



BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF GREATER CHICAGO

# THE BSGC NEWS

June, 2010

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The June 13<sup>th</sup> meeting is at 2 pm in Annex 2 at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Remember that there is a wine festival that day so you may want to come early to find a parking place. (I'll drink to that!)

## *President's Column*

*Well the summer heat has finally come and I wish that it hadn't! But for that I guess I'll have to move to another region of the country! It's been raining a lot around here, which is good for the crops and such. I hope that all our Mothers out there had a beautiful time on their special day! For all you Dad's, your day is fast approaching and we wish you a wonderful day filled with all those who love and care about you.*

*We will be meeting June 13th in Annex 2, which are the nice trailers up front. Steve and Martha will be doing a program of the Florida Extravaganza they went to in November 2009. We are sure to see some very lovely photos!! We will discuss after that, the preparations and setup for the show on June 26 & 27, 2010 at the Garden. If you have any plants that you'd like to display, please see if you'll be able to bring them on Friday, June 25th during the setup of the area. This year we have to setup between 11 AM - 6 PM and no later, as they're having a Summer Dinner Dance that night. This however should not pose a problem.*

*We look forward to seeing you at the meeting on June 13, 2010, bring a friend if you'd like.*

*Lori Weigerding*



Orthophytum species  
At the 2010 Sonoran Conference, Tucson

Martha and Steve Goode will present a slide program on the Florida Extravaganza which we attended in Orlando in November. I only have one plant that didn't make it from Florida to Arizona to Illinois. I found out that orthophytums can not take cold even in the 40°s.

After the presentation we will discuss the upcoming Flower Show and Sale which is scheduled for June 25<sup>th</sup> (set-up) to June 27<sup>th</sup>. We were glad to hear that Jack and Ardie Reilly are planning to come with twenty-five plants. We hope

everyone will bring a few plants. This is a non-judged show but be sure your plants are pest free and your pots are clean. If you can work anytime during these days, please call Martha (815) 459-1623 or email at [stevegoode1@ameritech.net](mailto:stevegoode1@ameritech.net) the days and times you can work. The hours we will be working at the show are 9am to 4:30 pm. I will be there on Friday to set up around 1pm.

The Journal of the Bromeliad Society of New Zealand had an article "Tantalizing Tillandsias" by Alan Thomson in their September 2008 issue.

Dave and Joan Anderson have been working at their Mt. Eden garden since the 1970s and it's a well established oasis of bromeliads, orchids and large cycads. Dave is a distinguished member of the Society and he has built up an impressive collection across the genera with a speciality in tillandsias.

Walking up the drive it is lined on the left with neoregelias and above them are clumps of rampant *Tillandsia somnians* with its distinctive stoloniferous growths shooting all over the place-perhaps this is the toughest and



*Tillandsia somnians*  
from [www.fcbs.org](http://www.fcbs.org)

easiest tillandsia to grow here as it's so happy to be just stuck up in a tree or tied onto a trellis!

Through the back gate and we are greeted with a mass planting of *T. Lindenii* with its long red spikes and bright blue flower that always reminds me of irises. The blue flowers have a white throat to them in contrast to its relative *T. Cyanea*. The latter needs a warmer climate and are generally sold as houseplants here. However, when the two are crossed then this results in a hybrid that is hardy enough to live outside and it inherits the shorter stature of *T. Cyanea* and completely blue flowers.



*T.kirchhoffiana*  
[www.fcbs.org](http://www.fcbs.org)

I photographed Dave with a *T.kirchhoffiana* with a long inflorescence and this is unusual in that it is a species that thrives in the shade. He was showing me the hail damage on it and it had a mass of small pock marks that the weather had inflicted. Stick it in a shady spot in a pot with some space around the plant because it 'pups like crazy'.

One of the biggest tillandsias is *T. Australis* and it can even grow to rival the size of the larger vrieses. Its beautiful limey green colour makes it a sought after specimen. It comes from the high altitudes of countries like Bolivia. I remember seeing a huge specimen of this at Jo Elder's in Tauranga last year that came via Dave.

Out on the brick path were well grown *T.confertiflora* and *T.'Sentry'* that Dave was trimming to cut the leaves that

had suffered during our dreadful wet winter. They weren't affected too badly though and were responding to spring by throwing up red and yellow inflorescences. A lovely garden pool arrangement was surrounded by a range of tillandsia clumps including the familiar *T.aeranthos* with their bulbous flowering heads drooping down in decline. I was intrigued to see *T.latifolia* because this is a species that is viviparous in that pups start growing at the axils up the length of the

inflorescence. Another species that shares this unusual reproductive feature is *T.secunda* that has a large spindly spike that can sometimes have between 30-40 pups growing out the length of it.

Dave and Joan did the Inca trail in Peru some years ago and Dave can recall seeing lots of *T.secunda* in the wild at 2500 metres (8,200 feet) in areas that get lots of breeze which makes the hot sun more bearable. *T.usneoides* (Spanish Moss) likes growing in these breezy conditions also and can be seen everywhere over there.

Of course, in their native habitats in South America, tillandsias generally thrive with hot wet summers and warm or cool dry winters. New Zealand conditions are opposite and only some tillandsias adapt well here.



*T. Limbata* [www.fcbs.org](http://www.fcbs.org)



*T.confertiflora* [www.fcbs.org](http://www.fcbs.org)

Dave held up a lovely specimen of *T.limbata* for me to photograph. This is a species that does not like the cold or wet and so has to be kept in the shadehouse all winter. He was bringing it out into the garden for the spring and we admired the three emerging zigzag spikes.

Best value for money is probably *T.rodrigueziana* from Honduras as it flowers and pups madly and is 'tough as old boots'. A mass of red spikes were springing out of the clump and it is quite similar looking to *T.fasiculata* but is bigger.

A little terrestrial caught my eye as it had a deep pink inflorescence that apparently lasts for months and comes from Mexico.

*T.gymnobotrya*-it's tough and does well in Auckland.

Small bright red spikes were emerging from *T.dura* and this is a plant that is often compared with *T.caulescens*. The difference comes at flowering time when *T.caulescens* produces white flowers on its inflorescence whereas *T.dura* gives us little pink ones!

Up on the fence Dave tidied up a beautiful clump of *T.aeranthos* (small version) and he remarked that Brian Dawson often wins on the competition table with this one. Also mounted up on a fence was a lime green clump of *T.neglecta* that lives up to its name and thrives in a very good compact form. At the back of the garage Dave has mounted a large fishing net onto a support and this is the perfect backdrop to hang lots of species that do best when suspended like *T.ionantha* that were getting red as they were coming into season.

In the shadehouse Dave showed me lots of species that need constant warm and air movement. A wee *T.heubergeri* had a bulbous pink flower and has been in

Dave's collection for four years or so but still no sign of pups. The sturdy *T.bulbosa* looked spectacular with bright red windy spikes. Intergenerics are not well known with tillandsias but Dave had an interesting hybrid of *T.multicaulis* x *Vriesea erthrodactylon* that loved the shadehouse conditions.

I noticed a clump of *T.caerulea* that mats up a bit like *T.usneoides*. Its long slender soft spikes are tipped with strongly perfumed flowers-one to recommend if you can keep it out of our winter rains.

I came away inspired to work with tillandsias a lot more because their compact form and appealing spikes and foliage are a joy to behold and there are so many species that love the life in Auckland!

Some of the tillandsia we have ordered from Russell's in the past are: *aeranthos*, *brachycaulos*, *streptophylla* and *caput medusae*. They may be in the order for this year's show depending on availability. The following information I found in [Air Plants and other Bromeliads](#) by Bill Wall and revised by Clive Innes and [Tillandsia](#) by Paul Isley III.



*T. Gymnotrya* [www.fcbs.org](http://www.fcbs.org)



*T. Neglecta* [www.fcbs.org](http://www.fcbs.org)

*Tillandsia aeranthos* means air blooming. It is found growing from near sea level to several hundred meters in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Paraguay. It prefers growing epiphytically on *Tipuana tipu* trees. It can grow singly or up to a dozen plants in a cluster. It can be used as a good indicator on whether your tillandsias need water. The leaf edges curl up when it is dehydrated. The flower scape is ruby red and the flowers are an indigo. According to Paul Isley, the plant blooms annually and the

entire flowering cycle lasts close to a month. The Argentines refer to the flowering plant as “Carnations of the Sky”.

The name *brachycaulos* means short stem which refers to the scape of the inflorescence. Its habitat is in the dry woods and desert area of Mexico and Central America at elevations of 2,000 to 4,000 feet. It is a tough dry growing species. When it is provided with high light and a humid environment it will have a rosy pink blush. It usually has no stem. It is one of the tillandsia that is pollinated by hummingbirds. The red color mostly fades after blooming, but there should be 2 or 3 pups coming. Paul Isley suggests growing them individually rather than in clumps because of the spreading nature of the leaves.

*Tillandsia streptophylla* means twisted leaf. It grows from sea level to 2,600 feet epiphytically from southern Mexico to Honduras. Its common name is the “Shirley Temple” plant because of the curl in the leaves. This can be controlled by the grower. When it is grown drier, the leaves tighten into ringlets. You don’t need to use your curling iron. There is a large variation in its mature size from 7" to 23.6 inches. One suggestion from Paul Isley is to quickly rehydrate by soaking in water overnight with a pinch of fertilizer. The leaf cell will only absorb water until full. The flower scape are carmine when they are given bright light. The color of the flowers is mauve. A word of caution-it is somewhat susceptible to rot where there is a lack of circulating air. One suggestion is to mount the plant horizontally.

The name *Tillandsia caput-medusae* means the head of snakes (Medusa-Greek Myth). It grows from sea level to 7,800 feet from Mexico and Central America. Its growth habit is small, usually less than 4 inches where it grows in dry gullies in Guatemala. Plants that grow to a larger size (8 inches) grow in dry habitats but receive moisture more frequently. It is a grey-green color with a pseudo-bulb. The inflorescence usually has 2-6 spikes. With good bright light, the bracts are a cherry red. The flowers are mauve. It has velvety leaves.