



# Orlandiana

Newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Central Florida

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**Next Meeting:** Monday, January 22, 2007

**Refreshments:** N - Z

**Where:** Leu Gardens, 1920 N. Forest Ave. Orlando

**This Month's Speaker:** Jason Mellica, see page 6

**This Month's Program:** Neoregelia Hybridization

**Time:** 6:30pm Refreshments

**NO Member Market,** Jason will be selling many of his Neoregelia Hybrids

7:00pm Meeting begins

## Ant Gardens of the Amazon

Ants have been known to colonize odd areas. They are capable of building unusual and large structures as protection against the elements and predators, so it comes as no surprise that they would have devised a way of avoiding the flood waters of the Amazon. Food is always plentiful around riverbanks, a convenient area for them to build their nests, but as the Amazon waters can rise dramatically in the wet season, their nests would be flooded.

To safeguard against this disaster, the ants settle on trees, close to the riverbanks, just above the obvious floodwater marks. They carry earth from the soft ground up to the trees to a selected site, mix it with excrement and use it as an adhesive. The adhesive is worked into crevices of the tree bark and seeds of certain bromeliad species are then placed on this bed of adhesive. The fast growing bromeliads and their pups contribute solidity to the structure, which lasts for years.

After the bromeliads flower they produce berries – the berries contain seed and sweet, sticky gel. Birds take most of the berries; however the ants manage to harvest enough for their needs. The seed is saved and the gel is used for food. Worker ants again bring earth from the ground and the adhesive is made. Some is used to repair and stabilize the nest, but most of it is placed further up the tree. Seed from the harvest are set on the new site and so their new home extensions have begun. With many thousands of these ants building their nests on nearby trees, early plant collectors have likened the area to a garden.

A phenomenon, which has been repeatedly observed by plant collectors in forests and jungles, is the fact that pseudo-bulbous bromeliads frequently harbor ants in the spaces between the leaves. Some of these ant colonies can become quite ferocious. Plant collectors favor the concept that a relationship exists between the pseudo-bulbous bromeliads and certain ant species. The plant provides shelter for the ants, and the ants in turn, fertilize the plant with their nitrogen rich excrement, supply moisture to the plants from respiration, and defend it against enemies.

This article originally appeared in Volume 30, Number 3 of Bromeliaceae, Journal of the Bromeliad Society of Queensland, Australia.

## What is CITIES?

**CITIES** (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.

Annually, international wildlife trade is estimated to be worth billions of dollars and to include hundreds of millions of plant and animal specimens. The trade is diverse, ranging from live animals and plants to a vast array of wildlife products derived from them, including food products, exotic leather goods, timber, tourist curios and medicines. Levels of exploitation of some animal and plant species are high and the trade in them, together with other factors, such as habitat loss, is capable of heavily depleting their populations and even bringing some species close to extinction.

Because the trade in wild animals and plants crosses borders between countries, the effort to regulate it requires international cooperation to safeguard certain species from over-exploitation. Today CITIES accords varying degrees of protection to more than 30,000 species of animals and plants, whether they are traded as live specimens, fur coats or dried herbs.

**How CITES Works** - CITES works by subjecting international trade in specimens of selected species to certain controls. All import, export, re-export and introduction from the species covered by CITES are listed in three Appendices, according to the degree of protection they need:

- Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances.
- Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival.
- Appendix III contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade.

**What Bromeliads are on the CITES list?** Today, there are seven bromeliad species on the CITES list – all Tillandsias. They are listed in Appendix II, which means the trade or import of these species is controlled. These seven are

*Tillandsia harrisii*

*Tillandsia kammii*

*Tillandsia kautskyi*

*Tillandsia mauryana*

*Tillandsia sprengliana*

*Tillandsia sucrei*

*Tillandsia xerographica*

If your collection contains any of these species, it doesn't mean that they are illegal to own, only that they must be obtained in accordance with the CITES regulations. The species that you possess was most probably reproduced in the United States from legally imported stock.

This article was reprinted from the August 2005 Bromeliad Blade, newsletter of the San Diego Bromeliad Society.

## **BSI Seed Fund**

The BSI Seed Fund acts as a clearinghouse for the exchange and distribution of bromeliads by seed. This is an excellent method of obtaining many uncommon or even rare plants that have not found their way into common cultivation yet. With a little patience, you can have the satisfaction of growing a plant from germination up to flowering size. Conditions of the BSI Seed Fund are as follows:

- **Seed may only be ordered by members of BSI.**
- Packets [at least 20 seeds] are US\$1.00 each.
- Each order is limited to two (2) packets per species.
- Some seed are in short supply. Please include a substitution list; otherwise a credit memo will be issued that may be exchanged for seed or cash.
- Any exception to order limits or packet size is listed by that item.
- Donations of seeds are gladly accepted.
- Trade of seed will be handled as maximum of two Seed Fund Packets sent to you for each LARGE packet of seed that you send in.
- Any seed sent to the Seed Fund should be marked as to parentage. If unpure (crossed) seed are suspected, please mark as such.
- Orders being shipped within the USA that include a long SASE with the order, will receive a free packet of seed.

Send orders and make checks payable to:

**Harvey C. Beltz**  
**6327 South Inwood Road**  
**Shreveport, LA 71119-7260**  
**Tel: 318-635-4980**

Visit [BSI.org](http://BSI.org) to see a list of seed available through January 2007.

### **“A True-Life Story”**

Once upon a time there were four members of a popular club who were named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job in the club that needed to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was really Everybody’s job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn’t do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done!

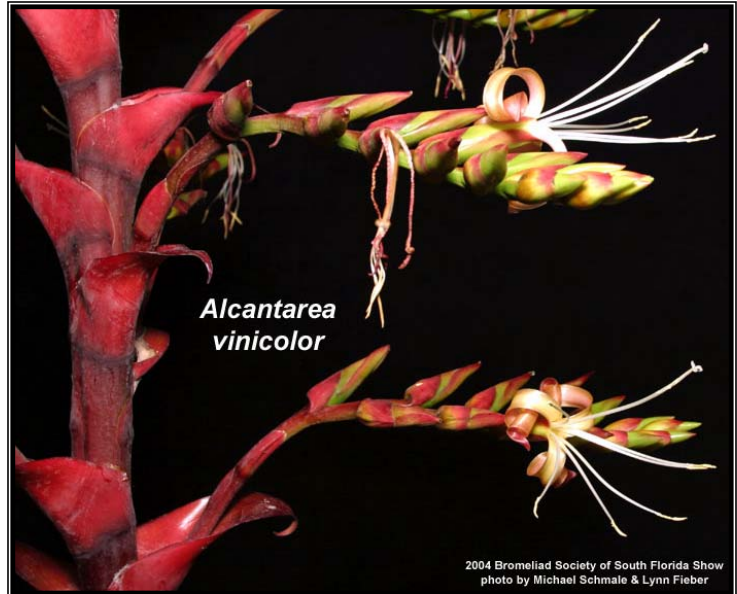
From the Program of the 1992 World Bromeliad Conference (Tampa, FL)

This year, you could organize a field trip, volunteer to help at one of our societies sales, or write an article for *Orlandiana*. The volunteer opportunities are endless!

### **The Show and Tell Table**

Members are encouraged to bring all types of bromeliads for our display tables – blooming, non-blooming, rare, common, problem plants, unidentified varieties. Ask questions and tell us about your plant, so everyone can learn more.

Bromeliads in the Genus *Alcantarea* are native to eastern Brazil, where they grow terrestrially in open places. Most of them grow in full sun; on granite outcrops (inselbergs) that can soar up to 500 feet above rivers; tropical forests and cultivated fields; in cracks where water percolates through granite. Many of them were formerly in the genus *Vriesea*. Most are very large (3-5 feet in diameter at full size) and have brightly colored, lightly colored or white and green **inflorescences** that are spectacular – up to 7-8 feet tall, with multiple branches; large, sometimes colorful **bracts**; and lovely, three-petaled, yellow or white flowers with long, protruding **stamens**. Many have flowers with long petals that curve backward and sideways, like lovely curls at the ends. Don't hold your breath waiting for these plants to flower – they can be 10 or more years old before they flower. But it's worth the wait!



You will need space to grow these plants. *Alcantarea* species can be grown in a loose mix of potting soil, a little charcoal and Perlite. Increase pot size as they grow. They eventually become so heavy that the bases lean and press against the edge of the pot. At this time, they'll fall over when loaded with water unless some preventative measure is taken. I usually pot them in plastic pots and place those pots into heavy clay

pots. Sometimes I also need to counterbalance the base of the plant by putting a brick or two in the plastic pot on the side opposite the plant base.

Some species and varieties (e.g., *A. imperialis* 'Red') tend to rot at the base; to guard against this, grow those plants in pure Perlite and porous rock (e.g. commercially available lava rock), with lots of time-released fertilizer (avoid placing the fertilizer so that it touches the plant base).

**On the right, BSCF Member John Boardman and his *Alcantarea imperialis*. John acquired this plant as a 6 inch seedling approximately 9 or 10 years ago, at a past Mother's Day Show at the Florida mall.**



They respond well to time-released fertilizer (I use 6-month time-released Nutricote, also available as Dynamite). They also do well in the ground. If covered with light frost cloth or sheets, they survive light frosts without damage. I grow them in my yard, in full sun or partial shade, and in a shade house, sitting high above all other plants. Plant or place them in locations where you won't need to move them after they're full grown. An *Alcantarea* holding even a little water can weigh 80-100 pounds.



*Alcantarea heloisae*  
photo © Jason Grant

The pups on *Alcantareas* grow from the trunk. Small “grass pups” with thin leaves can appear beneath the leaves when the plant is small through full-sized. These can be removed when they're about 4-5 inches long and potted. They are not easily removed because the base is **recurved** into the trunk of the parent plant. To remove them, dig the potting mix away from the plant, grasp the pup by the base, and wiggle it from side to side, while simultaneously pulling the pup a bit away from the mother plant. Very robust pups frequently appear after the plant has bloomed (cut off the inflorescence) if time-released fertilizer pellets are placed between the leaves. Sometimes it is possible to get a dozen or more pups by using this method. To remove



*Alcantarea odorata* photo by Reginaldo Baião

those pups, I remove all leaves below them and use the same technique described above for the grass pups. The best way to get them to root is to insert them between the parent plant's trunk and a big remaining leaf until they develop roots, which takes a few months. For me, that works better than potting them.

Few bromeliad enthusiasts seem to grow *Alcantarea* species, probably because they are so big. But if you want [a] unique, interesting landscape, try plants of this genus. They can tolerate some leaf litter accumulation, but not acorns or rotting leaves left in their centers for months. Several large species available for cultivation are cold-tolerant, easy to grow, and spectacular (e.g. *A. imperialis*, *A. odorata*, *A. extensa*, *A. brasiliiana*, *A. vinicolor*, and *A. heloisae*). *Alcantarea imperialis*, the most popular species, comes in several colors. The broad, stiff, spineless leaves are green above and green or various shades of red or purple beneath. *Alcantarea odorata* can be purchased with varying degrees of **trichome** (scurf) coverage. Those with thick coverings (e.g. cultivar ‘Silver’) are fuzzy or snowy-looking and interestingly beautiful.

All photos courtesy of [www.fcbs.org](http://www.fcbs.org). Definitions, for the words in bold may be found in the glossary on page 7. This article was reprinted from the October 2006 *Potpourri*, newsletter of the Greater New Orleans Bromeliad Society.

## **A Historical Note, Mulford Foster 1889 – 1978**

**by Jose Donayre**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of November, 28 years ago in 1978, an outstanding leader of the bromeliad world passed away after a life dedicated to the exploration of nature. Since early in life he was interested in the fruits of nature. He was barely 14 and he had made his name known as a herpetologist through his knowledge of North American reptiles about which he lectured widely until he was 21 years old. Then he became an expert on trees and their diseases and he quickly decided his place was in Florida. So he moved where he could be surrounded by tropical flora. First, he focused on succulents but soon bromeliads became his overwhelming interest. He set up himself near Orlando naming his property Bromel-La, his own Shangri-La where he lived with his close collaborator, his wife Racine. Admired for his vast knowledge and his vitality he left many friends and associates among which Eloise Beach, of Apopka, was probably close to being his disciple.

His contribution spans many decades when he became the dominant international figure in all aspects of the bromeliad field. He did not consider himself a grower but was bent on collecting, identifying and hybridizing them. Shortly after the BSI was started he became the editor of the Journal a position he held for many years. He kept a large herbarium and painstakingly described the species collected, identified them and provided them with names. It is said that he identified nearly three hundred new plants. Numerous plants have been named after him (mulfordiis, fosterianums) or after his wife (racinae) or his son (Bert).

Many of them had been collected during his many trips especially those to Brazil. In fact, his first trip to that country, in 1940, was chronicled in his engaging book “Brazil.

Orchid of the Tropics” which is out of print but is in our library. This volume should have had bromeliads in the title but the publisher prevailed to ensure sales.

In 1977, a year before his death, the Frazels took a trip visiting the Fosters. Describing their visit in our old newsletter “Commentary” , Bill found a 10 acre property on a lake with greenhouses in the rear. Abundant bromeliads were all planted in ground, with no grass and arranged following a natural disposition around trees and shrubs.

Mulford Foster was a jovial fellow, given to humorous stories and jokes, raunchy sometimes but always entertaining. His keen sense of observation and detail took him to drawing and painting filling his house with examples of his art. A few weeks ago one of his great granddaughters contacted the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies looking for his paintings as she was interested in taking pictures of them for a book she was planning. So, if any readers have one in their possession, please contact the Council and be part of the Mulford Foster legacy.

This article first appeared in November 2006 edition of The Scurf, newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Broward County

### **Jason Mellica to Speak at the January Meeting**

Jason Mellica has degrees in Botany and Horticulture from the University of Florida. He has worked in the Sarasota area for many years and has spent time working at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. He is a member of the Sarasota Bromeliad Society.

Jason has traveled on many collecting trips to South America with special interest in Guyana. He most recently has created over 50 *Neoregelia* cultivars. Using choice hybrids from Grant Groves, Chester Skotak and Jim Irvin, Jason has concentrated on producing stoloniferous plants with the colors and patterns of cultivars from these hybridizers.

**Please bring a plant or two for the Raffle Table and Silent Auction.**

## Glossary

**Bract** – A reduced leaf or leaf like structure at the base of a flower or inflorescence.

**Form** – A definable individual within a species that usually occurs at random within a larger population. A form may or may not breed true.

**Inflorescence** – The flowering part of a plant.

**Recurved** – Curved outward, downward or backward.

**Species** – The basic unit of classification; an intergrading group of individual organisms, which have in common one or more characteristics.

**Stamen** - The male reproductive organ of a flower, consisting of an anther and filament.

**Stolen** – An elongate, horizontal stem creeping along the ground and rooting at the nodes or at the tip and giving rise to a new plant.

**Trichome** – A hair-like outgrowth of the epidermis.

**Variety** – A definable group within a species that consists of one or more discrete populations. Varieties are true breeding; they remain distinct under normal circumstances.

## Epsom Salts

by Gene McKenzie

Plant life seems to be crazy about Epsom Salts. A 4 lb. carton of Epsom Salts contains magnesium sulfate. Epsom Salts deepens the color, thickens the petals, and improves the root structure of your plants – and healthy roots mean strong, healthy plants that can join you in the fight against pests, diseases, and even nasty weather.

For many years I used this product when watering my plants in the greenhouse, using a siphon hose in a large commercial plastic paint container with water, fertilizer when needed and the Epsom Salt (usually three or four teaspoons of either or both to mix in the water.)

One suggestion is to sprinkle 1 teaspoon or one tablespoon, according to the size of the pot, over the potted plant and thoroughly water it in. This can be very time consuming in a large collection, but the plants don't mind as long as you finally get to them.

Some suggestions are that spring is the best time to use this product. Here in Florida, it should be all right to use any time, especially before cold weather and as spring starts the growing season again. As a healthy plant can withstand most of our winter weather, it makes sense to keep the plant healthy.

Give it a try. You can find this product in the grocery store or drugstore. Start out with the green leaf plants and watch for the difference. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

This article first appeared in the Caloosahatchee Meristem, newsletter of The Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society and has been edited for content.

The Bromeliad Society of Central Florida, Inc. was formed in 1972 to encourage the exchange of information concerning the culture, identification and hybridization of the plant family *Bromeliaceae*; to promote & maintain public interest in bromeliads and to assist in the preservation of all bromeliads for future generations.



Meetings are held the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of every month from 7-9 PM at Harry P. Leu Gardens, 1920 N. Forest Avenue in Orlando. For directions: 407.246.2620 or [www.leugardens.org](http://www.leugardens.org). You'll enjoy informative programs, Show & Tell, plant sales, refreshments & door prizes. Members also receive a monthly newsletter — all for only \$10 per member, plus \$2 per additional family member (no charge for full-time students). Visitors are always welcome.



BSCF is an affiliate of the Bromeliad Society International, Inc. and a member of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies, Inc. and the Cryptanthus Society.

BSCF is a nonprofit Florida corporation recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations to this society are tax deductible in accordance with IRS regulations.



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## January 2007

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**NO Member Market**

7:00pm Meeting begins

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