SAN DIEGO BROMELIAD SOCIETY
Established 1965

The Bromeliad Blade

Newsletter of the San Diego Bromeliad Society
April 2024

VOLUME LIX NUMBER 4

President's Message

By Kerry Nelson

Spring has sprung and today a solar eclipse occurred. Those two prompts nudged me into the yard where I noticed my Tillandsia purpurea a species from Peru was blooming. This is special for me because it is the first time this clump of plants has bloomed since joining my collection. Initially I noticed the fuchsia bloom spikes a few weeks ago, not one but two of them. Both are now flowering! The delicate flowers with their deep-violet hue and cream-colored centers are striking for both their visual delight and their beautiful fragrance.

Last month I attended a meeting of the San Diego Botanical Garden Foundation, and I would like to acknowledge and thank Bob Vitacco for regularly attending these lengthy nighttime meetings as our SDBS representative. The main topic at this meeting concerned insurance for events held in Balboa Park. Fortunately, our club is on top of this with our membership in the California Garden Club along with Ronnee Kozlowski and Al Evans, our Co-Treasurers' vigilance.

The SDBS Board of Directors met on April 7, 2024. We are gearing up for our 2024 Show and Sale and will have a signup sheet for volunteers at our meeting on April 13, 2024. Morlane O'Donnell and Todd Johnson are Co-Chairs for the Sale and thanks to both for stepping up. We are still looking for someone to coordinate the Show Display, and if you are willing and able I'd enjoy hearing from you.

We are also getting ready for this year's San Diego County Fair exhibition. Nancy Groves and Robert Kopfstein have some great ideas in the works for this year's retro theme, and much appreciation to them for their considerable efforts. They too will have a signup sheet at our next meeting.

As a reminder our May meeting will not be held in Balboa Park, and look to the newsletter for details on this upcoming event. It appears we're in store for a wonderful garden tour and some special demonstrations! Make sure to participate if you can.

We'll have Tillandsias and other bromeliads for sale from a variety of vendors and from our members. Plus, we'll have tools, supplies, and experts on hand for all your questions.

Come to Balboa Park for the San Diego Bromeliad Society's

Summer Bromeliad Spectacular

Balboa Park Casa del Prado Rm 101

SAN DIEGO BROMELIAD SOCIETY
Established 1965

Saturday & Sunday

June 15 & 16

10-4:00

SanDiegoBromeliadSociety.org

April Program

Monthly meeting on Saturday, April 13 @ 10am in Casa del Prado room 104, Balboa Park

Bromeliads in Australia: The 2008 BSI World Conference

Cristy Brenner will share her experiences at the 2008 BSI World conference in Australia. She has attended all of the BSI World Conferences since 2000, and states that this conference was definitely one of the best. The conference was held in Cairns, in the tropical area of Northeastern Australia, and many members from San Diego and other Southern California societies attended. The Aussie's are exceptional growers and hybridizers and created beautiful displays. We also toured many amazing gardens and enjoyed the Aussie's great hospitality.

This talk is designed to get you excited about the upcoming conference in May, in West Palm Beach, Florida—hope you are going. In addition, you have probably heard that the 2026 World Conference will be held in Southern California. It will be hosted by the Saddleback Valley Bromeliad Society and it will probably be in Costa Mesa. So, there will be an opportunity to attend one of these wonderful conferences without flying across the country. You will also be able to show your beautiful plants, talk with Bromeliad enthusiasts from around the world, and hear talks from leading Bromeliad experts. It will also offer a great opportunity for those of you who sell your Bromeliads.

Hopefully, all of the Southern California bromeliad societies will participate to make this a very successful conference.

Cristy is a retired community college geography professor from Mission Viejo, California. As a geographer, she has visited all of the continents, but in recent years she has concentrated on traveling to regions where Bromeliads are located. She has photographed Bromeliads in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela. In Venezuela, she was part of a helicopter expedition to the top of Auyun Tepui and a second trip included a hike to the top of Roraima Tepui. She is a member of all Southern California Bromeliad societies, and is the former president of the Saddleback Valley Bromeliad Society and current newsletter editor. She is also a former member of the BSI board and a BSI judge.

Opportunity Table Offerings

Aechmea carvalhoi
Ae.fulgens v. discolor cv. Vin Rose
Aechmea orlandiana
Aechmea racinae
Neoregelia 'Royal Cordovan'
Neoregelia 'Cantankerous'
Neoregelia Oppenheimer x paucifolia
Neoregelia Super Fireball
Neoregelia 'Thunderclouds'
Nidularium ferdinando-coburgii
T. Aztec Flame (T. jalisco-monticola x dugesii)
T. Curly Slim (T. intermedia x streptophylla) - Dimmitt Hybrid
T. fasciculata v fasciculata (Honduras silver form)
Tillandsia multicaulis
T. Queen's Sceptre - (T. harrisii x fasciculata v. uncispica)
T. Queen's Trinket - (T. flabellata x ionantha)
Tillandsia Salmon 'Fire'
T. x Floridana x fasciculata v. densispica
Vriesea fosteriana 'Red Chestnut'
and more...

In Memoriam, Derek Butcher, and Paul Isley III

BSI Newsletter

Derek Butcher made significant contributions to the bromeliad world. "Uncle Derek", as he was widely known, devoted over 40 years of his life to learning about bromeliads and then disseminating his vast knowledge worldwide. He was instrumental in building up the early Bromeliad Species Picture database and Bromeliad Cultivar Registration (BCR) database at the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies (FCBS).

they were both awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for their service to bromeliad horticulture. The January-March 2022 edition of the BSI Journal featured many insightful tributes to Derek and Margaret.

Paul Isley played a major role in introducing Tillandsias to many around the world, a passion which began in 1969. Paul's love for Tillandsias lead him to start

developing cultural techniques, many exciting hybrids, and introducing a number of species to cultivation. He, with his friend and business partner Jerry, was a frequent explorer and traveler to faraway places in South America to find and bring back new and novel species for cultivation. Some species widespread in cultivation today were first and perhaps solely collected and imported by Paul and Jerry. Their California nurseries grew to produce

Collaborating with Geoffrey Lawn and Webmaster Eric Gouda, a new Bromeliad Cultivar Registry was introduced on the BSI web site. In 2022, the Bromeliad Species Database (BSD) was launched—a collaboration between Derek, Eric and Graeme Barclay. BSI will dedicate the upcoming World Bromeliad Conference to Derek.

Derek's wife, Margaret, equally shared in his enthusiasm for bromeliads and also left her mark on the world of bromeliads. In 2022,

up Rainforest Flora with friend Jerry Robinson. He authored several books on the genus including the large, colorful
tomes Tillandsia and Tillandsia II. Paul has been a speaker at many of BSI's conferences and has also served as Director on BSI's Board.

Tropiflora founder Dennis Cathcart, wrote a heartfelt tribute to Paul posted on Instagram and Facebook:

"Without dispute, Paul was at the top of the Tillandsia industry,

millions of specimens of numerous varieties and pioneered the introduction of Tillandsias to the commercial trade in the US and worldwide."

Paul was also an avid explorer who's achievements include climbing Mt. Everest and Mt. Kilimanjaro and diving down to the deepest depths of Lake Baikal.

An Argentine Puya

Andrew Wilson

It has been cool and wet this spring and some bromeliads have not yet started to bloom. Among them are the startling Chilean puyas that get everyone's attention. Less dramatic in color but beating them to bloom first this year is an Argentine member of the genus, as described below. It is also a more garden-friendly member. Let me explain why.

The better-known species such as *P. alpestris* or *P. chilensis* form large clumps and are ferociously spined. Magnificent in bloom, they are not easily accommodated in many gardens. Careful handling is needed to remove old leaves and keep the plants tidy in appearance. It is great to go visit a garden in spring where this has been done but don't talk to the gardener about the heavy gloves and the frequent cuts incurred during the year.

Some years ago, Dan Kinnard offered me several small, young and unnamed plants raised from puya seed gathered in central Argentina. They had been sitting in small pots without showing much inclination to grow. With no other information I decided to unpot and replant them. Fearing they might become rather large but also curious about how they might develop my decision was to plant them in hollow cinder blocks located close to the house. The blocks were 16 inches wide, 8 inches tall and 4 inches wide. With one block above a second the plant roots could descend 16 inches before reaching the ground. (There are no bricks below the blocks - see left). However, the hollowed region was more restricted laterally to ensure that pups could not emerge far from the plant center. Growth was initially slow, just as it had been when the plants were in small containers. However, after one wet winter the plants within the cinder blocks perked up in the spring. By a year later the plants had expanded rapidly and in the following season produced inflorescences similar to those in the images. Up to four feet tall and arched slightly they presented an arresting sight. Grown in this way the puyas are restricted from spreading laterally while flowering has appeared annually from fresh pups emerging from their congested confines.

Why has this occurred instead of the dilatory behavior shown when the plants remained in their small containers? As I explained in a recent paper (J. Brom. Soc. 73(3), 2003) puyas, together with dyckias and hechtias, belong to a class of bromeliads that derives nutrition through roots rather than through leaves which is how neoregelias, aechmeas and others derive theirs. Replanting the puyas in much deeper containers encouraged them to grow and reach their flowering stage.

That is the basic explanation but it's not the complete one. After replanting, growth was initially very slow until that one wet year. Why was it so? The mixture in which they were planted was fast draining and rather poor in nutrients. Growth was thus slow until persistent moisture deep in the blocks induced roots to extend to ground level. Once there, they found more nutrients and grew rapidly. They really needed to escape the confines of a container to thrive. Inserting them in hollowed concrete blocks allowed escape while restraining lateral extension.

The Argentine species turned out to be *P. spathacea,* a species that in nature may produce wide spreading lateral growths that are not easily managed in many gardens. Like most puyas its leaves are spiny, but they are much more easily handled than those of the more commonly grown *P. alpestris* or *P. chilensis*. As a plant in southern California, it accepts full sun in coastal areas with some shade for part of the day further inland. Flowering begins in March if rainfall has been adequate and later if not. The inflorescences are imposing and stand over four feet tall.

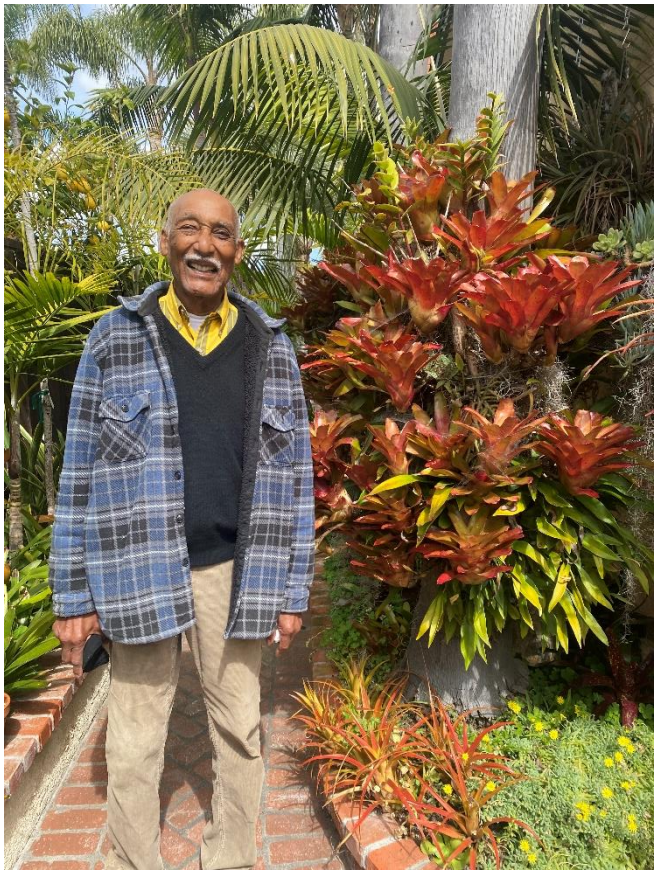
Slightly hairy they include green petals and golden stamens that stand up well to late spring rains. As with other puyas its flowers get the attention of our hummingbirds. To keep them busy plant a few dyckias nearby. The plant is an attractive plant year-round, requiring little maintenance to keep tidy. It is very tolerant of our summer drought conditions and has not received watering except in its early years and relies on those deep roots to keep it hydrated. You do not need to sprinkle the leaves with water. That achieves nothing other than to wash off dust or debris.

RSVP to Attend SDBS May Meeting

We will meet at our own Tyrone Hall's home in Encinitas.

Next month, the SDBS monthly meeting will not be held in Balboa park. You heard that right. Instead, we will meet at Tyrone Hall's home in Encinitas.

An RSVP sheet will be passed around in the April meeting. Each attending member can bring one plant to participate in the repotting and mounting clinic. We will have a group of experts to guide you on how to best divide, repot or mount your gnarly bromeliad. The club will provide lunch. More details coming soon!



Last Call for Vendors in the SDBS June Sale

If you want to sell plants in our Show and Sale but haven't committed yet, don't delay. Contact sale co-chairs Morlane O'Donnell and Todd Johnson to secure your spot. Tables are going fast, and once the layout is finalized, you may be left without a place to set up.

SDBS Events 2024

SDBS Monthly Meetings

Every 2nd Saturday of the month
Casa del Prado room 104
Balboa Park, San Diego
www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org

World Bromeliad Conference 2024

May 22-25
West Palm Beach Florida
www.bsi.org

SDBS Show & Sale

June 15 & 16
Casa del Prado room 104
Balboa Park, San Diego

SDBS at SD County Fair

June 12 to July 4
Del Mar Fairgrounds

SDBS Board Meetings Schedule

The SDBS board meets in-person 4 times a year to discuss all issues relevant to running the society. Any member can attend but must RSVP to the president and submit any agenda items in advance. Meetings are always on a Sunday from 10am to 12pm.

Next meetings are on August 4 and October 6 at Kerry Nelson's.

SDBS Officers 2024

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Vice-President
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Treasurer
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Cindy Benoit (2023-24)
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Lucia Velasquez (2024-25)
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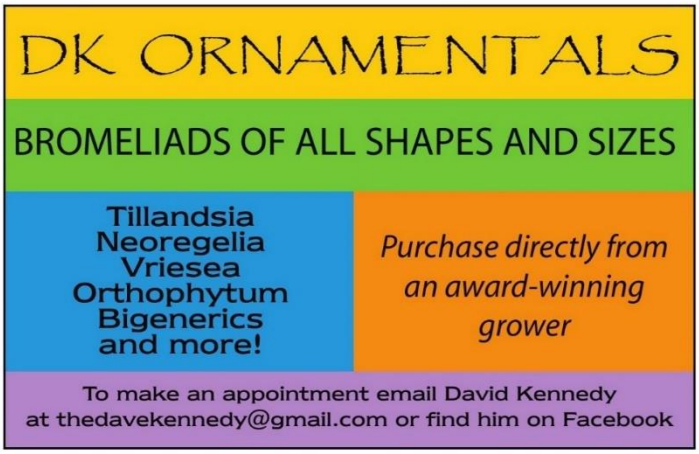
Essential Bromeliad Resources

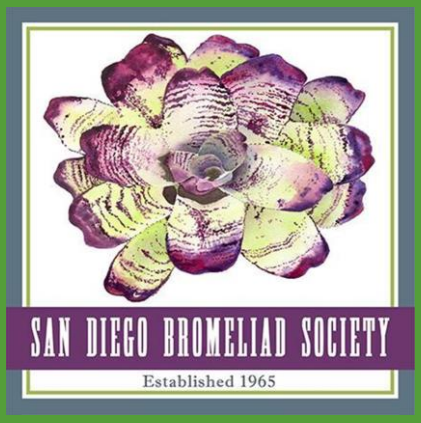
Bromeliad Species Database *– https://bsi.org/members/?bsd Species names keep changing due to new research. Consult the BSD for identification, photos, distribution, and spelling names of bromeliad species. For more granular information, log in as a BSI member.*

Bromeliad Cultivar Registry *– https://bsi.org/registry/ The BCR lists information on bromeliad hybrids and cultivars. Here you can check the parentage of a bromeliad hybrid or the species of a sport that goes by a registered name. This is a free resource.*

SDBS Library *– Our bromeliad-specific library contains titles you won't find anywhere else. Contact our librarian, Eloise Lau, and check out a book.*



THE BROMELIAD BLADE



Newsletter of the San Diego Bromeliad Society

Juliana Raposo, Editor

Invitation

We are in constant need of 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 Meetings

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

SDBS Website

www.sandiegobromeliadsociety.org

SDBS Facebook Group

https://www.facebook.com/groups/sandiegobro