

# Potpourri

The aim of our society is to promote and develop interest in Bromeliads through friendship and shared knowledge in cooperation with similar clubs throughout the world.

Greater New Orleans



Bromeliad Society



Neo. 'King's Ransom'



Vriesea 'Kohl'

Neo. 'Madam President'



Aechmea 'Blue Tango'

Tillandsia turquinensis



The Greater New Orleans Bromeliad Society is an affiliate of the Bromeliad Society International

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*The 2008 Potpourri is dedicated to the memory of our dear friend and editor, Fred Ross.*

Potpourri is printed five (5) times each year in January, March, May, August and October. Articles may be reproduced although requests to reprint our content must first be submitted in writing. We encourage GNOBS members and those outside the club to submit informative and instructive articles. Stories with fresh, creative points of view are welcome.

*Alcantarea imperialis*



*Alcantarea vinicolor*



*Aechmea (clump)*



# Potpourri

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## Editor's Note

It was **three weeks** before the May 3 Show & Sale at Lakeside when I began preparing for the event. This was my third show and I was already remembering all the hard work involved. Picking out the plants for the show and then isolating them from crickets and grasshoppers **10 days** before the big day was my first priority. This actually is the best part of the entire experience—searching out the best from one's own collection. However, after **eight days** of separating the good from the bad, cleaning them up and keeping them groomed, I suddenly felt the pressure.

Obviously, all my anxiety was internal; no one was forcing me to do this work. Every day I'm checking the plants and now with **seven days** left I notice one leaf eaten on my Neo. 'Rosea Striata.' *Such a perfectly full plant it is, or was, and now I have to shelve it.*

Before I know it, I'm searching through my plants for the minutest of insects, realizing how ridiculous I must appear. "It's a simple show," I keep telling myself. "Stop taking it so seriously." *Yet, if I didn't take it to heart then why am I not back inside the house dealing with business (I work at home).* No need to think long on this one because we all want to win, we all wish to do well . . . and I for one don't want any red ribbons.

**Four days** to countdown. I'm starting to have mixed emotions. I believe I have a nice selection of plants and suspect I should do fairly well at the show. So naturally I get excited thinking about which plants may or may not make the head table. These are my up times. But there's more than just showing plants.

*I need to decide which ones to sell and see how many extras I have. Do I have enough labels? What about the hooks that hold the identification cards for the show plants? Better get some wire and start making those and then pick up some plant tags in town.*

**Day three.** Doubt starts to settle in (big time) just like it did last year.

*Thursday evening I swap my wife's car for a friend's SUV. Between my car*

*(continued on page 2)*

**Editor's Note** (continued)

and the SUV I should have enough room for all plants and supplies. There's supposed to be a cart for transporting plants at the entrance to the mall but I don't think I can count on that. I better take Jason's (my son) wagon (Jason's now 35 which is also the age of the wagon) and hope that the wheels don't fall off (which one actually did).

**Thirty-six hours** before show time. I'm having second thoughts about exhibiting my plants. Regardless, bromeliads to sell are packed away; show plants have been separated and are placed in the big greenhouse. The SUV is parked in the driveway but I'm thinking about the hassle of packing the SUV and car properly without injuring any plant. I'm also remembering the difficulty of finding a space near the entrance and then unloading everything. That's only the setup; what about the break down where I'll have to gather up all plants and supplies and cart them out again?

*Do I really want to go through the trouble? Is winning a few ribbons worth this? Bromeliads are supposed to be my hobby. I never wanted to show off plants in the first place so why am I doing it now? Well, this is positively the last time. No more shows after this.*

7:00am, Friday, **24 hours** to go. I'm anxious but feel good as I start to make coffee and pack the vehicles. The plants look terrific and I'm becoming a little exuberant. *You know I just might take a few blues after all.*

By the time I arrive at Lakeside the butterflies kick in with a vengeance. *At least I found a space right by the entrance and look, there's no wagon or carrier for the plants. Good thing I brought my own.* My heart is thumping faster than it should and sweat covers my back. Already my shirt is wet and my steps are sluggish. I'm moving as if in a trance and want to close my eyes and rest.

But now something is happening. I see a few people by the tables and suddenly I'm not so exhausted. Strange as it is, I feel differently, maybe because I'm among friends and think about sticking around since you can always learn something at these shows.

What a difference a few minutes makes. Out of the blue I've regained my confidence and strange as it is, I think I can go head-to-head with the big boys. *Yet, so what if I fail?*

*No, don't say that. You can't let yourself down. You've worked too hard and there's too much time invested in all this. I really believe I can do it. I did the best I could and that's what counts, isn't it?*

## Editor's Note (continued)

Maybe I'll feel otherwise in a few hours, even with the butterflies, but for the moment, I'm really glad I'm here. Besides, what's the worst-case scenario?

I'm not even going to think about it. This has to be a good day; it just has to be, after all.

## Charlie Birdsong, Guest Speaker

**Saturday, August 9, 2:00pm**

In 1975 Charlie was instrumental in starting the Bromeliad Society of Baton Rouge. As a charter member he has served in every office since then and still serves the Society today. Charlie has attended many world conferences and has chaired the auction at the last two conferences. He's a Master Judge and has judged 52 shows since accreditation in 1996. Charlie grows many genera and although Billbergias are his favorites, most of his several thousand plants are Neoregelias.

### **Carnivorous Bromeliads**

When one considers the diversity of form, shape, color, bloom and habitat found in bromeliads, it becomes hard to imagine what other secrets they hold. Could the bromeliad family really contain CARNIVOROUS members? Come listen to Charlie at our next meeting and find out. ***This event will take the place of our regularly scheduled Thursday meeting.***

## Events & Shows

**August 29-31-2008 Extravaganza**, Sheraton Suites Tampa Airport. \$99 per room. \$45 registration for reception & banquet. **1-800-325-3535.**

**September 19-21, 2008**-Austin, TX Road Trip to Guild Show & Sale

**October 18-19, 2008**-City Park Fall Garden Show

**May 2-3, 2009**-GNOBS Show & Sale

**July 26-August 1, 2010**-BSI World Conference-Bromeliads in the Big Easy (Astor Crowne Plaza-New Orleans). **"Catch The Fun."**

## Refreshments

**August**-The Boes

**September**-Gary Hanford, Tim Calamari

**October**-Bonnie Boutwell, Jim Phillips

**November**-Barry Blanchard

## Brom Watch

**By Robert Smythe**

*This is the final installment of our three-part series.*

### **The Wells (Vases)**

This is the water retention area where most adult bromeliads receive their food. Micro fauna, mainly ostracods and mesocyclops, dwell here in my broms and are responsible, in a major way, for mosquito control. If the wells are kept too clean they're washed away. If they're kept too dirty then putrefaction kills them but not the mosquito larvae. They can take a great deal of water, though. One day we had 21 inches of rain in 24 hours and the predators survived.

**Horticultural Implications**—*A well that is polluted with fertilizer will attract algae. This, in turn, will grow and disfigure the plant as the spines of growing leaves hook it and lift it out of the water. There it subsequently dies and bleaches. Still, algae is an important uptake source of fertilizer. Remember, bromeliads are gluttons and don't know when enough fertilizer intake is enough. If you over supply them they'll over imbibe and kill themselves.*

### **The Stem**

I live in the sugar cane belt. When you look at cane you see very little other than stems. When you look at a bromeliad you see next to nothing of the stems. The evidence is only shown by the hard support material you feel at the base of the plant and the stolons growing out of this lower area, like a strawberry runner. The stem conducts food and water up and down to the leaves and roots. At the stem's very apex there's a group of cells that keep dividing to make new leaves and finally the inflorescence. At the base of each leaf similar cells are dormant but can spring into action to form pups or offshoots. This can happen at various times, but the process usually occurs when the growth tip is damaged or terminated by an inflorescence.

**Horticultural Implications**—*When broms refuse to flower or pup, there is one avenue available to us. We can force a Philips head screwdriver down the well and destroy the meristem. There's a function called apical dominance which means that pupping is inhibited by terminal growth. Once you remove the active terminal cells the pups will appear. This is the same process that occurs when you prune your shrubs. Remove the tips and branches appear.*

### **The Roots**

There are three types of roots. The first are the roots of seedlings that come

## BSI 2008 World Conference

### By Bonnie Boutwell

What a Ride! The trip was long, but the memories will last forever. Ann Jenkins and I just returned from the informative and entertaining 18th World Bromeliad Conference in Cairns, Australia. The Aussie's outstanding hospitality, mixed with the opportunity to meet BSI members from around the world, made the exhausting plane ride quite worthwhile.

The week of meetings, seminars and socials not only added to our knowledge of the plants we love, and the BSI, but also made us realize how much more there is to learn. At the Conference a 90-year-old Grace Goode was awarded the Wally Berg Award and **Ann Jenkins** won Best of Original Art with a photo of an *Aechmea fasciata* bloom belonging to **Shirley Schexnayder**.

There is certainly not enough space in the Potpourri to give details of the Conference. However, Ann took hundreds of photos and will begin to share them with GNOBS members at the monthly meetings. Hopefully, area BSI members will "Catch The Fun" and become a part of the planning process for "Bromeliads in the Big Easy" – the next World Conference.

*Plant buyers examining stacks of bromeliads and then checking them out.*



*The home garden tours at the WBC were both impressive and educational.*





# Potpourri

## 2008 World Conference Footnote

According to all reports, the World Conference Silent Auction was something to witness with its several high rollers. For instance, a copy of Paul Isley's book, in its original wrapper, went for \$800. The used version was auctioned for \$600 (Australian dollars). The first variegated *Alcantarea* fetched the incredible price of \$4,500 (see picture below). Here the bidding was between Olive Trevor and another Aussie. The other smaller, but not as well variegated, *Alcantarea* went for \$2,800. *Aechmea* 'Cold Spot' took in \$250.

*Our own Ann Jenkins shot Shirley's fasciata with her basic Casio Elfe digital camera and walked away with the grand prize.*

*"So how much would you pay for this plant?"*



Hoppin with a 'Lum's Delight.' Steve likewise won for the best judge's entry with that same *Cryptanthus*. The Show was judged by Dean Fairchild, Eloise Beach, Larry Giroux, Charlie Birdsong, Steve Hoppin and Michael Young. All awards were donated anonymously in honor of **Fred Ross**.

As an added special event, Chester Skotak of Costa Rica presented an excellent seminar on some of his very unusual hybrids. This was well received by an audience that also had a chance to get an autographed copy of Chester's new book, "Searching for Miss Fortuna."

A big thank you to everyone who helped make this show very special including Jim Phillips, Harold Huffman, Gary Hanford, Alex & Dottie Holmes, Mal and Mich Mele, Shirley & Keith Schexnayder, Dale Ramsey, Margie & Art Boe, Mike Broome, Richard Nalencz, Rei Irizarry, Bonnie Boutwell, Tim Calamari and Ann Jenkins. Without you it all wouldn't have been possible.

*Our congratulations go out to all GNOBS winners.*



## 2008 GNOBS Show & Sale - A Big Winner

The Greater New Orleans Bromeliad Society presented its 34<sup>th</sup> Show & Sale over the May 3-4 weekend at the Lakeside Shopping Center Mall. The Show was of excellent quality with 11 exhibitors showing 134 plants, of which 45 won Award of Merits out of the 99 blues. The Mulford B. Foster Best in Show was won by **Mal Mele** with a multiple 'Curly Slim' *Tillandsia*. The Best Artistic was won by **Alex Holmes** with an intergeneric hybrid xPuckia (*Puya laxa* x *Dyckia fosteriana* x *platyphylla*). Alex also won the Genera Sweepstakes award with blue ribbons in ten different genera.

There was a tie for the Sweepstakes Award with both **Tim Calamari** and **Gary Simon** winning 19 blue ribbons each. Tim won the tie-breaker with 11 AM's to Gary's 5. The best *Cryptanthus* species was won by Tim with a *Cryptanthus microglazioui*. The best *Cryptanthus* hybrid was won by Steve



## 2008 GNOBS Show (continued)

More fabulous plants from the head table.



*"Bromeliads are those extraordinary epiphytes to which collectors and connoisseurs quickly become completely addicted."* Andrew Steens



## **Brom Watch** (continued)

out of the base of the plant. Next, are the adventitious roots that appear out of the sides of the stem. Last, are the roots associated with fungi in a symbiotic mode. Additionally, roots function in more than one way. Some are for feeding and others for attaching. There's also an unusual amount of polyploidy in the roots of bromeliads. But enough for science (at least for now) and allow me instead to address some personal remarks.

The micorhizal association of fungi and roots is common and well understood. Probably all we can deduce from this is that epiphytes will usually grow in the ground but ground dwelling plants need their fungal association and usually won't do so well as epiphytes. Orchid growers might challenge this but orchid roots are specially modified to accommodate fungal association as epiphytes.

**An Observation.** When I ground fertilize bromeliad seedlings and weeds they all go green. When I ground fertilize mature plants, weeds go green and broms stay the same. This tells us with young broms that the true roots are definitely functioning like many plants. With other broms the proliferation of adventitious roots have now taken over a new role. This is the role of attachment and not feeding. Scientific studies using radioactive calcium have shown that the calcium is taken up primarily through the wells and not the roots. Other radioactive organic materials demonstrate the same process. Additionally, the experiments show foliar feeding to be useless for tank plants so wash fertilizer into the well.

**An Anecdote.** I was a long way from home and had bought too many plants. The question then was how to fit them all into my case. A very experienced commercial grower told me to cut off the roots since the plant didn't need them. In those days I thought him to be mad and went about with my own experiment. I cut the roots completely off just under the lowest leaf. Then I left an identical mature plant untouched and proceeded to plant both broms side by side in the garden. Afterwards, I fertilized the soil. For a while there appeared little that was happening. Then suddenly the rootless plant lost all its colour, went bright green and grew profusely. The new roots were obviously feeder roots.

**Horticultural Implications**—*Fertilize the well and not the ground with mature plants. Don't waste money on expensive potting mix for mature plants. My plants grow in pots of foam with some decorative material on the top to cover the foam. Have you ever had a small plant that won't kick along? Fertilizing the well would certainly improve this condition but so would cutting off the roots.*

## Did You Know That . . .

- Some plants are named after localities, such as *Portea petropolitana* for Petropolis near Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. Some are named after the shape or appearance of a leaf, such as *Deuteroconhia brevifolia* (short leaves) and then others can be named after growth forms, like *Neoregelia ampullacea* because the rosettes resemble an ampulla (Roman vessel).
- When removing pups take part of the woody section with it, even if it is part of the mother.
- One theory regarding variegated bromeliads is to expose them to better than normal light (but not direct sunlight) to make up for their deficiency in the process of photosynthesis.
- *Billbergia* was once called *Cremobotrys* meaning hanging cluster from the Greek. *Cuscuta* is now *Tillandsia usneoides*. *Pitcairnia* was named *Hepetis* from the Greek meaning liver and *Misandra* is now *Tillandsia* meaning hating man.
- Bromeliads placed in bright light, full sun, will see its pink color blanched to the color of celery.

## How Many Plants Are Too Much? *(continued from last issue)*

**By Charlie Birdsong**

Aside from selective propagation, how do I reduce or control my collection? I donate plants to the raffle of every Bromeliad Society of Baton Rouge meeting. We have a Society Show & Sale each year at which time I sell from 300 to 800 plants. I share my duplicate pups with visitors, new Society members, and friends. I also occasionally trade plants with other collectors when I have something of interest.

I have sold plants at the Houston Society meeting when I spoke there and at Southwest Guild Shows. Selling plants can be a hassle with occasional tax implications but it serves the purpose of collection reduction. More importantly, it makes plants available to other collectors and may bring more of the public into the fold of bromeliad growers. My goal is not to make a living but to offset some costs of pots, mix, labels, benches, shade cloth, poly, and a few utility costs. I've never sold a plant for what I paid for it. If I get enough pups I'm occasionally able to offset the price of new hybrids I might have purchased. In the end, however, these sales only remove a small portion of the pups I develop each year.

My most effective, but least desirable, method of disposing plants is to

### ***How Many Plants Are Too Much?*** (continued)

allow Mother Nature to freeze a large number of them. I have a 24'x 48' greenhouse into which I move as many plants as possible each winter. I keep a large number of plants under the trees and shade cloth whenever the weather allows.

Last year I was in Florida before Christmas when a 24 degree Fahrenheit cold wave descended on the collection. Had I been home I would have selected several hundred plants and moved them under the carport next to the house. I also would have covered some with sheets and freeze cloth. These extra precautions would have saved many plants. I estimate I lost a bit over a thousand plants but it's hard to tell. Although this was effective in reducing stock, I don't recommend this particular program.

What is the most appropriate size collection to fulfill your needs or wants? You'll be the only one who can make that determination, although you must take into account several factors. First, how much space do you have? Second, how many plants can you physically care for? Third, what type of collection specialization do you want? Once you make those decisions then be brutal!

Limit the number of plants you keep when removing pups. If you find some new plants to buy, then remove others from your collection. Hold to your decisions. A smaller well-grown collection will give you more pleasure than a large, overgrown, poorly cultured collection. This is a hard lesson to learn and I'm still trying to abide by it after 40 years with my own plants. Suffering through winter, and looking at damaged or killed bromeliads each spring, takes away from the pleasure of a well-cultured collection the rest of the year.

## *Times Are A-Changing*

**By Derek Butcher**

Do you want the good news or the bad news? We now have 8821 names on the International Bromeliad Cultivar Register of which 4366 are *Neoregelia*. If you wanted to buy one of these plants how lucky would you be? Let me explain.

Ever since I became Registrar in 2000 I have tried to point out the advantages of registering hybrids. This allows for some identification compared to the names that just occur in catalogues, or what I refer to as nurserymen's names (NN for short).

## *Times Are A-Changing (continued)*

It can be said that plants are truly being cultivated widely and need to be recorded in the Register. Therefore, if I find nurseries using a different name for the same plant, this is recorded in the Register—whether the company concerned likes it or not. The same name for different plants is also recorded. So the Register is more than just a register because it gives extra information in any search for identity.

We have the rule for registering hybrids that the plant should be grown through successions of asexual reproduction to ensure that 1. There's a chance to look at stability and 2. There's a likelihood that there are sufficient numbers for circulation for it to be considered a plant in general cultivation. This is decided by the registrant/hybridist, not the Registrar.

The Registrar treads a narrow path between the thousands of named plants out there not registered and the few thousand that have been. How many growers keep the labels near their plants? I have had one nurseryman boast that over the years he had named and sold some 60,000 plants without registering one. What I find interesting is that NOT one has been referred back to me with an identity crisis. This means to me that the plants could not have been that outstanding in the first place for purchasers to want to propagate them further. This also shows that you don't need to register every seedling you obtain, or as I've always stated, "Quality before Quantity."

## *Removing Roots*

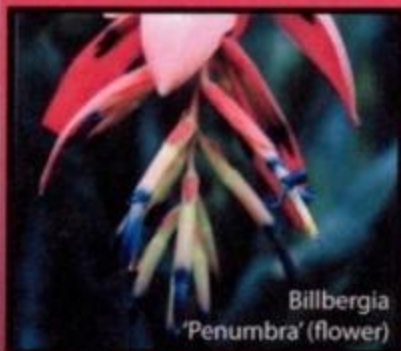
**Q.** I removed a good size pup from my *Neoregelia* 'Linda Cathcart.' In the process of taking the pup, however, I left all the roots on the pup and not the adult plant. Recalling that the roots aren't all that important to a mature plant, I took the adult and replanted it in straight soil conditioner (pine bark). Given all this, what's the prognosis for the adult?

**A.** Two scenarios. 1. If it is old and flowered you won't get many pups. 2. It will shoot a new batch of adventitious roots and will think itself a seedling again and grow profusely. On the down side it is operating from the well and from the roots and will over fertilize itself and could go very green. In the long term you might have a striking large plant as it will probably have an extra growing season. I have found leaving the pup with mother's roots is next to useless. The existing roots seem to retain their dormancy. They're also more prone to rot the pup.

Neo. 'Freeman's Pride'



Billbergia 'Othello'



Billbergia  
'Penumbra' (flower)



Vriesea 'Bibine'



Alcantarea nevaesii



Neo. 'Fame and Fortune'

**Greater New Orleans Bromeliad Society**

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