



Newsletter of the

Hawai'i Bromeliad Society

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TRAVELS WITH BROMELIAD-NIKS

If there's one thing HBS members like as much as plants, it's traveling. Whether it's Leslie and family to East Africa, David and Sandi to Portugal, Dolores and Jaime to Myanmar or through the Panama Canal, Terese and Stan to southern Africa, Naty to Croatia, Karen to Alaska, Lynette to . . . well, just about everywhere, HBSers like to get out and see and do (and eat and drink) fun things in beautiful places. For our July meeting, members are invited to share photos and stories of their travels—local, national, international. If you have any photos that you would like to share, please let Stan or Terese know by Friday.



TOP RIGHT AND BELOW: scenes of Portugal. BOTTOM RIGHT: Chris van Zyl of the East London Bromeliad Society of South Africa.



2019 OFFICERS OF THE HAWAI'I BROMELIAD SOCIETY

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JULY MEETING

This Saturday, July 27,
we meet at **Lyon Arboretum**
at **12:30.**

Our hospitality hosts are
Naty and Wendie.

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF JUNE 29, 2019

Lyon Arboretum

ATTENDING: Susan Andrade, Dina Chuensanguansat, Merrill Cutting, David Fell, Naty Hopewell, Elsie Horikawa, Karen Kim, Huang-Chi Kuo, Terese Leber (presiding), Jeanie Li, Wendie Liu, Larry McGraw, Sally Mist, Leslie Morishige, Judy Nakamura, Ed Nishiyama, Dolores Roldan, Jaime Roldan, Stanley Schab, Tom Stuart, Randy Wong, and Val Wong.

CONVENED: 12:45; ADJOURNED: 2:20.

Terese welcomed everyone, and thanked Leslie and Chris for the hospitality—great sandwich makings!—and David for the wonderful homegrown white pineapple.

HOSPITALITY: Our hosts for July are Naty (food) and Wendie (drinks).

MEMBERSHIP: Terese and membership chair Naty welcomed new members Huang-Chi and Jeanie, Judy, and Karen.

PROGRAMS: Upcoming programs for this year include Naty on her latest adventures in landscaping, Brian and Mischa on apartment bromeliads, and a preview and workshop on the Fall craft fair.

TREASURER: Dolores reported that our balance at the end of May was \$13,794, with \$176 raised at the May auction.

OLD BUSINESS—HBS BROCHURE: Naty reported that the brochure is currently on hold until we decide how many we need and how much we want to spend.

OLD BUSINESS—LYON ARBORETUM: Terese noted the great improvement in the road leading up from the gate to the arboretum, and reported that additional work will be done on the road (painting the speed bumps!), the parking lot, and especially the gate area. Members voted to

purchase a (whopping) big roll of weed cloth from David for \$119.

(Susan moved, Naty seconded. Unanimous.)

On the advice of Elsie, Stan agreed to meet with Tim Kroessig, the arboretum's new horticulture manager, to see about transferring to the garden the bromeliads that they don't have room for in the greenhouse.

AUCTION: Thanks to all who donated items for the auction, including a *Euphorbia geroldii* and Shinobu fern (*Davallia fejeensis*) from Elsie, and nice specimens of *Vriesea* 'Red Chestnut,' *Aechmea nudicaulis*, and *Tillandsia albida*, *capitata* (yellow variety), *compacta*, *concolor*, *flexuosa* (a new species for us), *funckiana*, and *rothii*.

BELOW: Hmmm . . . what shall we bid?

RIGHT: Bromeliad whisperer makes *Tillandsia levitate*.



TIPS AND TRICKS FROM AUNTIE ELSIE

At our June program, members were entertained and informed by our own Elsie Horikawa, who shared advice and stories from a lifetime in gardening. Of particular interest to HBS members, many of her tips had to do with tools and strategies that help gardeners—particularly gardeners of a certain age—grow what we want to grow without driving ourselves crazy or to the poorhouse. And most of those tips had to do with preparation.

Her first piece of advice: learn to recognize, and to recognize early, what you consider to be a weed. But remember, weeds are relative. For some people, oxalis or wedelia or bamboo (or *Tillandsia gardnerai*) are beautiful, desired plants; for others, they're pests. Which leads to rule number one: what **you** don't like is a weed. If you don't want a particular plant in your yard or landscape, learn to identify it before it gets established, and it will be much easier to remove.

As for her "indispensable" tools, she uses a pair of Japanese shears that are no longer manufactured, but that sometimes can be found (cheap) at garage sales or swap meets. She also uses a Japanese-made rice sickle, which she adopted from heliconia growers, and likes because of the way that it keeps an edge as sharp as much more expensive brands. For fine or close trimming, she uses a simple pair of house scissors, and a serrated knife for separating keiki or clumps of plants. She also makes sure she has a good hand pick for weeding, sticks for planting, tongs to



pick out leaves from the centers of plants, and hooks of all sorts, to hang plants in different environments. For mounting plants to wood or rock, she prefers Tillytacker, because it dries clear and fast, and is safer to use than hot glue.

To carry around her tools, she wears a carpenter's apron, like the brand new one made for her by her daughter. She puts colorful flagging tape on the tools to make them easier to spot, and keeps an alcohol spray bottle handy to sterilize her tools (and hands) between jobs. Even though she works with some pretty thorny plants, she tends not to use gloves, as much of her gardening is by feel. As a consequence, she also selects plants that don't have a lot of sharp edges, using *Euphorbia geroldii*, for instance, as a thornless substitute for crown of thorns.

Elsie stressed the need to spend some time thinking about how to work plants into particular landscapes. If she has a grouping of plants with big, bold leaves, for example, she will fill in front or around them with something light and lacy, like shinobu or asparagus fern to vary the color, texture, and height. She also takes note of the microconditions in her landscape. For a shady area under a tree, she planted McCoy grass, which looks good and doesn't need mowing.

ODD FACTS ABOUT BROMELIADS

THE EYES HAVE IT—FOR PINEAPPLES

The next time you cut off the rind of a pineapple, take a minute to look at its small “eyes.” Scientists have determined that they occur in two different spirals, one going to the right and one to left, which circle the fruit like threads on a screw. In 1933, M. B. Lindford, from the Association of Hawaiian Pineapple Canners experimental station, developed a system to grade the quality of a pineapple by the number of its eyes and spirals. He also noted the spirals come in sets of 3, 5, 8, 13, and 21. Subsequently, P. B. Onderdonk, of the Maui Pineapple Company, pointed out that these spiral numbers were the same as the Fibonacci series (in which any number in the series is the sum of the previous two numbers).

Pineapples can be traced to two regions in South America: the Orinoco River in Brazil, and further south in Paraguay. But on his second voyage in 1493, Columbus found them in Guadeloupe, where the plants were already seedless and had less serrated edges than wild varieties, showing that pineapples were already domesticated and cultivated. Their arrival in Europe caused a sensation, as they became symbols of wealth and prestige—there are accounts of people who couldn’t afford to buy a pineapple to eat, renting one for a day to display at a special event.

The modern commercial pineapple can be traced to a cultivar named ‘Cayenne,’ which James Dole picked because its circular shape made it easy to can, although the most common commercial cultivar now is the MD2 (Del Monte Gold)—which we can all attest is nowhere near as tasty as David’s white pineapples. And by the way, in the Tupí-Guarani language of the Amazon, *A-nanas* means exquisite fruit.



YUMMY!?

Pineapple is apparently not the only bromeliad to be eaten, although it is the only commercially successful crop. Researchers report that in Bolivia and Argentina, the hearts of the *Tillandsia rubella* are eaten like celery, either raw or cooked as a fresh vegetable; they are described as similar to hearts of palm. In southwest Sonora Mexico, the hearts of *Hechtia montana* have been eaten since pre-Hispanic times, while a juice made from the *Bromelia karatas* is sold in popular markets in Hidalgo. Also in Argentina, the fruit of *Aechmea distichantha* is known as “payo” or “choclo choclo,” and is eaten as a delicacy. In Ecuador, extracts of the *Puya haramata* are used to make a sweet juice, collected in very much the same way as pulque from agaves in Mexico. In Peru, the ash from the burned inflorescences of the *Puya raimondii* is mixed with sugar and used with coca leaves, while in Santiago de Chile, the center rosettes of various species of *Puya* are sold in supermarkets for use in salads.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF STUFFING

Up until the development of cheap synthetics, *Tillandsia usneoides* was the basis of a thriving, multimillion dollar industry in the southern US. The plant was processed into fiber used to stuff the upholstery in Pullman cars, automobile seats, couches, and mattresses. The gathering and processing of the *Tillandsia* took place primarily in Florida and Louisiana, amounting to a five million dollar-plus industry. The plants were kept in pits or trenches for about six months, where the heat and moisture rotted off the outer grey surface, leaving the tough, hairy internal fiber, which was then hung on wire racks for several weeks to dry. The fiber was divided into grades, depending upon how long it was cured. Finally, the *Tillandsia* by-product was put through a process like a cotton gin that cleaned out any debris and straightened the fibers, which were then shipped to upholsterers around the country.

BROMELIAD INGENUITY

One time, during a very dry season, pioneer bromeliad grower, hybridizer, and explorer Mulford Foster was driving across the Florida Everglades in a 1920 Chevrolet, and his radiator really started to overheat, to the point where he couldn’t drive travel any further. So he “milked” the *Tillandsia fasciculata* plants on a nearby cypress trees for a gallon-plus of water which he poured in his radiator and went on his way.