



# BromeliAdvisory

Stop and Smell the Bromeliads

April 2021

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



[http://www.facebook.com/groups/BromeliadSSF/?bookmark\\_t=group](http://www.facebook.com/groups/BromeliadSSF/?bookmark_t=group)

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

APRIL 20, 2021 **LIVE** MEETING 7:30 PM  
GARDEN HOUSE – NOT CORBIN BLDG

Speaker: Kenneth Stokes Sun Loving Terrestrial Bromeliads.  
That includes Orthophytums, Sincoreas, Dyckias, Hechtias,  
Diencaethons, Neoglaziovias, etc.

**NO FOOD OR DRINK – SEE RULES DIRECTLY BELOW**

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What	Who
Sales Table	Open to All Mike Michalski and Kenneth Stokes
Silent Auction	Will be there

## About Meeting Protocol

From Nestor Ortiz of FTBG:

Everyone the attends needs to fill out a "Assumption of Risk and Release of Liability Form"– FTBG will have Forms  
Everyone needs to have their Temperature Checked and noted (Non-Contact Thermometer)

All meeting are being held in The Garden House – not CORBIN  
NO FOOD will be permitted during Meetings

## President's Message

This month marks our return to Fairchild for real, live meetings after a break of 14 months. The meetings won't be quite like they were before. We will have rules which are published elsewhere in this newsletter. But we will be together enjoying bromeliads in a group. I am looking forward to seeing each and every one of you. The results of our Covid vaccine survey are as follows: 35% of members who attend meetings have had both their vaccines. 6% have had one shot. So 41% of our members have had at least one vaccine, not unlike the national average you see on the news every night. And we are not anywhere near herd immunity. But if we abide by our rules everyone should be safe. I hope you will attend to hear our speaker and hopefully leave with some plants. I also want to thank all our members who went to the trouble of attending our zoom meetings since last July. Thanks for your loyalty.

See you at the meeting!

*Maureen Adelman*

## If Buying on Amazon – Think Smile.Amazon.com

I had some trouble balancing our BSSF checking account for December but it was for a good reason. There was a deposit from Smile.Amazon.com. Amazon will partner with a charity of your choice and donate .5% of all purchases to that charity. And you know how much we all shop on Amazon right now. First

sign up at Smile.Amazon and choose your charity, hopefully BSSF, Inc. Then instead of going to Amazon.com to shop, you go to **Smile.Amazon.com** and shop. It's the same website except for the charitable donation. I signed up as soon as I saw that donation on our bank statement and I hope you will too.

## In Case You Missed It

by Leonard Goldstein

I met Chester Skotak, Jr., shortly after moving to Florida from Dallas in 1978. He was about to bolt from eastern Collier County. A transplanted Texan himself, Chester had been attempting to grow terrestrial orchids for a few years, but the venture had not gone well. He discovered that his property came with features not mentioned in the real estate brochure and not compatible with raising ground orchids: saltwater intrusion and walking catfish. Chester soon decamped to Costa Rica, where life took a decidedly positive turn. Today he is able to look back on a career as a prolific explorer for, and hybridizer of, bromeliads.

By now BSSF members are old hands at the art of attending Zoom meetings, and at our March meeting we were treated to just over an hour of the program Chester gave to California's La Ballona Valley Bromeliad Society in November 2020. A self-described eccentric, Chester – after 40+ years in the tropics – continues to innovate. He says he leaves the old man in bed every morning, and his alter ego pushes for the next big discovery. He already has more than 100 patents and 500 registered hybrids under his belt, and the work continues. He notes that for the person who goes into hybridizing, there's never a dead end.

Chester has had a long love affair with plants. He was growing cactus by the time he was 5, and before he was 20, his father, Chester, Sr., built him a greenhouse. One of his other early interests was bromeliads, specifically Guzmanias. As an explorer, he has gone to places where people don't usually go. He brought back *G. fortuna* from Panama. The species has now disappeared from the collection site. He also found the agaves there to his liking, but bromeliads were the big lure. In Brazil he collected *Alcantarea pita*, a beautiful plant that became a parent to *A. 'Skotak's Big Bang'*, a huge hybrid. It's rare to encounter variegated plants in the wild. This one makes lots of pups.

Chester peppered his program with interesting observations. He noted that there are many types of *A. imperialis* in Brazil; some are being developed in Australia. *Tillandsia aff. fendleri*, from Colombia, has a tall inflorescence. He predicts that over the next 25 years, Colombia will be the source of many new introductions. He says that lots of bromeliad species are interesting, but not useful in his breeding program.

Chester's main nursery is at 3,000-ft. elevation, where there is perpetual spring. But no place is perfect; earthquakes are a problem. In order to control against inadvertent hybrids, pollination takes place at 6:00 a.m. in completely-enclosed shadehouses. Although he concentrated on the genus *Neoregelia* for many years, he now works mostly with *Guzmania*, because it's a desirable house plant in Europe. Green, almost mature seeds are grown out on agar, and seedlings are then shipped by DHL to Belgium for production. *Guzmania* hybrids are complex, and what he likes isn't necessarily what the public likes. *Guzmania 'Hope'* is very popular all over the world. But not everything pans out; lots of plants are thrown away.

Among Chester's other favorites are *Bromelia* species from Brazil, particularly *B. rosea* and *B. villosa*. *B. 'Alien Eye'* is a cross between those two species. Another of his ventures involves the genus *Ananas*. He owns a commercial pineapple farm for research. He's growing 50,000 plants there; no two are alike, but all are spineless. He thought it would be a simple project, but has found that a good fruit is hard to develop. Internal chemistry is important. He has been working on influencing internal color via hybridizing only – no transgenics involved. He is producing a miniature red pineapple, and has been observing that recessive genes seem to be expressing themselves.

'Piping' happens when spines are bred out of a bromeliad. It is a line at the margins of leaves that actually contains overlapping spines. Some pineapple fruits in his operation are double-headed or double-stemmed, and some are very sweet. But Chester admits that, while he thinks commercially, he considers himself more of collector. Nevertheless, there's no denying that he operates on a large scale. 25,000 plants per cross are necessary to be successful. And the work is demanding: no people who are overweight or over 40 can do the job required in the heat of his pineapple operation. Pollinated flowers are covered to keep them from being washed off by overnight rains. Perhaps a quarter of the hybrids developed turn out to be green-leaved. Even the mandatory tasting task is not easy; it makes the tongue swell.

In Chester's work with *Neoregelias*, he has found that over time, the cups of hybrids decrease in size. He actually makes cuts in the cups to expand inflorescences, and he punches holes in cups to drain

them. Like Pam Koide Hyatt, he stresses that good labeling is essential to successful hybridization.

Working with Neo seedlings is like taking care of babies. Variegated seedlings are removed from the community dish with tweezers, immersed in a solution of Peters fertilizer for 15 minutes, and then washed off to keep fungus from developing. With respect to larger seedlings, Chester's operation uses Osmocote (3-month formulation) on Aechmeas and Neos, but not Tillandsias. The fertilizer is washed before application in order to keep it from burning the plants, and he cuts watering back if fungus starts to develop. Nevertheless, he considers bromeliads tough.

As stated earlier, Chester has high standards. The grower, he insists, must be ruthless. His credo is, "Make selections and throw the rest away." But a lot

of folks think that not all of his rejects are losers. You might remember that when Chip Jones spoke to BSSF in July 2015 about Chester's nursery, he said he'd be happy to take all the Skotak culls.

Once Chester has given a hybrid his seal of approval, he might release only 10-15 plants. He then lets other people run with the ball. That, he notes, is how he shares.

Then there is the matter of Skotak hybrid names. To say the least, they're colorful: 'Back Stabber' . . . 'Barbed Wire' . . . 'Eye Candy' . . . 'Gunsmoke' . . . 'Deep Space' . . . 'Lucifer'. It turns out that Chester isn't the person who names them. Floridian Eloise Beach is accorded that honor. But the free-wheeling approach to that task is a reflection of Chester's abiding philosophy: "You gotta enjoy what you do."

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**April 17, 2021 (10AM-4PM)**  
**Fairchild Annual Spring Plant Sale**  
@ Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden  
<https://showcase.republicahavas.com/websites/fairchildgarden.org/event/plant-sales/spring-plant-sale/>

**October 1-3, 2021**  
Tamiami International Orchid Festival  
<https://www.facebook.com/tamiamiorchidfestival/>

**October 23-24, 2021**  
BSSF Annual Show  
@ Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden

## MESSAGES

**WORLD CONFERENCE  
CANCELED**  
World Conference of June 8, 2021 to June 12, 2021 is CANCELED  
<https://www.bsi.org/new/conference-corner/>

**FCBS Publication**  
<https://www.fcbs.org/newsletters/FCBS/2021/02-2021.pdf>

### **If You Got'em, Donate'em Crystal or Give Donations for Awards**

Anyone who has previously well deserved and won crystal from the Bromeliad Show is urged to recycle and give the same to Barbara Sparling who handles the awards for the show.

Anyone wanting to donate for awards needs to merely give Barbara an email or call.

### **Badges Wear Them**

We make some pretty neat badges. They help our fogged aged memories for names. Starting next month, anyone who wants a door prize *must* be wearing a name badge. This way we will better address one another by name. FYI – do not put the badge onto anything which may be affected by an external magnet.

### **Waivers and Fevers**

Come a little early to the meeting, as your temperature and waiver will need to be handled prior to entry. FTBG rules.



*Tillandsia araujei* var. *mimina*  
Photo by Maggie Vergottini

## Biographical Sketch of Kenneth Stokes



Kenneth is a life-long Floridian. He was born in Melbourne, moved to Miami as young man and was then transferred to Tampa by his employer to open a new business. He eventually started his own furniture manufacturing business, selling to the national interior design trade. He continues in the same field today doing antique restoration and operating a gallery of art, architectural and interior furnishings.

Following in the footsteps of his grandmother and mother, he has always been interested in plants. He began collecting wild plants as a child to put in their large rural garden. He now has an extensive collection of tropical plants in his south Tampa garden.

He has been involved in many plant societies and joined the BGTB in 1995. He has also been a member of the Sarasota Bromeliad society and has served in a number of positions in both. He has been doing public speaking for most of his life in business, religious and social organizations. He is also the author of four literary novels. He uses the skills he developed over the years to pull together fresh presentations, utilizing real examples to illustrate what is being said.

### TEN TIPS FOR ENTERING A BROMELIAD SHOW

Our Show will be held in Six (6) months, for the next six months, we will try to include articles concerning how to be ready for the show.

1. Remove unsightly lower leaves by splitting them down the middle and pulling the two halves away at the base.
2. Dusty leaves can be cleaned with a 1" sponge paint applicator or an old, damp wash cloth. Each leaf should be cleaned, but artificial leaf-shine is a no-no.
3. An emerging inflorescence can be supported with balled up newspaper so it won't lean. It can also be staked. Supports must be removed before taking the plant to the show.
4. If the entry is blooming, remove old, spent flowers.
5. If one plant in a clump is the one you want to enter in the show, but it's rootless as a result of removal from the clump, try this neat trick: tie a string tightly around the base, then either run the end of the string out of the center hole in the pot and attach it to the pot bottom with a piece of masking tape, or tie the string to a rock of the appropriate size and shape. Once the potting medium is added and packed tightly around the plant, the anchor, whether string alone or string plus rock, will hold the plant in place. Make sure the string is completely hidden.
6. Fresh top dressing will probably be necessary if you're not repotting the plant. Although you're not allowed to use anything decorative, you may use plain black gravel, the smallest pine bark nuggets you can find, or any clean, fresh potting mix.

7. Trimming brown leaf tips on tillandsias is a challenge since the leaves on many types are brittle and fleshy. If cutting is necessary, try to cut only one edge of the leaf, preferably the edge toward the back of the plant, so the trimmed edge is as inconspicuous as possible. When cleaning and trimming tillandsias (and other genera with scaly leaves) take care not to damage the scurf (trichomes) on the leaves.
8. The cut edges of trimmed leaves can be rubbed with aloe jelly. This retards drying the shriveling. This aide works best when done the day the plant is entered for competition.
9. If you have a plant that has become distorted, consider using a decorative container. You may have a container with an opening on the side in which to insert the plant. In the Decorative Container class, you (the exhibitor) may place the entry yourself on the table to insure the best view of the plant. Immature plants may be used, and any number of blooming or non-blooming plants
10. Cut inflorescence. This is a non-standard class (entries won't be judged against standard entries) but is a good way to show off a beautiful inflorescence. Just place it in a plain glass container of water. It should, of course, be as clean as possible.

(Thanks to: Nat DeLeon, Lynne Fieber, Connie Johnson, and Ed Prince.)

## Garden Notes- March 2021

By Stephanie LaRusso

### April- Propagation by Offset

The start of April is the beginning of our most active Bromeliad growing season in South Florida. While the rains may not start until later in the month, consistently warmer temperatures encourage Bromeliads to grow faster, and often to bloom, either of which can kick start the production of offsets. Offsets or pups, as we often call them, are new “children” plants which form directly on the mother plant. The removal and planting of these offsets is the most common method of Bromeliad propagation because unlike propagation from seed, propagation from offset most often produces a clone of the mother plant. This means that your new plant is most likely to have all the characteristics of your original mother. Since Bromeliads typically die after they bloom, this is essential in trying to maintain the plants in your collection.

It is important to know that not all Bromeliad mother plants produce offsets at the same time, in the same quantities or from the same place on the plant. Some plants, for example, will produce pups only after they bloom. Others may produce them only when they are very young. Additionally, timing and technique, while removing and planting pups can make the all difference in their survival and also their speed of growth. Mastering propagation techniques for any plant type can take a lifetime however there are a few quick tips for Bromeliads that can get you started right!

### General Rules on when your Offset is Ready

As a good rule of thumb, a Bromeliad offset is ready to take when it is about half the size of the mother plant. This rule stems from the notion that typically by the time the offset had grown to half the size of the parent, it has produced enough leaves to support itself even if it does not yet have roots of its own. Since offsets feed off the mother plant until she is dead or until the connection between her and the offset is broken, Bromeliad offsets may not root until they are almost the size of the mother, particularly if the mother is still actively growing.

While the half size rule works most of the time, it is still best to take offsets when they already have roots. Once a Bromeliad offset has roots it can collect water and nutrients on its own so mom is no longer needed. No matter the size of the offset, if they have roots then you can clip and plant them. The size of the offset, however, can affect the how fast the new plant will grow and sometimes how large the new plant may become before it blooms. While many times you can take an offset that is smaller, for best results let the plant get at least half size, even if it has roots, before clipping. The only exception to this rule is when the mother plant is already dead. Any pups left on a dead, completely brown, mother should be removed once they have roots since they are no longer getting nutrients from the mother.

Timing is important. Offsets taken during winter, particularly those without roots, may not develop roots until spring. This can cause the offset to rot if there is

too much rain or, if it survives winter, it can cause growth to be stunted even once spring starts. Additionally, some types of bromeliads will bloom not matter what size they are as long as they are rooted during their blooming season. Small offsets, therefore, if planted right before bloom season, may never reach full size before they bloom.

If you want to maximize your offset production then take pups right when they are ready. A mother plant passes nutrients to its offsets as they grow, if you remove an offset then that frees up energy for her to make more. The quicker you take the offsets off then the more offsets you may get out of the same mother plant.

### Long Stolen Offsets

Some Bromeliad offsets extend out past the parent plant on stems or stolen. Often these types of bromeliads produce pups before they bloom. It is easy to see when roots have formed because they will be above the soil. To remove them simply clip the stolen below the roots and you are ready to plant!



### Short Stolen Offsets

Many Bromeliads have offsets that start right at the base of the parent. It is best to use the size method here since the roots are often under the soil. When the plant reaches 1/2 size, take a thin bladed clipper and slide between the mother and



child until you feel the connection point. Stay as close to the mother plant as you can and snip. When you pull out the offset you should see roots. This offset is ready to plant. If you do not see roots or if you accidentally cut a little too much of the offset off don't worry. Let the offset end dry for a day and then plant it the next day.

## Hair Pups

Some Bromeliads make hair pups at the base of the plants. They are given this name because they look very thick like hair when they first form. Often hair pups form on plants that live a longer life like Alcantarea. In the case of Alcantarea, plants produce the most hair pup offsets when they are young and then don't produce leaf base offsets until after they bloom sometimes years after. So if you want to propagate these plants quicker make sure you don't miss out on the early hair pups! For these types of offsets the rule is that the larger they are when you take them the better. Three to five inches is usually a good range. If you see that your plant is producing hair pups and you want to encourage more, keep the base of the plant free of dead leaves. This makes it easier for the offsets to form.

Hair Pups:  
Left hair pup is ready, the others could use more time



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

## Leaf Base Offsets

In some Bromeliads the offset grows out from within the mother's leaves. Here again you can use the 1/2 size rule. Once an offset looks ready remove all the mother's leaves from around the offset until you can see the connection to the mother. Then tilt the offset back a little from the mother to expose that connection. Again use the small thin snippers or a knife to slice away the connection. Often roots will have formed so be careful not to cut them away.

Leaf Base Offset Ready:  
Shows leaves removed to show connection



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Leaf Base Offset Ready:  
Successful cut of offset from the mother



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Leaf Base Offsets Ready:  
Offset is ready but since it is alone it is best to wait  
until it has used up all of the mother plant



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

### Inflorescence Offsets

Some bromeliads such as many of the Orthophytums can create offsets on the inflorescence spike. Particularly in Orthophytums it can be hard to tell the difference between a cluster of floral bracts and the offsets themselves. The best way to tell if you have offsets forming is to look for color or patterns that start to resemble the mother plant. As these offsets get larger this will be come fairly obvious. Telling when these are ready can be difficult but a general rule would be when you can easily separate them from the inflorescence. To check that they are in fact ready and to make planting them easier, remove the dead leaves from the base. You should be able to see some roots below.

Inflorescence Offsets



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Ants on Aechmea



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso



### What's Blooming

It's Spring which means *Neoregelia* bloom time has begun! Also still in bloom are a lot of *Aechmeas* and many *Orthopytum*. While enjoying the amazing color changes in your garden don't forget to check on your *Vrieseas*. Many of them are starting to throw up bloom spikes and some will already have flowers open! Keep Growing!



Herndon Collection- *Neoregelia olens* '696'



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Neoregelia cyanea*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Neoregelia* 'Wild Tiger'



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Neoregelia marmorata*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Neoregelia* 'Sunita'



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Neoregelia* 'Tossed Salad'



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Neoregelia mucugensis*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Neoregelia 'Gespacho'*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Neoregelia 'Divine Brown'*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Neoregelia 'Paula'*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Neoregelia smithii*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Neoregelia Grenada*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Neoregelia roethii*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Vriesea 'RoRo'*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Goudea ospinae ospinae*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Vriesea poenulata*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Vriesea saundersii*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Vriesea hybrid*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso



Herndon Collection- *Aechmea nudicaulis* 'Rafa'



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Aechmea nudicaulis* 'Burl Marx'



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Aechmea alopecurus*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Aechmea tillandsioides*



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Quesnelia marmorata* 'Rafael  
Oliviera'



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso

Herndon Collection- *Quesnelia testudo* (albo)



Photo By: Stephanie LaRusso



