



# S.F.V.B.S.

## SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BROMELIAD SOCIETY MAY 2014 NEWSLETTER

**SFVBS**  
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**OFFICERS** Pres & News: **Mike Wisnev** V.P.: **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**

## NO REGULAR MEETING

### President's Message

**Remember that there is no regular May meeting. Instead, I hope you will all try to attend the La Ballona Bromeliad Show and Sale – see more about it under Announcements.**

This is a great opportunity to see and buy some fantastic Bromeliads. Ana and I have attended this show for the last few years, and it is great. The show plants are stunning, and often you can find an offset of some of them for sale. It's also a great chance to meet some other Bromeliad enthusiasts and get more ideas for growing your plants. HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE.

### Announcements

- **Happy Birthday to:** *Kathleen Misko* May 31;
- **REMEMBER – THERE IS NO REGULAR MAY MEETING> YOU are encouraged to attend the**

**La Ballona Bromeliad Show and Sale**  
**9:00 – 4:00 pm Saturday and Sunday**  
**Veteran's Memorial Hall at**

**4117 Overland Avenue, Culver City. Just take the 405 south, get off at Culver Blvd and go west about a mile or so – there is a parking lot on the right side of Culver just before Overland. Among others, Bryan Chan and Ray Van Veen usually sell Bromeliads there. The Sunset Cactus and Succulent Show and Sale will be at the same location. Larry and Natalia from Live Art, Artie, Kim, Steve, Duke and Kaz will also be selling plants.**

### Google Directions from 101 freeway

Take I-405 South/San Diego Fwy	12.3 mi
exit # 51 <b>Culver/Washington Blvds</b>	0.2 mi
Turn left onto <b>Sawtelle Blvd</b>	338 ft
Turn left onto <b>Culver Blvd</b>	1.0 mi
Turn right into parking lot just before Overland	
<b>4177 Overland Ave., Culver City</b>	

### Driving Surface Streets

If you don't like driving the 405 freeway,  
Take Sepulveda Blvd. south,  
Turn Left (east) on Culver Blvd.,  
Turn Right on Overland Ave,  
Turn Left immediately into parking lot  
The Veteran Hall is located on the  
Southeast corner of Culver and Overland

## Ramblings about Better Growing

- Lot's of ways to grow Great Plants.

In the first Ramblings article, I noted that there are lots of different ways to grow great plants. Based on what I have heard, there are lot's of ways to grow good, and even great, looking plants. Here is some advice from some of the talks I've heard over years - all from very excellent growers! Most was given for cacti and succulents, but most of this advice probably work just as well for Bromeliads.

Soil Mix. -"I use a mix of pumice and cactus mix." "I grow your plants in pure pumice." "I use loam." "I generally use part soil, part pumice part soil." "I like to add some coir to my mix." "I add some sand to my mix." For Bromeliads - "orchid bark." "I use a much heavier mix so I can water less."

Fertilizer. "I don't fertilize - maybe once a year." "I use a light dose every time I water." "I fertilize a lot in the spring and early autumn."

When to Water. One grower I know says he always waters in late afternoon. Why - most Bromeliads, and cacti and succulents, use a photosynthesis method labelled CAM for short - basically some of the chemical processes occur at night. Another great grower says he always waters in the morning so the plants have a chance to dry out a bit and prevent rot.

Winter water. "I like to water every 2 -3 weeks - it helps keep the roots moist and prevent them from dying during winter." "I don't water at all in winter - the plants can easily survive, and this prevents rot etc."

So there you have it - everybody is doing something different. Why is that?

First, everybody grows in different conditions - San Diego, South Bay, the desert, Arizona, the Valley. Each habitat might suggest a different way to grow to plants. Second, I don't think there have been many scientific studies as to which works best in what conditions. Most of us work by trial and error, based on advice we hear. Third, there are simply lots of ways to grow well - your plants want to survive and do well. I did hear one talk by a guy who tried like 10 different ways to grow seed of a certain plants, and concluded they all worked equally well!

Finally, you need a coordinated approach to sun, heat, water and mix. If you grow in more heat, you need to water more. A heavier mix, water less. Larger pots - water less. All pumice - you better fertilize. So once you do one thing for one aspect of growing, some of the others necessarily will differ if all other conditions are the same.

So, there are lots of ways to grow well - you need to find what works well for YOU.  
Good Growing!

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

1. First foremost we need **members to plan to attend all meetings.** 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. We are still a small group and everyone's participation is vital if we want to keep this club alive.
2. You can **donate an occasional plant for the mini-auction or the raffle.** You can also **participate by buying raffle tickets or by bidding** on a plant.
3. Food and Drink - everyone is encouraged to bring in something for our great lunches, and feed the kitty if you don't.
4. Newsletter - you might contribute a short (or better yet, long) article - a paragraph would be great.

# S.F.V.B.S.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BROMELIAD SOCIETY

## BACKYARD BAR-B-Q PARTY



hosted by: Bryan and Mary Chan

**SATURDAY JUNE 7, 2014**

**3:00** - *Guests are invited to view Bryan's  
plant collection*

**3:00 - 4:30** - *If you need help dividing and/or grooming a plant for  
our upcoming Show and Sale, bring it; one of our members will give you a  
hand. Our goal is to enable participation from each of our members.*

**by 4:30** - *Deliver all food dishes*

**5:00** - *Pot Luck Dinner served*

*It is not too early to decide what you plan to bring for the pot luck.*

*Please notify one of the Mary's.*

*As usual, a little coordination will prevent having so many duplications.*

**10571 Odessa Avenue**

**Granada Hills, CA 91344**

**405 FWY to Devonshire; go west on Devonshire;**

**Turn right (north) on Hayvenhurst Ave. for 2 blocks;**

**Turn right (east) on San Jose St.**

**Turn left (north) on Odessa.**

**10571 is on the left at the end of the cul de sack.**

**If necessary you may call for directions 818-366-1858**

**Bryan** [bcbrome@aol.com](mailto:bcbrome@aol.com)

**Mary** [mchan2001@aol.com](mailto:mchan2001@aol.com)

Please **RSVP** to Mary K. 818-705-4728 or Mary Chan **818-366-1858** ASAP

## *Be Prepared*

By: *Mary K. Carroll*

### **Are you almost ready for our Bromeliad Show on June 14 & 15 ?**

Now is a good time to remove large pups and prepare to Donate pups for Club Sale.  
At the show we need Volunteer Docents  
Volunteer Time at Reception Table  
Help with Set-Up & Break Down

### **Prepare one plant a week**

We still have time to get our plants ready. Make a commitment to **prepare one plant a week**. If you do that, each member can have 3 plants to add to the June Show. Remove pups that are half or 2/3 the size of the mother plants. Wear long sleeves and gloves when handling the Aechmeas. When potting tall or large plants, you can add a few rocks or broken pottery to the pots to keep them from falling over. Use proper potting mixture. Pot the plant and if necessary use chopsticks or small rocks to brace the pup upright; pup's root faster when stable and you prevent them from moving around. Place the pot on a bench or in an area where it will receive bright diffused light. Make sure the leaves don't touch other plants so they don't become scared.

Before the show wipe off the leaves and flower pots with a damp cloth. In 15 minutes you will have 3 plants ready to show.

### **Mother plants are now ready for the Show!**

#### **Please Put These Dates on Your Calendar**

Saturday, May 3, 2014	<b>Field Trip La Ballona Bromeliad Show &amp; Sale</b>
Saturday, June 7, 2014	<b>SFVBS Summer Picnic</b> at Bryan & Mary Chan's home
Sat & Sun - June 14 & 15	<b>SFVBS Bromeliad Show &amp; Sale</b>
Saturday, July 5, 2014	Speaker - <b>Gregg DeChirico</b> – “Travel with Gregg to see Bromeliads of Peru”
Saturday, August 2, 2014	Speaker – <b>Andy Siekkinen</b>
Sat & Sun August 2 & 3	South Bay Bromeliad Show & Sale
Saturday, Sept 6, 2014	Speaker - <b>Larry Farley</b> – “Bromeliad Blooms by the Month”
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

## **Help us improve our Membership**

**Tell people about your hobby !  
Let apartment dwellers know  
these plants can be grown  
inside or on a balcony !  
Give them a plant !  
Invite them to a meeting !  
Reach out to visitors and new  
members, make them feel  
welcomed !**

### *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](mailto:rango676@aol.com)

# Taxonomic Tidbits – *Aechmeas* and their varied Inflorescences – Part I.

By Mike Wisnev, SFVBS President ([mwisnev@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mwisnev@sbcglobal.net))

San Fernando Valley Bromeliad Society Newsletter – May 2014

*Aechmeas* are great plants. Many have stunning leaves, and their inflorescences are lovely – a great combination. *Neoregelia* certainly have spectacular foliage, but no one cares about their tiny flowers. And while *Billbergias* have great inflorescences, they rarely last more than a few days. Those of *Aechmeas* can last a month or more.

*Aechmeas* are already popular - if only they were a bit smaller, they would probably be even more popular. In fact, one of the first Bromeliads widely cultivated (other than the pineapple) was an *Aechmea*.

Like *Vriesea splendens*, *Aechmea fasciata* was widely cultivated in Europe by 1900. It is still widely popular, so much so that you rarely see it at a Bromeliad show. In fact, it is the first Bromeliad we had, long before we entered the hobby. With beautiful silvery marked leaves, pink bracts and blue flowers, it is hard to beat.

Here is *Aechmea fasciata* in bloom.



It also seems *Aechmea* are pretty easy to identify, even without a flower. Put an *Aechmea* on a table with a *Billbergia*, *Neo*, and *Verisea*, and it is easy to pick out the *Aechmea* (and the others). But put an *Aechmea*, *Portea*, *Androlepsis* and *Quesnelia* on the table. No inflorescence. Now you might have a lot of problems! For that matter, even with an inflorescence I suspect a lot of us can't tell which is which, especially if you aren't dealing with well known species. I know I can't!

I got a hint of the problem early on a few months after I started collecting Bromeliads. I had bought an Aechmea-like plant with a spent inflorescence – the flowers were gone. Here it is (please let me know if have a potential ID!).



I posted it on a forum and asked a well-known nursery owner. No one knew, though some thought it might be a hybrid of an Aechmea and Quesnelia. Having just acquired the Smith and Down's treatise, I went to see how to tell those two genera apart.

Most books etc describing a plant family or genus have an “artificial key” to outline its members. This is a relatively short outline to help you identify the different genera or species in the group. Their usefulness varies widely – the

more plants in the group, the more complex they get. They are a lot easier to use if each plant shows up only once and the keys rely on easily visible parts. Even the use of a flower can be a problem, since your plant may not be in flower, and might not ever flower!

The key may not tell you anything really important about your plant. Here's an example - a Martian visits the US and is told the most popular sports are baseball, football and basketball. You take the Martian to a game and it asks – which is this, how can I tell. So you hand it this key. Ball white – baseball. Ball brown-see step 2. Step 2 – ball round – basketball; ball not round – football. While the Martian can easily figure out which game it is, it tells nothing about the game.

Back to my problem plant. I look at the key to see how *Aechmeas* and *Quesnelias* key out. It is only 51 steps. This actually isn't too bad for all of the Bromelioideae subfamily. Most of the main branches and sub-branches involve the inflorescence and whether the flower has a pedicel. I find *Aechmea* and work backwards to see what it has. But then I look and see *Aechmea* a second time. And a third. *Aechmea* shows up 12 different times on the key! It has almost every kind of inflorescence! If that wasn't bad enough, *Quesnelias* show up 3 times, usually right next to *Aechmea*. They also give some measurements for the sepals and petals, but they overlap. (As an aside, in one of those rules of the universe, every time I see overlapping measurements, such as one species has flowers 1-2 cm long and the other has 1.5- 2.5 cm long, mine has 1.8 cm flowers!) And to add the final insult, the key distinguishes the two by telling you *Aechmea* ovules are "long-caudate" while those of *Quesnelia* are "unappendaged."

So I still don't know how to tell an *Aechmea* and *Quesnelia* apart on a taxonomic basis without a microscope.

It wasn't for another year or so that I learned that *Aechmea* are called the "trashcan" genus. Most of the DNA studies involving *Aechmeas* have shown it is not a valid genus – its different members may have evolved separately many different times. Some of these branches include members of other genera. I would have known this earlier if I had looked a bit further in Smith and Downs. In 1979, well before these DNA studies, at the very beginning of the description of *Aechmea*, they said "*Aechmea* includes some very discordant elements and is very likely of polyphyletic origin. Further research is likely to divide it with some parts becoming independent genera and others merging with genera at present considered distinct." *Flora Neotropica*, Monograph 14 (part 3) p 1768.

It is worth noting one aspect of one DNA study of *Aechmea*– the importance of geography. Some of the groups that seemed valid (or pretty close) were located fairly close together. In addition, in at least 4 situations, a genus or subgenus that had members in 2 or 3 widely separate areas turned out not valid. But the members in each particular location were considered a good group. For example, some *Hohenbergia* species grow in the Caribbean and the rest far away in eastern

Brazil. The study found these two groups were not related genetically, but that the Caribbean members were related to each other, and the Brazilian members were related to each other.

So, the bottom line is that *Aechmea* is a mess as a genus. More studies are needed before proposals are made to revise it. Its 8 subgenera are perhaps even worse. Their description in Smith & Downs doesn't even mesh with the key for them, as it was prepared by Carl Mez, a great Bromeliad botanist who died in 1944. Remember how *Tillandsias* don't have a petal ligule, while *Vriesea* do. One *Aechmea* subgenus distinguished by a lack of a petal appendage! The rest of the key generally involves differences in type of inflorescence and whether there is a pedicel. The shape of the sepal is also important.

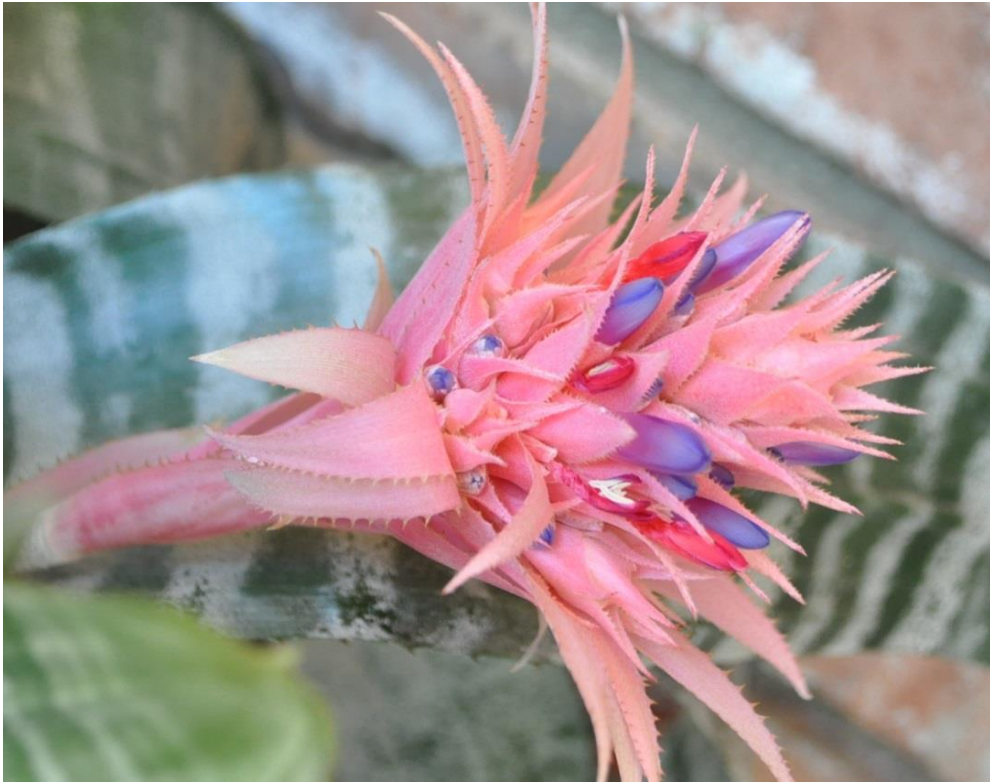
The *Aechmea* key was also unusual in one respect. Many of keys for the *Aechmea* subgenera are labeled Subgenus X "and Simulators." I had never seen this before (or since!) Since many *Quesnelias* apparently "simulate" *Aechmea*, these various *Aechmea* keys included a number of *Quesnelia* species. Adding further confusion, the DNA article on *Aechmeas* noted that many consider *Quesnelia* as being related to *Billbergias*!

Given these problems, I won't discuss the subgenera at all. Instead, let's look at some *Aechmea* inflorescences. This one isn't labelled, but seems to be *A. orlandiana*. We planted this one in the ground.





Here is a close up *Ae. fasciata*, also shown above.



This picture shows a number of interesting and somewhat unusual features. First, the inflorescence ends with all the flowers etc in a pyramid like shaped structure. Second, the pink floral bracts are highly serrated, like a steak knife. Third, each bract forms a pouch around the flowers – the subgenus containing *A fasciata* is characterized by decurrent bracts forming pouches around the flowers. Decurrent means the bract runs down the peduncle below the place it is first attached.

Lastly, the flowers themselves don't open, but remain closed at all times. There were lots of ants crawling around, so I presume ants and insects pollinate them rather than birds, but I don't know this for sure.

I'll note one other feature of this species. A while ago, I noted that while Bromeliads have 3 petals, 3 sepals and 3 pistils, they have 6 filaments – two series of 3 each. When I looked up *A fasciata*, I learned that the “filaments of the second series [are] highly adnate to the petals.” Adnate means attached, so this means they are attached high up on the petal. Look at the picture below.



When I pulled off each petal, the “highly adnate” filament and white anther came with it. On the left you can see a pistil and a filament of the first series that arise at the bottom of the flower. It appears that a lot of species have this feature. This particular flower didn’t have any pollen, but when I later opened other flowers, it seemed that they had white pollen that came off when you touched the anthers.

Next month, we will continue to look at different *Aechmea* inflorescences.

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