



BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF GREATER CHICAGO

THE BSGC NEWS

September/October 2019

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| President | Lori Weigerding | (630) 888-7516 |
| Vice President | Martha Goode | (815) 459-1623 |
| Treasurer | Paula Dering | (847) 295-2559 |
| Secretary | OPEN | |
| Newsletter Editor | Steve Goode | stevegoode1@ameritech.net |

WEB SITE
Webmaster

<http://bromeliad-chicago.org>
Lori Weigerding

It has been a very busy time. We drove back to Arizona the middle part of September. On the 18th, I flew to Orlando for their Bromeliad Extravaganza. It was super. On October 6th, we flew to Australia where we visited for 2 and a half weeks. I will write about the Extravaganza in this Newsletter and Australia in the next one.

President's Column

Oh winter weather is closing in on us! I hope everyone's furnace is working! We weren't so lucky, but on the bright side if I'd known more I could've pushed the propeller with a pen just like him! So for now expensive lesson, cheap fix.

I'm sure you're all kinda crowded after bringing in all your plants from outside. Remember to keep them moist, ventilated, appropriate sunlight and showered with love.

When we return from our winter break, Martha and Steve will have many fabulous photos to share with us from their travels!

Please have a happy and safe Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year and any other holidays that come before we see you again! Stay warm and dry too.

Lori Weigerding

FLORIDA COUNCIL OF BROMELIAD
SOCIETIES
EXTRAVAGANZA

On Saturday, September 21st, there were four speakers at the Extravaganza in Orlando. The first one was by Stephen Littlefield who talked about his career from drawing and painting to the process of making prints. He is a retired art teacher. The Journal of the Bromeliad Society, vol. 68(3) has an article on *Tillandsia fasciculate* var. *densispica* by Dennis Cathcart. In it he tells the story of the painting that Stephen made and how Dennis was able through his contacts to get the painting approved to be hung outside of the office of the Florida Secretary of State. Stephen always has a booth selling the T-shirts he has made with all the beautiful bromeliads at the Florida Bromeliad events. I'm sure you have seen me wearing a few of them.

 Stephen Littlefield
Underhill Studio



Bromeliad Images

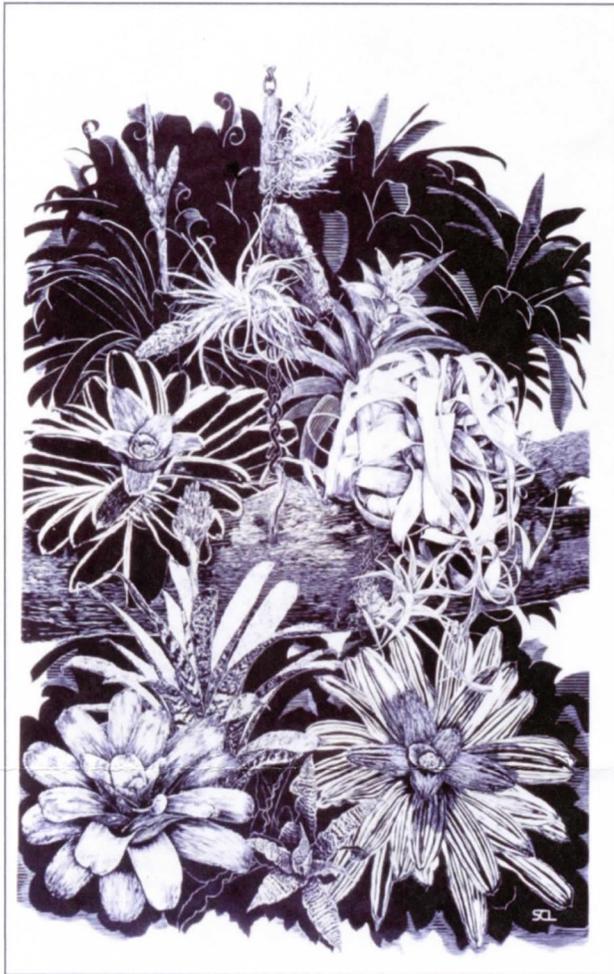
FCBS Extravaganza

September 21, 2019



This presentation by the artist depicts a selection of his 38 years of bromeliad imagery in his works of art, including the process of making the 1996 WBC poster.

Using a 2 ft by 3 ft linoleum block, the image of multiple bromeliads was drawn onto the linoleum using a rapidograph pen and black ink. Over a period of months the drawing was carved into the linoleum. During each phase of carving, a "state" of the print was made by applying ink to the block, using mulberry paper and hand rubbing that area to assess the specific section being worked on. Taking care to maintain the overall image, each "state" is numbered. When the entire image was completely carved to the artist's satisfaction, the final "state" called the Artist proof was achieved. This is the final phase of working on the linoleum block, with no further carving done. The artist then printed the print which was then reproduced with the WBC conference date and the poster heading for Orlandiana 1996. A limited edition of the 10 original prints will be handprinted by the artist.



Involved in all aspects of making a visual artwork is attention to detail, creating a "space" for the image to exist in while drawing it to allow the critical thought process - where is the light coming from?; what perspective is key to pulling off the final design, especially when multiple objects - be they plants, people or landscapes are the subject matter. This artist's view of using black and white is purposefully planned to afford the viewer his concept of "visual radio" where each person sees the image and adds their own version of the color in each of the bromeliads.

Development of this grouping of bromeliads into the final printed image shown here took 10 months to create. This process is over 400 years old and represents art made without the use of electricity, a computer or a printing press.

Aechmea Orlandiana was the first plant carved in State #1, its bloom later intertwined with the Neoregelia mounted on the wood above. One of the artist's favorite bromeliad images also makes an appearance in this print, Tillandsia Xerographica. While studying each "state" of the print, the artist at times used a white pencil to draw on that "state" to continue to fine tune the image toward the next phase of carving to achieve the final print.



stephenlittlefield.com

The second speaker was Teresa Eddy. She showed us how to make flower arrangements using bromeliads. I really enjoyed this talk since I have very little artistic ability and enjoy people who do have the knack makes it look so easy.



Lady's Hat



Christmas Wreath



Handheld Bouquet



Fall Friendship Arrangement

Terrie Bert was the speaker for session 3. She told us that learning about the ecology of bromeliads can help us to grow better plants. Some genera have only one or a few species in them and occur in narrow ranges. Other genera contain hundreds of species and occupy a broad range of habitat. We will also talk about Terrie when we get to the auction.

The final speaker was Bruce Holst who is the Vice President for Botany at the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. His topic was “Bromeliads of the Maya-Olmec Region of Middle America.” This area is from Southern Mexico to Honduras. He has documented the bromeliads and epiphytes of the region over many years. The Olmec culture thrived along Mexico’s gulf coast from around 1200-400 BC.

One of the places he traveled was Baldy Beacon in Belize. Some of the plants they found there was *Catopsis hahnii*, *Werauhia noctiflora*, *Til. Punctulata* and *Til excelsa* in full bloom.



Picture from www.fcbs.org
The group which puts on the Extravaganza

You can download the bromeliad species of Belize by going to Fieldguides.fieldmuseum.org Selby Gardens has started their master site plan to create a garden complex with a “Net Positive energy rating” Bruce showed us pictures of what the future Selby will look like. There will be a behind the scenes tour of Selby at the June 2020 World Bromeliad Conference. To register for the conference go to bsi.org and put in the menu, Conference Corner. (Ed. Note: Martha and I have been to Selby before and this Conference will be one of the best Conferences to go to. It will easily be worth the time and money to travel to it.)

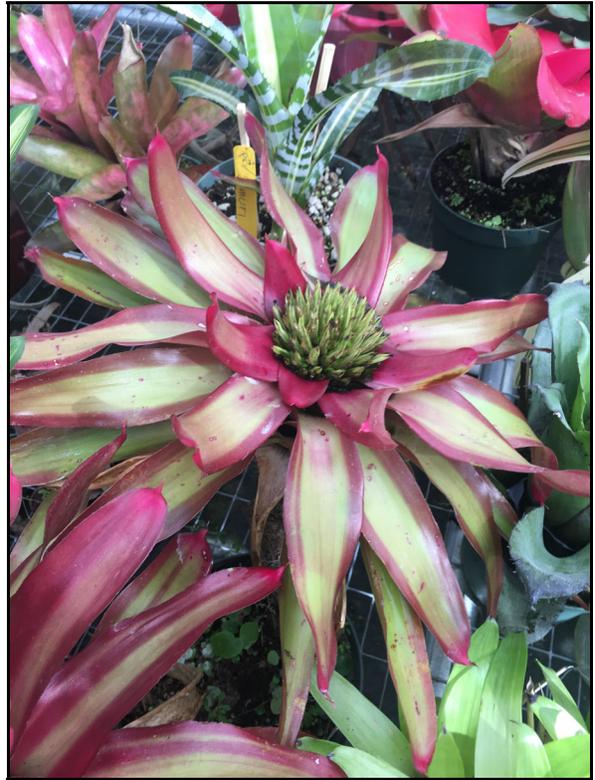
The banquet and auction was on Saturday night. The Auctioneer was Ray Lemieux. I noticed that he did a little skipping dance when he was holding a basket of plants. I asked him what that was about and here is his response.

“...the whole ‘basket dance’ thing happened when we were having an auction for our show and sale (Sarasota bromeliad society) and during the auction, the members who were logging all the bids, bidders and plants be auctioned off had a problem and we had to wait a few minutes til they worked it out, I happened to be holding a basket of plants to auction off and after a few minutes I just did this little Red Riding Hood skip to the Lou maneuver and everyone started laughing so I did it again to more laughter, as the auction got back under way more baskets came through for auction so each time I auctioned one off I had to do the ‘basket dance’, some members would chant ‘basket dance basket dance’ and we would all laugh as I did the dance, several members got creative and some interesting baskets have come down the line through the years and I worked that into the item being auctioned off, we’ve had a lot of fun with it over the years and it all started as just a random distraction.

The auction got very heated when Terrie Bert and someone on the other side of the room started heatedly bidding on a pot with Pitcairneas. Terrie won the bid at \$320. She later found out that a group of five people had gotten together to bid against her. Here is a picture of her with the lovely Pitcairnea.



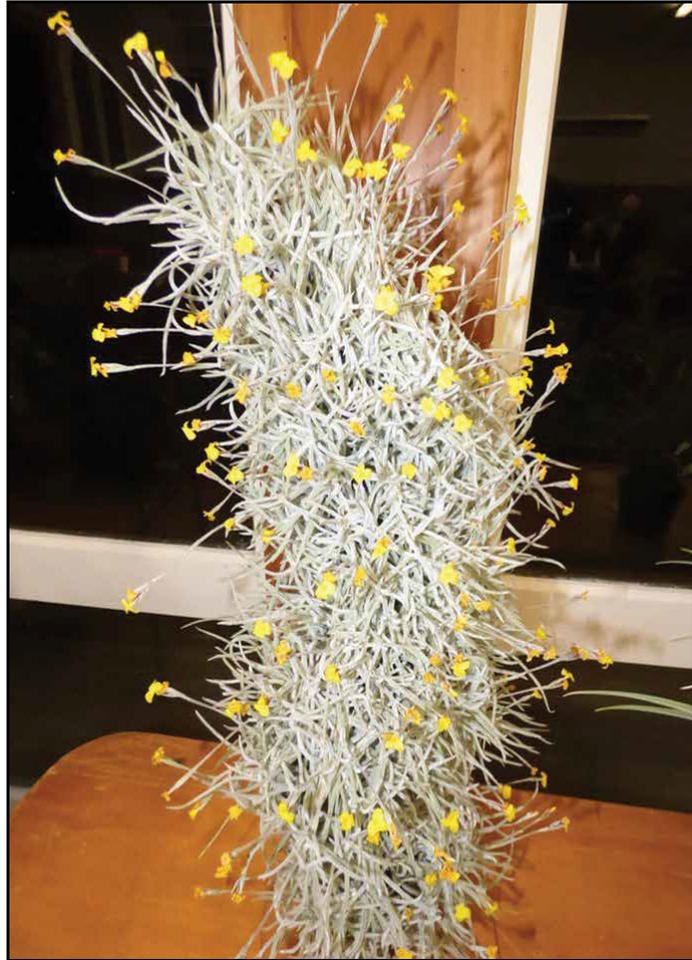
Sunday was the optional Bus Tours. I opted to go on the bus that went to Lisa Robinette's and John Boardman's house. They had some beautiful bromeliads.



I bought a Tillandsia ‘Rutschmann’s Orange’ because I had just read about it in the September issue of the Journal of the Bromeliad Society of New Zealand. Here is the article by Graeme Barclay.

Tillandsia ‘Rutschmann’s Orange’

Sometimes luck, timing and fate play a role in discovering new species or special clones that end up in our collections. This normally involves a keen eye when exploring in or near wild habitats, where experts in certain genera or species groups are able identify a new or different plant from the smallest of details. Our subject is a good example of this. To look at the plant when it is not blooming, one sees a normal (albeit larger) form of the commonly cultivated, *Tillandsia crocata*. Normally, *Tillandsia crocata* flowers have canary-yellow petals.



Tillandsia crocata – yellow-flowered small clone clump, grown by Lynette Nash.

However, when Dr. J. Rutschmann from Switzerland noticed a bright orange-flowered plant that looked like *T. crocata* blooming in the grounds of a hotel in Brazil in 1983, he took a piece back to Europe, and that was how this particular clone entered cultivation and subsequently spread around the world. There has been some doubt over the years as to whether this plant was a true species, or actually a hybrid. In his 2008 article archived in the BCR, Derek Butcher from Adelaide, Australia relates the interesting background as follows; “...When Werner Rauh described *T. crocata* var. *tristis* in 1983, he mentioned how variable *T. crocata* was. At that time *T. crocata* was considered to be widespread in Brazil, through Argentina to Bolivia. He referred to a very large form collected by Dr. J. Rutschmann of Basel, Switzerland in the grounds of a hotel in Brazil, and which had a 6-7 flowered inflorescence and fragrant, dark orange flowers.



Tillandsia
'Rutschmann's
Orange' clump and
flower detail.
PHOTO GRAEME BARCLAY

Pictures of *Tillandsia* 'Rutschmann's Orange' and *Tillandsia crocata* are from the Bromeliads New Zealand.

A year later, Walter Till created *T. caliginosa* in 1984 and treated *T. crocata* var. *tristis* as a synonym. *T. caliginosa* coming from Northern Argentina and Southern Bolivia. The orange-flowered *T. crocata* continued to offset and be grown by European specialists. In fact in 1996 it made its way to Australia as *T. crocata* 'Orange' where it would not offset fast enough to satisfy the demand. In dry Adelaide, 'normal' *T. crocata* has leaves 7cm long but leaves for 'Orange' are 13cm long. Nobody has succeeded in growing self-set seed from this plant to prove it is a form of *T. crocata* and not a hybrid. However, it was collected in Brazil far from the habitat of *T. caliginosa* so this cannot be considered to be a parent and we are talking about a putative natural hybrid. Because of another man-made hybrid – see below, this clone needs a more specific name, like *T. 'Rutschmann's Orange'*.

In 2004, Doetterer in Germany, was selling *T. caliginosa*, having obtained his stock from Holm. What is interesting is that a low proportion of these plants do not have the typical glabrous leaf sheath of *T. caliginosa* nor the typical dark brown petals. In fact, they have *T. crocata* type leaf sheaths and almost orange petals. It would appear that some foreign pollen has crept into the seed raising project. Because of their hybrid origin they should be called *T. 'Mock Orange'*. The problem with identification will be that fact that *T. caliginosa* also has long leaves which remind me of a live floppy mouse tail compared to a dead stiff mouse tail of *T. myosura*. We must remember here, that *T. myosura* was a 'confused' species for over 50 years until Walter Till created *T. caliginosa* in 1984.

So if you do have a *T. caliginosa* acting oddly, think of 'Mock Orange'..."
Some interesting facts, especially for those of you that may be growing an orange-flowered *Tillandsia caliginosa*.

Fast forward to later years, where Peter Tristram in NSW, (from whom I got the plants photographed here), reports that *Tillandsia 'Rutschmann's Orange'* does indeed self-set seed and the seedlings all grow and bloom much the same. This confirms it is probably a true clone of *T. crocata*. If it had another species as a parent being a hybrid, you could expect some variation with this other parent's features showing up, even though *Tillandsia crocata* – yellow-flowered small clone clump, grown by Lynette Nash.

it would likely be a primary hybrid (species x species) where all offspring can look similar. It's possible this plant is the result of a natural crossing of two different clones of *T. crocata*, that perhaps produced the larger size and orange petals, but of course we will never know for certain without a DNA study of the genetics. For what it's worth, I have dissected a live flower

head off my T. 'Rutschmann's Orange' clump and compared the floral parts to the botanical description T. *crocata*, getting a very close match. So for the purposes of this article, we will treat it as a valid clone of species T. *crocata*, as per the description in the BCR. I have just 'selfed' all the flowers on the colony of four plants shown here, swapping pollen from one plant to another to hopefully make self-set seed. If successful we can make seedlings of this unique clone readily available. As mentioned earlier, the perfume of the orange-petalled blooms is very strong. Someone once commented; 'they smell like a florist shop'. They are right. If you own and bloom other T.*crocata* clones, you will no doubt agree!

Tillandsia 'Rutschmann's Orange' is relatively fast growing and enjoys very bright light with regular watering and foliar feeding. If well fed, it will branch with pups after blooming to form a clump and is grown best mounted on driftwood or glued to a firm mount like most other tillandsias. However, it will also grow just as happily un-mounted and un-rooted, as seen in my clump photographed here, where they are just sitting on the rim of a clay pot. It is reasonably hardy and should be able to be grown outdoors here if desired in a sunny but dryish area, (e.g. under the eaves of a house), without too many issues.

References:

- Tillandsia *crocata* 'Rutschmann's Orange' by Derek Butcher 3/2008
- www.registry.bsi.org (BCR)

Steve and I are planning to go to the Kiwis Brom Conference in April 2020. To get information about it, go to www.bsnz.org If you ever want to go to New Zealand, this is the excuse you need. The trip, tho long, is well worth while taking.

I had also bought Hechtia 'Wildfire' at the Extravaganza since the dyckia, hechtias and puyas do well here in Arizona. When I got to the TSA at the airport I was asked to take my hechtia out of my bag. I had left it in the pot. He carefully used a swab around the pot. It tested negatively but the agent had gotten a few scratches. He said, "I should have worn long sleeves today". He was testing for sulphites which are used to make explosives.

Things sure have changed. I remember when I was young, I went with another lady to Dallas for Swift Chemical Co. Since Dallas has high humidity the fertiliser cakes up in the bins so the guys let me push the plunger and blow up the fertiliser. This was done so it would be easy to load it into the trucks. Good thing there wasn't a TSA check at the airport since I probably wouldn't have passed.