vase like base, especially when elevated in trees. They also forage for insects in the leaves.

Birds use bromeliads as a water source, hunting grounds, for nesting material, nesting sites, and lastly for fruits and flowers, especially *tillandsias*.

Ever wonder what is in the vase of a bromeliad? They include worms, shrimp, copepods (small crustaceans) flies, frogs and tadpoles, fungi, algae, insects, snakes looking for prey, and lizards. There is even a YouTube video showing an Australian bird, the banana quit, bathing in the cup of a bromeliad.

A blogger from Brooks Reflection Nursery in Australia reports that birds love the following bromeliads:

Aechmea raja
Aechmea rubens

Vriesea sandersii
Aechmea ramosa
Aechmea caudata
Billbergia nutans and
Aechmea blanchetiana

Of course, that is in Australia and may not apply here in Florida.



Ae. rubens



Ae. ramosa

Generally, bromeliads that attract birds are elevated in trees and their flowers are primarily red in color.



Ae. caudata



Ae. blanchetiana

But this does not give us anything at eye level. So next month we will expand on the subject with a more general article on attracting birds to your yards with non bromeliads.

Sources:

Annals of Botany, Vol. 92, issue 5,
Nov. 2003

Munich Botanical Garden website
Nature Guide to Florida, Banyan
Books.

Sources continued:
Jack's Florida Bromeliads and
Orchids, website
Bromeliads "My Collection" blog-
spot.com, Brooks Reflection
Nursery, Australia

Please send your questions and
commentbs to:

mhadelman@comcast.net

minimum and more if we decide to
host a member plant sale booth. We
may also attract new members.

BSI will assist and we will receive
guidance from the previous hosts
in Sarasota.

What we will need from you, our
members, is volunteer hours. Many
many volunteers are needed. We
will also need committee chairs for
speakers, plant sale, plant show and
rare plant auction.

This will all be time consuming but
will put our society on the map and
will help promote our mission of
educating the public about the
preservation and propagation of
bromeliads.

Should we decide to go ahead with
this, co-chairs have already been
chosen. Barbara Partagas and
Alex Bello will be leading us.

Are we up to the challenge? Please
let our President, Tina Severson,
know how you feel. Call or email
her or make your comments in
person at the next meeting.

tinaseverson@gmail.com

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT HOSTING THE 2024 BSI WORLD CONFERENCE?

The BSI has decided to hold its
next World Conference in Florida
again and has zeroed in on Miami
as the ideal site. Our society must
decide if we want the conference
here.

Our members will have the oppor-
tunity to hear renowned inter-
national speakers, to attend a rare
plant auction, a huge sale and a
judged plant show as well as a few
private garden/nursery tours.

There will be no cost to our society
and the chance to make \$2500

ABOUT LAST MONTH

June 21 marked our annual Bromeliad Bingo Night. Members gathered round long tables piled high with bromeliad prizes. Mike Michalski was our master of ceremonies. Though some members were luckier than others, no one left without a plant. Our thanks to all members who donated plants for this fun evening: Barbara Partagas Tina Severson, Carl Bauer, Mike Michalski and Maureen Adelman.





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
4/30-8/28, Nature Connects
Lego Sculptures
Sept. 24-25, Internatioal Aroid
show and sale, 10-5

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

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

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