

S.F.V.B.S.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BROMELIAD SOCIETY

FEBRUARY 2014 NEWSLETTER

OFFICERS

Pres: **Mike Wisnev** V.P. & News: **Mary K. Carroll** Secretary: **Kathleen Misko** Treasurer: **Mary Chan**
Membership: **Nancy P.-Hapke** Health & Wellness: **Georgia Roiz** Web Page: **Kim Thorpe**
Directors: **Steve Ball, Bryan Chan, Richard Kaz -fp, Dave Bassani-fp**

Saturday February 1, 2014 @ 10:00 am

Sepulveda Garden Center 16633 Magnolia Blvd. Encino, California 91316

AGENDA

9:30 – SET UP & SOCIALIZE

10:00 - Door Prize – for members who arrive before 10:00

10:05 -Welcome Visitors and New Members.
Make announcements and Introduce Speaker

10:15 –Speaker: Gregg DeChirico

Program title: Tillandsias in Coastal & Southern California Gregg will offer a short presentation featuring successful cultural guidelines for growing *Tillandsias* from San Francisco to San Diego. The program will cover basic *Tillandsia* care and also offer a selection of species featured in the gardens of Santa Barbara residents and recommended for growing both indoors and outdoors in coastal and southern California. Gregg is a keen advocate of growing compatible *Tillandsia* species among succulents in a varied collection.

Gregg has grown plants of all types for over 30 years, and now has a nursery, Gregg's Greenhouse, located in the Santa Barbara area, specializing in seed-grown, rare and exotic plants. Gregg is a frequent participant and vendor at many local and regional club shows and sales. He has travelled throughout Latin America to photograph the local flora and fauna, featured in many of the programs he offers. Gregg served as president of both the San Francisco Succulent & Cactus Society and the Santa Barbara Cactus & Succulent Society, and is the current President of the Cactus & Succulent Society of America (CSSA) through 2015.

President's Message

We owe **Mary K. Carroll** an incredible debt of gratitude – she has put her heart and soul into this Club the last two years, and probably a lot longer than that. Her efforts have been Herculeanness – she does the Newsletter, she finds speakers for our meetings, she comes in Friday to set up the meeting, she is in charge of hospitality, and she brings in most of the raffle plants. She is up late cooking the night before, and up early the next morning to get cuttings and load them into her car. She is the last to leave the meeting since she makes sure the room is clean when we leave. She coordinates with all of us to help out the Club. She spends more on our lunches than the modest stipend we provide. No doubt I have left out many other things that I don't even know about!

To be blunt, I am not sure we would have a Club if Mary hadn't done all she has. I don't mean to slight anyone else - many contribute much much more than their fair share to the Club and deserve our heartfelt thanks. But Mary's time, effort and contributions have been truly extraordinary!

Mary is stepping down as Hospitality Chair and Newsletter editor. Knowing her as I do, I suspect she will still be quite active, maybe

more than anyone else in the Club. But she has other commitments and needs to slow down on the Club. And, in a bit of unasked for advice to Mary – you definitely don't need to be exhausted after our meetings!

So my only Message is this heartfelt thank you to Mary. In my view, there is only one way to truly thank her for her help, and it is really up to all of us to do so. A plaque, or award or plant, no matter how great, just isn't really enough! The real thanks each of you can give - to contribute the Club and help it grow. Every little bit helps out. For those of you that aren't very active, how about something simple – bring in a cutting for the raffle, or stop by the grocery store and bring in some fruit or desert, or a salad. Or stay and help clean up after the meeting. Bring in a plant for show and tell. Or bring in a guest that might be a potential new member. If each of us did something extra to help the Club grow and prosper – that would really give the thanks to Mary that she so richly deserves!

11:15 - Refreshment Break, and Show and Tell:

Will the following members please provide refreshments this month: **Nancy Pyne-Hapke, Brenda Kanno, Richard & Anne Kaz, Michael & Terral Matsumoto, Leni Koska & Teresa Campbell, Kathleen Misko, and anyone else who has a snack they would like to share.** If you can't contribute this month don't stay away just bring a snack next time you come.

Questions about refreshments? Call Joyce (818-705-3224) or Kathleen (818 402-6031). Leave a message - they will call back.

Feed The Kitty

If you don't contribute to the refreshment table, please make a small donation to the **(feed the kitty jar)** on the table; this helps fund the coffee breaks.

For **Show and Tell**, would, each member **please bring one plant**. You may not have a pristine plant but you certainly have one that needs a name or is sick and you have a question.

11:30 – Officer/Director Election and Club News

11:45 – Mini Auction: members contribute

12:00 – Raffle: We need each member to donate

12:15 - Pick Up around your area

12:30 –/ Meeting is over—Drive safely **

Hope to see you all at the next meeting by 10:00 am...



Hot off the Press – Club News. The Board met after our last club meeting. Here's a quick review of the news.

Officers and Directors. The Board recommends that all current officers and directors be re-elected unless other members are nominated by the Club members.

Hospitality Co-Chairs. **Kathleen Misko** and **Joyce Schuman** graciously volunteered to be in charge of refreshments. As before, the Club will provide a modest reimbursement to them for our cuisine. And, as before, we hope everyone will pitch in to make our lunches some of the best known in the plant world. If you can, please bring something, whether it is one of your favorite dishes, a new recipe or something quick and easy. Even you non-chefs can easily pitch in – desert or fruit is a great idea to help out. If you can't bring something in, you might contribute a bit to the cash kitty to help defray costs.

Newsletter. Starting with this Newsletter, **Mike Wisnev** will prepare the Newsletter, and **Nancy P.-Hapke** will be distributing it to those of you who don't get it by email. I'd like to encourage all to contribute from time to time. Send me a paragraph or two about some Bromeliad - related topic. Or do you have something to announce or something humorous or educational to add?? .

Future sales and raffles. The special sale in January was (IMHO) a great success. Every member had an opportunity to buy a plant, and most of us did. We will be having one later in the year. In the meantime, we will be adding some variety to the auction and raffle etc. by trying different things. For February we hope to acquire some great plants to add to our monthly regular raffle.

May Meeting. **Instead of a regular May meeting, we encourage all members to attend the La Ballona Bromeliad show and sale in Culver City.** There is an added bonus - there is also a cacti and succulent show and sale there. IT is a great opportunity to see, and buy, some fantastic plants, meet new plant lovers and have a great day!

Webpage. **Kim Thorpe** is looking for ideas to grow our web page. One of the best ways to attract new members is through the web. IF you have something that might be helpful, please talk to Kim.

I'd like to personally thank all those who attended the meeting for all their ideas and help.

Ramblings on Better Growing.

The Board wanted to try to put a bit more emphasis on how to grow better looking plants, both here in the Newsletter and at Club meetings. As I have only been growing Bromeliads for 2 years, I feel more than a bit inadequate to be writing much on this topic. But unless I get some help you're stuck with my advice. As Ana and I say to each other, we don't do subtle - that was a request to all you experienced growers!

I thought a lot about what to name this column. I started off with "A Definitive Guide for Great Growing ... is a Mystery." While it would have caught your attention (especially the novices), it sounded

pompous, and I personally don't think there is such a thing. Even *Good Growing Guidelines* seems presumptuous to me. My point is that everyone grows their plants a bit (and often a lot!) differently, often with spectacular results for very different growing regimes. I'll continually get back to this theme of different ways to grow your plants in future articles. But it something to remember. Whenever anyone (especially me!) tells you something about growing plants, it is likely that someone else will tell you something completely different!

So, I settled on *Ramblings on Better Growing* since that is what you will get - some rambling on ways to consider growing plants, and some of my other related thoughts as well.

I wrote this in early January expecting a winter. We aren't having one. Due to the unexpected heat, make sure you keep your plants hydrated. Normally I water every 2-3 weeks in winter, but have been watering twice as much this year.

If we do get a winter, cover your plants if it gets too cold or there is possibly a hail story. You can pretty much use anything to cover your plants. This helps keep a bit of heat around your plants to prevent freezing. About the only thing not desirable for cold is apparently clear plastic sheeting as doesn't keep the heat in. It's fine for hail though. If you can't cover your plants, and you are home when it hails, try to empty out the hail afterwards, or even consider hosing off the plants if it isn't too cold. I've been told that the hail damage is often from the fact the freezing hail sits in the plant as the pounding of the hail itself - I can't say I know for sure.

Lastly, you can bring some plants inside for the winter, or when it is too cold, or move them around where they might get more protection. Even if this isn't doable for all your plants, think about it for some of your favorites. Almost all, if not all, Bromeliads can easily survive inside few months, and add some great decoration.

Good growing!

Announcements

- ***Special Plants for the Regular Raffle*** – Last month, we had some special plants for a special sale/raffle. I thought it went great. This month we will have a few special plants to add to the regular raffle, and auction off a couple as well. We encourage everyone to bring in some cuttings to add to the raffle - that would be appreciated.
- **Sylmar High School** agricultural program - lets plan on a meeting at the High School, maybe March?

If you haven't noticed, our climate is always changing ! Remember extreme wind can quickly dry out your plants; keep an eye on them, especially the Tillandsias. Spray the Tillandsias before noon so they have 4 hours to dry before night time.

Rewards System – This is a reminder that you will be rewarded for participation. Bring a Show-N- Tell plant, raffle plants, and Refreshments and you will be rewarded with Raffle tickets. We realize not everyone has pristine show plants but each of us certainly have sick or unidentified plants that can be brought in. **Each member, please bring one plant.**

• ***What can you do to help our club?***

1. First foremost we need **members to plan to attend all meetings**. Our group is small and we need your participation. From time to time emergencies come up and some family events that can't be rescheduled, that's life. What we ask is for people **to try not to plan anything else on our meeting day.** Look at our calendar below before you schedule.
2. You can **donate an occasional plant for the mini-auction or the raffle**. A percentage from the auction plants will go the club and a part to the donor. Most of the time there will be plants priced for every pocketbook. **You can also participate by buying raffle tickets or by bidding** on a plant in the auction.
3. Food and Drink – everyone is encouraged to bring in something for our great lunches.
4. Newsletter – you might contribute a short (or better yet, long) article – a paragraph would be great.

<<>> ***Wishing you a Happy Valentine's Day*** <><>>

Speakers

Do you have any ideas for Speakers about Bromeliads or any similar topics? We are always looking for an interesting speaker. If you hear of someone, please notify Mary K. at 818-705-4728 or e-mail rango676@aol.com

2014 Membership Dues

Pay at the meeting to:
SFVBS – Treasurer - Mary Chan

TIME TO RENEW..... *Yearly Membership Dues* **\$10.00** for a single or couple

UPCOMING EVENTS

Please Put These Dates on Your Calendar

Suggestions: visit the Sylmar School project for one of the 2014 meetings
Visit Live Art Nursery in Northridge for one meeting

Saturday, January 4 1, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting – Program by Larry Farley
Saturday, February 1, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting – Program by Greg DeChirico
Saturday, March 1, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting - STBA
Saturday, April 5, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting - STBA
Saturday, May 3, 2014	Field Trip LaBallona Bromeliad Show & Sale
Saturday, June 7, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting - STBA
Sat & Sun - June 14 & 15	SFVBS Bromeliad Show & Sale
Saturday, July 5, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting - STBA
Saturday, August 2, 2014 ??	SFVBS meeting and Field Trip
Sat & Sun August 2 & 3	South Bay Bromeliad Show & Sale

Saturday, Sept 6, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting - STBA
Saturday, Oct 4, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting - STBA
Saturday, Nov 1, 2014	SFVBS Regular meeting - STBA
Saturday, Dec 6, 2014	Holiday Meeting & Brunch 10:00 – 2:00

Dates with ?? to be discussed at a later date

STBA = Speaker To Be Announced

***Broms in Bloom - Member Photos.** Lots of us bring in plants to show and tell. But sometimes some of our favorite plants bloom between meetings. Or you may have a large plant difficult to bring in for show and tell. Why not send me a picture instead, and we'll put it in the Newsletter. A plant in bloom, your favorite plant - there are lots of possibilities! Depending upon your wishes, I can tell the Club it is your plant, or just say it is from an anonymous member. I know of one member who has given a presentation at another club about photography (who could that be?) - we'd love to see some shots of your plants from time to time.*

In the meantime, here is a huge clump of an unlabeled Billbergia of mine that recently bloomed - I haven't gotten a definitive ID. Please let me know if you recognize it.



Taxonomic Tidbits – *Racinaea*

By Mike Wisnev, SFVBS President (mwisnev@sbcglobal.net)

San Fernando Valley Bromeliad Society Newsletter –February 2014

I recently discussed the six *Tillandsia* subgenera, and the features separating them. At the outset of these articles, I had noted there had been a seventh subgenus until fairly recently. Previously called *Tillandsia* subgen. *Pseudo-Catopsis*, this group is now considered a separate genus called *Racinaea*.

While Smith and Downs listed 47 members of this group, very few of them are in cultivation, and those that are still aren't widely available. Two that can be found are *Racinaea fraseri* and *multiflora*. Since they had been called subgen. *Pseudo-Catopsis*, it is not surprising they resemble *Catopsis*, another genus in the *Tillandsioideae* subfamily. *Catopsis* have a different kind of seed than other genera in the subfamily.

In general, the various *Tillandsia* subgenera are distinguished by the follow features: exerted or included stamens, the relative length of the stamen to the petal, tube-like or droopy flowers, the size of the flower, and the size and shape of the styles. *Racinaea* species, which have *Tillandsia* like seeds, are distinguished by a different feature. They have asymmetric petals, unlike any of the other six subgenera of *Tillandsia*. Sepals are often difficult to see on *Tillandsias* since they are covered by leaves or bracts. But they are symmetric, which means that the left and right sides are more or less the same shape. In contrast, the two sides of the *Racinaea* sepals are differently shaped. They are also widest towards the top of the sepal, while for other *Tillandsia* the sepals general are widest at the bottom or middle. *Catopsis* also have asymmetric petals. My only *Racinaea* hasn't flowered, and the *Catopsis* flower is among the smallest I have seen. I don't even have a decent picture of the flower, let alone the sepal!



In 1993, Michael A. Spencer & Lyman B. Smith created a new genus, called *Racinaea*, for these species. *Phytologia* (February 1993) 74(2):151-160. They briefly discussed the history of these plants, and then stated:

During the course of revisionary work on the genera of Bromeliaceae, we have come to the conclusion that taxa treated under subgenus *Pseudocatopsis* are sufficiently distinct from other tillandsioid species to warrant generic segregation. We therefore establish the new genus *Racinaea* to accommodate them. The unique set of characters that readily distinguish *Racinaea* from other tillandsioid genera are distichous, small and inconspicuous flowers; asymmetric sepals which are broadest towards the apex and free or nearly so; stamens and pistil that are included in the corolla; and a short and stout style. Id at pp 151-2.

From what I gather, this change has been well accepted. While I certainly am in no position to disagree with the conclusions, I confess that I did not find the above rationale very persuasive. First, it does not seem as if any new features were actually discovered to warrant make the change. There wasn't a DNA study, or a discovery that these plants had different pollen or seeds than the other *Tillandsias*. Second, all of the "unique" features noted above, other than the sepals and distichous flowers, are also characteristic of the *Diaphoranthema* subgenus. Note also that the paragraph above

was the entire explanation for the change. So, to my way of thinking, these unique features might well warrant a subgenus, but why a new genus.

Below is a picture of *R. multiflora* var *tomensis*. Courtesy of <http://bromeliad.org.au>. Photo by Peter Tristram.



I wrote this a while ago, and still feel more than a bit presumptuous criticizing the above article. After all, Smith was the number 1 expert in the world, and extremely detailed oriented, and I have been growing Bromeliads for two years. Who would you believe? But remember, I am distinguishing between disagreeing with their conclusion and questioning their stated rationale.

In my defense, I later learned of other articles Smith co-authored in the 1990's that made similar taxonomic changes. One elevated the eight subgenera of *Aechmea* to genera with a 2 sentence explanation – unlike the *Racinaea* article, these changes were criticized and have not been well accepted. Curious about these seeming departures from his earlier works, I found that Smith was about 89 years old when these articles came out!

Secondly, the DNA study of the *Tillandsioideae* subfamily noted in earlier articles included 4 *Racinaea* species in their sample. It showed that these 4 plants should be grouped together. However, if *Tillandsia* itself is considered a good

genus, the cladograms indicated that *Racinaea* should not be a separate genus. However, no changes were suggested to the *Tillandsioideae* subfamily since the authors felt more sampling was needed. Another study of the entire Bromeliad family included one *Racinaea* species and the diagrams show there also suggested that it was part of the *Tillandsia* genus. Assuming the new studies show similar diagrams, this leaves two approaches – 1) keep the *Racinaea* as genus, but break up the *Tillandsia* genus into two or more genera, or 2) make *Racinaeae* a subgenus again. It will be interesting to see if the *Racinaea* genus is short-lived.

In any case, this leads to a much broader question than whether *Racinaea* should be a new genus, or just a subgenus. The question - what is a genus anyway? You'll have to wait for another article to find out!