

President's Message

We are looking forward to having some fun this summer. Lots of exciting things are in the works. I visited the BSI World Conference in Sarasota last weekend and saw some beautiful plants that inspired me to reach for some new goals. It's always good to support other societies that have the same love of bromeliads and plants as we do. We will be playing bingo at the next meeting. This is a fundraiser for our club. If you have some extra nice bromeliads or pups you would like to bring to add to the winnings we would all appreciate your donation. Invite your neighbors, friends, and family to attend our meetings. We all love a party so don't forget to bring your favorite food or beverage of your choice and receive a raffle ticket.

Tina Severson

BROMELIAD BINGO

This Tuesday is Bromeliad Bingo, a chance to relax and have fun. This is also a fundraiser for our society. Please try to bring an extra plant or pup so everyone can leave with a little something. Your first card, which you can play all night, is free. If you want to play like the pros and have additional cards, they are \$5.00 each. Good luck and may we all be winners!

BEWARE OF EMAILS

If you receive an email 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.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RAFFLE TABLE

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

THE BIG SHOW

Since pictures speak louder than words, following are photos from the BSI World Conference so we can see what we missed. There s the possibility of another World Conference in Florida in 2 years. The conference was well attended and sales were through the roof. The highest bid at the auction was \$800 for an *Androlepsis skinerii* that was variegated.



Best of Show - *Vriesea* 'Rainbow' by David Fell, hybridizer, Hawaii





Driftwood at Tropiflora



Tropiflora Display



Sarasota Bromeliad Display











Starry, starry night - Best cryptanthus arrangement





Best Cryptanthus Group Award





In Case You Missed It

April 2022

In April, the BSSF welcomed back past president Dr. Jeff Block to speak on sundry subjects. His first observation was that 40 years ago, there were far fewer bromeliads being grown. Now we're seeing them all over the world, but the irony is that lots of folks aren't aware that many of those plants were hybridized in Miami, not, for instance, in Hawaii. Bromeliads in our part of the world go back a long way. By the time of European exploration, the pineapple was being cultivated in the Caribbean. After all, it's a New World native.

Jeff reminisced about what has happened since he moved into his current home—now known as Block Botanical Gardens—over 30 years ago. He recalled that an *Aechmea purpurea-rosea* was his first entry into competition, somewhere around 1983. There were a lot of good *Neoregelia* growers in those days. By 1988 Jeff was president of the BSSF when it hosted the 8th Bromeliad World Conference, themed Miami Magic.

It didn't take Jeff long to realize that he doesn't really like spiny plants. Growing *Tillandsia* 'Fascination' allowed him to get away from spines. It looks a little bit like *T. cyanea*. After nearly four decades of putting bromeliads into competition, he has pretty much ceased. Nowadays his entries are confined to World Conferences.

Jeff is an exponent of the Master Gardeners' mantra: Right plant, right place. That directs efforts toward, among other variables, proper light and ventilation. Plants convert sunlight to energy, because they can't move around to gather food, i.e., chlorophyll. How much light a plant receives during the day is what imparts its energy.

One of the cultivation challenges that Jeff accepted as a bromeliad hobbyist was *Vrieseas*, which are harder to grow here than in Hawaii. He has also taken on *Guzmanias* in the last 25 years, specifically to breed for variegation. In fact, he grows lots of plants that are variegated, albomarginated, mottled, and, of course, spineless. He probably surprised some members of the audience by disclosing that he doesn't fertilize his bromeliads. There's no need to push them, he explained, because he isn't a commercial grower.

A relatively new phenomenon—in the last 25 or so years—is the tissue culturing of bromeliads, which produces clones of the parent plant.

Jeff prefers growing plants on the north side of the house. That way the homeowner looks at them with the light at his back.

A significant part of the program was a dive into the importance of water. In 1992, Hurricane Andrew wiped out many of Jeff's trees. In those days, reverse osmosis water was used in municipalities. R.O., a means of manufacturing clean water, was thus a large-scale operation. Operation Desert Storm in 1990-91 introduced small R.O. systems into the war, although it turned out they didn't have to be used. A year later a number of those systems came through McDill Air Force Base as military surplus, and Jeff bought one; it's what he's used ever since. Tap water simply doesn't deliver what a grower wants. Jeff believes that clean water, delivered worldwide by R.O. systems, could eliminate diseases.

Jeff concluded his presentation by noting that his bromeliads generally go into trees. Although he places some plants—Neos—at ground level, he keeps them in pots. Live oaks are probably the best friend of epiphytes.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

May 2022

Our speaker, Karl Greene, presented a program on the topic, "Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Mounting Tillandsias." Karl, a retired orthopedic surgeon and three time BSSF president, gave participants a clinic on the proper cultivation of the popular group of species often referred to as air plants. He credited Brazilian lawyer/judge and self taught botanist Elton Leme with streamlining his introduction to the genus Tillandsia. Karl made collecting trips to Brazil in 1999, 2000, and 2006, and along the way was introduced to famed bossa nova musician and bromeliad collector Roberto Menescal.

Karl's wife Kris, standing nearby, commented that he started his cultivation of bromeliads with *Aechmea Fasciata* followed by *Ae. 'Little Harv'*. Karl would inspect his plants at night by flashlight until he discovered the first pup on one of the plants. Thus began a wonderful avocation.

Karl devoted the rest of his program to sharing tips on mounting air plants successfully.

- Plaque material should be capable of holding up well to humidity/moisture. Karl buys cedar shakes from Home Depot and cuts them into smaller sizes.
- In preparing name tags, a melamine eraser is useful. Attach tag to the back of the plaque with a stapler. A very serviceable stapler can be purchased for under \$40.
- Use a drill to prepare the plaque. Drill one hole near the top to accommodate the wire hanger. Drill two holes lower down the plaque for threading a wire around the base of the plant and then through to the back of the plaque.
- The wire hook from which the plant will be hung should be run through the hole drilled near the top of the plaque. The part of the wire that will become the upper section of the hanger should be bent upward on the backside of the plaque. To keep the hanger from slipping out, the bottom part of the wire should be curled over the top of the plaque and around the ascending section of the hanger. Use pliers to create a u-turn at the top of the wire to complete the hook, 16-gauge wire is the best.
- Mount caulescent (stem-forming) Tillandsias upside down. Positive phototropism will cause them to grow upward. An upside-down orientation is especially good for species that don't like much water.
- Attach the plant to the plaque with a glue product such as Liquid Nails or E5000. Use a dripless glue gun and refrigerate the glue after use.
- Help stabilize the glue bond by threading something like telephone wire around the base of the plant through the two drilled holes. Twist the ends of the wire tightly together on the back of the plaque.
- For affixing larger Tillandsias, zip ties are helpful. Use the white ones as the black ones are not UV-resistant.
- Allow the glue to dry for 24 hours before hanging the plant.
- Use tools that are made of hardened steel (heated and then tempered), rather than stainless steel.
- With experience you will be able to prepare 100 plaques in 3-4 hours.

FROM LAST MONTH'S MEETING



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MEETING



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
July 9-10, Mango Festival, 10-4
Sept. 24-25, Internatioal Aroid
show and sale, 10-5

Fruit and Spice Park
6/25, Summer Fruit Festival,
10-5pm

