

# BROMELIANA

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(visit our website [www.nybromeliadsociety.org](http://www.nybromeliadsociety.org))

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## THEY THRIVED IN THE WIND AND COLD

by Herb Plever

This article was written on November 24<sup>th</sup>. I have been growing many broms on my terrace since May, and I refrained from bringing them into the apartment until now despite the gusty winds and cold nights that we've had since mid-October. We've had a windy November and night-time temperatures have been mostly in the low 40°s though we've had a few nights when the temperature dropped to 37°F.

This morning, when I read a weather report on my computer that predicted the temperatures tonight would drop to 32° F., I brought my bromeliads into the house. It was 40° at 10 am this morning and there was a brisk wind blowing on my 8<sup>th</sup> floor terrace. Yet all the plants were thriving and were in excellent shape with crisp leaves and glowing color. Many plants had flowered and had put up strong pups, so I removed the pups and threw out the parents. (Space is always at a premium.)

My plants always seem to do well outdoors on my terrace, but when the night-time temperatures drop in October, an even greater improvement their health and

color seems to occur. They get cold-hardened by the gradual drop in temperatures at night beginning in September, so they don't mind when the freeze comes, even with the strong winds.

I think the cold brings out stronger markings on Neoregelias. The Neo shown to the left is a case in point. It colored up well on the terrace during the summer, but once it was subjected to very cold nights and wind the marking became more intense.

I'm not sure the label on this hybrid is correct, but you can see the cross has been strongly influenced by *N. concentrica* that is in its DNA. The seed parent's formula is like Chester Skotak's *Neoregelia* 'Milagro' (*N. carolinae* x *concentrica*) x *N.* 'Royal

Burgundy', but Chester's cross is more dramatic with its dark green leaves and bright red margins which indicates different clones were used in the cross. However, the label indicates that a seed parent with a 'Milagro' formula was crossed again with 'Royal Burgundy'; I would have expected that the second crossing with 'Royal Burgundy'



[(*Neoregelia carolinae* x *concentrica*) x *N.* 'Royal Burgundy'] x *N.* 'Royal Burgundy'?

**BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

**PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGED MEETING DAY AND DATE**

**NEXT MEETING** - **Saturday, January 8th**, 2011 at 11:30 am at the home of Herb Plever, 172-34 133<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Apt. 8A, Jamaica, NY. In the Rochdale Village Cooperative, it is Bldg. 15 Sec. C; go to the rear of the lobby and take the even floor elevator. There will be valuable pup door prizes. It would help to know how many people will attend so that we don't run out of snacks. Please rsvp at 718-723-3783. See News and Notes on page 4 for travel directions.

**CULTURAL** discussion will be led by Herb as we view the different plants in his collection.

would have given the plant even darker green leaves. It is for that reason I suspect the label may not be correct. In any event, whatever formula was used has made an attractive *Neoregelia* cultivar.

Most of the plants kept outside were aechmeas, billbergias and neoregelias, and I knew that these genera would tolerate cold temperatures. But a cold-hardened

*Orthophytum seidelii* also thrived under those conditions, as did an x *Guzpriesea* which previously had problems indoors.

If can put your broms outdoors for the summer, you will find they grow better than ever with the improved light and especially the moving air. And you can keep them outside until the first frost. □

## SQUIRRELS ON THE 8<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR!??Q\*Z!

by Herb Plever

I have a 14 foot, south-facing terrace in my 8<sup>th</sup> floor apartment. I keep many bromeliads there from May to November. When I moved in about 46 years ago, I found that pigeons also enjoyed roosting on my terrace. To understand my reaction to this situation you have to understand that I **hate** pigeons.

I admit I went off the wall when I found a pigeon sitting on an egg in a dark corner. I attacked them with a rod and nasty sprays which caused them to fly away, but by the next day they were back again.

So I bought a large roll of thin chicken wire and installed it from ceiling to floor to completely enclose the terrace - and I have not seen a single pigeon there since that time. The wire was thin so it really did not block the view outside.

However, over the years the chicken wire became brittle and rusted, and in places it ultimately broke apart under the impact of heavy autumn winds, leaving small holes in various places. I should have gotten around to replace it, but as the pigeons never appeared, I kept putting off doing the job.

Fast forward to this past October. I was sitting in a chair and reading near the terrace door when I saw a flash of white across the terrace. I went out to investigate and didn't see anything, but I heard some rustling noises in a dark corner under a table where I keep a pile of cork logs.

I picked up a broom and probed under the logs with the broomstick and out flew a big squirrel with a huge tail with a white underside. He went up the brick wall to the roof of the terrace in a flash, shimmied upside down under a loose area of the chicken wire and jumped out of the terrace. I thought the fall would do him in, but I could see him landing on the foliage of a tall tree below and scurry down the tree to the ground.

Then I knew I needed to clean up the mess on my terrace. It was crowded with: 5 large garbage bins where I store pots, mix and other equipment; a 4 foot

table in the corner had on it bags of fertilizer ingredients, cement mix and old electrical fixtures and other junk I didn't want to throw out. Underneath the table were many cork logs and pieces and used pots I didn't have a chance to clean.

I collected everything that I had no immediate use for and took them down to our recycling area to be removed. This should have been the end of the story but it wasn't. In the early morning the next day I spotted the big squirrel back on my terrace, looking at me defiantly. He didn't move until a sprayed him with some ammonia. Then he flew out of the terrace in a hurry. But he stayed on the ledge outside the chicken wire and bared his teeth and made threatening noises.

I then understood that there might be more squirrels in that corner he was trying to protect, so I moved all the bins out of the way and pulled the cork out from under the table. At that point another adult squirrel and two small squirrels fled out and ran in and around the plants on the terrace looking for and finally finding holes in the chicken wire to get out.

My terrace had been providing shelter for a family of squirrels, and they were very unwilling to be evicted. They had not done much damage to my broms; I found only two plants with clawed and bitten leaves.

This finally roused me into action, and I bought a large roll of heavier gauge chicken wire with smaller holes. Like other rodents, squirrels can squeeze their bodies through very small holes. I am now working to install the new stuff without removing what is left of the old wire, as it take a lot of time and effort to do the job.

It would never have occurred to me that I would have to worry about squirrels 8 stories above the ground. But now that I have seen them climb up and down brick walls as easily as they climb around tree trunks, I am going to make sure that every part of that chicken wire is tightly fixed to the terrace walls, floor and ceiling. □

## Guzmania gloriosa & G. squarrosa var. lutea - a Correction

by Herb Plover

On page 3 of the October, 2010 issue of BROMELIANA, I erroneously stated that in Harry Luther's new Alphabetical Binomial List, *Guzmania squarrosa* had been changed to *Guzmania gloriosa*. That change should have referred only to former *G. squarrosa* var. *lutea*. *G. squarrosa* is still a recognized species. The error was repeated in the caption for the picture of *G. squarrosa* on the same page.

When Harry's new list became available, several experts voiced reservations about the validity of the change. But Harry now has furnished persuasive evidence to support designating *G. squarrosa* var. *lutea* as *G. gloriosa*.

The Bromeliad Identification Center at Selby Gardens is still without an authoritative head and taxonomic issues are in a kind of limbo since Harry Luther left to work for the Botanical Gardens By the Bay in Singapore. For the foreseeable future we probably will not have one definitive B.I.C. Perhaps that situation may ultimately lead to some good.

There are important experts in taxonomy in various places around the world: Harry Luther in Sing-



former *Guzmania squarrosa* var. *lutea* - now is *G. gloriosa*. Oliva-Esteve photo from fcbis.

apore, Elton Leme in Brazil, Walter Till in Austria, Jason Grant in Switzerland, Francisco Oliva-Esteve in Venezuela, Gregory Brown in Wyoming, Bruce Holst at Selby, Eric Gouda in Holland, Derek Butcher in Australia, Renate Ehlers and Dr. Elvira Gross in Germany and others. Many of them have worked together in the past, and there has been random communication by and between them.

Now is the time for the creation of a kind of taxonomic umbrella with more formal ties between experts, to enable the ready circulation of information and new findings. Then issues can be more effectively discussed, debated and resolved on the basis of strong consensus. An expansion of Eric Gouda's FloraPix site (<http://botgard.bio.uu.nl>) is but one tool that could be used by the group.

It would be nice if B.S.I. were able to do this, but absent strong initiative and leadership, it is up to the experts to step up to the plate and start the consensus ball rolling. □

## A WALL TO REMEMBER

by Victoria Ehrlich

On Tuesday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, the members of the Bromeliad Society had a real treat at our annual holiday party. We were the guests of Michael Riley and his partner Francisco at his unique home which has a cork-covered wall of epiphytes in his extended living room. Bromeliads of many different genera, and many orchids, aroids, gesneriads, ferns, philodendrons and other epiphytes are all mounted happily on the cork.

Some Society members had already experienced "the wall" and wanted to see what was new. The latest additions were twig orchids that literally grow on the tips of branches and are tossed in



Mimi Gussow at the "Wall"

the cool and moist breezes in their native habitat. I did not notice them until another member pointed them out to me. The wall is lighted by a by eight foot fluorescent lights controlled by a timer, and is frequently misted by a fogger on a separate timer.

High light plants such as aechmeas are mounted at the edges of three, south-facing windows. A beautiful *Aechmea* 'Ensign' (see page 4) was seen leaning into the window and it had put up a pup on a long stolon. This was my first visit to Michael's apartment, and I was very impressed with the fern allies which I had not seen grown outside of a botan-

ic conservatory. We typically grow our broms and other epiphytes in flower pots or baskets. Seeing them clinging to the cork wall with their vigorous roots was a quite an experience. Directly below the wall, a pond with a fog rising from the surface contributes to the atmosphere.

Our hosts provided a tasty home-baked turkey and chipotle laced sweet potatoes. Added to this were



Unusual clone of the sport A. 'Ensign' that consistently produces white-margined pups and no other variegations.



Tillandsia ionantha ball that flowers with great seasonal timing

many appetizers and side dishes brought by the other members that made for an outstanding holiday dinner. Michael's Xmas tree was decorated by colorful balls, sparkles and by some lovely tillandsias. Enough said. We all had a great time.

The wall was truly amazing and no words can adequately express how much fun we all had. Thank you Michael and Francisco!



Members enjoying elegant dining



Living room discussions



Tillandsia ornament

All party photographs in this issue were taken by David McReynolds. Thanks David!

**N E W S and N O T E S**

TRAVEL DIRECTIONS to Herb's House; best is via Long Island R.R. In Manhattan, take Long Beach 10:45 am train at Penn Station. In Brooklyn, take the Far Rockaway 10:42 am train from Atlantic Terminal and change at Jamaica for the Long Beach train. For both connections stay the in last car of the train. I will meet you on the station when the train arrives at about 11:13 am. In Queens take the Q85 bus to Bedell Street.

**2011 DUES** are payable beginning this month. Single and joint memberships are now \$25.00; an out-of-town subscription to BROMELIANA is \$8.00 and an overseas subscription is \$12.00. Mail your check payable to N.Y. Bromeliad Society to Barbara Lagow, 54 West 74th Street N.Y.C. 10023 or pay your dues at the next

meeting. Please pay your dues promptly so our mailing list for 2011 can be set up quickly. It would be greatly appreciated. We do not dun delinquents. If your dues are not paid by February, your name will be stricken from the mailing list.

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