

# The BromeliAdvisory

January 2005

Volume 48, Number 1

This Month's Event - A Two Parter

## President's Address:

This month our new President Ed Prince, will ask the membership body to consider a subject of great importance to the activities of the BSSF.

Please read the president's message in preparation for the upcoming meeting.

## Nat De Leon's Presentation:

After the President's issues are considered Nat De Leon will give us his presentation – Curiosity, Can't Kill This Cat

It will be about hybridizing bromeliads. In case you didn't know Nat is not only one of the founders of the BSSF but also one of the most knowledgeable persons in the world on the subject of bromeliads and hybridizing. I even get a little jealous when I read that Nat is speaking at other society's meetings but I'll get over it and look forward to starting the year off with a Nat De Leon Presentation.

See You

Tuesday January 4<sup>th</sup> 7:30 pm

# January's Events

## Raffle Table

Ed and Moyna Prince

## Door Prize

Pete and Clara Kouchalakos

## Sales Tables

Will Be Open to for Members to sell

## Refreshments

Sandy Roth and the usual suspects

## Name Tags for New Members

are available from Connie Johnson. Call her at 305-275-8595 to order yours. They are free the first time; there's a nominal charge for replacements.

## Library

Lynne Fieber will have the library open from 7:00pm to 7:30 pm

Happy New Year

## 2005 DUES DUE

Enclosed with this issue of the newsletter is a membership renewal form. Please take the time to complete it now, and mail with your check (\$20/single, \$30/dual, payable to BSSF) to Moyna Prince, 11220 SW 107 Ct., Miami, FL 33176.

NOTE: If you joined the society in October or later, you do not have to pay again until 2006.

As in the past, we encourage you to join the Bromeliad Society International. Membership includes the BSI Journal, published in color six times a year. To make it easy to join, just add the BSI dues to your BSSF dues. We will do the rest. Please note that this offer is for new BSI memberships only .

Some members have indicated that they would be willing to waive receipt of the mailed copy of the Bromeliad advisory, which can be seen online at [www.bromeliadsareafamily.com](http://www.bromeliadsareafamily.com) . If you would like to do without the hard copy, please answer YES on the line indicated.

## 2004 Holiday Party

Once again, our annual holiday party was a great success! About 60 members and guests were in attendance, and a good time was had by all! Everybody went home with a nice plant and fond memories of the evening.

Our President, Karl Green, thanked outgoing board members and welcomed the new board members, and kept the evening running smoothly. Peter Kouchalakos, as Past President, presented Karl with a plaque in appreciation for his efforts on behalf of the B.S.S.F. for the past two years as President.

A big thank you to Nat DeLeon for providing those beautiful plants, and Karl Green for picking up and delivering them to the Garden. Also, thank you to Mike Michalski for donating and handing out plants to guests. More thanks to Moyna Prince for graciously greeting arriving members and guests at the door.

At the top of my "thank you" list, is Kris Green, who truly outdid herself!

In case you don't know, she cooked for two straight days and as a result...lucky us!...we ended up with 2 different turkey dishes, 2 different pork dishes (and you'd think this would be enough!), well, she also made the stuffing...the gravy...AND a huge ambrosia salad!

Is that a cook or what!??

Thanks to Ed Prince for picking up and delivering the delicious honey baked ham!

Kudos to Sandy Roth and Joy Parrish for doing a wonderful job with the refreshments!

Last but not least, a HUGE thank you to all of our members who made those wonderful appetizers, marvelous cranberry sauce, delicious salads, fabulous vegetables, and scrumptious desserts! NO DIET THAT NIGHT!

It's been a pleasure chairing this event for the past 9 years, and it's all because of you! Thank you all so much!

Happy Holidays.....

Clara Kouchalakos.

## President's Message

I have long believed that when you are about to make an important decision, one that will have major impact on your future, it's a good idea to first make two lists,

On the first are all the reasons you should vote yes and on the other all the reasons you should vote no. In January, our society needs to collectively make some very important decisions that will certainly have a major impact on our society's future.

For the past twenty plus years our society has put on an annual bromeliad show and sale that is unquestionably the top show in Florida and perhaps the finest in the country. Here is a brief (very brief) synopsis of a typical BSSF show and sale.

- 1 Up to ten commercial vendors as well as our members are invited to sell plants.
- 2 On Thursday morning the set-up committee prepares the Garden House for entries.
- 3 On Thursday afternoon entries are classified and put on tables for judging.
- 4 On Friday morning invited accredited judges from the South East Region judge the show.
- 5 On Friday afternoon the awards committee sets up the show and the head table.
- 6 On Saturday morning the show is open to the public.
- 7 An auction takes place Saturday afternoon.
- 8 On Sunday the show closes.

The above list does not include many tasks such as food preparation for the workers, the judges luncheon, clerking for the judging, show booklet and showschedule preparation, hospitality, security, etc., etc., etc.

In summation. IT'S A BIG JOB !!!

Every year we have traveled the "show road" and although there were a few bumps along the way we managed to pull it off. This year the road appears to be full of giant potholes that make it necessary to evaluate our options. So here are my partial lists followed by our choices (there may be others). This pertains to doing it like we have always done it.

For Yes:

1. Our reputation precedes us. People from all over South Florida come to see and buy plants at our annual show.
2. At no other show, anywhere, is there such an abundance of drop dead gorgeous plants.
3. The art displays get better every year.
4. Our crystal awards are the envy of the bromeliad world.
5. Our vendors and members that sell usually make some big bucks.
6. It's very rewarding.

For No:

1. The same people (for the most part) are responsible for the major committees.
2. Several committee chairs have either moved away or are getting long of tooth and just can't do it anymore.
3. The expense of putting on the show is perhaps getting too high.
4. To date, no one has agreed to be show chairperson.

So.....What to do?

1. Have our regular show and sale.
2. Not have an annual show and sale.
3. Have a sale only.
4. Have a non-judged show.
5. Have a show and sale every other year, to correspond with Broward's every other year schedule.
6. Something else.

Please come to the January meeting prepared to participate in a discussion that deals with the future of our society. We will devote as much time as needed. To that end Nat De Leon has prepared a program that can be tailored to the time remaining, and, if necessary, be presented at a later date. Based on the discussion and your input the executive board (we meet the week after the regular meeting) will continue the discussion and then make a decision regarding this year's show.

Please think about our show and your part in it and come to the January meeting as a participating society member.

Ed Prince

# What Is a Cryptanthus?

Named from the Greek *krypte*, "hidden," and *anthos*, "flower," these plants, members of the family Bromeliaceae, are related to the pineapple. Their common name, 'Earth Stars,' came naturally from the way their low, spreading rosettes hug the ground "like fallen stars." The variability of shapes, colours, and patterns, plus their adaptability to a wide range of growing conditions, make Cryptanthus a favourite of plant lovers around the world.

## Potting

Cryptanthus in their natural habitat are true terrestrials ( Growing in the earth ). A few varieties are saxicolous ( growing in soil pockets among rocks ), but none have ever been observed growing as epiphytes ( growing on other plants, but receiving nourishment from the air). Cryptanthus should always be growing as potted plants.

The growing medium should be a loose, porous mixture. There are many good mixes: commercial potting soils, African Violet mix, soils mixes or a mixture of peat and sand with perlite. Regardless of the mix chosen, it must be kept damp for best growth. It should never be allowed to totally dry out. Plastic pots help conserve moisture. Successful growers have used capillary matting, wick watering, misting systems as well as the old-fashioned method of watching the plant and giving it a drink when needed.

Cryptanthus should not be under-potted. The develop root systems at least equal to the size of the plant - a five or six inch pot will allow the root system plenty of room to develop.

## Light

In their native habitat of Brazil, Cryptanthus can be found growing in a wide variety of conditions; sunny, shady, moist, dry, in forests, and at the ocean side. There is a Cryptanthus variety to fit any light condition. *C. beukerii* and it's hybrids like to be shaded, moist and humid. They are excellent for terrariums. Species such as *C. bahianus* sp 'Cascade', and *C. warasii* will tolerate full sun, but the plants grow better in diffused light. Too much light causes bleaching, sunburn, or gives a leathery stressed look to the plants. Bright, diffused light is

necessary to bring out maximum colour in most Cryptanthus. Lack of enough light will result in dull uninteresting foliage. "Greening" of a usually colorful Cryptanthus, or weak unbalanced growth, is usually caused by insufficient light, proper lighting will bring out the best in Cryptanthus.

Acclimate plants to grow in as much light as possible. The light source may be natural ( in the greenhouse, outside with strong, but filtered light, in a windows garden ) or artificial ( "grow lights" or plant carts ). Cryptanthus grow equally well with either.. The colors intensify under fluorescent light, which make Cryptanthus an excellent choice for office decorating.

Whatever the light source, be sure plants receive even lighting. If the light comes from only one side ( as in a window garden, be sure to turn the plants regularly to promote balanced growth.

## Temperature

Cryptanthus prefer the same temperatures as their growers.. Optimum growth occurs in a range between 60 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit ( 16 - 29 degrees Celsius ). However, Cryptanthus will thrive in less than optimum conditions. Outdoor gardeners will be please to learn that most Cryptanthus can withstand temperatures just above freezing and some varieties will survive winter outside if they are heavily mulched and the root zone does not freeze. If one wishes to leave plants outdoors over the winter, they should be "hardened off" in the fall by cutting back on the amount of water they receive. Depending on how long the temperatures remain below freezing, leaf damage may be severe, but the mulch protects the root zone and spring brings renewed growth. On the other extreme, Cryptanthus are very tolerant of high temperatures, even above 100 degrees ( 38 degrees C ) as long as there is adequate humidity and potting mix is not allowed to dry out. Again they should be protected from the scorching effects of direct sunlight.

In temperate climates, Cryptanthus grow easily and well outdoors, making beautiful and exotic bedding plants or ground cover. In colder climates, one might consider growing potted Cryptanthus outside during the warmer months. The pots can be sunk into the outdoor garden for the summer, and then easily removed to a safe winter inside, beautifying your home or greenhouse. Cryptanthus grow just as well, or even better in the year-round controlled environment of an indoor garden.

## Humidity

Many Cryptanthus varieties enjoy high humidity which may be increased in the home or office with the use of humidifiers, frequent misting, capillary matting, by placing the pots over water, or grouping plants together. Cryptanthus make wonderful accent plants in well-lit bathrooms or above the kitchen sink where the humidity is generally high.

## Fertilizing

Fertilizer is not necessary for Cryptanthus to show off their dazzling colors, but it is necessary for maximum growth. A timed release balanced ( 14-14-14, 10-10-10) fertilizer combined in the potting mix gives excellent results. Other types of fertilizer such as African Violet, Orchid or organic, used in a diluted form with each watering, work equally well. Like people, Cryptanthus require proper nutrition.

## Blooming

Although the name Cryptanthus means hidden flower, many varieties flatten, at maturity to reveal a bouquet of delicate flowers. Some varieties maintain an upright growth with the flowers remaining somewhat hidden, while others actually bloom on a scape ( stem ). Some varieties display one flower at a time; others exhibit an entire cluster at one show. As different species and cultivars bloom at different times of the year, it is possible to have different varieties in bloom the year around. They are reliable bloomers - there is no need to force bloom Cryptanthus.

## Offsets or Pups

Each Cryptanthus plant blooms only once in its lifetime. But after it blooms, it will reward you with new plants! Beginning before or immediately after blooming, Cryptanthus will produce offsets, or pups - new plants - which form from the axils, from woody stolons ( as with *C. bahianus*), or from the base of the parent plant. One will have the beginning of generations of plants to keep or share with friends.

Offsets may be left on the mother plant for multiple growth. The ideal hanging basket plant, sp. 'Cascade' produces long, hanging stolons of up to two feet with rosettes ( pups ) forming at the ends. Other varieties will form clumps or mats of beautiful color. If one wishes to remove the offsets, allow them to grow

to about one-quarter the size of the mother plant. Then, a slight tug will easily detach the offsets from the mother plant. Some varieties release their own offsets when they are sufficiently mature. Don't be alarmed that there are no roots on the pup. In nature the pup would roll to a new location or take root in the decaying humus around the mother plant.

Cryptanthus will root easily in potting medium. Make a small depression, insert the pup's small stem and press the mixture firmly around it. Pot no deeper than the base of the first leaf. Stake the plant if necessary to keep it from rocking back and forth. It is essential for the plant to be secure for an extra fast start and good growth. Bottom heat may speed root development in colder climates. Place the newly potted plant in a favourable location and water it as one would a mature plant.

## Insects and Disease

Cryptanthus are relatively pest-free. By following good horticultural practices severe problems can be avoided. Two of the more common insect problems that may be encountered are mealy bugs or scale. Scale is a destructive insect which forms and remains under a waxy scales on the plants. If either are found on cryptanthus, treat the infected plants with any insecticide recommended for use on houseplants. Wear gloves, follow the manufacturer's instructions for mixing, and dip the entire plant in the insecticide.

Fungus is the most common disease found in Cryptanthus. There are many good fungicides available. In an area where fungus is a problem use a fungicide regularly.

After any treatment, keep the plant in the shade for at least 4 to 24 hours. Then rinse it thoroughly, but do not place it in bright light until the leaves are completely dry.

With any severe infestation or disease, infected plants should be isolated until the problem is corrected

Cryptanthus should also be protected from contact with galvanized metal, copper and pre-treated wood.

[Cryptanthus Online <http://members.iinet.net.au/~scrozier/Culture.html>](http://members.iinet.net.au/~scrozier/Culture.html)