SAN DIEGO BROMELIAD SOCIETY
Established 1965

The Bromeliad Blade

Newsletter of the San Diego Bromeliad Society

September 2022

VOLUME LVII NUMBER 9

President's Message

By Steve Zolezzi

We all have had enough of the seasonal heat to last another year. That poses challenges to keeping our plants growing well in addition to the bugs and beasts. So when you bring your show and tell plants to the September meeting, we are all looking forward to hearing how you were successful. The nominations committee will be announcing opportunities for the November elections but the opportunity to participate on a committee is always open to all members. Please email me at steve@stephenzolezzi.com or let me know at the meeting your interest to participate. Eloise and Dan are again conducting a Growing Trial - this time it is Pitcairnia plants, and signup will be at the September meeting. It's a fun and easy project, so look for it.

Saturday we will be announcing an IT training session sometime next week in room #104 to familiarize as many members as possible with our A/V, Computer and Zoom system. It's very important to the program committee and those attending monthly meetings we deliver a high-quality experience for continued success. At the most recent board meeting this was discussed in detail and determined Zooms will be exclusively used to continue providing worldwide programs only.

Good growing and see you Saturday!

We had record attendance at the August picnic at Pam Koide-Hyatt's house! (top right). This week, the intense heat made this Portea Candy bloom almost overnight. (below).

September Meeting

September 10 @ 10am, Casa del Prado room 104, Balboa Park

September Program

We are back in Balboa Park with an exciting program about the World Bromeliad Conference in Sarasota, Florida. Our own Scott Sandel, who actually presided over the previous world conference hosted by our club in 2018, will present this program. Scott attended the event in June. Expect lots of cool pictures of the show and guided tours through the wonderful bromeliad collections of Florida.

As a tie-in to the talk, Scott will bring in some new broms that were acquired at the WBC back in June.

There will be a raffle table with mesic Ecuadorian imports, augmented with a range of easy to grow yet interesting plants. And we'll have another reasonably-priced group of auction plants from the World Bromeliad Conference sales tables.

Lastly, our speaker will have a sales table set up at 9:30, with Vrieseas, Billbergias, Tillandsias, and a wide range of Neoregelias.

August Picnic Highlights

The SDBS Picnic at Birdrock tropicals had record attendance. The private sale for SDBS members and the $25 voucher to shop at BT were a huge success!

Photos by Pam Peters.

They are all smiles! Ronee K braving the heat in the Birdrock Tropicals shadehouse; at the register with Pam and Virginia, Ruth Contino shows her shopping cart; Eloise Lau having a laugh.

More photos of the picnic on next page.

Thanks Pam Koide-Hyatt for once again hosting the SDBS picnic. There could not be a more delightful setting. Last 2 photos by Dave Kennedy. All other photos by pam Peters.

Scott's Summer Broms

Scott Sandel sent me these shots in July. I found it appropriate to show them now to get everyone excited about the September program!

Neo Heartbreaker in full color, ready to bloom.

Vr. 'Uncle Bob' is a dazzling creation by Hawaii's star-hybridizer David Fell.

Did you order yours in SDBS's group purchase?

Vr. Tasman Candyman came all the way from New Zealand. Vriesea hybridizer Andrew Maloy is another master of the craft.

Vrieseas seem to like the island life.

Growing pattern-leaf Vriesea outdoors in Auckland, New Zealand

by Andrew Maloy

We are reprinting this 2011 BSI article by renowned grower Andrew Maloy, which we think many new (and not so new) growers will find informative. Andrew ran his 'Kiwi Bromeliads' nursery business for many years at Whenuapai in west Auckland. He now lives on Waiheke Island.

Auckland lies on latitude 36.5 degrees south which in the northern hemisphere is similar to cities like Malaga in Spain and Monterey in California. But as a relatively small group of islands New Zealand's summer climate is greatly influenced by the expanse of the Pacific Ocean, so Auckland is much cooler in summer than its northern hemisphere counterparts. In mid-summer (February) we average a daily high of 23.7°C (74.7°F) and a low of 15.8°C (60.4°F), while in mid-winter (July) the average daily high is 14.5°C (58.1°F) with a low of 7.1°C (44.8°F). Many parts of the Auckland region, particularly around the inner-city suburbs, are relatively frost free but towards the west and south and away from the coast light winter frosts are not uncommon. Night temperatures can drop as low as -4°C (24.8°F) in some winters. Annual rainfall is around 1250 mm, with an average of 65-70 mm during summer months increasing to 140-150 mm a month in winter.

Low levels of ozone in the atmosphere, little pollution, and the

pattern of the earth's orbit around the sun result in New Zealand being exposed to high levels of ultra-violet light. The UV index in Auckland during summer is often 12 or above. Anything higher than 10 is considered extreme in terms of skin damage, but from a bromeliad enthusiast's point of view high UV appears to contribute to the great colors we achieve in many of our plants.

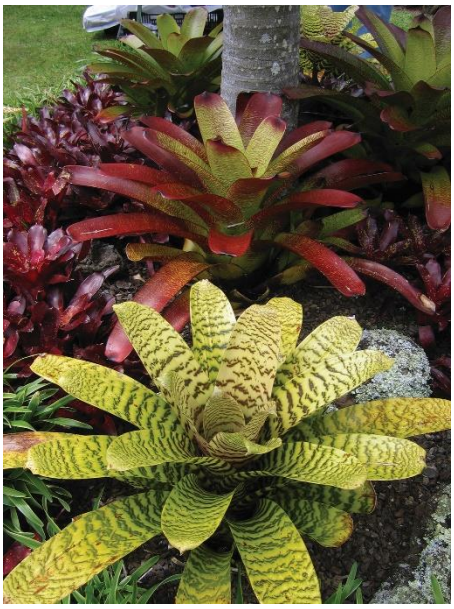
Through years of growing and breeding pattern-leaf Vriesea for outdoor use we have learned a lot about what conditions these exotic looking beauties can tolerate and how to grow good specimens. The main factors affecting color and leaf pattern intensity in Vriesea appear to be genetics, age, light, temperature, and nutrition.

Genetics

Parents obviously pass on characteristics to the offspring. For example, V. hieroglyphica has shiny, recurved leaves with dark patterns while V. gigantea has upright leaves with grey, non-reflective foliage. V. fosteriana has broad recurved leaves. Other species have a range of color traits, such as red tips (fingernails), spots or flushes of color above or below the leaves. In some cases, we can be fairly confident what the results of a cross between two parents will be, but often it is a shot in the dark.

Age

Good things take time and the same applies to foliage Vriesea. As a plant matures, the color and patterning intensify. It usually takes two to three years for a new hybrid to show its color potential but as it grows larger and older the color and patterning will only get better. Once they reach 2-3 years old vrieseas are not as slow growing as you might think, in our gardens they can double or triple their size in 12 months.



John and Agatha vrieseas

Light

Over the years we have learned that most pattern-leaf Vriesea can stand more sun than we previously thought possible. While they do grow well in shade (even heavy shade) they are equally as successful in quite bright light with the added benefit of more intense coloration. So, as a general rule, color and patterns will be brighter and more intense in good light than in shade. But too much sun, for too long, can fade colors and may even cause yellowing and leaf burn. Of course, beauty is in the eye of the beholder – I've seen vrieseas that look faded from excess sun but other people find them quite attractive. As a guide, partial shade with exposure to sun for part of the day seems best for most varieties, but each garden will have its own local variations. Genetics also plays some part here, in that a variety bred from a shade-loving species, such as V. hieroglyphica, may be less sun tolerant than others. Depending on the other parents involved though, it may have increased sun tolerance.

Temperature

We used to think pattern-leaf Vriesea grew best in warm conditions, but as time goes by we hear reports of how they have survived relatively cool temperatures. We have had reports

Vr. Phillip Foster, John Lambert

of them surviving temperatures as low as -4° (in Motueka, South Island, NZ) without damage, but I recommend you take that as the exception rather than the rule. Under the shelter of taller trees and shrubs, where frost crystals are not going to form on the foliage, they have been known to tolerate light frosts (-2°C) without the need for frost cloth covers. In more exposed areas a single or double covering of frost cloth usually provides sufficient protection. Some of our hybrids have survived a series of light frosts unscathed while Alcantarea imperialis, vireya rhododendrons, Agave attenuata and other sub-tropical plants growing nearby showed significant damage. Some even seem to respond to cold by coloring up (mostly red and pink tints) in much the same way as do some NZ native plants like Coprosma 'Karo Red'.

Nutrition

As a rough guide once planted in reasonable garden soil these Vriesea need little, if any, extra feeding. If the foliage looks exceptionally pale or growth is very slow, we feed sparingly with a general garden fertilizer, preferably one containing relatively high levels of K (potassium). Excessive N (nitrogen) compared to K will lead to greener foliage with a loss of color intensity, but as the N is used up or leached from the soil the colors will return. So the rule is do not overfeed. If you do apply fertilizer, do it during a period of active growth such as spring and early summer when there's plenty of moisture in the soil. In containers we use a good quality potting mix (composted granulated pine bark) and feed in spring with a 6-8 month slow release fertilizer in spring and occasional liquid feed if necessary.

Above: Vr. Tasman hybrid. Below, Vrieseas at Broms in the Park. (John Lambert)

Pitcairnia Growing Trial September 2022

by Dan Kinnard

Editor's Note: A couple years ago, the club did a similar growing trial with the finicky Aechmea brevicollis. (Mine did not survive). Pitcairnia seedlings will be kindly provided by Dan and Eloise.

Eloise and Dan have a few Pitcairnia seedlings that we will use for a growing trial. The trial is open to members who wish to participate.

Take a plant and fill in the registration sheet with that kind with your name and email. You will receive a worksheet by email that you can use to fill in such information about your growing conditions and observations. In 6 months to a year we will dedicate part of a meeting to bring the plants back in to compare and contrast them (Dead or Alive).Grow your plant as you think it will best grow. You can search for some ideas on

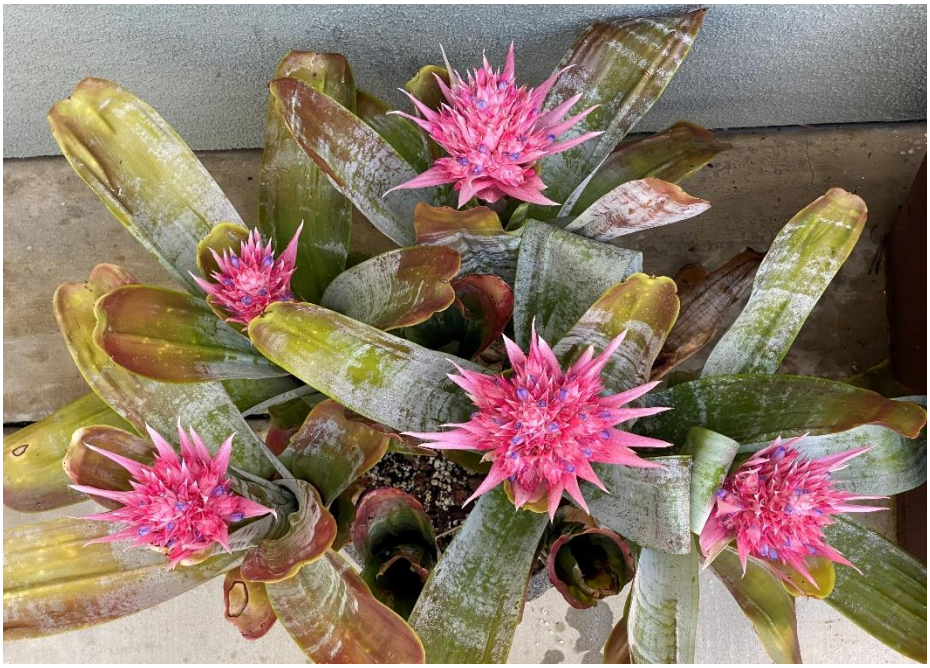
growing requirements on the web or by using some of the bromeliad information that gives habitat information. A link is included below for each type to start with. These are from low level, humid forests with low temperatures around 50˚F. We seem to be able to grow some of these outside but protected in Vista. Our society also has a library. The types that will be available (in the same order as the photos above) with a link to get started with some growing information.

Pitcairnia tabuliformis
https://en.hortipedia.com/Pitcairnia_tabuliformis

Pitcairnia nigra
http://journal.bsi.org/V31/2/
front and back covers

Pitcairnia maidifolia
https://en.hortipedia.com/Pitcairnia_maidifolia

More Summer Broms



Top: Spineless Aechmea fasciata (probably Primera) in mass bloom. Below: Aechmea Malva, the purple cultivar of mulfordii, blooms for the first time in 8 years. It's a puny flower, but the plant is a wonderful accent for a shaded area for the foliage alone. Photos by Juliana Raposo

Billbergia kuhlmannii (was brasiliensis) took advantage of the heat and humidity. This species is known to be hard to bloom in the Southern California environment. Photo by Dan Kinnard.

SDBS Events 2022

SDBS Monthly Meeting
September 10, 2022 @ 10am
Casa del Prado room 104, Balboa Park, San Diego.
www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org

SDBS Winter Sale
December 17-18, 2022

One More…

September bloomer ultra colorful Billbergia sanderiana hybrid

Hey, you!
SDBS Needs a New Treasurer
If you would be interested in filling this important SDBS position, please contact Al Evans. He will teach you.
alevans31365@gmail.com

SDBS 2022

Officers

President
Stephen Zolezzi
sazolezzi1946@gmail.com
619-379-4300

Vice-President
Kerry Nelson
kanelsondesign@cox.net
619- 574-0987

Treasurer
Al Evans, Jr.
alevans31365@gmail.com
858-492-9866

Secretary
Ruth Contino
ruth.contino1@gmail.com
619-303-2144

News Editor
Juliana Raposo
julianadraposo@gmail.com
858-349-1405

Membership
Charles Oelsen
cdoelsen@gmail.com

Past President
Morlane O'Donnell
morlane.odonnell@att.net
619- 422-8168

Board Members

Nancy Hoyt (2022-23)
nhoyt2662@yahoo.com

Mary Lee (2022-2023)
2kyanone@gmail.com

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DK ORNAMENTALS

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THE BROMELIAD BLADE

Newsletter of the San Diego Bromeliad Society

Juliana Raposo, Editor

Ph: 858-349-1405

To send material for publication, please contact Juliana at julianadraposo@gmail.com

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

SDBS MEETING

The club meets on the second Saturday of the month at 10am in Balboa Park, Casa del Prado, room 104.

SDBS WEBPAGE

www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org