

orlandiana

**Newsletter of the
Bromeliad Society of Central Florida**
Volume no. 50, Issue no. 9

Next meeting: September 20, 2023

Where: Leu Gardens, 1920 N. Forest Avenue, Orlando, FL 32803

6:30 –7:00 is time for displaying and purchasing plants

Program officially begins at 7:00 pm

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Visit the Bromeliad Society of Central Florida Website at:
www.bromeliadorslando.com

You will find an activities page that lists our speakers for upcoming meetings, downloadable copies of newsletters, plant photos, a map to Leu Gardens, and more! This is a great place for the public to find out about our Society or send us a message. Check it out!

Dyckia 'Yellow Glow' courtesy John Boardman

President's Message

Sitting cross-legged in the shade beside the koi pond, it is warm and humid with a bit of a breeze. I'm cleaning up an old clump of *Tillandsia ionantha*. I'm using tweezers to pull out the tiny dead leaves, and thinking it is going to take all morning to clean up the one plaque. It is a job that can't be rushed or young offsets get broken off and that defeats the goal of having the plaque completely covered. I have been wanting them to cover the whole plaque for a long time. Some setback always occurs. A branch falls knocking some off. It gets too much water and a section rots. Each setback frustrates, but then it blooms and is awesome, and I am re-energized by the thought of how much more awesome it would be if the whole plaque was covered.

So, I'm sitting with the tweezers thinking about broms. That leads to society stuff, and that leads to hoping Bill Clark's upcoming talk on building his new greenhouse is a good one. Pulling out an oak leaf that is stuck deep in the clump makes me think of all the broms I do not bother to coddle. Lots of them have more than one oak leaf stuck in them. They also get crowded too close together, get too much sun, or not enough. If I spent as much time on each brom that I spend on these *ionantha*... Well, that's not happening. The imperfectly grown ones still amaze me. Broms can be beautiful and bizarre without me doing much. It feels good to think it is OK to be lazy.

For nearly 50 years I have vacillated between periods of seeking to grow my broms to be the best they can be and an attitude of letting Nature take its course. The high energy comes during the cooler months... and after seeing some grand specimen grown by someone with a greenhouse. August and September are 'live and let live' months. The second summer living in Orlando my collection of broms had grown to perhaps 20 pots of plants. I decided I needed a place to grow them better. Using four 8-foot long 4" x 4"s as uprights, and 2" x 4"s as cross-pieces and bracing, I hammered together a structure and covered it with lattice. I did not like the bare wood, so I painted it to match the house. It was pretty good looking. I was so proud of myself. A matching wood shelf was made to fit perfectly inside. The broms looked good with sun dappling through the lattice. I was beginning to collect epiphytic ferns also, and hung a few from the cross-pieces at the top. It was beautiful and I just knew those broms would become magnificent.

That did not occur. First one and then another got yellow burn-looking spots. One had the whole center die and rot. The ferns were thriving, but not the broms. I had used treated lumber for the uprights and cross-pieces so the structure would not rot outdoors, and the paint had all sorts of chemicals in it. Rain and dew dripping from the structure contained copper leaching from the wood and paint. Instead of creating a great spot to grow my broms,

I had placed them in a death trap. It was a hard lesson. I should have asked experienced club members for advice. I did not know enough to know to ask. The ferns loved it.

There were more DIY shade structures over the years. Whenever I'd get the notion to grow my broms to be their best, I knew the first step was to create a place where I could control light exposure, prevent tree debris from falling on them and do at least some of those other things the pros do. All these years later, I have ended up with a metal-framed shadehouse for my Vrieseas, a western cedar (it rots eventually) structure shading the koi pond from which broms, orchids and ferns can hang, and a plastic arbor that works well for Tillandsias. None of these structures provide the totally controlled conditions of a commercial greenhouse, but each in its way allows me to grow some broms better.

Finishing with the tweezers, I start with scissors to snip off some brown leaf tips. My mind has been wandering about greenhouses and such for nearly two hours. It would have taken two minutes to clean up a pot of Billbergias. But, the clump is looking pretty good. You'd never know there had been so much raggedy dead stuff. With all the fresh tiny new pups sprouting up, maybe this will be the year they cover the whole plaque. If I had another shadehouse, I could coddle a few more.

Mike McMahon

August Minutes

Bromeliad Society of Central Florida Meeting Minutes Wednesday, August 16, 2023, 7-9pm

Program: Vice President Tim Dreggors introduced speakers Pam Marion, John Boardman and Mike McMahon, who gave mini-presentations on the FCBS and BSI websites, varieties of patterning & variegation and the intricacies of clones, hybrids & cultivars.

A Member's Market, along with a table displaying our plant of the month, orthophytum, drew enthusiastic attention before and after the speakers.

The Business Meeting was called to order by President Mike McMahon at 8:00 pm.

New Members and Guests: Recording Secretary Katherine Vaccaro invited us to welcome guests Jaudon Marlete, Jennifer and Rosemary Jonas and Dennis Edwards.

Minutes: The minutes of the July, 2023 meeting were published in the *Orlandiana* Newsletter. A motion was made by Bob Smedly and seconded by Liesel Haas that they be approved. The motion passed.

Treasurer's report: Joyce Gibault reported on our income and expenses for July. We continue to have healthy reserves in both our checking and money market accounts.

Holiday Party report: Teresa Eddy encouraged everyone to volunteer for tasks for our November feast and gift exchange.

President's Report: Research on a BSCF group tour to Costa Rica revealed that there was no consensus on trip details, so the idea has been dropped.

There was no **Old Business**.

New Business: The Board nominated John Boardman and Pam Marion as Life Members in recognition of their more than 30 years of service to BSCF. They were approved by acclamation.

Show & Tell didn't draw as many plants as usual, perhaps due to the Member Market.

Door Prize/Raffle giveaways rounded out the evening.

Respectfully submitted,

Katherine Vaccaro, Recording Secretary

Guest Speaker - Bill Clark

Bill will be discussing building a greenhouse in your backyard. Since Bill will not have much in the way of broms to sell, we will have another Members' Market.



List of Upcoming Events



Wreath making floral arrangement

Date: Sat Oct 15 2022 at 12:30 pm to 02:30 pm

Location: Harry P. Leu Gardens, 1920 N Forest Ave, Orlando

Organizer: Harry P. Leu Gardens

Instructor: Teresa Eddy

Learn to compose unique and unusual floral and foliage arrangements from plants you find in your own garden or landscape setting. In this workshop, the instructor will help you create your own made-at-home arrangement and take some of the confusion out of using various vases and floral gear.

Teresa Bremer Eddy is an Orlando native, an avid gardener, a retired special education teacher, and the owner of Patioscapes, a container garden business. She derives her eclectic and unique floral design style from her travels throughout the United States, Europe and Asia.

Participants must withdraw from classes at least five days prior to the start of class in order to receive a full refund or credit. If we must cancel a class, we will make every effort to inform you prior to the class time, and you will receive a full refund or credit.

Only those registered for the class will be permitted in the classroom. Childcare services are not provided.

A Cultivar That Isn't A Cultivar

Mike McMahon

A cultivar is a plant with one or more traits different from the norm discovered in cultivation. If it was found in Nature, it would be a form or variety of a species. It could not be a cultivar. So, if you find a brom in the BSI Cultivar Registry you know it is not found in Nature. Or, at least, that's what I was always thought. Sometimes, however, things are not what they seem.

Aechmea nudicaulis is a problematical species when it comes to naming. It is highly variable in Nature, but botanists have not spent the time required to do peer-reviewed justifications for giving official variety names to all the numerous natural versions of the species. So, nurseries and hobbyists have filled the void by giving many of them creative names. These are used in the trade as if they were cultivars (versions found in cultivation, not in Nature).

One such is a beautiful version of *A. nudicaulis* long known as 'Rubra'. However, it was not an officially recognized variety, so it should not have a Latinized name. It confused people. Adding to the confusion, 'Rubra' came in different versions. Some have red streaks running the length of the leaves, some blotches of red and some intermediate. The plants grouped under the 'Rubra' label shared bright red pigment. It would take forever for a botanist to gather the field material of all these plants and come up with an acceptable description justifying official recognition as a natural variety. So, nobody has bothered.

Then steps in the guy who headed up the BSI cultivar registry, Derek Butcher, well-known for being a real stickler for technical correctness. He looked at the confusion and gave the whole tribe of plants circulating under the name 'nudicaulis Rubra' a cultivar name and put it in the registry... despite the fact it is not a cultivar! He admitted he was violating the rules. His explanation:

"There is one [nudicaulis] that is very popular with Bromeliad growers that is distinct but has not been formally described and yet everybody knows it as *Aechmea nudicaulis* 'Rubra' or *Aechmea nudicaulis* var. *rubra*. In effect it falls in the gap between a cultivar and a botanical variety by being not acceptable under either ICNCP (International Code of Nomenclature of Cultivated plants) or ICBN (International code of Botanical Nomenclature) rules. It is not in the Cultivar Register and it is not in the Binomial Listing. I think you will all agree with me that this situation should be remedied. At this late stage I cannot see any botanist bothering to describe this plant properly under their ICBN rules.



Aechmea nudicaulis

"This form is found in the wild in Brazil and I have discussed this anomaly with my friend Oscar Ribeiro of Bromeliario Imperialis in Rio de Janeiro. Apparently there are native tribes in Brazil whose members on ceremonial occasions, paint themselves red. One of the larger tribes is called 'Xavante' and while there is no direct link in ethnobotanical terms it does seem an apt name. I realise this will mean you changing your label but it will solve a problem and we will have a photo in the Register for identification purposes. There is the problem that 'Rubra' will continue to be used, but, at least there will be links in the Register to point enquirers in the right direction if they wonder about identification. So remember the name is either *Aechmea nudicaulis* 'Xavante' or *Aechmea* 'Xavante'."

The moral of the story: When you get confused by how broms get named, don't feel too bad. The guy in charge of cultivar registration violated his own rules by registering a naturally occurring brom as a cultivar and he did it to eliminate confusion, thereby creating different confusion.

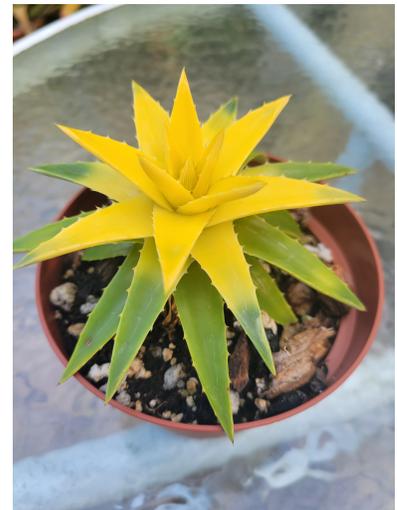
At least he was honest about it.

Plant of the Month: Dyckia

There are two different genera, **Dyckia** and **Hechtia**, both in the bromeliad subfamily Pitcairnioideae. They are often grown side by side because both like lots of sun, but they are otherwise very different in their needs.

Dyckia grow in rocky, sunny areas, but where water is readily available to their roots. They are endemic to semi-arid regions of Brazil and the central part of South America, but they are not the xerographic desert plants many people assume them to be. They colonize where crevices in rock allow their roots to reach water. They have a natural tendency to clump, leading to thick, large mats. There are 178 accepted species of Dyckia and nearly 400 registered hybrids.

All are terrestrial plants, and all but a few are very spiny. The spines are often a major part of their beauty. Some Dyckias have plain green leaves, others are purplish red and some are so silvery they look metallic. The bloom spike appear from between the leaves laterally, not from the center. They often have colorful orange or yellow bell-shaped flowers. The overall look reminds some people of an Aloe... but a very spiny one.



Dyckia 'Yellow Glow'
courtesy John Boardman

Growing Dyckias successfully is very different from how one succeeds with most bromeliads. Instead of the typical fast-draining, open potting mix favored by most bromeliads, Dyckia do best in ordinary soil. They do not hold water in a cup. They should be watered regularly and not allowed to go completely dry. Avoid having the soil stay soggy, but if uncertain whether your Dyckia needs more water, give it some. Some growers even use shallow saucers under their pots to help keep the soil more moist. Also unlike other bromeliads, Dyckia do best when regularly fertilized and you can follow normal package directions. And, feel free to use a pot larger than seems proportionate to the plant. Dyckias have large root systems which they use to gather water and nutrient. They are happy when their roots can spread. You can grow your Dyckias like you would a cactus, except give them more water. Dyckias are fairly tolerant of cold weather, but should be protected from frost and hard freezes.



Hechtia texensis

Courtesy: John Boardman

Hechtias are native from southern Texas thru Central America and are cold tender. There are 85 accepted species and about a dozen registered hybrids. They grow terrestrially in dry, rocky and cliff habitats. These are often arid and semi-arid. Regular soil or a mix designed for cactus works best. Some growers like to add a little dolomitic lime so the soil will not be acidic. (Most bromeliads prefer a moderately acidic medium.) Regular fertilization according to package directions works fine. Unlike Dyckias, the Hechtias are adapted to long periods of drought. They will grow best if watered when the soil goes dry, as you would grow a cactus. If in doubt, wait a day before watering. Raise them in full sun and give them a large pot. Hechtias can become quite large and their root systems spread out.

An unusual trait of Hechtias is that the plants are either male or female (except for the species *H. gayorum*). To set seeds, both sexes are needed. Another curious trait is that old bloom spikes that look dried out can re-bloom a year or more after you thought it had finished. The flower spikes rise from between the leaves laterally, not from the center. A Hechtia plant can live to be decades old, and over the years will produce plenty of offsets, but not nearly as many as a Dyckia.

Snacks

All of you brought such delicious goodies for the food table last month that we ran out of forks again. If you promise to bring more treats in September, I promise to bring a lot more forks!!!

See you in September!!!!

Peggy

Pictures



John Boardman and Pam Marion have become lifetime members.





N. cruenta 'rubra' - John Boardman



Orthophytum 'Sunset' - Mike Saunders



Mike McMahon's clones



2023 Bromeliad Society of Central Florida MEMBERSHIP FORM



_____ NEW MEMBER _____ RENEWAL

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name (s) _____

Address _____

City, State Zip +4 _____

Phone/Email _____

\$15 for one member, plus \$5 for each additional family member at the same address.

Name Tags are optional. The price for a name tag is \$7 per member.

If so desired please insert number ordered _____ \$ _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____ Make checks payable to BSCF

Either **bring payment to the next meeting.** OR If mailing please send to:

Bromeliad Society of Central Florida, PO Box 568872 Orlando, FL 32856-8872.

Meetings are held at Leu Gardens, 1920 N Forest Ave, Orlando, FL 32803.

On the 3rd Wednesday of every month, from 6:30-9:00 pm. Buy plants from the speaker between 6:30-7pm. The meeting starts promptly at 7:00. You'll enjoy informative programs, Show & Tell, plant sales, door prizes and raffles. Members also receive a monthly newsletter. Please come join us!

Treasurer:

Date _____ Check # _____ Cash \$ _____

Officers

President: Mike McMahon

Vice-President: Tim Dreggors

Treasurer: Joyce Gibault

Secretary: Katherine Vaccaro

Immediate Past President: Mike Saunders

Florida Council Reps: Mike Saunders & Mike McMahon

POSITIONS

Meeting Layout Coordinator: President.

Meeting Hospitality Coordinator: Kathy Hancock (Beverages); Peggy Bohl (Snacks)

Helpers:

Welcome Table/Raffle Coordinator: Robin Norton Helpers: Tracy Kochmann, Katherine Vaccaro

Secret Bid Auction Coordinator: Phil Wright

Plant Of The Month Coordinator: John Boardman

Speaker Helper: John Boardman

Librarian : Telka diFate

Newsletter Editor: John Vecchitto Would be good to have a couple of people as 'reporters', supplying John with photos, news blurbs and articles.

Newsletter Proofreader: Marty Folk

Membership Secretary: Marilyn Howser

PLANT SALES -

Plant Sale Chair for Leu Gardens Spring Plant Sale: Mike Saunders.

Field Trip Organizer: Karen Steinberg

Webmaster: Greg Kolojeski

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BSCF is an affiliate of the Bromeliad Society International, Inc., and a member of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies, Inc. and the Cryptanthus Society.