

# 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



Billbergia  
'Strawberry Cream'



Aechmea recurvata



Neoregelia 'Terrie Bert'



Orthophytum glabrum



Hechtia texensis



Canistum triangulare



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



# Potpourri

October 2007  
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## Editor's Note

Numbers don't lie and although GNOBS membership has remained fairly constant these last eight years, it hasn't significantly increased either. This is certainly a problem for our organization as it is for others. However, unless we seriously address this situation, membership enrollment won't be changing any time soon.

While recruitment is a task that is both discouraging and challenging, we need to reverse some of our lackluster numbers (which is definitely within our grasp) and connect with others outside our group. We need to show new prospects what it means to grow and cultivate bromeliads. We need to foster the same excitement in others that we feel each time we step into our greenhouses. We need to share our enthusiasm for all that's beautiful about bromeliads and impart this feeling to others.

Before we set out on this daunting task though, it's essential that we at least try to figure out why GNOBS isn't a bigger drawing card, and what we can do to change this. While I certainly don't profess to have all the answers, here are a few suggestions to consider:

1. Youth aren't running out and signing up for clubs whose members' ages are twice their own.
2. Most young persons don't have time for plants. They have other priorities, like rearing a family, earning an income and using their spare time for family trips and activities. It's unlikely these younger people will start putting money aside to build greenhouses.
3. It takes time to "cultivate" an interest in plants and this usually happens with age and the availability of leisure hours.

Given these points, it's understandable why young folks aren't rushing to our doors. Then again, it's not as hopeless as it appears. Some people eventually **do** turn to plants as a way to beautify their homes while others take it to the next level and actually **do** construct their own greenhouses. One doesn't necessarily have to be 50 and over, however, to cultivate a "green" interest.

*(continued on page 2)*

## **Editor's Note** *(continued)*

One could be in his thirties, as I was, when I started raising and growing succulents. It was probably 20 years later that I began looking around for others to share my hobby, although I had little success. I even contacted a succulent society in Baton Rouge, but there too no one responded or offered an invitation.

But that was then and this is now. Currently we're at a crossroads with GNOBS and it's imperative that we all try to encourage new members. This step is necessary both for our sakes and for that of the plants. What with wild habitats being destroyed by commercialization and greed, it's incumbent upon all interested parties to raise bromeliads in private collections and nurseries. It's equally important for those who follow in our footsteps to carry on the task of growing and protecting Bromeliaceae. Sadly, the fate of plant organizations, like GNOBS, and the bromeliad genera themselves are at a fragile stage. With any luck though, a coaxing hand from everyone will increase the odds in favor of our plants and a revitalization of our clubs.

## *Minutes*

### **September 13, 2007**

The meeting began with a workshop by Ann Jenkins. Members brought plants from their collections that were in need of pup removal and Ann demonstrated techniques particular to each genera. A short business meeting followed:

- Tim Calamari, President, announced that GNOBS would participate in the Fall Garden Show & Sale at City Park on October 19-21. A work schedule was circulated and members were asked to volunteer to help with the event.
- Tim reminded members to make reservations for the Christmas Party to be held on December 8 at Vincent's Restaurant in Metairie.
- Bonnie Boutwell announced that GNOBS had joined the Southwest Bromeliad Guild and stated that GNOBS members would be kept up-to-date on Guild activities.
- Bonnie announced that efforts to solicit advertisers for the Potpourri were successful. Michael's Bromeliads and Rainforest Flora have agreed to exchange an assortment of raffle table plants for advertising space in our monthly publication.

Jessica Crow volunteered as Refreshments Chairman for 2008. Gary & Holly Hanford supplied a delicious meal of salad, jambalaya and desserts. The raffle contributed \$124 to the Treasury.

## *Minutes (continued)*

There were 22 members and 2 guests present. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
**Bonnie Boutwell**, *Secretary*

## *Refreshment 2007 Schedule*

**October** - Bonnie Boutwell & Gary Bergeron

**November** - Rick Peterson & Barry Blanchard

## *Dates to Remember*

**October 20 & 21** - City Park Fall Garden Show. Volunteers are needed to set-up on Friday, break-down on Sunday, and work the event on Saturday and Sunday. Sign up at this month's meeting.

**November 3** - Paul Wingert Program. Longue Vue Gardens 2-4 pm. Bring a prospective member and \$\$ to buy Paul's plants and raffle tickets.

**December 8** - Christmas Party. Send checks to Margie Boe for \$37.50.

## *This Month's Meeting*

**Thursday October 11 - 7:15 Sharp!**

It's that time of year again to protect your plants for the winter. Mal Mele is scheduled to offer suggestions and share his secrets to ensure that your plants make it through the season. With or without a greenhouse, it's easier than you think to safeguard your plants.

## *Events & Shows*

**November 30-December 2, 2007**

**Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society Sale and Show**

Contact Steve Hoppin at [SteveandLarry@comcast.net](mailto:SteveandLarry@comcast.net) or 239-997-2237.

**June 24-28, 2008- BSI World Conference in Cairns (Australia)**

**July 26-August 1, 2010- BSI World Conference in New Orleans**

## *Plant Corner*

Good size Aechmea & Dyckia pups. Nice selection. \$4 & up.

**Call Gary 985.892.8474.**

*\*GNOBS members allowed (2) free lines. Non-GNOBS members pay \$5 for two lines per ad.*

## *GNOBS Joins Southwest Guild*

At this year's Guild show GNOBS officially became a member of the Texas/Louisiana organization. The other city members are Houston, Beaumont, Baton Rouge, Shreveport, Austin, Dallas/Ft. Worth and Corpus Christi. Each year the Guild holds two meetings, one of which is its May gathering in Houston. Next year's 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Southwest Bromeliad Guild Show is slated for Austin, TX, followed in 2009 for Baton Rouge and 2010 for Dallas/Ft. Worth.

The Guild allows 2 representatives from each society. All Guild members are permitted to show and sell at each year's Guild program. Registration for this year's show was \$50, including dinner.

## *GNOBS Workshop*

If you have a bromeliad question and want to talk to an expert, then talk to Alex Holmes. At 7pm, before each monthly meeting, Alex will be available to address any problem(s) you might be having with your plants. Remember, if you have a question, others are probably struggling with that very issue, so don't be shy about asking. We suggest everyone take advantage of this wonderful opportunity.

## *Selling Your Plants At City Park?*

For those who are planning to sell their bromeliads at City Park Fall Garden Show, we would like to know how many plants you intend to bring. Before our next meeting, look through your greenhouse and assess your inventory. You might be surprised at the number of pups you wish to sell.

## *Footnote to GNOBS Later History, Katrina*

In 1997, GNOBS had approximately 83 members. By August, 2005 that number was in the mid-forties. After Katrina struck, many members' homes were damaged, greenhouses destroyed and individual bromeliad collections significantly impaired or eroded. On this, the second anniversary of that unfortunate event, we thought it appropriate to revisit the months leading up to the storm and some of the days afterward. No real record was kept, however, and most of the details are scanty, at best.

## Brom Watch

Each month we will carry a column compiled from the writings of Rob Smythe. Rob, 69, is a grower with a science background and goes under the name Brom Watch. This distinguished author contributes consistently to state and national bromeliad newsletters and magazines, including BSI. Throughout the years he has lectured at national conferences and local club meetings in the state of Queensland.

Rob wishes that his Louisiana readers know he lives in Townsville, which is at latitude 19 south and is in the dry tropics of northeastern Australia. He grows his bromeliads in the ground in garden beds or as epiphytes, and by the looks of things does a magnificent job.



**Bob with his Aechmea Fire Up.**

### Fertilizing Mature Bromeliads

Fertilizing mature tank broms must be done via the tank with completely soluble fertilizers. Root fertilizing these plants is a waste of time and fertilizer. Use of expensive growing media for mature plants adds nothing, as roots are non-functional as far as fertilizer absorption is concerned. The roots of mature plants are just finding something to which to attach. I actually grow my advanced plants in empty pots with plants just held in place with foam. A brief story may add some light on the subject.

After purchasing plants at a Mt. Cootha show, I could not fit them into my case. This was necessary to allow me to get them back to Townsville. The nurseryman from whom I bought the plants told me to chop off the roots. I thought he was mad. However, they are actually dead on old plants and are only operating as fasteners, as I was later to find out.

I confirmed this by getting two of the same adult plants and with one plant I chopped off the base of the plant just below the bottom leaf. Eventually new roots appeared and I re-potted it. Then a little time further on I fertilized both doctored and non-doctored plants. Bet your life the doctored one went all green and only the weeds in the other pot showed response to fertilizer. I should have realized this dead root syndrome earlier as I was always being asked how I establish my plants on my trees. My advice has always been to wait till they start to pup and then attach them with the pup touching the



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## **Brom Watch** (continued)

tree. Yes, that is where the attaching roots come from, the pup, not from the older plant. Reminder: As I said, know your plants. What is the saying—one shoe does not fit all. The large vrieseas sprout roots all the time and feed off the detritus in their own auxiliary wells. If you pull the lower leaves off you will see these root bundles. This type of plant, being loved for its flower as well as its foliage, might be fed as per a normal flowering plant.



**For Bob, pots are definitely out of the question.**



**Everything goes in the ground.**

## *What Our Members Are About*

### **Gym Phillips**

Last year my wife met Gym Phillips (a name whose spelling Mr. Philipps changes as often as one changes one's clothes!) for the first time. As we were leaving the restaurant she turned to me and said, "That Gym is really a nice guy. He's so pleasant. Is he always that friendly to everyone?" Truer words were never said because this outward-going, genial human being is indeed the real thing.

I had met Gym only a few months before my wife did and my reaction was exactly the same. I remember our first conversation. He immediately put me at ease and though his six-foot plus frame towered over me, I knew I was in the presence of a genuine individual. Within a few minutes my guard

was down and I felt almost immediately that I had made a new friend. I imagine that most people meeting Gym react the same way. His manner is unassuming, relaxed and sociable, and now that I've known him for a year I can say my initial reaction was absolutely correct.

Still, this doesn't mean Gym is the easiest person to understand. There is a very private side to his open personality. For instance, while Gym can be the center of attention at some GNOBS meetings, he's also quick to keep much of his personal life to himself. He's a bromeliad member, as well as fern, orchid, hibiscus and camellia member, but doesn't keep a greenhouse or large collection of plants. He loves to stay busy doing carpentry and electrical work during the day, but will be the first to downplay his talents. He'll make light of his education but then firmly hold your attention talking politics and the general state of affairs. Is he a contradiction? Yes indeed, but a contradiction that is certainly hard to fault.

Gym was born in Los Angeles where his father was a florist. Obviously, Gym inherited his botanical interests from his father, although this proclivity didn't surface again until several decades later. In the meantime, Gym finished high school and later was drafted into the Army where he was a medic at Fort Polk, Louisiana from 1964-1966. Afterwards he began a career as a salesman for such distinguished companies as Avis and Lanier and in 1997 retired from the workforce. He still spends several months each year with relatives in northern California but has made New Orleans his permanent home.



Gym has been a member of GNOBS for over a decade and although he might wish to keep his "drummer" days to himself, GNOBS' self-proclaimed "entertainment director" is not shy about discussing his favorite bromeliad club. The following is just a sampling:

**Q:** When you joined GNOBS, membership had declined from its high of 200. How can membership be increased today?

**A:** Years back club meetings were held at UNO on Thursday evenings. They were friendly and informative with quite a bit of participation. But still there was only a nucleus of movers and shakers who did all the hard work in terms

## **What Our Members Are About** (continued)

of organizing meetings and events. Today it's important that we add new members to our roster. We need high visibility in many areas such as schools and garden clubs and it would be to our benefit if we could advertise more. We don't do enough of that now.

**Q:** What's your current assessment of GNOBS?

**A:** We have a good body of officers and a great group of people. However, we need to improve our meetings to where there is more education and outside speakers.



**Q:** How would you like to see GNOBS use its money?

**A:** I would like to see the club do more advertising, like I said. If we can reach more people, if we can interest others in bromeliads, the better our chances of getting new members.

**Q:** What does GNOBS mean to you?

**A:** I come to the meetings because I really love people. I find them interesting and I want to stay in touch with friends. I enjoy the social aspect of the club, but I also like plants, too. As much as I look forward to seeing everyone, I still want to learn about bromeliads. For that to happen, though, things have to change. We have to start bringing in more speakers and gearing our time to more educational programs.

**Q:** If you could make one wish for GNOBS, what would it be?

**A:** That every member try to bring in one new member each year. We don't do this any longer but it's important that we start to think in these terms. Many peoples' interest is in gardening and not specifically bromeliads. It's important that we show them how much fun bromeliads can be. It won't be easy since people don't have much leisure time, but at least we have to try.

In his own way, Mr. Phillips does try as well. If the club requires a favor, such as assembling tents or driving BSI board members to and from the airport, Gym will be there. Whatever the task, he'll gladly lend a hand. Personally it's hard imagining a meeting without Gym up front calling out the lucky raffle ticket winners. Just watching him work the audience in his amicable way is well worth the drive across the lake.

## Ask The Expert

For the record, Gym, keep the Show going. We all enjoy it!

**Q.** Is it true that guzmanias and vrieseas prefer “a little shower” at night rather than during the day? There are so many opinions that it’s hard to know who is right. Can you please help?

**A:** Watering consistently at night is considered a bad practice only in xeric (gray-leafed) tillandsias. These species use a form of metabolism known as CAM (Crassulacean Acid Metabolism). CAM species open the pores on their leaves (called stomata) at night to breathe in CO<sub>2</sub> and complete their photosynthetic cycle. When the leaf surface is wet the trichomes (the fuzzy, umbrella-shaped cells) get flattened onto the leaf surface blocking the stomata. Repeat waterings every night will eventually suffocate/starve the plant. Guzmanias and vrieseas are usually from mesic (moist) environments and use a form of photosynthesis called C<sub>3</sub> which does not require the plants to be dry at night. The mesic species have thinner leaves and are more prone to drying out so keeping water in the tanks and the soil evenly moist is beneficial (day or night).

**Q.** Some say achmeas like to be fertilized while others say only certain achmeas like to be fertilized. Is there a hard and fast rule regarding this matter? If so, which achmeas can take the fertilizer? Also, is it all right to fertilize neoregelia pups?

**A:** Nitrogen in the fertilizer is necessary for proper plant growth. The only risk in adding fertilizer to bromeliads is the possibility of causing too much vegetative growth resulting in weak, elongated (and very green) foliage. Assuming that the plants are given as much light as they want, the addition of a teaspoon or two of time-release fertilizer pellets to each plant will help it grow and remain healthy. Most growers reduce the amount of fertilizer given to full-grown neoregelias and other species with colorful foliage. A common practice is to fertilize a neoregelia pup once when it is taken from the mother plant and potted on its own. Neos are usually grown ‘hard’ in as bright a light as the plant will handle and without extra fertilizer to encourage a tight rosette with good color.

So it is important to fertilize all bromeliads for proper growth (especially when grown in a controlled environment where they are less likely to get nutrients from dissolving organic matter in their tanks). Just limit the amount on species with colorful foliage and monitor them for possible signs of loss of color or leggy growth.

**Ken Marks**, BSI Director

## **GNOBS History** (continued)

**April, 2005**—This will be Carol Hertz's last month as president; VP is Judy Zinglersen.

**May, 2005**—Marty Quist is president; Carol steps down due to illness. At the GNOBS meeting Marty provides a program "on Mulford & Racine Foster and their quest to bring the bromeliads of Brazil to each and everyone of us in the bromeliad world." Three new members join the club.

**June, 2005**—Alex Holmes returns home from the hospital. Unfortunately, his garage is set on fire and one thousand bromeliads are lost in the blaze. Two more members are added to the GNOBS roster.

**July, 2005**—It is reported that Bob Boutwell is ill and that Neal Pendleton's wife, Patricia, passed away. Ann Jenkins and Jeanne Garman provide Show 'N Tell activities.

**August, 2005**—The club votes to have its Christmas party at La Cuisine. James Gregorius displays an *Aechmea brevicolli* in bloom and Part Two of Grace Goode's video is shown. This is the last time the full club will meet in 2005.

**November, 2005**—Between 8-10 members are forced to permanently leave the city. One of those persons to lose all her possessions is Carol Hertz. Others most severely impacted by the storm are Alex and Dottie Holmes, Jeanne Garman and Bob Boutwell. A few members connect with one another and suggest that they have a pot-luck dinner in December. Fred Ross invites everyone to his home, although guests are asked to bring their own chairs.

**January, 2006**—Marty Quist, Keith & Shirley Schexnayder, Jim Phillips, Bonnie Boutwell, Lorraine Sheehy and Margie Boe bring refreshments and champagne to Fred's "under construction" home. There they discuss the future of the club and question whether they have enough of a "nucleus of members" to warrant the continuation of GNOBS. They agree to stay together and unanimously decide to move forward. In the December Potpourri it is noted: "Many of us have lost plants but there are those of us that have lost EVERYTHING. Let's find out just what we can do for you to aid in your return to normalcy."

**March, 2006**—Marty Quist leaves New Orleans and steps down as president. A second setback is the club's meeting place which was once the U.N.O. campus. This facility is now shutdown and under repair. Consequently, Bonnie and Margie are forced to look for an alternative meeting hall. Arrangements are made with Longue Vue Gardens whose grounds and buildings have also been damaged by the hurricane. Regardless, Longue Vue is now the permanent home of GNOBS.

## **GNOBS History** (continued)

**April, 2006**—Tim Calamari assumes the position of president. Individuals and groups offer to supply the club with plants. GNOBS begins its road to recovery.

**May, 2006**—Carol Hertz passes away. During Katrina Carol was forced to live for months without power or potable water (although she did stay briefly with Lorraine Sheehy and Rick Peterson). Carol refused to leave her home and her cats and eventually succumbed to complications.

**September, 2007**—The world still hasn't forgotten New Orleans or GNOBS. The Bromeliad Society of South Florida writes to ask "whether we could assist your society in rebuilding bromeliad collections or replacing important plants that may have been lost as a result of Hurricane Katrina." The process is arduous but both the city and GNOBS continue to make headway—one day at a time, one meeting at a time.

## *Pollination Of Bromeliads*

**By Eileen Killingley**

*Eileen Killingley is secretary of the Illawarra Bromeliad Society in New South Wales, Australia and produces its newsletter, Newslink. She enjoys growing many types of bromeliads (the large aechmeas and alcantareas being her favorites) and is also a qualified bromeliad judge. Eileen encourages people to grow these magnificent, yet hardy, plants in order to add color to their gardens.*

While attending a New Zealand Conference and listening to the speakers, I guess I again became aware of how many things about bromeliads that "I didn't know I didn't know!" For example, finding it fascinating when I saw a slide of the showy *Guzmania sanguinea* var. *comosa*, with its brilliant red bracts—which are not part of the inflorescence but are used as a flag to attract pollinators to the rather insignificant flower sunk deeper in the rosette (somewhat similar to a *Neoregelia*)—I looked for further information.

I was aware that plants need pollinators, such as bees and butterflies, but I had not thought too deeply about perfume, colour, etc., just kind of going along with the easy idea that these are for the gardener's—or nature lover's—pleasure. But on checking on *Guzmania sanguinea* var. *comosa* in Jose M. Manzanares' new book, **Jewels of the Jungle: Bromeliaceae of Ecuador, Part I Bromelioideae**, I found some beautiful pictures of this plant, and more fascinating information (for me, at least) on "Inflorescences, Flowers and Pollination."

## ***Pollination of Bromeliads*** (continued from page 11)

The book explains that (in Ecuador) bromeliads with red and yellow inflorescences are pollinated by hummingbirds, but those with green inflorescences are pollinated by insects or bats. Some species that flower at night and are pollinated by bats include *Guzmania alborosea* and *Werauhia greenbergii*. *Guzmania sanguinea*, with its flowers submerged in the centre, changes its leaf colour from green to a brilliant red to attract hummingbirds. In *G. sanguinea* var. *comosa* the leaf colour remains green but a largish colourful tuft of bright red bracts (flower-like in themselves) projects on a "stalk" from the centre to attract a pollinator.

In general, the pollination of bromeliads is accomplished by hummingbirds, bees, butterflies and other insects during the day and by bats and moths at night. Other birds and small mammals also pollinate bromeliads. Birds and insects are attracted by and pollinate the majority of flowers containing nectar. In their habitat one can observe, in various species of *Aechmea*, ants collecting the nectar from inside the flowers and thus pollinating them at the same time. In the province of Zamora Chinchipe (Ecuador), flies, smelling the strong odour of garlic given off by its green flowers, are attracted by *Guzmania confusa*. Those species pollinated by insects during the night possess a delicate fragrance, as is the case of several *Racinae*.

The flowers in the majority of the genus *Tillandsia* subgenus *Phytarrhiza*—such as *Tillandsia straminea*—emit a light fragrance to attract butterflies. The heat and humidity of the day accentuate the perfume from the flowers of *Tillandsia platyrhachis*. When the atmosphere is dry in the semi-desert valleys, *Tillandsia caerulea* is fragrant at midday and *Tillandsia dodsonii* (which in itself is interesting as its inflorescence is more orchid-like, reaching up to a metre long) is fragrant at dusk. *Aechmea woronowii*, with white flowers, produces a fragrance from the beginning of anthesis, attracting bats and moths as pollinators. When it rains the strength of the chemical makeup that emits the fragrance diminishes. This is a characteristic common to all fragrant flowers.

In the subfamily Bromelioideae, after pollination, the ovary begins to develop and forms a fruit. The function of the fruit is to protect the seeds during formation and to favour their dispersal. (Fruiting, again, not just for the benefit of us humans!)

These observations serve to emphasise some of the amazing strategies that living things adopt to aid in their survival and propagation.