



BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF GREATER CHICAGO

# THE BSGC NEWS

September/October, 2013

|                   |                 |                           |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
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WEB SITE

<http://bromeliad-chicago.org>

Webmaster

Lori Weigerding

The meeting on Oct. 13<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm in the Annex at the Botanic Garden has a full agenda. We will have a raffle of plants and items to mount them on. Please bring either a garden related item such as a pretty pot, something to mount a tillandsia on or a plant. Also don't forget to bring bags to carry items home. Larry Clever will share his pictures from his recent trip to Hawaii.

Let us know before the meeting if you would like to become an officer. We also need someone to volunteer to make arrangements for the November luncheon. The slate of officers for next year will be approved then.

### *President's Column*

*Well the temperatures were starting to cool down and now I hear that this weekend will be in the mid-80s. Well that is much better than 90s! Pretty soon we'll have to be finding space for our plants to reside inside for the winter. So what are your plans for your plants? Have you been cleaning out space for them, that's been filled up with other plants? Unfortunetely for me I have no where outside to put them, so they stay inside all year. I'm hoping some day to have mature trees that will offer some shade.*

*We'll be meeting Sunday, October 13, 2013 in the Annex trailer. Hope to see you all there!*

*Lori Weigerding*



Alaskan King Crab at the Dallas Aquarium  
Not a Bromeliad Crab!

Steve and I had a busy September. We drove to the Southwest Bromeliad Guild and Cryptanthus Show which were held together in Dallas on Sept. 6-8th. While there we went to the Dallas Aquarium where they have other animals as well. They also had a lot of bromeliads which they had gotten from Tropiflora.

I found some old newsletters of the Greater New Orleans Bromeliad Society at the Southwest Bromeliad Guild. In the May, 1980 issue, I found the following article on Soil and Soilless Potting Mixtures by Severn Doughty.

“A BASIC DEFINITION OF SOIL IS A MIXTURE OF WEATHERED ROCK PARTICLES, PLUS DECAYING ORGANIC MATTER IN WHICH PLANTS GROW. A TERM OFTEN SEEN IS SOIL MEDIUM OR ITS PLURAL FORM MEDIA. This refers to a mixture of soil or soilless components often used in container growing. The reason medium is used is because of its definition- a substance in which plants live and thrive. In discussing soil mixtures, it is important to understand soil and soil components, preparation of the mix sanitation, soil sterilization and watering the mix. In the following pages, a brief discussion of each topic will hopefully acquaint the reader with soil mixtures, soil recipes, and how to enjoy healthy thriving plants.



One of the many bromeliads at the Dallas Aquarium

ORGANIC MATTER- Considering the soilless mixes, first, organic matter is very important to the structure of the medium. Peat moss is a primary component and it is used in practically all soilless mixes. There are four basic types of peat available.

- PEAT-
- 1) Sphagnum peat is harvested from a living moss in bog areas. There are two forms available, whole sphagnum and shredded sphagnum. Whole sphagnum is used in hanging baskets as mulches, and used for air layering or mounting epiphytic bromeliads and ferns. Shredded sphagnum peat moss is prepared by drying the living moss and shredding it into a peat moss consistency.
  - 2) Reed-sedge peat is a form of peat that is partially decomposed grasses and sedges. It is actually mined from the ground. Some of the Canadian, Michigan and German peat mosses are composed of this material.
  - 3) Humus is a dark brown material that is finer than peat because it is more decomposed.
  - 4) Muck is a very dark brown to black material that is almost totally decomposed and often, when rubbed between the fingers, leaves a reddish brown stain.

Peat moss, as a plant growth medium, allows for air pore space, holds moisture, holds nutrients, and allows the roots to penetrate easily. Other attributes include its availability, it's uniformity, and its freedom from toxins and pests.



Phil Speer's entry to the head table

## WOOD PRODUCTS-

Wood products are very often used as soil amendments and soil components. The most popular of these wood products used is bark. There are two types of bark, pine bark and hardwood bark.

Pine bark may be used without being aged. It does not break down very rapidly and it allows for ample pore space.

Hardwood bark, on the other hand, must be composted before it can be used. If it is used fresh, toxic properties may inhibit plant growth. However, a composted hardwood bark contains soil-borne pathogen inhibitors and limits soil-borne diseases in plants that are grown with the mix.

Cypress shavings are another wood product that is becoming more popular. This product may be used fresh and is an excellent soil amendment.”



*Aechmea lueddemanniana x weilbachii*  
Elizabeth Patterson  
Southwest Guild Show 2013

We flew to the Bromeliad Extravaganza which was held Sept. 20 & 21st at Indian Rocks Beach near Tampa, Florida. It was hosted by the Florida West Coast Bromeliad Society. Afterwards, we visited Rob Branch's garden. He grows bromeliads, aroids, bamboos, palms and a few succulents. Steve had been there eleven years ago when they had the World Bromeliad Conference in 2002 in St. Petersburg. I was a Director on the Board at that time so I wasn't able to go. It was definitely worth the wait to go and see it after all these years.

There are as many potting mixtures as there are growers. The following is found on the [www.bsi.org](http://www.bsi.org) website.

What kind of potting mix should I use?

Again, this depends on the type of bromeliad but for most commonly cultivated bromeliads, they like a light, well-draining mix. One of the standard recipes in use by many growers is to make a mix of equal parts of (1) mulch/pine bark nuggets, (2) perlite and (3) composted peat or professional potting mix (a soil-less mix). You want the medium to be able to be moistened easily but drain well.

Most epiphytic (growing on other plants) bromeliads do well in this loose, organic medium but terrestrial bromeliads do better in a mix that retains a bit more moisture. Most terrestrial (growing in the soil) bromeliads do not have leaves that form holding tanks to supply their need for water. These bromeliads include the succulent Dyckias and Hechtias, the grass-like Pitcairnias and the pineapple.



On the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “The Wizard of OZ”,  
Cryptanthus ‘Ruby Slippers’  
Steve Reynolds

In the August 2013, San Diego Bromeliad Blade, they had the following question and answer.

- Q. Can bromeliads be grown in just perlite?
- A. Perlite makes a very good medium for growing bromeliads as stated above. The main problem with any growing medium is to determine the moisture and nutrient requirements. Perlite is nontoxic although it does release some fluoride ions and should not be used with fluoride-sensitive plants. Obtain

the larger, pellet-type, sometimes known as agricultural perlite, and then sift it through one-eighth inch hardware cloth while using a face mask or respirator. The fine dust is believed to be carcinogenic, thus it is usually dampened before use, but is impossible to sift when wet. Sifting removes the fine particles and some of the dust. Reserve the fine particles to add to some other type mix and use the larger particles as the medium for growing in pure perlite. It will be necessary to occlude the the drainage holes with screen or gravel. Then, using the dampened perlite, pot as usual, filling up to the dirt line, (that is the ring about three-quarters to one inch from the top of the pot), do not pack. Top with pea gravel or some material to prevent washing. This is an artificial way of growing and you have complete control over what nutrients the plant receives through the roots as well as moisture. Bromeliad roots seem to thrive in well watered perlite, producing a mass of fine white roots throught out the pot. As this material absorbs a great amount of water, it remains moist for some time, yet the particles hold their size very well. It does not permit voids to form, yet allows air to penetrate the root ball.



Tillandsia fasciculata 'Tropiflora' X cacticola  
Charles Birdsong

I enjoyed the Murphy's Law of Bromeliads which I found in the May, 1980 New Orleans newsletter.

In the beginning there were the Universal laws- principles that attempted to define some aspect of reality. But soon man realized the error of his ways, and people like Edsel Murphy began to write laws which reflect the Real world, a world dominated not by nature but by inanimate objects and capricious human behavior. Below

are a few "Laws" by Murphy and his friends as they apply to bromeliads:

Murphy's Law- The limb always falls on the most perfect bromeliad, the day before the show.

Buttered Side Down Law- Any plant knocked from a shelf will fall so as to dothe most possible damage to itself and all plants below it.

Hybridizer's Hypothesis- The most undesirable traits of the parents always manifest themselves in the hybrid, two years later.

Tisk Tisk Law- No matter what your bromeliads do, there is always someone who knew it would.

Green-Thumb Postulate- Experience gained is directly proportional to bromeliads ruined.

Show Chairman's Law- Nothing is impossible for the person who doesn't have to do it.

Parkinson's Law- Bromeliad collections expand to exceed the space available.

Placement Principle- Placement chairmen always place show plants with the fault in the most visible place.

Phyllotron Law- Under the most rigorously controlled conditions of light, temperature and humidity the bromeliad will do as it damn well pleases.



Betty Patterson's Greenhouse

From THE OFFSET, March, 1980, Atlanta Bromeliad Society, Inc.

Editors Note: There really was a Murphy! He was an Air Force Captain attached to Colonel John Paul Stapp's program to test the effects of acceleration on the human body. They used Rocket Sleds on rails. (1946 to early 1958) At one time, Col. Stapp was known as the fastest man alive. The motion pictures of the test were quite something to see. If the rockets were assembled incorrectly, the sled would blow up. So Captain Murphy said that 'if there is any way to do it wrong, he will'. He was talking about strain gauges; if you attach two together, the wrong way, you will get a zero readout. Today, we know Murphy's Law as **"Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong!"**

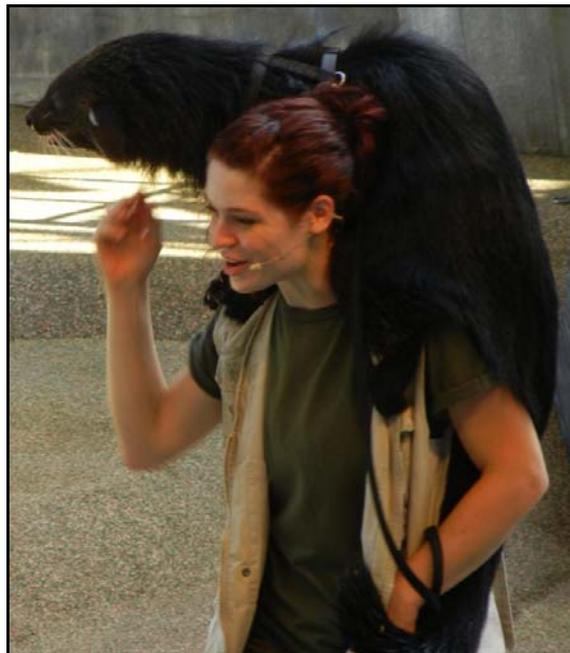
Editors' Note: There was no show at the Florida Extravaganza.



Betty Patterson's Greenhouse in Dallas!



Busch Gardens in Tampa, FL  
Lots of Bromeliads  
Martha wouldn't go on the Roller Coasters



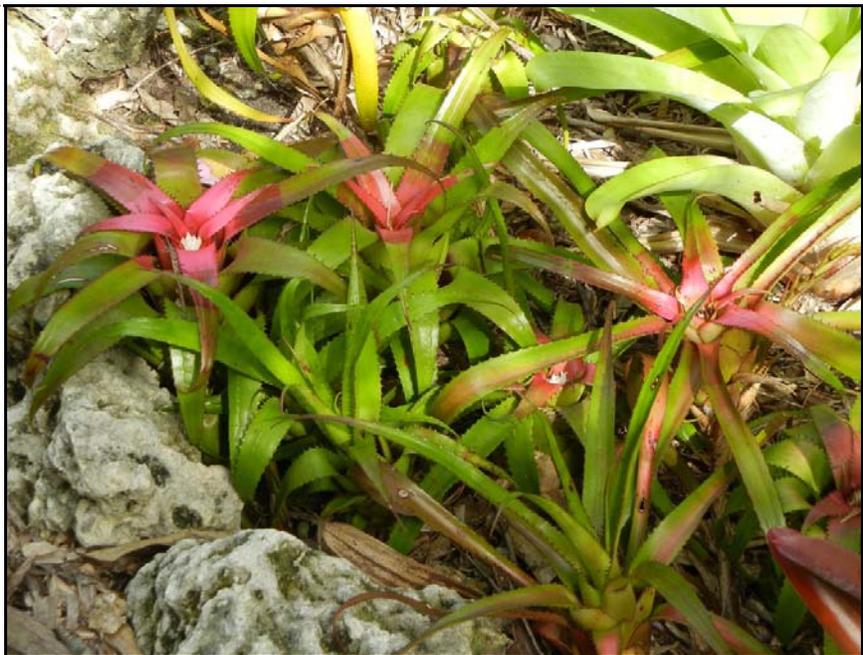
Asian black bear or Moon bear 'Ursus  
thibetanus in a Busch Garden Show



Rob has used a ladder to plant bromeliads up in his trees.



In Sarasota, Florida



*Neoregelia pendula*

Rob has found that Neo. Pendula grows better as a groundcover than in a hanging basket