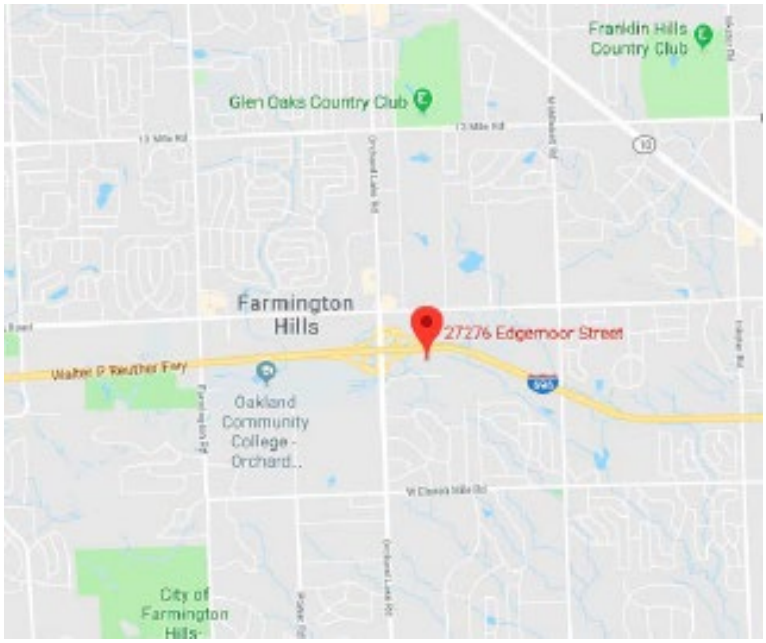
SEMBS

THE SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN BROMELIAD SOCIETY
AFFILIATE OF THE BROMELIAD SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL
MAY / JUNE 2022

Tillandsia duratii (1840) epiphytic in Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia
(graphite – P. Goff)

Saturday, May 21, 2022, at 2:00 PM at the home of Paul & Karen Wingert- 27276 Edgemoor, Farmington Hills, MI 48334. The primary agenda will be the distribution of plants from the society group order. In addition to any orders from Tillandsia International and Michael's Bromeliads, there will be another significant number of plants to be distributed from Andrea Gray's bromeliad collection. Andrea's widower, Gordon, wishes for her plants to be adopted by plant lovers who shared her passion for bromeliads! As we continue to nurture the plants that she loved, may we happily remember and honor Andrea's life and the friendship that we shared! The plants are free to society members, though it is strongly encouraged that individuals consider donating to the "Michigan Lupus Foundation in honor of Andrea Gray".



Looking ahead at the weather forecast for Saturday, there is a chance of thunderstorms developing in the afternoon, so we may need to improvise a bit. Let's plan to commence promptly at 2:00 PM with the distribution of plants. If anyone would like to arrive sooner to preview the available plants, or just to view the shade house, you are welcome to come to arrive around 1:30! First time visitors- the driveway entrance is just past the house. There is room for about four cars in the driveway, and ample frontage to park along the road either side of the mailbox or driveway. Enter the back yard by way of the steps leading up behind the house. Go through the gate, and the path up the hill leads to the shade house.

June meeting- Members are encouraged to attend the Bromeliad Society International World Bromeliad Conference in Sarasota, FL. Dates of the Conference are June 7-11, 2022. No meeting here in Michigan in June.

Saturday, July 23, 1:00 PM. Annual summer picnic/ potluck hosted by Lynne & Pat Echlin. Meeting topic to include display of new plant acquisitions from the WBC and report one the conference experience. More details to follow in the July-August newsletter.

Saturday, August 20, 2:00 PM. Meeting hosted Paul Wingert. Meeting topic (possible trade session?) and more details to follow in the July-August newsletter.

Transitioning Your Bromeliads Outside for a Summer's Vacation

-by Paul Wingert

One of the most common subjects of discussion at our society's public events relates to the ever-popular Aechmea fasciata, also known as the "Silver Vase" plant. Typically, it begins "I got this Silver Vase plant years ago, and I got pups, but they never bloom". Then ensues a discussion of the "apple with the plant in a bag" maneuver. This does work. For those who may be unfamiliar with the process, a ripe apple gives off ethylene gas, and when it is contained within the bag, it permeates the meristem of the bromeliad and signals that it is time to bloom.

Commercial growers who raise thousands of plants are doing essentially the same thing. Plants are fed aggressively until they reach the desired size and then are chemically treated to initiate flowering. From that point, they know it is "x" number of days until the inflorescence is beginning to emerge and the finished product can be shipped to vendors around the country. Many other varieties of bromeliads are produced for the market in much the same way. This "mechanization" of the floriculture industry allows bromeliad enthusiasts to find a broad assortment of varieties throughout the year and at reasonable prices!

Now, there is a natural alternative to getting bromeliads to bloom! Very simply, it involves moving the plants out of the house and placing them outdoors in a desirable location. Once again using the example of the Aechmea fasciata- mature, well-fed plants growing outdoors respond to natural triggers of fluctuating temperatures and day length. In my years of experience, inflorescences begin to emerge in mid to late July, and the first flowers can be expected to open within a few days of August 1.

Aechmea fasciata variegata sporting blooms in August

There are two important considerations when acclimating our plants to outside conditions. The first is to provide sun protection for plants that have been in relatively low-light, interior conditions. There is nothing more disheartening than getting your plant successfully through the winter months, only to witness it getting fried to a crisp after a day or two of intense sunshine! Even if it's not the whole plant being burned, it seems like the leaves most greatly exposed to the hottest, mid-afternoon sun are most vulnerable to leaf scorching. While it likely will not kill your plant, the disfigurement may take months to outgrow, kind of defeating the purpose of the summer vacation outdoors! So, do take care when first placing them outdoors! A covered porch may offer a good starting point to begin acclimating plants

outdoors. By the middle of May, the deciduous trees are normally pretty well leafed out and offer many more filtered shade options. My long-term solution has been the construction of a shade house. I use 40% shade cloth for overhead protection and 30% shade cloth for vertical "walls" around the south end of the structure. It gives me the confidence to move the plants outdoors with no fear of sunburn- as long as temperatures are warm enough! That brings us to the second, rather obvious consideration of adequate warmth.

Paul's shade house in June

The month of July features many blooming Neoregelias

Let's face it. It's May. We're in Michigan. Temperatures are notoriously volatile! And every year is different. The average date of the final spring freeze locally is right around May 1. I begin moving more cold-tolerant bromeliads out as soon as possible after the last apparent freeze, starting with more cold-tolerant bromeliads such as Tillandsias, Dyckias, and bromeliads that grow at high elevation. Billbergias, Neoregelias, and Vrieseas follow shortly thereafter. Last to go out to the shade house (usually after May 15, but sometimes even a week after that) are plants from low altitude, low latitude distribution such as Aechmea chantinii, Ae. zebrina, Ae. tessmanii, and various Cryptanthus. In 40+ years of growing, I have not yet had any plants die as a result of a late spring freeze, though I have likely pushed the limits of good sense in some years! Once

every 3 to 4 years on average, it seems that a mid-May frost is suddenly in the forecast, and out comes the frost cloth and the sheets for a night or two. The vast majority of the bromeliads appear to shrug off the experience unaffected by the brief chill. The most sensitive plants I have observed are various Orthophytum spp. and hybrids, and Hechtia lanata. The Orthophytums showed leaf damage when temperatures reached 35-38 degrees, even when covered with frost cloth. The only consolation is that the plants grow fast, so there was little evidence of damage by the end of summer. Hechtia lanata is another story altogether. It shows leaf damage at around 45 degrees. Fortunately, I haven't had damage to the growing point, but it is much slower to shed evidence of mistreatment! Even though it appears morphologically very similar to Dyckias, it is really a more tropical grower and needs to be treated as such.

Colors intensify in August's simmering heat

There are risks to moving bromeliads outside for the summer, but these can be easily mitigated. Be sensible about exposing plants to the intense sun and make the transition to brighter conditions over a period of time! Avoiding a freeze is just common sense. Though many bromeliads will survive a brief period of freezing temperatures, it seems unnecessarily cruel to take the chance when you can possibly avoid it! The rewards of transitioning your bromeliads outside soon become evident. Plants respond to the increased air circulation and appear revitalized in a matter of days. Abundant natural light helps intensify the beautiful leaf colors. Throughout the summer, there are subtle differences in the intensity of coloration with the fluctuation of temperatures and day length. Finally, you should be able to witness an increasing number of bromeliads initiating blooming, and that brings additional satisfaction to your growing experience!

September's cooler night temperatures deepen colors even more!