

BROMELIANA

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MAKE ROOM - HERE COMES OUR SPRING ORDER

by Herb Plever

We hope you all had a decent winter. We've had warm spells and very cold ones, mild winds and lots of strong gusts. If the winter has seemed long and you and your plants have looked forward to a change, suddenly spring is upon us - almost. And here, to cheer you up and get you more deeply involved in your bromeliad collection, is a fabulous plant order. Take the plunge and buy some new bromels to grow on, enjoy and flower. As soon as your beauties arrive in May you will be revived and involved. We hope to have a bromeliad mix available.

You know you always have to make room for new plants, because as soon as you've seen the video of the plants on the order list, you won't be able to resist buying them. We have bromeliads for every indoor environment from moderate to bright light listed on the order mailed with this issue. Most of them are small to medium in size and they are available at bargain prices. Many of them will fit on a 5-6" window sill and more easily under lights.

Of course if you have made the recommended improvement of extending the depth of your window sill with a simple shelf extension, you can grow plants with a medium and even larger spread. This can be done by buying a piece of plywood (1/2" thick will do) the width of your sill and mounting it flush with the sill with a pair

of "L" brackets. You can make it as deep as your space reasonably permits. Then cover the wood with contact paper that will fit your decor.



Aechmea Black On Black' courtesy fcbs.org

At the April meeting you will see pictures of all of the plants in bloom, but I want to single out a few of them in this article. Included among the 11 aechmeas are two aechmeas which have not been in the list before: Aechmea 'Black On Black' a hybrid made by the late John Anderson and A. 'Mini-Cal' a medium/small cultivar of A. miniata x A. caliculata with miniata's mahogany discolor leaves.

All of the billbergias will fit on your window sill. For strong markings they need a window that receives some sunlight. New on the billbergia list are Billbergia 'Arriba', B. 'Arribella', B. 'Ballerina', B. 'Birdsong', B. 'Felicity O' and B. 'Rosita' (see photo on p. 2). All of these plants can attain striking color and markings in good light as can the

billbergia hold-overs from last year, the white-blotched B. 'Fantasia' (a must for every collection), the albomarginated B. 'Louise' and the tiny B. 'Tequila Sunset'.

On the Canistropsis list are the small C. burchellii with discolor leaves, of rich purple underneath and green on top and Canistropsis seidelii with its tiered, yellow inflorescence. Also an easy fit on your window sill is the

NEXT MEETING - Tuesday, April 3rd, 2007 promptly at 7:00 P.M. at the S.L.C. Center, 352 Seventh Avenue between 29th and 30th Streets, 16th floor.

VIDEO REVUE OF SPRING PLANT ORDER - Take advantage of this exceptional chance to buy bromeliads at bargain prices. Please be punctual as there will be 169 photos of the plants to view and you will want time to ask questions about them. We'll have CDs of the video for sale to aid you in making choices. See News & Notes for details.

stand-out *Canistrum fosterianum*, an upright, tubular plant with dramatic markings and a lovely, tulip-like bloom. There are eleven cryptanthus on this year's list including first timers *Cryptanthus* 'Betty Ann Prevatt', *Cr.* 'Blake Babcock', *Cr.* 'Fire and Ice', *Cr.* 'It' and *Cr.* 'Ti'.



Cryptanthus 'Fire and Ice' courtesy fcbs.org

More than any other bromeliad, guzmanias can flourish in the moderate light of most apartments, so we always provide a long list of them in the order. There are seventeen guzmanias on the list, many with tiered, multicolored inflorescences. New this year are a few Deroose and Herb Hill hybrids: *Guzmania* 'Apache', *G.* 'Firedragon' (see photo below), *G.* 'Bailee', *G.* 'Class', *G.* 'Gasprilla' and *G.* 'Karley'. We've been trying new guzmania cultivars for years and have hardly ever been disappointed. For instance, those few members who were "brave" enough to order the wonderful *Guzmania* 'Saffron' and '*G.* 'Nacho' when they were newly listed felt lucky to have done so.

Take advantage of the fact that *G.* 'Nacho' is still available to us in limited numbers. It may not be around for long as commercial growers in the south seem to have trouble growing it (and many other guzmanias as *G. musaica*), whereas guzmanias seem to love apartment conditions. Plus we are still carrying old favorite guzmanias: var. *minor*, 'Anita', 'Ice Cream', 'Lance', 'Snowball', and 'Voila'. *Guzmania* blooms last so long in color that they are worth growing and blooming over and over again.

Still on the list are two small, interesting lymanias:

Lymania corralina and *L. smithii*.

On the subject of small and even tiny plants, we offer a wide range of some really pretty neoregelias: *Neoregelia* 'Betty Head', *N. ampullacea* 'Black Beauty', *N. lilliputiana*, *N.* 'Little Jewel', *N.* 'Morado', *N.* 'Morona', *N. pendula*, *N.* 'Piccolo', *N. smithii*, *N.* 'Spot On', *N.* 'Tar Baby' and *N. tigrina*. You can also choose the medium sized *N.*

'Gespacho', the albomarginated *N.* 'Van Dourme' and *N.* 'Barbarian'.

We have never tested *N.* 'Barbarian', but all of the other plants are light sensitive and will color up in a south or west window, or in an east window which gets morning sun. For instance *N.* 'Betty Head' shown on this page (a cultivar of *N.* 'Red on Green') gets bright red markings in my east-facing kitchen window. The new neos give us an opportunity to test their responsiveness to light. Order a few of these to grow on your window sill or under your light unit close to the tubes and you may be pleasantly surprised at the results.

This order offers *Nidularium innocentii v. lineatum*, *N.* 'Leprosa', the marginated *N.* 'Miranda' and *N. scheremetiewii*, all of which will beautify your home with reasonably decent light. *Orthophtum gurkenii* with its attractive barred markings is again on the list. A few members have complained that they had trouble growing this plant while others, including myself, did not encounter difficulty. It would be helpful if more than a few members ordered the plant (it is very worthwhile) so we could exchange experiences and get to the bottom of



Billbergia 'Rosita' courtesy fcbs.org



Tillandsia montana



Guzmania 'Firedragon' photo by Deroose

the problem. We're offering two new *Orthobrytum* cultivars, *O.* 'Stardust' and *O.* 'Starlight'. *Quesnelia* 'Tim Plowman', a *marmorata* cultivar, is still there because of the strong impact of the beautiful specimens Sara Savitt brings in to display.

There are still **34** tillandsias on the list, with a

few new additions such as *Tillandsia montana* (shown on page 2) *T.* 'Fuego', *T.* 'Amethyst', two new *T. stricta* cultivars, *T. sucrei*, and *T. vernicosa*.

Just as our supply of general bromeliad mail-order nurseries has dwindled down to **one**, now we are finding it difficult to buy tillandsias at the low prices we used to enjoy. We have to buy at wholesale with requirements that we purchase a minimum number of each species. Tillandsias are perhaps even easier to grow indoors than guzmanias or vrieseas, so please take advantage of this list of basic tillandsias that should be a part of every collection.



Tillandsia sucrei



Vriesea fenestralis x V. carinata



mini *Vriesea splendens* photo by M. Kiehl

We are offering 10 vrieseas, seven of which are new to our order: *Vriesea* 'Blaze' (*V. poelmannii x* 'Tiffany'), *V.* 'Cardinalis' (*V. carinata x psitticina*), *V. fenestralis x carinata*, *V. fosteriana var. seideliana*, the larger *V.* 'Gaslight', a strong clone of *V. heliconioides* and a mini form of *V. splendens*. So treat yourselves; take the plunge and dive in and wallow in this wealth of great bromels. AND - to make the job of selecting plants easier, you can purchase a CD at the meeting with photos of every plant on the list. Take one home and ogle the plants at your leisure. Then make your choices and send in your order. □

THE HISTORY OF THE PINEAPPLE

by Peter Paroz

(Excerpted from the September, 1999 issue of *Bromeliaceae*, Journal of the Bromeliad Society of Queensland, Australia)

Pineapple is the common name given to the fruit of members of the plant family *Bromeliaceae* which have compound fruits (individual fleshy berries fused into a single fruit) **at maturity**, and a crown of leaves on the top of the fruit. All species of pineapple belong to the genus *Ananas* which is thought to be derived from the language of the Guarani Indians. The "a" stands for any fruit and the "nana" means excellent; anana - an excellent fruit...

Most pineapples grown commercially throughout the world belong to the variable species *Ananas comosus* within which there are five distinct groups of varieties: Cayenne, Spanish, Queen, Pernambuco and Perolera...The pineapple is propagated

vegetatively from tops(crown), slips (offsets from the fruit stem) or suckers (offsets from the stem of the plant), and take 20 to 30 months from planting to full maturity depending on the plant material used and the planting season.

Pineapples were unknown to Europeans until they were discovered on the island of Guadalupe by Columbus during his second voyage to the New World in 1493. He is reported to have brought back a fruit for Queen Isabela. By 1550, pineapples had been found in many other locations along the northeast coast of South America, through the Caribbean islands to southern Mexico on the Gulf of Campeche.

The pineapple was coined by European explorers,

who thought the fruit resembled the seed cone of the fir pine, *pina* in Spanish, and it was in common use within 50 years of the initial discovery. The pineapple had been in cultivation (*by native Americans - Ed.*) for many years prior to the discovery by Columbus, as there were different names for the plant indicating different varieties, including references to “wild pineapples”. The pineapple is native to the sandy coastal areas of the tropical northeast of South America and, judging by the distribution of wild pineapple species, the cultivated varieties probably originated between the Amazon and Parana rivers. There was also a reference to spines on the leaf, but no mention of a spineless form. Cultivated varieties did not set seed, and the natives were aware of the need to propagate by offsets.

The spread of the pineapple from this region followed the sea trade routes of the times with the following cultivations recorded:

Madagascar 1548, India 1550, Java (Indonesia) 1599, Guinea (W. Africa) 1602, Bermuda 1616, Singapore 1637, China (Kiangsi, Quantung, Fukien provinces) 1640, Cape of Good Hope 1660, Burma, Siam and Thailand 1688-1700.

There are records of plants and fruits being sent to Spain in 1535, but no record of their cultivation there. There is also a record of four fruits presented to Cromwell in England in 1657 by members of the East India Company returning from China. In 1661 fruits from Barbados were presented to Charles II. It is most likely that these fruits were transported as developing fruit on the plant to have survived the long sea voyages.

There is also a well known painting by Henrick Danckerts showing Charles II receiving the first pineapple grown in England from Rose, the royal gardener. The first reliable records of the cultivation of pineapples in Europe refer to Le Cour, a wealthy Flemish merchant in Belgium, whose gardener fruited plants in a hot house in the late 1690s, and to Henry Tellendale, head gardener to Sir Matthew Decker of Richmond, who harvested fruit in England in 1719-21.

The exact date when pineapples were introduced into Queensland is not clear, but there is a reference: “...in 1837, the Postmaster of the Moreton Settlement grew pineapples and was the first person to ship fruit to Sydney”..., suggesting the first plantings would have been made some ten years earlier. These pineapples were of the rough leaf variety. There is another reference to an importation from Fiji, noting that these were inferior to those already in cultivation. The rough leaf variety was the only variety cultivated until about 1850.

The origin of cayenne is rather obscure, but

there is information that suggests it was from a batch of plants collected in French Guiana in 1819 by Perottet. Its distribution proceeded from French Guiana to France (1820), England (1835)...

Cayenne is genetically unstable with mutations arising from time to time, and these have to be removed from commercial plantations. The most common mutation is probably multiple crowns, usually doubled tops, but occasionally extreme fasciation of the crown occurs. Another frequent mutation is reversion to the spiny leafed form, and very infrequently to a variegated leaf form.

Pineapples are now the third most important fruit crop in Queensland with 200-250 million plants in cultivation, producing about 130,000 tons per annum; 90-95 million tons are processed with the remainder sold as fresh fruit. There are two main varieties: the smooth leaf ‘Smooth Cayenne’ which is suitable for processing and ‘Ripley Queen’, the spiny leafed plant which is sold only as fresh fruit... □

NEWS and NOTES

PLANT ORDER CDs or DVDs -To facilitate your choices on the Plant Order, you can view the plants on your computer monitor or on a television screen if you have a DVD player. Order a CD or even a DVD of the plants by calling Herb Plever in advance of the meeting at (718)723-3783. A CD will cost \$8.00 and a DVD is \$10.

AUDREY EIBER has been recovering from lung surgery, which is why she has been absent from meetings. She hopes to come back to us soon. Her telephone number is (212) 879-6635.

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