



August 2023

WEBSITE: <http://www.bssf-miami.org/>



Facebook- Public  
Bromeliad Society of South Florida

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Facebook - Members  
Bromeliad Society of South Florida

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bromeliad-Society-of-South-Florida/84661684279>



FCBS Newsletter

<https://www.fcbs.org/newsletters/FCBS/2022/5-2023pdf>

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Silent Auction: Rene Izquierdo

August 15, 2023 MEETING 7:30 PM

Corbin A

**SPEAKER: Alex Bello**

**Slides from the 2023 Show**

**No Member Plant Sales, speaker only**

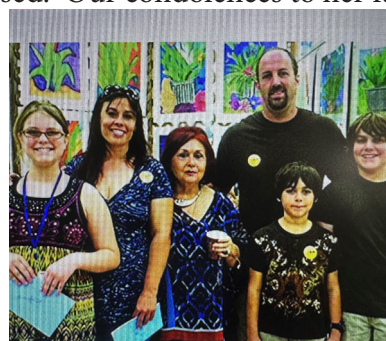
**Silent Auction Plants OK**

**Food Donations Appreciated - Win the Prize**

## IN MEMORIAM

### SHARON BIDDIX-MAESSEN

We have been informed of the passing of Life Member Sharon Biddix-Maessen in July. Sharon was an art teacher in Miami-Dade county for many years, at Palmetto Middle School and eventually at the Southwood Middle School Magnet Art Program. She even taught our current President, Tina Severson, who remembers her as kind and inspirational. Sharon served on the Board of BSSF as Vice President in 2006-2007. Most importantly, Sharon initiated the Student Art Exhibit and Competition at our annual show in 2001, an exhibit that continues to this day. She will be greatly missed. Our condolences to her family.



## President's Message

I hope everyone is staying cool this summer. For those of us who visited the Extravaganza July 28-29, we learned a few things. I spoke to many of the vendors, many of whom have nurseries. They told me to protect my plants from the heat that is stronger than usual this year. I left there with some beautiful, rare bromeliads. We are excited to have Alex Bello speaking to us this month and sharing his slide presentation from our last Bromeliad and Art show and sale. Alex always puts on an amazing raffle table too. Reminder: bring in your plants for the silent auction which is a 50-50 split with the society. You can share some of your extra plants and make some money too. I know many of you are travelling this time of year but I would love to see a great turnout this month, especially from our new members. Invite your friends and family.

Tina Severson

### OUR NEXT FIELD TRIP

Mark your calendars for Saturday, November 4, 2023 for the next BSSF field trip. The plan is to rent a bus that holds 30 people and whatever plants we buy and head to Naples Botanical Garden. This award winning garden was completed in 2014 and contains 12 themed gardens in its 170 acres. It was designed by a dream team of professionals including Raymond Jungles. Of course we will be stopping by several nurseries on the way back. The cost has been supplemented by proceeds from our latest garage sale plus a small fee from members.

Admission is \$25 for adults with no reciprocity with Fairchild. However, you will get free admission if you can show you are a Bank of America customer. Be sure to sign up at our next meeting or contact Sandy Roth (SandyR53@aol.com).

### THE GARDENING WORLD LOSES A GREAT FRIEND

Former Miami Herald garden writer Georgia Tasker has died after contracting yellow fever on a trip to the Pantanal region of Brazil. She started with the Herald in 1969, became garden writer in 1979 and left the Herald in 2009, around the time the Herald discontinued its garden section. She then wrote and photographed for Fairchild Garden until her retirement in 2018. She won many awards including a Pulitzer nomination.

Tasker, who had a beautiful garden which she wrote about often, was a pioneer in warning of climate change and rainforest destruction.

She was often seen at our annual show and sale. A celebration of life will be held in the fall.

## THE EXTRAVAGANZA ROCKS

For those who attended the West Palm Beach FCBS Extravaganza, it was a fabulous weekend. Check in wasn't until 3 pm, so if you went up early in the day there was time for antiquing at Antique Row ( Southern Blvd. and S. Dixie Highway) or ogling the mansions and shops of Palm Beach. Friday night was a delicious barbeque for 250 people which was moved inside due to the heat (thank you). After dinner, everyone went to bromeliad heaven. This was the ballroom filled with thousands of plants from 17 vendors. The registrants had 2 hours to shop to their heart's content. The room was open to the public the next day but by then several vendors had sold out. Some people bought nothing; some people bought boxes and boxes of plants. Everyone was friendly, talkative, and generous with advice.

Saturday morning registrants could shop for plants some more, lounge at the pool, or do more sightseeing. At 1pm the speakers started and they did not disappoint.

David Shiigi is a long time friend of Chester Skotak and Grant Groves who turned a hobby into a business. He worked for both Libby and Dole Foods while in high school. He encountered an old man on the big island who was selling bromeliads for \$1 each. Bromeliads were hard to find in the 70s so he befriended people who grew them and also went on a collecting expedition with Chester Skotak and Grant Groves in 1976. He started his current nursery on 10 acres in Hilo in 1991. In addition to the vriezeas for which he is known, he also grows neos., guzmania, dyckias and cut flowers. He said he keeps about 1 in 1500 seedlings which show variegation. His daughter is now hybridizing also. He is a real family man who has named many plants after family members and friends.

Eloise Beach titled her humorous talk, "55 Years of Incurable Bromelitis." She is a retired commercial grower in Apopka, Fl who propagates Chester Skotak's plants and then sells them to Tropiflora in Sarasota. She is also a bromeliad judge and a Life Member of BSI. As a teenager she became enamored of bromeliads and visited with many of the state's bromeliad pioneers, including Mulford Foster who was a friend and mentor. At this time she also became best friends with Chester Skotak. At one time she had 4 commercial greenhouses but is now down to 2. She has more than 700 clones of Chester's hybrids. She is a founding member and first president of the Bromeliad Society of South Florida as well as a former Director of BSI. Interestingly, she was a computer science major who left that field when the pull of bromeliads became too great. In 2006 she helped Chester in his search for Miss

Fortuna, a rare brom. The search produced a book by Chester. Another expedition with 78 year old Francisco Olivera resulted in the discovery of *Pepinia leopoldii* in Venezuela. They travelled through water until there was none then backpacked for 3 days, climbed a mountain and went down to a lake. But she found the leopoldii. She grew the first *Ae. brevicolis* and brought back *Cryptanthus* 'Brittle Star' from California. She gave some good advice for growers new and old. Variegated species will not grow from seed and complex hybrids must be grown from pups. She said we should always look for the best quality in hybrids and eliminate albinos and other offspring that would slow down the production of quality hybrids. She recommends the "punch and turn on side" method of producing more pups. Punch a hole in the plant you want to propagate and turn it on its side to produce more pups. For neos, she recommends pulling out the flower which is not much anyway and instead filling in the hole with fertilizer to produce more pups. Label all pups because you will inevitably forget which is which. She also recommends putting fertilizer such as Osmocote in the leaf axils in small amounts. She ices her plants to protect them from cold damage. She starts her sprinklers and keeps them on all night during a freeze. This coats the plants in ice but helps them survive a freeze. The good news, which she told us later, is that even though Chester is retiring, she still has many of his plants in the propagation pipeline so there will be more new releases for us to enjoy and empty our pocketbooks for.

Finally it was time for the most anticipated speaker, Chester Skotak whose talk was titled, "Organized Chaos". Chester was humorous and spoke way beyond his time limit. He asked us if we wanted him to stop and, just like in a rock concert, the audience loudly urged him to continue. Chester was born in Texas but moved to Costa Rica in 1978. He still leads expeditions. In the past he travelled to Ecuador with our very own Ed Prince. Variegated bromeliads are his specialty but he grows more *guzmania* than anything else. He is known as the best hybridizer in the world and has sold millions of bromeliads. He started out collecting cactus in Texas. He had a greenhouse as a boy in Houston. He was always encouraged by his father who was a Flying Tiger with Chennault's forces in China during WWII.

Chester states there are still many, many plants yet to be discovered and laments the soy farms destroying habitat in Brazil and elsewhere. He also had advice for growers. He says fertilized plants bloom sooner. He recommends fertilizing once a week with a soluble fertilizer spray. He uses Peters 20-20-20 and Osmocote when potting. Despite the frequent fertilizing he does he advises do not overfertilize as it will burn the plant and stain the leaves. He says all *imperialis* are easy to grow from



seed. He pollinates 7 days a week in the morning. He sends his fertilized seeds to Belgium where they break the pods open, treat them for fungus and start the seedlings. Of a million seedlings maybe 100,000 are saved. The seedlings are returned to him in Costa Rica at about 8 months of age. Guzmania are his biggest sellers, being the number one plant in Europe.

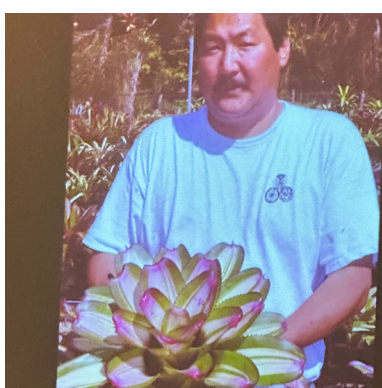
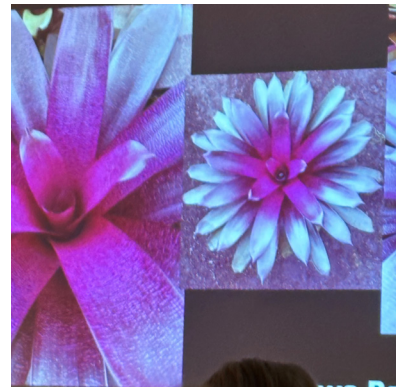
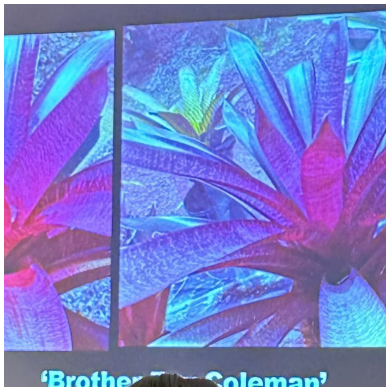
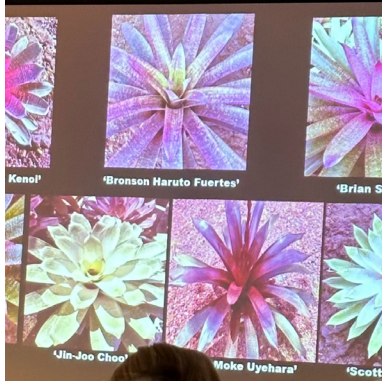
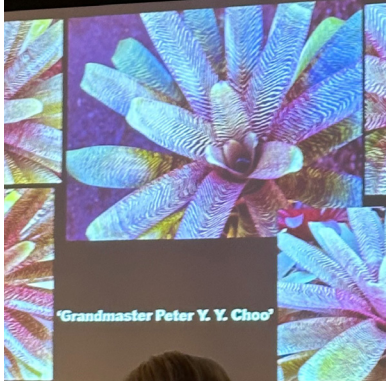
Chester uses ethylene gas to make his broms flower. To hybridize properly, you must know how many days it takes after gassing for various hybrid parents to flower so that both plants will be in flower at the same time. About 30 years ago he started hybridizing pineapples and now has over 70,000 plants. A lot of his hybrids are bright red. Some crosses take 30 years to perfect. If the ascorbic acid content is over 40% you can ship the fruit. If it is under that they need to go to a local market and very quickly. He showed us a pineapple that was pollinated and produced seed right in the fruit which makes it hard to eat. During any month he will save 1 pineapple plant and throw away 5,000. He told us the sugar content of the pineapple is measured in brics. 16 brics is a sweet fruit. In addition to hybridizing the fruit he has had to work on creating thicker stalks to support the bigger and heavier pineapples he is producing. The seedlings are fertilized with osmocote but first he rinses the osmocote to remove the gel covering to prevent fungus.

Chester states the *Ae. fasciata*s are being heavily hybridized and we will be seeing some very different plants in the near future. He then showed slides of some of his new releases which are shown in some of the photos to follow.

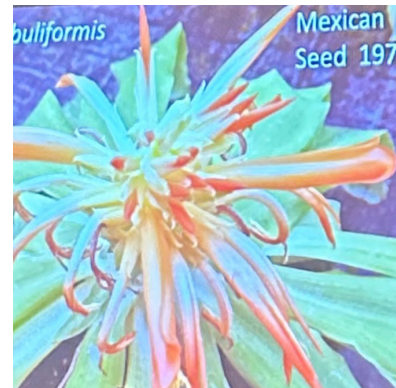
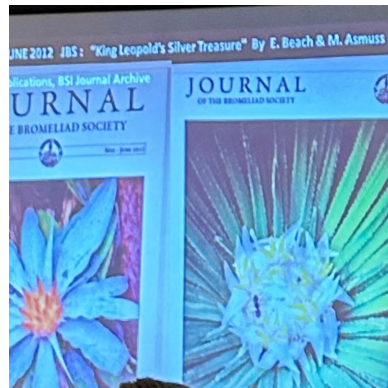
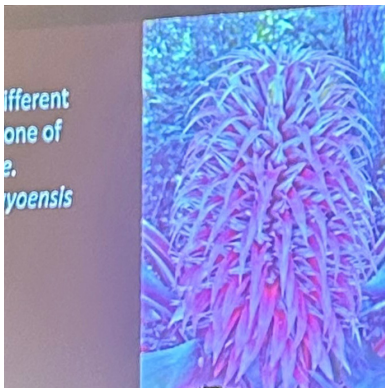
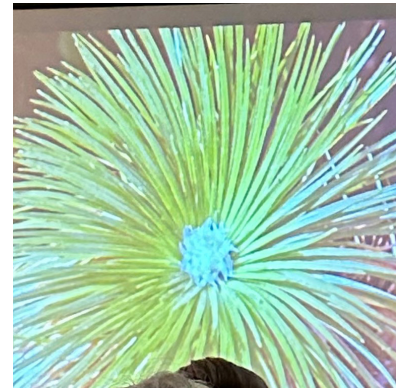
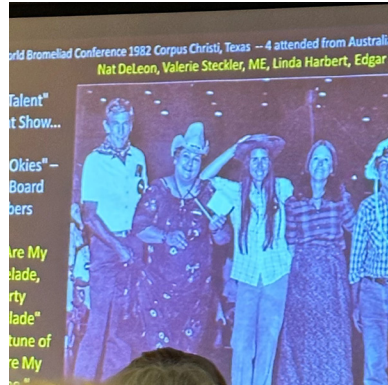
The day ended with a banquet featuring both a silent and live auction. The plants were beautiful but most sold for very high prices, a number of them for several hundred dollars. Bromeliad enthusiasts want what they want and they paid dearly to get them. The next day a brunch and garden tour was held at the home of Betty and Joe Libertucci. Despite the heat it was a pleasant and well attended brunch and Joe's garden was full of plants of every kind, including some stunning cycads.



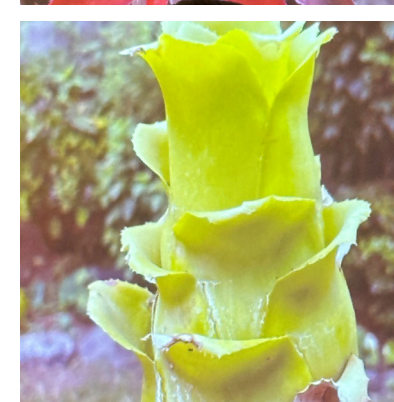
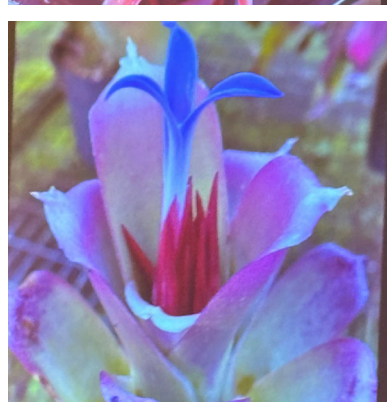
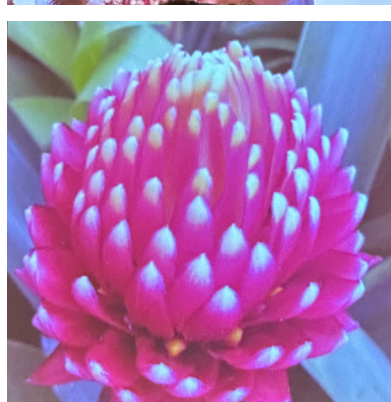
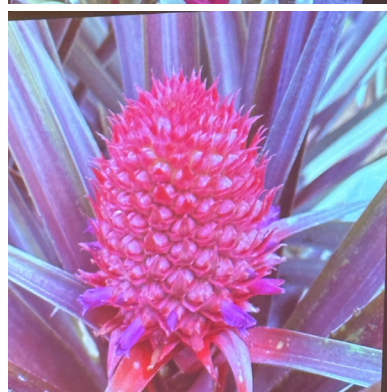
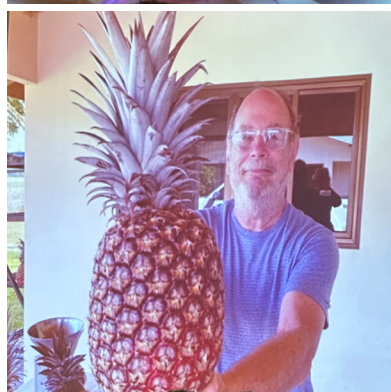
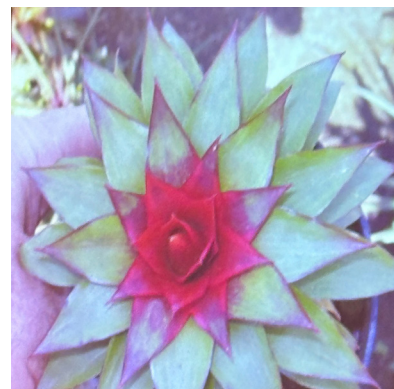
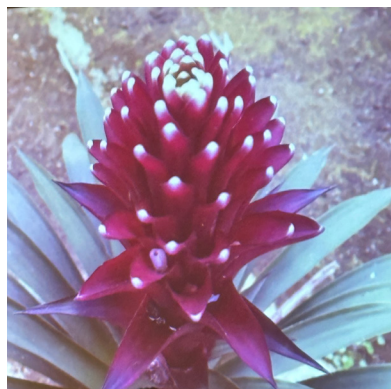
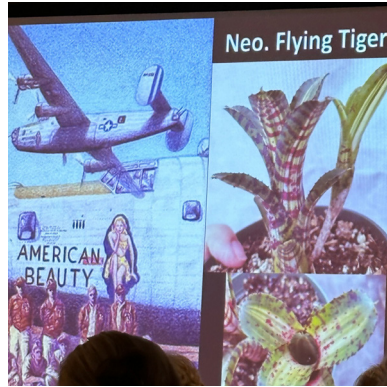
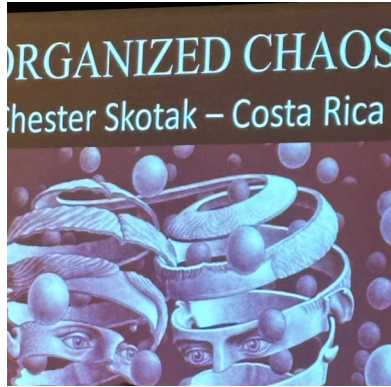




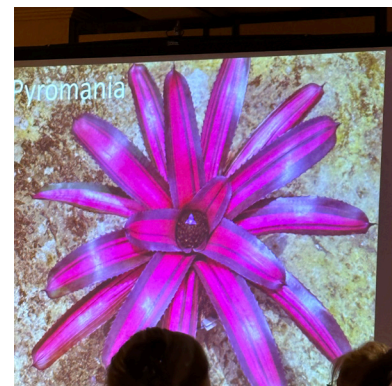
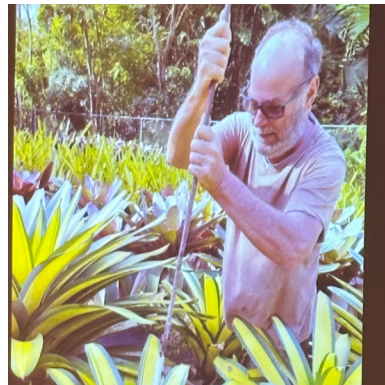
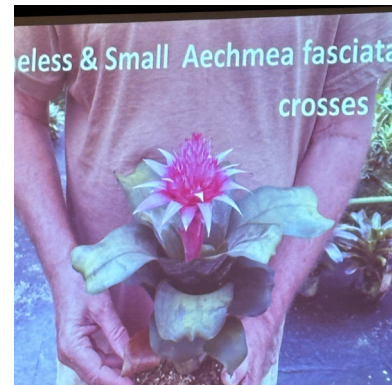
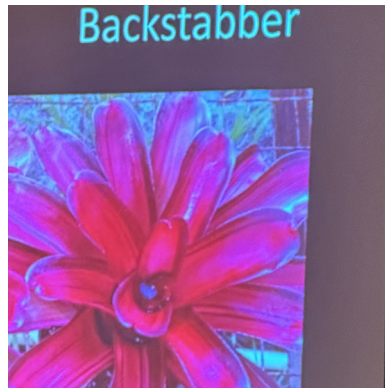




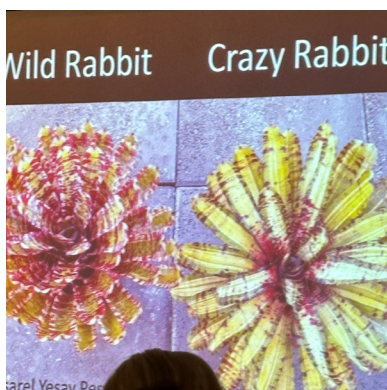
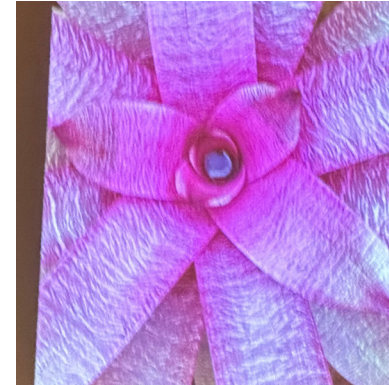
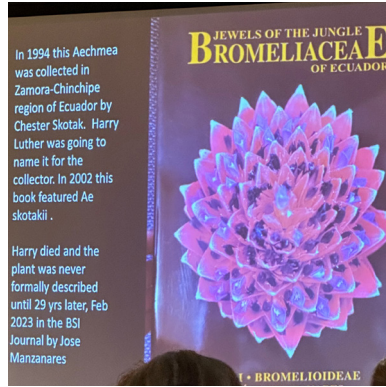




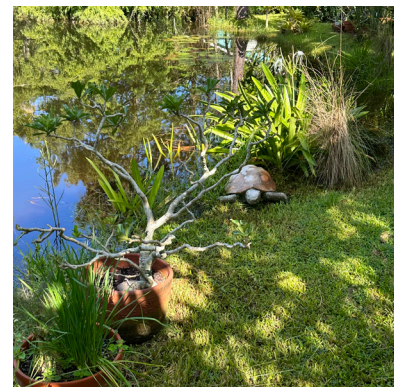
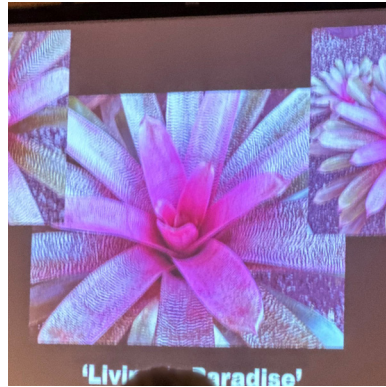




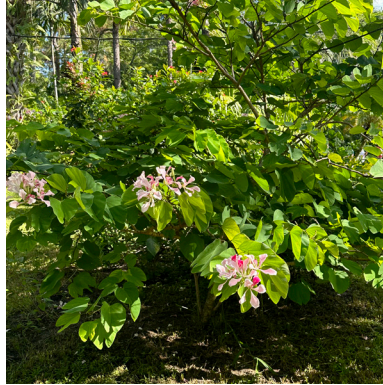












Don't miss the picture of a young Nat DeLeon. Search for it.



## ASK DR. BROM

Dear Dr. Brom:

I have lost several plants this summer due to the almost daily downpours. I'd like some tips so it doesn't happen again.

With the daily torrential downpours we have been getting, our plants are getting more water than their leaves can take up, causing standing water in the pot. The standing water forces the air out of the plant. Without air the roots cannot function, resulting in root rot. Bromeliads are prone to root rot anyway as they don't usually get water from their roots, which act more like anchors. Broms get water from their cups and through leaves which contain trichomes. Bromeliads don't like a lot of water anyway. The exception to this are cryptanthus which like to stay moist. Bromeliads are more likely to die from root rot/crown rot than drought. The plants are also more subject to fungus when they are getting too much water. Root rot is difficult to spot until it is too late.

Here are some signs of root rot to look for before the plant dies:

- Yellow leaves which usually start with the lowest oldest leaves.
- Mushy stems where the root rot has moved up.
- Mold on top of the pot.
- Wilting of the plant.
- Leaves may be brown and mushy at the base and may be easy to pull out, even new leaves. Brown leaves from too much sun or lack of water will be crispy. Brown leaves from root rot will be mushy.

If the inner leaves of the plant are still intact you may be able to save it. Remove the plant from the soggy pot and place in a slotted pan over newspaper. Let it dry overnight, then remove the dead part of the roots, saving any functioning roots. Dip the roots in fungicide or a root hormone containing non copper fungicide. Repot in well draining soil and a new, clean pot.

Here are some other tips to help protect your bromeliads from too much water:

- Be vigilant. Observe your plants every day if you can. Have your coffee while you walk around.
- Stick your finger in the pot a few inches to see how wet the plant is.
- Do not use saucers under your pots.
- Do not put your plants on a flat surface. Take a lesson from our commercial growers who use wire screening to sit their plants on. Even wire closet shelving works.
- Garden dirt and topsoil are too dense and retain too much water. Use a well draining potting medium such as peat moss, perlite, orchid mix, lava rocks or any combination of these.
- For existing plants, you may have started with a well draining potting mix but this mix breaks down after time. Repot every two years.
- Improve the air circulation around your plants. Don't put your pots too close together.
- Use the smallest pot possible. Larger pots will retain more water.
- Don't water a pot that is already wet. Check the soil first.
- If it's too late to help the plant, check for pups before disposing of the plant.

And sometimes there is nothing you can do. Rain happens. Move on. I had a newly planted nidularium in well draining soil in a small pot. I placed the small pot in a larger clay pot for stability. I placed it on a smaller pot turned upside down so it wouldn't sit too low in the pot. What I didn't see was that the smaller upside down pot had suctioned itself to the clay pot and no water could drain. I only noticed when the plant collapsed. I won't do that again.

Sources:

[Gardenknowhow.com](http://Gardenknowhow.com)

[Bromeliadsinfo.com](http://Bromeliadsinfo.com)

[Bobvila.com](http://Bobvila.com)

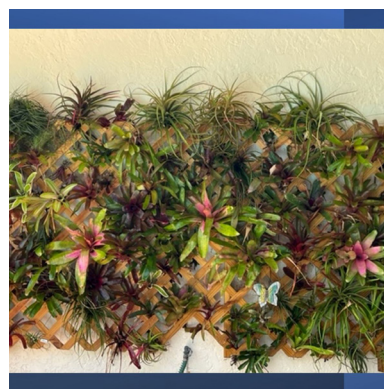
[Smilysprouts.com](http://Smilysprouts.com)

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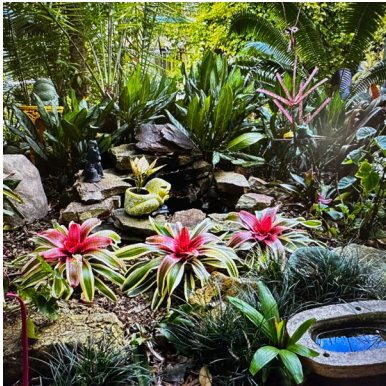
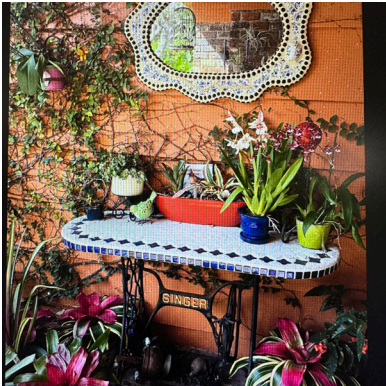
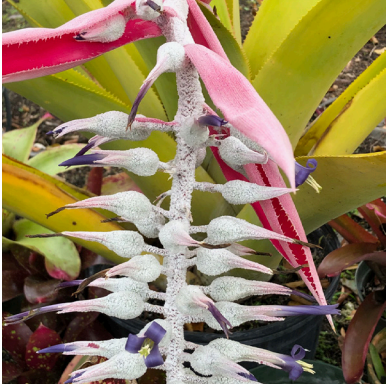
## ABOUT LAST MONTH

Last month's meeting featured a rare treat. Members were asked to send in photos of their gardens and Tina Severson put together a slide show with a few surprises. Thank you to VP Patty Gonzalez for coming up with this unique program. 15 members participated. Lenny Goldstein started things off with a few rare palms as well as the new bromeliad educational sign at the Kampong. Elaine and Meredith Mills showed off their huge yard filled with mature plants. Chris Pfeffer showed off her wet wall built with help from Sandy Roth. Lori Weyrick showed she has a way with Tillandsias and fireballs. Judy Kilburn's garden was planted from scratch and included smiling trees. Sandy Roth's garden is extensive with lots of mosaics and yard art from her many visits to vintage stores. Sylvia Betts' home sits on a canal as wide as a lake. Thank you Debbi Cortina for your beautiful photos. Maureen Adelman's yard and patio included giant clumps of *Quesnellia marmorata* 'Tim Plowman' and *Billbergia* 'Hallelujah'. Barbara Partagas' yard showcased a *Ursulea MacVaughii* with its huge flower after the rain. Tina Severson's yard was stuffed with plants highlighted by her lighthouse in the front yard. Mike Michalski and Patty Gonzalez' yard, also filled to the brim, featured just about every bromeliad in the book. Maria and Tony Almodovar have a nice and growing collection. New-member Joe Gennaro has a magnificent garden beautifully lit for an evening party. Chieng Manlee has a very relaxing Japanese garden. Tina also included slides from previous field trips.

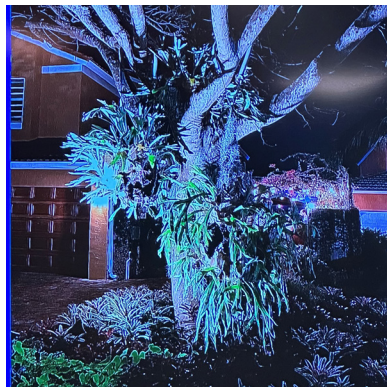
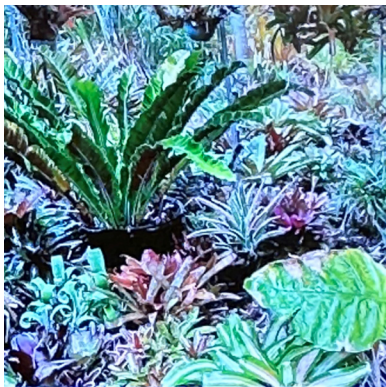
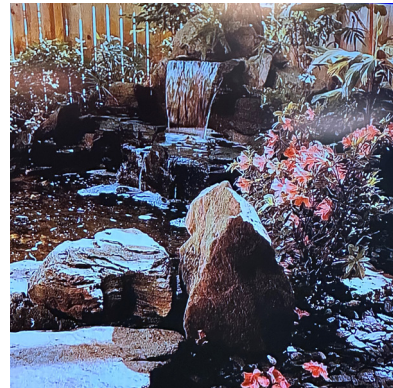
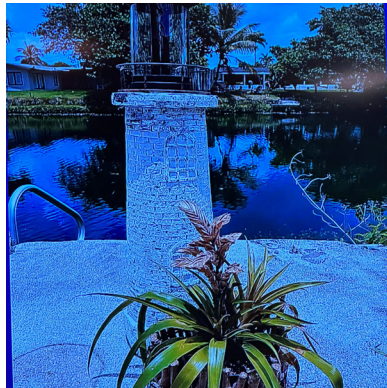
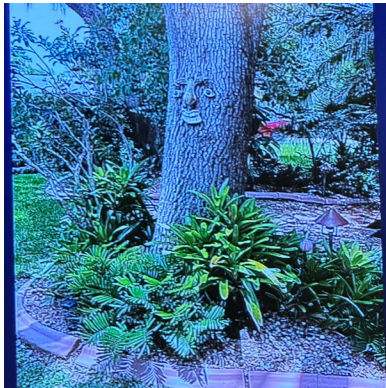
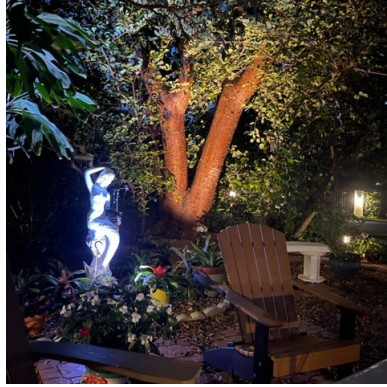
Everyone enjoyed the photos and it was suggested we do an in person garden tour next, possibly with a progressive brunch. If you like this idea please let a board member know.











## THOSE LITTLE GREEN POTS

You know the pots. The ones you get when you buy a bromeliad from a vendor. Then when you go to Home Depot or another garden center to buy some to use in a show they are nowhere to be found. We've got you covered. They are at O.F.E., short for OFE International Orchid Supplies, 17899 SW 280 St., Homestead. We stopped there on one of our previous field trips. It's a good long drive so you might want to call ahead (305 253-7080) to make sure they have your size. You can order them online ([ofeintl.com](http://ofeintl.com)) but the shipping is more than the pots! O.F.E is open 7 days a week, M-F 9-6, Saturday 9-5 and Sunday 10-3.

4" pots are 10/\$5.00

5" pots are 10/\$7.50

6" pots are 10/\$9.50

Other sizes are available. If you find them at another dealer let us know and we will publish the name and address.





## SILENT AUCTION AND MEMBER PLANT SALE RULES

We now have unlimited silent auction plant sales. You will be paid 50% of the sales price and BSSF will receive 50%.

We will defer to our speakers for member plant sales when we have a speaker bringing plants. We will have no member plant sales on these occasions. This will give our speakers who travel here and pack up their plants a fair chance to sell their plants. When we do have member plant sales you will be paid 80% of the sale price.

To participate in member plant sales please contact Alex Bello (bellotropicals@yahoo.com) or 239-223-6155 to schedule your sale so that we are not overrun with plants.

We appreciate your cooperation so that there will be no hard feelings if members bring plants and are turned away because we have a speaker who brought plants to sell.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden:  
- Fairchild sells some rare and different plants online. Go to website, click virtual plant sale under events.

Mounts Botanical Garden -  
Summer Plantapalooza - September 16 & 17  
Fall Plantapalooza - November 4 & 5

## RAFFLE TABLE RULES

Raffle table tickets are now 5 for \$5.00 with a \$5.00 minimum. Still a bargain. Donations to the raffle table are greatly appreciated. You can also make 50% on the plants you bring.

## FOOD AT MEETINGS

We continue to need food donations for our meetings. Side dishes and desserts are a good choice. And you have a chance to win the food prize which is usually, you guessed it, a plant.

BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

BSSF. INC.

2023 MEMBERSHIP FOR NEW MEMBERS\_\_\_\_ AND RENEWAL\_\_\_\_

Please print names: (Couples include both names)

ADDRESS:\_\_\_\_\_

CITY\_\_\_\_\_STATE\_\_\_\_\_ZIP\_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE\_\_\_\_\_ADD'L PHONE\_\_\_\_\_

Year Joined BSSF:\_\_\_\_\_

Referred by:\_\_\_\_\_

E MAIL (you will not receive a newsletter without an email)\_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE HIGHLIGHT ANY INFORMATION ABOVE THAT IS DIFFERENT FROM LAST YEAR

Please create my membership in BSSF, Inc. for the period of March 1, 2023 to February 28, 2024.

Check the category:      Single membership \_\_\_\_\_\$25.00

                                 Dual membership \_\_\_\_\_\$35.00

Dual members enjoy all the privileges of active membership, but receive only one copy of the Bromeliadvisory.

Dues must be received by March 1, 2023 in order for you to be included in the BSSF 2023 Roster. All fees are non refundable.

Please mail completed form and check payable to BSSF, Inc. to:

Patti Gonzalez

10565 SW 109 St., Miami, FL 33176

Or email this form to:

[pgonza7782@aol.com](mailto:pgonza7782@aol.com)

You can pay up to 5 years at the rates above.