SEMBS January-February 2022

Happy New Year! We begin 2022 under the specter of the continuing COVID pandemic, though there are some very encouraging signs that better times are ahead! To insure everyone's comfort and safety, our January and February meetings will take place online using Google Meet. Among the few positive outcomes of the COVID crisis has been the technology innovations that allow for some degree of social interaction, while remaining in the comfort of one's own home! Aside from fear of the virus, the ability to engage in remote meetings is a great time saver with regards to travel, and it also circumvents weather issues. As a humorous retrospective, the last time SEMBS attempted an in-person January meeting (scheduled several years ago at Matthaei Botanical Gardens), Mother Nature intervened with 6-8 inches of snow. Beautiful to look at, but no need to risk life and limb sloughing for miles through snow-induced traffic congestion!
This month's meeting will take place on Saturday, January 22, 2:00 PM using Google Meet. The topic will be "How do you pamper your plants?" The past few months, social media offers plenty of content revealing that house plant enthusiasts take a lot of pride in their collections, and they often go to great lengths to create a real showcase! Whether you have a large window / garden window, a vivarium, garden room or greenhouse, or a dedicated room with electric lighting, this is a chance to show what you've got! While it would be nice to have some focus on bromeliads, this will be a wonderful opportunity to share any other plant interests you may have! One reality check for everyone, the month of January can be a challenging one- many plants may be in a less active growth phase, the summer sheen is gone from most of the Neoregelias, there are not as many winter blooming bromeliads as in summer, though a few reliable ones do exist! For those who have experience and are comfortable with the Zoom or Google Meet "screen share" function, feel free to take charge during the meeting. If you're not familiar with the "screen share" (it can be tricky!), feel free to email photos and/or brief video files up to 30 seconds each to Paul- pcwingert@gmail.com. If you wish to present photos in a particular order, rename the files with a prefix #1,#2,#3, etc. Paul will execute the screen share, and everyone can provide descriptive narration of the photos. Live video presentation is discouraged. Camera phones are not entirely dependable- they can be fuzzy, or otherwise misrepresent brightness, shadows, or accuracy of colors!
Use the following link to join the meeting-
Video call link https://meet.google.com/geo-mtjz-czw

The February meeting will take place on Saturday, February 19, at 2:00 PM. Following the November meeting, several people reached out to offer regret for being unable to participate. The program will be a reprise of "The WBC Experience, Hawaii 2014". Each World Bromeliad Conference—the biennial Hadj for the Bromeliad-obsessed—has its own particular character. Paul Wingert will highlight the 2014 World Bromeliad Conference which took place in Hawaii, where activities included a Hawaiian luau (complete with hula dancing), a visit to a truly tropical botanical garden (no greenhouse required!), field trips to visit Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, and visits to the nurseries of three prominent growers and hybridizers. It's always a treat to get to know the people who attend these conferences as well! Due to restrictions on import of plants to Hawaii there was no competitive Show at the Hawaii Conference, but there was no shortage of spectacular plants on display or for sale (and no problem buying plants to bring home!)
This month's presentation is a retrospective on the 2014 WBC, but it should also serve as a preview of the upcoming Conference scheduled for June 7-11, 2022, in Sarasota! For five

wonderful days, you are guaranteed to see the greatest variety of bromeliads imaginable! See the attached flyer for more information. It is possible that our SEMBS affiliate will have the highest level of participation since the WBC event held in Chicago in 2004!
Also on the meeting agenda: Member input for future meeting topics and programs. We will also reassess the possibilities of resuming in-person meetings for March or April?
Use the following link to join the meeting-
SEMBS February meeting- "The WBC Experience, Hawaii 2014"
Saturday, February 19 · 2:00 – 4:00pm
Google Meet joining info-
Video call link: https://meet.google.com/xvp-kyjq-dkp

Don't forget its renewal time! Renewal dues of $12 were due on Dec. 31, 2021 for the 2022 year. If you joined or renewed between September 2021-Present you are already covered for the 2022 year. There is a grace period and after that period you will be removed from our mailing list. WE ARE NOW IN THE GRACE PERIOD! Kindly remit dues payment by check made out to SEMBS and mail to: SEMBS, PO Box 80472, Rochester Hills, MI 48308-0472

You will find two attached pdf files along with the emailed newsletter with information about the upcoming World Bromeliad Conference scheduled for June 8-11, 2022 in Sarasota, FL.

Utilizing LED Lights to Enhance Winter Growing of Bromeliads. By Paul Wingert

There is no denying that advances in LED technology are an absolute game changer for those who enjoy growing tropical plants indoors. Cost of lights and fixtures is increasingly competitive with florescent lighting, and LEDs offer a distinct advantage in operating cost- just about half the cost of florescent lights for comparable lumens. LEDs can be tailored to promote vegetative growth (mostly blue and violet spectrum), or for enhanced flowering (red to infrared spectrum). Most of the newer tubes and fixtures offer a wide spectrum which offers a nice balance for healthy plant growth, compared with earlier versions of LEDs which produced a weird, "blurple" light that could be uncomfortable to work under. (There's a joke that it is the kind of light that makes the neighbors suspicious about what you're growing?!) The new, wide spectrum lights appear much closer to a neutral-white, slightly red-tinged light that is much more pleasant and easier on the eyes.

I have a four-tier light cart inside my greenhouse where I pamper developing seedlings and choice hybrids that get preferential treatment. It's interesting to observe that on sunny days, the light from the light cart isn't particularly noticeable. However, on gloomy days when we suffer the persistent, lake-effect clouds which dominate on a majority of our winter days, the light cart consistently outshines the natural light in the greenhouse. Those of you who are familiar with the design of my greenhouse may recall that a portion of the roof is solid and shingled, not glazed with clear polycarbonate. A few years ago, I purchased an assortment of three different brands of screw in, 15-20 watts "blurple" LED bulbs with the intent of providing more consistent light for the bromeliads near the back wall of the greenhouse. Overall, the goal was achieved, and far fewer plants exhibited etiolation (long, strappy, floppy leaves). This year, one of the bulbs exhibited failure of half of the LED diodes. So, time to search for a replacement. Ultimately, I purchased three, 30 watts, 2-tube, 2-foot-long LED fixtures manufactured by Feit Electric. I found them at Home Depot. They may also be available at Lowe's and ACE Hardware. The units were a breeze to hang, and instantly provided a significantly brighter and cheerier atmosphere. Plants in preferred locations close to the tubes are showing an intensity of color similar to the plants on the light cart. That's really enjoyable to see!

I keep all the supplemental lighting on a timer. Beginning last year, I was much more methodical about correlating the on-off cycles with actual day length. Lights were set to turn on about 30 minutes before sunrise, and off about 30 minutes past sunset. So, when the plants come into the greenhouse in early October, lights are timed to be on for about 12 1/2 hours/day. By early December, and for a 6-week period through mid-January, lights are only on for 10 hours/day. The quality of light is so fine that the plants do not appear adversely by the reduced hours of light. From mid-January, the process will be reversed, and day length will be gradually increased. Now for perspective, most of our members live between 42 degrees N. and 43 degrees N. latitude. Our day length on December 21 is very near 9 hours- give or take a couple of minutes. Now, move 10 degrees latitude closer to the equator- southern Georgia for example, or better yet, southernmost Brazil, (where you may actually find bromeliads!) There you will find the day length on the shortest day

of winter is almost exactly 10 hours long. Conversely, the longest day of summer is about 14 hours and 15 minutes. The fluctuation in day length over the course of the year is significant! Obviously, this contributes to a change of seasons, and it is logical to assume that many species of bromeliads have evolved to respond to various temperature and day length triggers for their respective flowering seasons. Simple observations will confirm this. For a few examples, Aechmea fasciata begins flowering about 4-5 weeks after the summer solstice. Billbergia pyramidalis is reliably in bloom a couple of weeks before the autumn equinox. A daily email on Christmas Day from Google photos reminded me that a charming Canistropsis billbergioides was developing a colorful inflorescence exactly 10 years ago on 12/25/2011. I went to check on its descendent in 2021, the plant was in *exactly* the same stage of development! Many other bromeliad species are not quite so date specific, but definitely have a season of bloom. Even now in the depths of winter, I see evidence that numerous Vrieseas, Orthophytums, and Neoregelias are in the earliest stages of flower bud initiation. It portends a very colorful Spring and Summer!

Canistropsis billbergioides approaching first bloom 1-08-22

Two siblings from a hybrid grex of Vriesea lubbersii x 'Voodoo Magic' blooming during December 2021. Unexpected and surprising outcomes!