



**October 2008
BSSF OFFICERS 2008**

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Refreshments: Patty Gonzalez

What	Who
Sales Table	NONE AUCTION

OCTOBER 7, 2008 , 7:00 PM

NOTE: WE ARE IN THE BIG ROOM – ORCHID SOCIETY MEETING ROOM AND AT A DIFFERENT TIME

SPEAKER: This is the AUCTION

FOOD TABLE: YES

AUCTION IS ON: In Case You Forgot – It Begins at 7PM at the other building (where the show is held) and please Bring two healthy plants to be auctioned off – clean and attractive and enticing.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

This is again a special BromeliAdvisory. Included in the pages are many unique items which deserve more attention than usually delivered by the BSSF's kind and conscientious readers. They are:

1. An article by **Alan Herndon** outlining bromeliads and blooms;
2. A special project proposal by **Karl Green, Nat Deleon** and **Alan Herndon** on preserving species/hybrid information; and
3. A photo journal of some of the winning plants of the show.

ALL PHOTOS courtesy of **Michael Schmale**

In Case You Missed It

by Robert Meyer

On September 2, 2008, **Lynne Fieber** and **Michael Schmale** gave the ever-so-overly-assumed slide lecture of the Annual Show. The detailed scientists' efforts were well displayed with superb quality photographs – which would even impress the finest German lens maker, thorough descriptions of the respective plants, and great hand-eye-voice coordination between spouses who flipped and identified the “largest bromeliad show on the continent” (if not the world) .

Inheriting such feats ordinarily belong to those with panache – but the modest Fieber/Schmale team incorporates the moderate moderator Fieber and focused shutterbug Schmale.

With true, and that means not touched, colors set against a black backdrop, most of the photographs made the plants seem more impressive, more spectacular, or more vivid than they were to the impressed naked eye. I left the show wondering how I missed so much with my eyes – and this is not the fault of the optician, but better reflects Schmale's ability to see what I cannot.

Fieber's adept ability to deliver quick descriptions of the convoluted and often-elongated and always-Latin-based plant names evidence oral acrobatics ordinarily reserved for late night talk show hosts, radio jockeys or voice over professionals.

By the middle of the show, most understood that the majority of the winning plants were coming from the usual suspects, but the vast majority managed to tortuously refrain from permitting their impulsive jealousies from disrupting the congenial show.

So we salivated at the well spent energies of our peers who so graciously delivered top quality plants to the show. And, we pleasantly think for – at least that gentle moment when the lights came back on from the Fieber/Schmale show – Wait until next year, when mine are shown!

FACTOID: Lynne delivered a new word to my lexicon during the show – myrmecophilous :
mər-mə-'kă-fə-ləs.
Definition: fond of, associated with, or benefitted by ants.

CALENDAR: The ED PRINCE GARDEN project soon arrives. Sandy Roth will be the pivot person handling questions and ideas from other. Join in this endeavor and beseech yourself to be actively engaged in one of the “other” bromeliad events.

Bromeliads in Bloom

by Alan Herndon

Summer, the peak blooming season for most bromeliads, is drawing to a close. A quick glance in the garden will reveal many species of *Aechmea*, *Cryptanthus*, *Guzmania*, *Neoregelia*, *Nidularium* and *Vriesea* still in bloom or bud with more recently past bloom. Of course, many of these plants started producing inflorescences in spring and are nearing the end of their blooming period. Others are just starting and will bloom for several months more. There are also many species and hybrids that never bloom during the summer.

There are several different patterns in the blooming evident in bromeliads, especially if you grow several plants (or clumps) of each type. Here, we concentrate on species and hybrids with extended blooming periods. That is, these plants can be found in bloom over a large portion of the year even if the bloom on each individual rosette is short-lived.

Aechmea chantinii is a typical example of the species with an extended blooming season. Even though the blooms on individual rosettes retain good color for only 1 or 2 months, as long as you have several blooming size rosettes in your garden, plants may be found in bloom from early spring through late fall. The early and late bloomers tend to be lonely, but as you go through spring more plants come into bloom simultaneously with a peak in inflorescence production in June. In general, the largest plants will be the ones that bloom early in the season, with smaller plants blooming later. However, there is some tendency for different clones to bloom at different times. Right now, we have an overwhelming majority of green-leaved clones in flower or bud. A month ago, the dark-leaved clones predominated. *Aechmea* Little Harv, a hybrid of *Aechmea chantinii*, shows the same pattern of extended blooming when several clumps are grown.

Many *Neoregelia* species and hybrids (such as *Neo* Aztek, *Neo* Gespacho, and have the same extended blooming pattern. Individuals can be found in bloom over a six month period. Again, larger plants tend to bloom first. However, if you normally harvest several pups from a mother plant, the last pups taken will often bloom near the beginning of the blooming period at a much smaller size than the mother. These latter pups always grow slowly, and usually appear to be miniature versions of the mother when they bloom. You can think of this as chronological age overriding the effect of size for these pups. If, on

the other hand, you leave pups on the mother plant, the pup will often bloom towards the end of the summer at a somewhat smaller size than the mother plant. In these cases, the pups have notably fewer leaves than the mother. Overall, it appears that any plant reaching a minimum combination of size and age during the summer months will bloom.

Rapidly growing plants with extended blooming periods, especially those that produce only a few leaves before flowering, will often have pups blooming less than a year after the parent bloomed. A parent that blooms early in the season can produce a pup that blooms later in the season. If the plants are allowed to clump, the effect is one of multiple blooms each year. Nonhelicoid *Billbergia* species fall in this group. Many of the small *Neoregelia* species (especially members of the *ampullacea* complex and *olens* complex) and hybrids based on those species may bloom several times during the year as successive generations of offsets mature. Some larger *Neoregelia* hybrids (such as 'Aztec' and 'Gespacho' noted above) will bloom twice during the summer months, and the medium sized *Neoregelia* hybrids 'Sheba' and 'Ultima' will bloom 3 or 4 times if allowed to clump. The various clones of the *Aechmea nudicaulis* complex show the same propensity for multiple blooms. Many of the species of *Quesnelia* subgenus *Billbergiopsis* (the species with few leaves) also show the same pattern in blooming. In all these cases, the offsets grow quickly and reach blooming size within 3-4 months. The life-span of individual blooms on *Aechmea nudicaulis* clones, all *Billbergia* species and the species of *Quesnelia* subgenus *Billbergiopsis* are very short (less than a month, sometimes considerably less), so the extra blooms are a welcome bonus.

Many bromeliad species and hybrids, however, show no inclination towards extended blooming seasons. With some, it seems that every blooming size plant in southern Florida comes in to flower the same week. However, this is a story for another day.

Bromeliad Clone Preservation Project

A PROPOSAL BY:

Nat DeLeon
Alan Herdon
Karl Green

It has been nearly 60 years since the Bromeliad Society International (BSI) was formed and almost 50 years since the Bromeliad Society of South Florida (BSSF) was organized as an affiliate of the BSI. During this period, bromeliads have gone from being hard-to-find plants of interest to only a small cadre of highly motivated (some might say obsessed) collectors to a mainstream crop easily available to every American in local stores.

Along with the shift from collectible to commodity, large numbers of species were imported and huge numbers of hybrids were created to meet the demands of the mass market. As newer hybrids took over an ever larger share of the market, older clones began to disappear from sight. Many examples can be cited by people growing bromeliads 30-40 years ago. For example, I no longer have any idea where to find *Aechmea fulgens* discolor 'Magnificent', if it still exists. Nor have I seen *Aechmea pineliana* minuta in recent years. The small form of *Aechmea tillandsioides*, that was commonly grown in southern Florida 30 years ago, now seems to be represented only by the albomarginate clone.

Note that the term clone is used both to describe genetically distinct collections of species and different hybrids. In general, a clone represents a group of genetically identical plants. These clones are commonly produced by asexual reproduction (i.e., not grown from seed). Each collection of a species in the wild almost always represents a genetically distinct clone. In the same way, virtually every seedling produced by crossing distinct clones of a single species (*Aechmea chantinii* is a good example) represents the start of a new distinct clone. In practice, we are not going to genotype plants, we will only recognize clones where the genetic difference manifests itself in the appearance of the plant. The same considerations apply to hybrid clones. We are only concerned with clones that differ in appearance.

Some of the old clones have undoubtedly disappeared, but bromeliads are a remarkably hardy group of plants, and many of the older plants may still exist in the odd corners of small (or large) collections. As time passes, identification of these clones becomes harder as labels are lost in the normal course of events and memories fade. There is also a slow but steady loss of plants in even the best maintained collections. Natural disasters (windstorms and floods, in particular) can lead to catastrophic losses in both plants and the labels attached to the plants. However, the most serious risk of wholesale loss in older collections occur when the owners die, move or become too ill to care for their plants.

In some cases, it is important to have these older clones in hand. For instance, I have not found plants comparable to the plants we used to call *Neoregelia ampullacea ampullacea* and *Neoregelia ampullacea tigrina*. Without the plants, I cannot even guess how they relate to the *Neoregelia ampullacea* complex as understood today.

We propose a project to preserve these old bromeliad clones. The project will focus on providing information on what clones are available and who is growing them. Specific goals include developing a database of the different bromeliad clones in cultivation, create a list of individuals growing each clone, and provide a framework for trading and selling these clones among interested growers. Clones most in danger of being lost in cultivation will be identified in the database.

The database will ultimately include all identifiable bromeliad clones, old or new. Clones will be identified by comparison to old photos and descriptions whenever possible. Older growers, such as Nat DeLeon, will also be pressed into service to help with the identification of these plants. The initial priority will be identification of older clones, since these are most likely to have dwindled in cultivation.

Local Bromeliad Societies will play a crucial role in this project. Many desirable clones are probably waiting to be found in older collections where labels have been mixed and lost over the years. Knowledgeable local society members will be needed to ferret out these plants and establish their true identities. Local societies will also need to keep track of the individual growers in the database so all interested persons can be notified when a collection rich in desirable older clones is about to be dispersed. Finally, local Bromeliad Societies could help preserve the more important clones by including them in their plant distribution programs.

The general database should be open to all interested parties. Small commercial growers who would be willing to grow a clone that sells five to ten plants a year might find the database provides the necessary market. Collectors might find the database provides a way to exchange duplicates for money or other plants. There should also be a membership network of people most interested in growing these plants. The primary aim is to have each clone established in more than one collection to guard against loss. Membership would be open to anyone willing to follow a few rules. Members would have to follow strict guidelines for labeling plants and ensuring labels are not lost. The central database would include a unique identifier for each clone that could be used in labeling so individual growers would not have to maintain the complete record associated with the clone. All members would agree to provide a minimum number of free offsets (perhaps 5) yearly for the benefit of the project (other offsets may be traded or sold for the benefit of the member). Finally, in the event of a natural disaster befalling one member, other members would be expected to help restock the collection of the affected member.

Benefits to members would include a ready source of information on all clones in the database and a directory of potential sources for desired plants. Members would also receive advance notice when another members collection (or a significant part thereof) becomes available. Finally, members could expect assistance in recovering their collections from disasters.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is an issue to which I have observed **Nat DeLeon** to be passionate about. And, with the delivery of this article, I believe his passion carries over to the hearts of **Karl Green** and **Alan Herndon**.

The crux of this labeling crusade relies almost exclusively upon the membership's energies. If the membership can deliver something akin to what it showed beneath the heated sun at the VA Hospital during a summer afternoon, this project could easily be met.

This is a nobler cause than most any I have seen introduced to the society in my membership's tenure. Upon reading this article, I reviewed Article II of the By-laws of the Bromeliad Society of South Florida, Inc, which state: "*The primary objective of this society shall be: . . . 3. To sponsor, to engage in, and to encourage research that will broaden knowledge in the field of bromeliads including identification, culture and uses.*" (Emphasis added).

This project appears to be precisely what the incorporating parties envisioned. I hope the BSSF takes charge on this tremendously challenging venture and proves that the organization is more wonderful than already proven by the Autumn Auction, Annual Show, Holiday Party, monthly lectures, and other endeavors.

This is an initial proposal. Nothing specific has been planned. The idea will be presented to the Board in the near future. In the meantime, any member who has ideas should relay the same to the authors and even attend the Board meeting where this idea will grow. In the horticultural jargon delivering metaphorical explanation: This is merely the seed. Let it sow it to become one of the BSSF's greatest blooms.

PLANTS PLANTS PLANTS

Over the next several months, plants will become a part of your life. You will be offered a chance to buy some at the October Auction. And, there will be many good ones. And, if you hold onto them long enough, you can display them for Annual Show and be like many of the other displayed on the winners' table.



If your aspire, you can reach the heights of **Rhonda Herndon**, whose one plant won several awards.



Or you could be delivering variegated hybrid wonder – a la **Nat DeLeon**.



Or deliver hundreds of pounds of these otherwise seemingly small and facile to grow plants. If you do, you will make bromeliads wowwww people like **Patricia Bullis** can.



So for the next few months, become more involved than you already are. Attend the auction, and buy some great unique plants. Then baby those plants and deliver them to the show in the Spring. And, in between maybe send a few plants to the Ed Prince Garden at Sunset High – a place where he molded many an impressionable mind.

And while you garden volume increasingly bestows the beautiful bromeliad inflorescences, neighbors will come to your door asking about the plants you have which they do *not* see in the nurseries, in the Home Depots, in the places where they see all other plants. And, as the talisman's owner, you can be the newly created ambassador for the BSSF in your neighborhood – and be the expert. And such fiefdom costs only a simple few dollars well spent at the auction and being a member.