

# BROMELIANA

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## MAY TO OCTOBER

by Herb Plever

In the past September issue of BROMELIANA, I wrote about having “Lots of Blooms” over the summer. The nice thing about those blooms is that they last in color for many, many months.

I didn't write about this, but suddenly up in September was the inflorescence of *Aechmea* 'Morgana' (Bak), for my money the best cultivar of *Aechmea fasciata* ever made. It was produced because it stood out in a tray of seedlings of *fasciata* at the Bak Nursery in Holland, and was selected out and improved by Cornelius Bak to become a great cultivar with consistent attributes that I have praised before:

1. It grows very fast like a weed so that it reaches maturity at 19 to 23 months when it always flowers.

2. It is a compact plant with about 20 four inch wide leaves that make a 19-20 inch diameter.

3. The beautiful leaves are stiff and heavily marked with silver barring on dark green. The barring is more intense on the undersides of the leaves.

4. 'Morgana' literally thrives on year-round high-strength frequent fertilizing.

5. The gorgeous, tiered, pink inflorescence with French Blue flowers is 6 inches in diameter and it lasts in color for many months.



*Aechmea* 'Morgana'

Contrary to some written information in various bulletins, the leaves of *Aechmea* 'Morgana' do have spines, but I'll take it over any of the newer spineless cultivars of *fasciata* that have long, floppy leaves. I always make room for one or two pieces of *A.* 'Morgana'.

*Aechmea fasciata* used to be considered a no-no for indoor growers who used to complain that they grew the plant for 4 or 5 years and it would not flower even with good indoor light. Of course

one could easily force bloom with ethylene pills, but with *A.* 'Morgana' you have a *fasciata* that will flower naturally in a decent east, south or west window in less than two years. Unfortunately it does not appear to be available at this time, so members will have to wait until I bring down more pups to the sale table.

**NEXT MEETING** - Tuesday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011 **promptly at 7:00 P.M.** at the [Ripley-Grier Studios 520 8th Ave. \(between 36th & 37th St\) Room 16N](#)

**FIXING YOUR MIX** - Because we have been unable to obtain fibrous peat moss for our potting medium, we have resorted to using straight shredded Cedar mulch. But many members have reported problems with this medium. We present a panel that will discuss ways you can add material to improve this mix and use better watering techniques.

**PLUS - A MEMBERS' HANDS-ON POTTING WORKSHOP.** We'll have lots of different potting materials for you to make experimental mixes to take home and try on some plants. If you have some material you have been using other than cedar mulch, please bring some to the meeting. Also bring a plant or pup to sell, swap or pot, and a plant for show and tell.

In the September issue I wrote about a full sized *Aechmea* 'Blue Tango' that had started to bloom on my terrace. The inflorescence of that plant is now up, sporting **19** vibrant blue, branched spikes that are still growing. See photos on this page. Not bad for an indoor-grown plant.

The only problem with this plant for indoor growers is its huge size - its spiny leaves spread to about 3 ft. and it is also high and has a 20" tall inflorescence. The plant unit in my south bedroom window has high perches, so the plant sits above my head. (Sylvia and I are both quite short.)

In that September issue (written in early August) I also made reference to *Guzmania* 'Diana' (Deroose). Last month, when I looked at the plant while watering I noticed that it was also blooming. It has a brilliant yellow inflorescence and has a reasonable spread of about 12". Unfortunately it is no longer being produced.

I also wrote that *Vriesea* 'Carly' was starting to bloom. *Vriesea* inflorescences are very slow growing and take up to 5 months to reach full color. 'Carly' is a small plant with a yellow and red 3-spiked inflorescence that will easily fit on any window sill. Those members who have not ordered this plant should certainly do so in our next spring plant order.

Many years ago I grew some spiny terrestrials from the genera *Dyckia* and *Deuterocobnia* that I bought from the late Bill Baker who ran California Jungle Gardens. I enjoyed growing his hybrids *Dyckia* 'Brittle Star', *Dyckia* 'Kestwick' and *Dyckia* 'Toothy'. I also grew and flowered *Deuterocobnia longipetala*. That plant had a lateral inflorescence that emerged from a side leaf axil, and it was perennial, flowering a number of times over successive years as it ripened flowers from the same stalk. Perennial, lateral inflorescences appear in *Dyckia* as well as *Deuterocobnia*.



After a while I moved these plants out of my collection to make room for new plants I wanted to learn how to grow. Then at the 2002 World Bromeliad Conference in St. Petersburg, Florida I saw *Deuterocobnia mezziana* in bloom with its huge, many-branched spray of dominantly yellow, multicolored flowers. Leaves, typically, were wickedly spinous, but it didn't appear to

spread too much for my setup and I decided I'd like to grow it. However, it wasn't readily available until I spotted it last year and put it on our spring order.

Then I was able to order *Deuterocobnia mezziana* and *Dyckia fosteriana* cv. 'Silver Queen'. They were shipped at the end of April in their pots to avoid my having to deal with the nasty spines if they came bareroot and I had to pot them. They were placed in different, unobstructed east-southeast windows where they received lots of

morning sunlight and weekly, high-strength fertilizer.

Species of both genera are xerophytes; they grow dry-saxicolous on rocks in Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay. The leaves of many species are succulent and can hold enough water to enable the plants to survive long, dry periods. They should and do accommodate to our drier indoor atmosphere. Nonetheless, I treated them as terrestrials and snaked panty hose wicks up through the pot medium so they are growing wick-watered. Since they have no cups, I applied fertilizer by pouring it into the medium.

Paradoxically for so-called xerophytes, in the 5 months since the end of April, these plants seem to love the available water and fertilizer in the medium. The *Deuterocobnia mezziana* has almost doubled in size; it is now 18" across and 10" high. And the *Dyckia* 'Silver Queen' has added several tiers of new top growth while the lower leaves have grown 2 inches longer. (See photos of these plants on page 3.)



*Vriesea* 'Carly'

They have taken to indoor culture and are growing as well as any of my bromeliads. I am looking forward to seeing them bloom, especially the successive, perennial blooms after the first flowers are spent.

There are really nice, small Dyckias available that apartment growers will find very easy to grow and bloom. I'll make sure to have some on our spring plant order and presale video.



*Dyckia fosteriana* cv. 'Silver Queen'



*Deuterocohnia meziana*

## FANTASY COMING SOON: SINGAPORE'S GARDENS BY THE BAY

by Herb Plevor

The Gardens By the Bay in Singapore is nearing completion. Harry Luther is an Assistant Director for Horticulture at the Gardens, and he kindly sent me some photos showing what is happening now. These stimulated me into going on line to find more information and photos - and to write this article.

Gardens By the Bay consists of three separate gardens, two huge conservatories, and 18 man-made, solar powered Supertrees 82 to 164 ft. high that are designed to collect rainwater, generate solar power, and act as venting ducts for the conservatories. These Supertrees will be vertical gardens covered with tropical climbers, epiphytes and ferns. Aerial walkways will

connect several of the tall Supertrees so visitors can view the gardens from on high. The Gardens will have a special opening this November to host the World Orchid Congress. (I will have more to say about this later on.) The official opening is set for June, 2012.

Singapore is at the crossroads between the East and West and is a busy, wealthy center for commerce and industry with a well developed infrastructure. Still in these times the size of the project boggles the mind; it comprises 249.5 acres or 177 football fields. To maintain growth, an economy requires frequent investment to update existing infrastructure and to



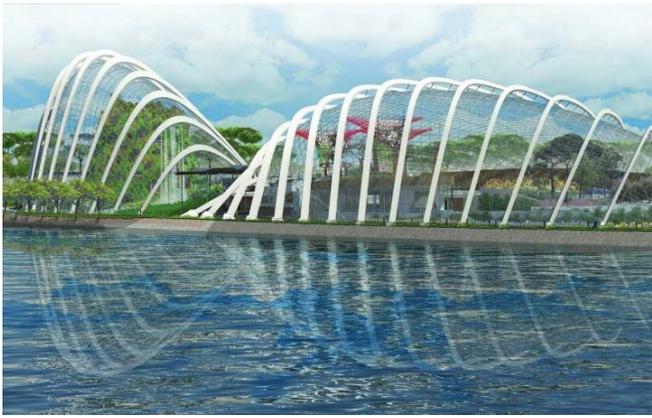
Gardens By the Bay overall view (ph. Design Boom)



Supertrees under construction (ph. Harry Luther)



Projected view of conservatory with waterfall (Design Boom)



2 cooled conservatories (ph. Grant Assoc.)

create new infrastructure. Singapore's investment costs for this project must be enormous, but it has created and will create new employment and a huge return income from tourism. An additional part of the project will create a new source of fresh water for the city.

Dr. Kiat Tan, the C.E.O. of the Gardens has been a leader in creating large green areas in urban Singapore and to conserve its natural environment. With that work and with the new Gardens By the Bay he hopes to transition Singapore from a garden city into a city in a garden.

(I ask readers to pardon this digression, but I am struck by the contrast between Singapore and other peaceful countries who have managed to maintain their economies while we have allowed our infrastructures to fall apart.)

Singapore's Gardens By the Bay will attract plant lovers from around the world. It will be especially enticing to bromeliad growers as it will have a large collection of well grown and exotically displayed bromeliads. What it seriously lacks is a local Bromeliad Society. BSI and members of the Garden should make



Bromeliad supertree under construction (ph H. Luther)



Bromeliads mounted on supertree (ph. Harry Luther)

some effort to organize a society. If one could be organized even with a small group of members, then it could host a future World Bromeliad Conference. The World Orchid Congress has wisely taken this step, and BSI should do whatever it takes to make a WBC happen in Singapore. □

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

**HOLIDAY PARTY** - Save this important date: **December 20<sup>th</sup>**. That is the date of our annual holiday party that you will not want to miss. Michael Riley and Francisco Correal have once again generously offered to host the party at their fabulous apartment. Michael and Francisco will provide the main dishes and beverages. Please bring an hors d'oeuvre, side dish, salad or dessert. The festivities will start at 6:30 pm.

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