



S.F.V.B.S.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BROMELIAD SOCIETY MARCH 2014 NEWSLETTER

OFFICERS

Pres & News: **Mike Wisnev** V.P.: **Mary K. Carroll** Secretary: **Kathleen Misko** Treasurer: **Mary Chan**
Membership: **Nancy P.-Hapke** Health & Wellness: **Georgia Roiz** Web Page: **Kim Thorpe**
Directors: **Steve Ball, Bryan Chan, Richard Kaz -fp, Dave Bassani-fp**

Saturday March 1, 2014 @ 10:00 am

Sepulveda Garden Center 16633 Magnolia Blvd. Encino, California 91316

AGENDA

9:30 – SET UP & SOCIALIZE

10:00 - Door Prize – for members who arrive before 10:00

10:05 -Welcome Visitors and New Members. Make announcements and Introduce Speaker

10:15 –Speaker: John Martinez

Program title: “Introduction to Plant Photography.” This presentation will explore the fundamentals of creative plant photography through the use of light, exposure, and composition. Also presented will be tips on how to photograph plants in your collection, gardens, and in the field.

John lives in Moorpark with his wife Linda and has recently retired from the Los Angeles Fire Department after 35 years of service. He is a member of our club, and the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Cactus and Succulent Societies, and volunteers at the Huntington Botanical Garden. John has a deep fondness

of nature and has been growing xeric plants most of his adult life. Over the past 4 years he has shared growing grounds in Somis with three experienced growers of cactus, succulents, and other exotics.



Aside from maintaining his plant collection, John’s time is divided between gardening, golf, photography, occasional fly fishing, and grandchildren. As a native of Southern California he attended California State University of Northridge where he received a Bachelor’s Degree in Art.

11:15 - Refreshment Break

Will the following members please provide refreshments this month. **March - Don Misumi, Shawn Newmann, Stacey Phelps,, Chris Rogers, Georgia Roiz, Steve Rudolph and anyone else who has a snack they would like to share.**

Questions about refreshments? Call Joyce (818-705-3224) or Kathleen (818 402-6031).

Leave a message - they will call back.

Feed The Kitty

If you don’t contribute to the refreshment table, please make a small donation to the **(feed the kitty jar)** on the table; this helps fund the coffee breaks.

11:30 - For Show and Tell – Each member **please bring one plant**. You may not have a pristine plant but you certainly have one that needs a name or is sick and you have a question.

11:45 – Mini Auction: members contribute

12:00 – Raffle: We need each member to donate

12:15 - Pick Up around your area

12:30 –/ Meeting is over—Drive safely **

Hope to see you all at the next meeting by 10:00 am...

Announcements

- Thanks to **Bryan, Mary K and Ray** for their donations to the auction last month!
- Happy Birthday to: **Kazuko (Kaz) Benadom - Mar. 7 and Jim Jaegar – Mar. 25** and belated happy birthdays to **Kim Thorpe - Feb. 1, Mary K. – Feb 5, Nels Christianson - Feb 16, Stacey Phelps – Feb 21, Teresa Campbell,-Feb 24**
- **Remember, no regular May Meeting. We hope you will attend the La Ballona Bromeliad Club Show and Sale in Culver City.**
- Last month, the Club voted to re-elect the current slate of officers and directors. We also contributed \$100 to the purchase of the new screen.

Hot off the Press – The Newsletter.

Well, you might have noticed a few changes in the Newsletter the last two months. Due to the vibrant colors of Bromeliads, I've added some color to the headings, as well as our Club logo. And some new columns, as noted below.

The real reason I took this position is that I've always wanted to play with the Fonts offered by Word. So, the columns are in different fonts, some selected for their names. This column is Book Antiqua.

Amused that I am writing a column about better growing, Ramblings is Comic MS Sans.

For obvious reasons, Taxonomic Tidbits is in Plantagenet Cherokee.

Since Bromeliads are so lovely, Broms in Bloom is in Lucida Calligraphy.

The **President's Message** is in **Matura M7 Script Capitals**, and Leelawadee, which is how I feel when I write it.

The rest is in Times New Roman.

Be Prepared

By: **Mary K. Carroll**

Time to start getting ready for our Bromeliad Show June 14 & 15

Remove large pups in March

Donate Sale Plants

Donate Material for the Raffle

Volunteer Time as Guide

Volunteer Time at Reception Table

Help with Set-Up & Break Down

Bring Show Plants

Now is the time to get your plants prepared. Make a commitment to prepare one plant a month. If you do that, each member will have 3 plants to add to the June Show. Remove pups that are half or 2/3 the size of the mother plants. Wear long sleeves and gloves when handling the Aechmeas. Add rocks to the pots to keep them from falling over. Use proper potting mixture. Pot the plant and if necessary use chopsticks or small rocks to brace the pup upright; pup's root faster when you keep them steady and prevent them from moving around. Place the pot on a bench or in an area where it will receive bright diffused light. Make sure the leaves don't touch other plants so they don't become scared.

Before the show wipe off the leaves and flower pots with a damp cloth. In 15 minutes you will have 3 plants ready to show. Your extra pups can always be donated to the club sale.

If you haven't noticed, our climate is always changing! Remember extreme wind can quickly

dry out your plants; keep an eye on them, especially the Tillandsias. Always spray the Tillandsias so they have 4 hours to dry before night fall.

Journal of the Bromeliad Society

As a change of pace, every now and then I'll summarize an interesting article in the Journal. I found David Benzing's recent article, "What Bromeliads can Tell Us About Darwinian Evolution – Part 2" in 63(2) JBS 104 (2013) fascinating. Benzing is a biology professor who has a number of books about Bromeliads.

His article is basically about how a plant uses its limited options to maximize its potential. After all, it can't just pick up and move. A simple experiment shows how the same plant grown in shade has minimal roots, and instead maximizes leaf growth. In contrast, growing the same plant in full sun results in maximum root growth, and small leaves. Essentially, plants have evolved to maximize their growth where it is needed – a lack of sun means it grows more leaves, while a lack of nutrients will cause it to grow more roots.

There are many tradeoffs among different plant types. A plant that loses its leaves annually has the greatest photosynthetic capacity, but also loses the most moisture from its leaves. These leaves "cost" little to make, and they are easily lost. In contrast, most xeric plants, like Bromeliads, need thicker and tougher leaves. These leaves cost quite a bit (in terms of plant resources and energy), and thus need to last a long time, at the expense of limited photosynthetic capacity but favorable water use efficiency. Benzing states "aridity acting as an agent of natural selection has favored drought tolerance at the expense of diminished vigor and elevated leaf cost as the arbiter of Darwinian fitness." Id at 109.

Ramblings about Better Growing – Location, location, location.

Some preliminary thoughts about this column are in order. First, and foremost, I am writing this column since I am the newsletter editor and no one else has offered to write it. I am under no delusions, I hope!, about my growing skills. I consider myself an okay grower – not great, not

terrible. I have grown cacti and succulents for less than a decade, and Bromeliads for only two years. But we belong to three plant clubs, so we have heard a lot of talks about growing well. Lots about watering, or fertilizing, or soil mix, or shade cloth etc. Much of what I pass on in these articles here is from those talks.

As a result, most of these articles are geared toward beginners and intermediate growers. I seriously doubt I have much for expert growers. In fact, they could offer me, and the Club, a lot of suggestions. So even if you don't want to write this column regularly, you expert growers (and anyone else!), might consider writing an occasional article, or just send me a suggestion or two for the Newsletter from time to time.

March can be a strange month for growing. Is it winter, or spring? Here in Southern California, it's usually more like spring, but there is often a brief cold spell. So I would suggest some caution before you start your normal watering/fertilizing regime. New growth can be especially tender, and if a cold spell suddenly hits you might find you have more damage than if it had been earlier. For that reason, this is a good month to keep abreast of longer weather reports. Before you water take a look at a 5 day or longer forecast to make sure the weather is okay for the next few days. **And, like the last couple months, if we do have a real cold spell, think about covering your plants.**

The end of the month might also be a good time to move some of your plants around. That brings me to the title of this article – Location, location, location. You've probably heard that about a retail business- a good location is critical for its success. I wouldn't say it is quite as important for growing plants, but it is something that can be overlooked. After all, almost all of us grow our plants where we live, we aren't going to move to grow better plants, so we're pretty much stuck with what we have. All true, but I'd suggest you have more variation where you live than you might realize.

Some plants like more shade and some like more sun. Some like it hotter or cooler. You can't replicate their actual habitats, but you can provide some variation. For example, your plants will get more light and heat if grown in afternoon get less sun; conversely, they'll generally get more sun on the south and west sides.

Even if you grow all on one side of your house, I bet most of you have more micro-climates than you think. Move some plants closer to the house for shade, or under a tree or shrub. Put some under the table or bench in the hot summer months. Maybe move them to get more sun in winter months. Even if you grow all your plants on an apartment balcony, you might find an

appreciable difference in sun by growing them on the floor, balcony, under the table, or closer or further from the apartment door!

So if you have a plant that used to be full of color, and now seems too drab for your tastes, you might think about moving it to more sun. Now is a good time because you don't want to burn the plant, and your plant will have time to acclimate. Or you might have some that seem to be too dry, or lots of dead end tips from too much sun, or blanched leaves from last summer. Move a few of those to more shade.

I'll be touching more on location in later articles. In the meantime, *Good Growing!*

Speakers

Do you have any ideas for Speakers about Bromeliads or any similar topics? We are always looking for an interesting speaker. If you hear of someone, please notify Mary K. at 818-705-4728 or e-mail rango676@aol.com

2014 Membership Dues

Pay at the meeting to: Membership Chair - Nancy Pyne-Hapke or Treasurer - Mary Chan or Mail to: SFVBS membership Attn: Nancy Pyne-Hapke P.O. Box 16561 Encino, CA 91416-6561

TIME TO RENEW..... *Yearly Membership Dues \$10.00* for a single or couple

UPCOMING EVENTS

Please Put These Dates on Your Calendar

Saturday, March 1, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting - Program by John Martinez
Saturday, April 5, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting - STBA
Saturday, May 3, 2014	Field Trip - LaBallona Bromeliad Show & Sale
Saturday, June 7, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting - STBA
Sat & Sun - June 14 & 15	SFVBS Bromeliad Show & Sale
Saturday, July 5, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting - STBA
Saturday, August 2, 2014 ??	SFVBS meeting and Field Trip
Sat & Sun August 2 & 3	South Bay Bromeliad Show & Sale
Saturday, Sept 6, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting - STBA
Saturday, Oct 4, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting - STBA
Saturday, Nov 1, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting - STBA

Broms in Bloom - Member Photos. Some of you may remember that *Mary K.* donated a huge *Billbergia* for auction last month. *Richard Kaz* thought it was probably *Billbergia robert-readii* x *B. euphoniae* var. *purpurea*, and noted it has a fantastic bloom. *Bob Wright* bought the plant at the auction and contacted *Michael Kiehl* about it. *Bob* reports that "it is a Beadle cross that as far as [Michael] knows was never named or registered. It's Beadle # is H-0962." What a great inflorescence grown, and photographed, by *Richard Kaz*! Maybe it deserves a name!



Dyckia Developments

Dyckias 'Big Brother' and 'Tooth and Nail.' Bryan Chan reported last month he has registered two of *Bill Baker's* fantastic *Dyckia* hybrids on the Bromeliad Cultiver Register (BCR), and brought them in for show and tell. It's great he registers them – having an official record allows others to confirm they have a correctly named plant and see what the real plant looks like. They are both gorgeous *Dyckias*! – see the next page for pictures.

[For those of you who haven't checked it out, the BCR is compiled and maintained by the Bromeliad Society International (BSI), which is the International Cultivar Registration Authority for Bromeliads.. Here is the link to the BCR -<http://registry.bsi.org/>.]

Dyckia 'Espiritu.' I have a *Dyckia* labelled 'Espirato.' While that name is registered on the BCR, there were no pictures. The picture on FCBS looked a bit different – given the potential differences in

growing conditions, and mysteries of photography, I couldn't be sure mine was the same. I asked Derek about it and he thought it might be a **Bill Baker** hybrid. I spoke with Steve Ball, who confirmed that Bill did hybridize a 'Espiratu', not Espirato, and that mine was Espiratu! So now that name is now registered on BCR as a Bill Baker hybrid.

Here is **Bryan's** pictures of *Dyckia* 'Big Brother' on BCR.



Taxonomic Tidbits - What is a genus anyway?

By Mike Wisnev, SFVBS President (mwisnev@sbcglobal.net)

San Fernando Valley Bromeliad Society Newsletter –March 2014

Last month, I covered *Racinaea* - in 1993, Michael A. Spencer & Lyman B. Smith created a new genus, called *Racinaea*, to cover a group of *Tillandsias*. At the end of my article, I suggested that their change led to a bigger question – what is a genus?

Let me first note that the *Racinaea* article did not define genus. Nor do I remember a definition in any other article describing a new genus. That seems a bit strange, at least to me. One might think the an article naming a new genus (or a new species), would say here is what a genus (or species) is, and here is why this group of species (or individual plants) qualifies.

So what's a genus. The Biology of Plants, by Professors Raven, Evert and Eichorn, might well be the leading college level introductory botany text. In the sixth edition, genus is defined as “the taxonomic group between family and species in rank; genera include one or more species.” That gives you a hint there isn't a hard and fast rule to specify a genus.

In Botany – An Introduction to Plant Biology, Professor James Mauseth (who also writes quite a bit about cacti), defines it as “a group of species closely related by descent from a common ancestor.” This last definition helps – it notes a common ancestor is required. Of course, it may well be that no one actually knows what this common ancestor is! Instead, it adds DNA testing to the mix to analyze the likelihood that the plants had such an ancestor.

What is critical, however, is that no one can really define how closely related the plants need to be to qualify as a genus, or subgenus, or really any other rank. There is no checklist. There is no rule that out of 72 different plant parts, 38 of them need to be the same. This is in large part why there are lumpers and splitters. In many cases, they are not disagreeing as to facts. Various botanists and hobbyists may all agree that two plants are basically the same except for 3 features. They might further agree on what these features are. Yet one might say that is enough to make it a different species, another might make it a subspecies, and the third might treat it the same as the other.

In case you think I am overstating the vagueness of these terms, consider the definition in Glossary of Botanical Terms with Special Reference to Succulent Plants by Prof. Urs Eggli. His definition is more or less the same as that of Prof. Mauseth above. But it continues – “ There is no clear-cut rule what constitutes a genus and what does not; taxa classified into one genus normally share a number of important characters; traditional circumscriptions are also an important way (but not the best one) in which genera are defined. “

So, we really don't have a very precise definition of a genus, or for that matter, a species!. It is important to note that there are two issues – first, how to group plants, and second, how to rank that group. These are very different issues.

How to Group? The first issue is an attempt to group various plants by some predetermined criteria, such as plant characteristics or, as noted above, by common ancestry.

Traditionally, botanists looked to common plant characteristics to group species into genera. And, not surprisingly, they often disagreed as to which characteristics were most important, and thus grouped the same set of plants differently. Over time, flowers, fruit and seed have become more important features in distinguishing plants, as opposed to plant and leaf shape etc. This often frustrates the hobbyist who may rarely see the flowers, let alone fruit and seed.

Convergent evolution may explain many of these problems. Two completely unrelated plants may in very similar habitats hundreds of miles apart to look extremely alike. DNA testing often shows that what seemed to be a defining feature of a genus actually arose independently a number of times. Thus, using that feature to group them as a genus is inappropriate.

The increased reliance on common ancestry focuses much of the debate over this first issue. Generally, most botanists agree that for the genus to be considered valid the members of the genus (or some other rank) should have a common ancestor. In addition, no members of another genus should be descended from that common ancestor. DNA testing has added a more quantitative approach to these issues. DNA studies are often not conclusive, so the problem is hardly solved.

How to Rank a group. So, let's assume everyone agrees that based on DNA, fruit, seed etc, the plants known as Racinaea are in fact commonly related. Does that solve all the issues for this group? Well, probably not. We still haven't addressed the second issue noted above - how to rank this group. This second issue may never be completely solved. From what I have read, most botanists who have written on the topic feel it is inherently subjective. Certainly in a lot of cases, we will agree that a group should be a species or genus, but in others it is much more difficult. We can agree that this group of plants (or animals) should be grouped together, but not whether they are a species, or genus, or subgenus. These issues are particularly difficult for smaller groupings – like species vs subspecies, and large groupings like families and subfamilies.

DNA testing does not really address this issue. It does show different groups, and also can show that some groups are embedded within others. But it doesn't tell us how to rank the smaller or larger groups.

There is not a governing body for most genera. If you find a new Bromeliad, or one you think is new, you can submit an article to any number of publications. If it is published, Bromeliad botanists and hobbyists will either generally agree or disagree with you. The same is true if you think a new Bromeliad, or for that matter an older one, should be a different genera.

Because there is no clear definition, nor a governing body, everyone can have their own idea. This lack of uniformity is a problem. To take an example, consider a group of plants that appear identical in pretty much all respects, except that they have different flower colors. In some, if not most, cases, the two will be treated identically from a taxonomic standpoint. But in others, they might be considered a different variety, or a different subspecies. Sometimes they will even be considered a different species!. Why – because they were described by different people with different views of what is a species etc (or if you are cynical, by someone who wants to be published as having found a new species). One person thinks flower color is enough to make a new species, while others don't. The same type of issues exist for genera.

Of course, there are some criteria that are typically used, but these are not usually hard and fast rules. For example, geographical dispersion is usually important, especially at the species and subspecies level. Again, consider two plants that are almost the same, except for flower size and color. If these two plants grow in separate habitats, it is more likely that they will be classified as subspecies. If they grow together botanists will often treat them as the same, or perhaps just as separate forms. Similarly, if the plants intergrade from one location to the next, they are likely to be treated as the same taxa.

So these ranking issues may never be solved. As noted above, DNA doesn't generally address them. But in some cases, it does provide assistance. I will probably discuss these concepts in another article.

Next month, I hope to finish an article on a couple *Dyckia* cultivars at the Huntington Botanical Gardens. I had planned it for this month, but every time I think I am done, I find out more!.