



# The Bromeliad Blade

Newsletter of the  
San Diego  
Bromeliad Society

January 2016

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## The President's Corner

by Robet Kopfstein

The new year often brings thoughts of the year that is past and of the upcoming twelve months and beyond. What better time to reflect on our relationship with our plants.

You commonly hear people refer to "my plants" or "my garden"; however it might be worth pondering on that relationship. Do you really own the plants in your collection? Or, rather, do they own you? Are you the proprietor of your garden, or merely the caretaker? Think of how many plants out there which have passed from one owner who no longer can care for them to another (and sometimes to another, and yet another).

Clearly, the plants are indifferent to us humans, but we humans have a passionate relationship to the plant world. It is this close connection that brings to mind three rather short books by good writers that are well worth the read: *Faith in a Seed* by Henry David Thoreau (of Walden fame), *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold, and *The Botany of Desire* by Michael Pollan.

Thoreau, a renowned naturalist and the author of the modern concept of civil disobedience, wrote the manuscript of *Faith in a Seed* between 1860 and 1862, when he died of tuberculosis in Concord, Massachusetts.

In Thoreau's day there was still a common belief in spontaneous generation, that life forms could spring from nothing. For example, after a spell of rain, plants suddenly appeared where before there was only bare ground, and frogs could be heard whereas before there was only silence.

An acute observer and recorder of nature Thoreau used scientific observations to confirm his beliefs.

*Though I do not believe*

*That a plant will spring up*

*Where no seed has been,*

*I have great faith in a seed.*

*Convince me that you have a seed there,*

*And I am prepared to expect wonders.*

Over a period of many months Thoreau studied how plants reproduce by dispersing their seeds, how seeds can lie dormant for long periods of time, and how the dispersal process operates.

He studied fields that had lain fallow and recorded the sequence of plant succession from an array of annual flowers and grasses, to woody shrubs, and eventually to trees. Thoreau was keenly interested in "learning the language of these fields." And he spent years traipsing about the New England countryside observing and recording.

For us today, Thoreau's writings give us the blueprint for appreciating growing plants, how to nurture, cultivate, and above all to understand them.

*A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold was first published in 1949—Leopold had died, a victim of a brush fire on his own land, in 1948.

He had bought a completely worn out farm in Wisconsin and decided (somewhat like Thoreau) to go out every morning with his coffee and notebook and observe the land, the plants and the animals. His idea was to see how the environment would react without the heavy hand of man

which had logged, hunted, and stripped the earth until it appeared that it could never recover.

Month by month he carefully recorded what happened, with headings like Good Oak, The Geese Return, The Alder Fork, and the Choral Copse.

Part Two, titled Sketches Here and There, is a series of essays on the environment of Mexico, the United States, and Canada. In particular, his sketch titled Thinking Like a Mountain presents a compelling argument in favor of wolves, at a time when most states paid a bounty for wolf pelts.

The final part of the book, The Upshot, discusses the conservation ethic and the need for wilderness. Leopold's ideas are not

revolutionary, but they are elegantly expressed, and even today more than 65 years after his death they are apt, especially for those who value plants and animals and who see man not as master of his environment, but as a responsible steward of all nature.

The Botany of Desire (Random House, 2001) like Sand County Almanac, is a series of essays, but by a writer/journalist, not a naturalist, Michael Pollan. The book is divided in four parts:

*Beauty—The tulip*  
*Intoxication—marijuana*  
*Sweetness—The apple*  
*Control—The potato*

In those chapters Pollan discusses the interconnection of mankind and the plant world. He emphasizes how

interdependent the two are, and how the plant world has affected humans politically, economically and socially.

Of particular interest is the chapter on the apple, and the story of John Chapman, also known as Johnny Appleseed. Chapman's insistence on growing all the stock in his nursery from seed rather than by grafting has produced the amazingly wide variety of apples we have in our markets today.

All three of these books are not only a good read, they are also thought provoking, allowing us to stop and ponder our relationship to the amazing and intricately complex world around us.

## 2016 SDBS Membership

It's that time of year again! Please renew your membership with the San Diego Bromeliad Society by March 1st to insure you are included in the 2016 membership directory.

The 2016 directory will be sent to all current members via email before the March meeting. Some printed copies will be available at the meeting.

Please note that due to the high cost and extra labor involved in USPS memberships, they are no longer being offered to new members and are only available to those who are grandfathered in with a "P" associated with their name in the 2015 directory. Thanks for your understanding,

Al Evans

### Renewal Fees: 1 year

<p>Single email \$13          Dual email \$17          Single USPS \$28          Dual USPS \$32</p>
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### Renewal Fees: 2 years

<p>Single email \$22          Dual email \$30          Single USPS \$52          Dual USPS \$60</p>
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## SDBS 2016

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# Letter from the Editor

by Juliana Raposo

## Dear SDBS members,

Hope you all had a wonderful holiday season. I am very excited and thankful to be your newsletter editor for 2015! Since joining SDBS I was looking for a way to contribute to the club. What could be better than writing about my favorite subject, bromeliads?

Taking over after Dan Kinnard will not be easy. After all, he did such a wonderful job creating an interesting, fun newsletter that I looked forward to every month. In that spirit, I will go on sharing interesting, relevant information with our membership, hoping to make it enjoyable to all of you. Talking plants is something I love to do - let us see how I will do writing about them!

Cheers,

Juliana, The Bromeliad Blade



### SDBS MEETINGS

Meetings are held at 10 AM on the second Saturday of each month at Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 104.

### San Diego Bromeliad Society Webpage

[www.bsi.org/webpages/san\\_diego.html](http://www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html)

### THE BROMELIAD BLADE

San Diego Bromeliad Society  
Juliana Raposo, Editor

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To send material for the newsletter, please contact Juliana at [julianadraposo@gmail.com](mailto:julianadraposo@gmail.com)

Make sure to submit your contribution before the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month for inclusion in the next newsletter.

# January Presentation

by Pam Peters



SDBS member Pam Peters will be talking about her trip to the Brazilian Amazon.

In this presentation, titled "Ants, Plants, Water & Trees – In the Footsteps of Margaret Mee: A trip to the Brazilian Amazon", we will hear about her exciting journey through the Rio Negro region.



Above: Rio Negro Clouds  
Left: Aechmea Rodrigueziana  
photos by Pam Peters

## Books New to the SDBS Library

by Eloise Lau

### Two new acquisitions for 2016

Air Plants, the Curious World of Tillandsias by Zinaida Segó

What can I say, this is a book for the crafter/decorator and if you happen to be a tillandsia grower an inspiration for you. It is definitely a book about designing and using tillandsias in very creative ways. There ideas for tillandsia jewelry and hair ornaments, home decoration, and companion planting. A book for the beginning tillandsia grower; the first third of the book is devoted to the understanding and the care of tillandsias. Lots of photos with simple explanations for projects.

Growing Bromeliads, third edition from the Bromeliad Society of Australia Inc.

A book we already own, the third edition includes ten new species and new chemical treatment for bromeliads. Also a book for those starting out in bromeliads, this updated version includes growing information on over 200 species and hybrids. Descriptions of the native habitats for 10 genera will help you to provide the right growing conditions for species within these genera. There are separate chapters on propagation and on pests, diseases and problems.



## December Meeting

### Holiday Party Highlights

The December meeting was all about celebrating. The day started with socializing, followed by the Holiday luncheon and gift exchange.

Instead of the opportunity table, members got raffles for the bromeliads on the Christmas tree. Even the tree itself went to a member's home.



### Gift Exchange

Each member got to choose one gift from the pile. Then, packages were traded. The mysterious package with a sidekick on a leash was the most coveted one, being "stolen" multiple times.

# Taxonomic Tidbits

## Bromelias, colors and descriptions

### San Fernando Valley Bromeliad Society Newsletter – December 2015

The July 2014 Newsletter had a Tidbits article titled. “Will the real Bromelia balansae please stand up? You can find the article on <http://svfbromeliad.homestead.com/Newsletter.html>. That article addressed Bromelias serra, balansae, sylvicola and penguin and started out by stating “I am confused about this topic, and I am sharing my confusion about this relatively obscure genus.” Nothing has changed; in fact, I may be more confused now than before.

In any case, a recent Bromeliad Journal describes a new Bromelia, named *B. tocantinense* found in Ponte Alta do Tocantins, Brazil. See *J. Brom. Soc.* 65(1) 58. 2015. The authors, Eddie Esteves Pereira and Eric John Gouda, describe the new species and compare it to its relatives, *B. antiacantha*, *B. balansae* and *B. eitenorum*. There are lots of pictures of the new species, and one each of the three others. There is also a chart describing the various differences among the four of them.

But this article is only tangentially about Bromelia tocantinense or even Bromelias. Instead, the various pictures and descriptions of the petal colors intrigued me. Specifically, the petals of the four species are described as “red with white margins” (tocantinense), “deep violet” (balansae), “dark purple to white at base” (eitenorum) and “purple” (antiacantha). Id at 67.

I fully confess my limited familiarity with various shades of colors. While I am not color blind, I tend to describe colors pretty basically, sometimes modified by “light” or “dark.” There are a dizzying number of color terms I don’t pretend to know, or remember. Magenta, teal, crimson, scarlet, lavender, fuschia ... the list goes on. Sometimes I think I know what one is, but when I look on the computer, I find it is different than I think. In fact, my ignorance extended to not realizing (or remembering) there is a difference between purple and violet.

So this somewhat different article is a bit about color (and words), and the difficulty of using them to explain things. There are really two interrelated issues for both, if not more. The first is how the color or word is defined, or described. The second is the degree to which each of us perceives and uses the color or word.

For example, sometimes if you look up a botanical term, you will find it defined a bit differently in different references. For example, one might say A is a synonym of Y, while another might distinguish the two a bit (or a lot more). So if I see a plant is A, what exactly does that mean – is it the same as Y, or is it a bit different. Even if all references agree on the same meaning, that doesn’t necessarily mean that each of us will use the term the same way or even correctly for that matter.

It turns out that purple and violet are different, though not that different. Violet is actually a “spectral color,” meaning that if you hold up a prism and let the light refract through it to get a rainbow like effect, one of the

colors is violet. In contrast, purple isn’t spectral, but is a “composite color” that is a mix of violet and red.

*(to be continued on the February issue)*

## Upcoming Events

### Highlighted Meetings

January 9, 2016 at 10 AM  
San Diego Bromeliad Society  
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 104  
Our own Pam Peters on Brazil  
[www.bsi.org/webpages/san\\_diego.html](http://www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html)

February 13, 2016 at 10 AM  
San Diego Bromeliad Society  
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 104  
[www.bsi.org/webpages/san\\_diego.html](http://www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html)

June 13 – 19, 2016  
Bromeliad Society International World Conference  
Houston, Texas  
[www.bsi.org/webpages/san\\_diego.html](http://www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html)

### Monthly Meetings

1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday, 6:30 PM  
San Diego Orchid Society  
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 101  
[www.sdorchids.com](http://www.sdorchids.com)

2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday, 10 AM  
San Diego Bromeliad Society  
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 104  
[www.bsi.org/webpages/san\\_diego.html](http://www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html)

2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday, 1 PM  
San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society  
Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Room 101  
[www.sdcss.net](http://www.sdcss.net)

2<sup>nd</sup> Monday, 5 PM  
San Diego Horticultural Society  
Surfside Race Place at the Delmar Fairgrounds  
[www.sandiegohorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.sandiegohorticulturalsociety.org)