

# Bromeliad Society



250th birthday  
AMERICA!!!!



JULY 2026 Volume 59 Number 7



## The President's View

By Michael O'Neal,  
BSH President

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One of the things I've learned about bromeliads is that identifying them is not nearly as easy as many people think. There are simply too many of them for anyone to know them all. Even experienced BSH judges can struggle with identification because so many plants look similar until they bloom—and sometimes even after that, the answer still isn't obvious.

I still have several plants from when I first joined the society that I cannot confidently name. Some I have good theories on. Others I'm very confident about... or at least I thought I was.

In fact, I have a very large plant I've been growing for well over ten years that I had long been convinced was an *Alcantarea*. (And if you bought one from me at a sale labeled simply "Alcantarea," you may want to pay attention here!) During my trip to California earlier this year, I encountered very similar plants at two completely unrelated locations. Close enough that I'm now fairly convinced they are the same plant. The interesting part? Both were labeled as *Tillandsia zizkaea* or *Tillandsia krukoffiana*—the latter being an older synonym for *zizkaea*.

**JULY Program: see pages 13  
and 14**

**Included in this issue are  
some plants from the 2026  
show Head Table.**

**JULY meeting:**

**Zoom info:**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89412131955?  
pwd=KcnmZawPlxsZ6M7CgYaazm4pEbiX4h.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89412131955?pwd=KcnmZawPlxsZ6M7CgYaazm4pEbiX4h.1)

Meeting ID: 894 1213 1955

Passcode: 194524

**HOSPITALITY IS A-M**

**There will be a raffle.**

**Board Meeting link:**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85257139694?  
pwd=qNAz7YrR93EObhWTABXaCvUrUdW5TXR.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85257139694?pwd=qNAz7YrR93EObhWTABXaCvUrUdW5TXR.1)

Date: July 16 Time: 7:30 pm

Before the trip, I was probably 90% certain my plant was an *Alcantarea*. Now I'm probably 90% certain it is a *Tillandsia*. What does that percentage actually mean? Absolutely nothing until the plant blooms or another clue appears. Still, this kind of botanical detective work is genuinely fun for me and one of the things I enjoy most about the hobby.

## AI, Bromeliads, and Learning to Ask Better Questions



As I'm sure you've all noticed, artificial intelligence seems to be everywhere now. I've experimented with several AI tools over the past year, including ChatGPT, and I've used them for everything from writing assistance to brainstorming ideas for the society—including occasional help with this very article.

I've also had long "discussions" with AI about how organizations like ours can continue evolving and improving while still maintaining the mission, culture, and values that long-time members have worked so hard to build over the years. Some of the ideas it produces are useful. Some are terrible. But even the bad answers sometimes spark useful conversations or new ways of thinking.

Naturally, I've also experimented with using AI for bromeliad identification. I can't honestly say it has been consistently great at it, but it *has occasionally pointed me toward very helpful clues or possibilities I might not have considered otherwise*.

The key, though, is learning how to use these tools carefully. There is an enormous amount of misinformation online, and AI systems absorb all of it—good and bad. I quickly realized I needed to give it guardrails: focus on reputable sources, explain where the information comes from, compare conflicting possibilities, and sometimes even challenge my own assumptions rather than simply agreeing with me.

In some ways, AI feels like the search engine many of us always wanted—but it still requires skepticism, judgment, and careful thinking from the person using it. So for those of you who remain cautious about AI: good. You should be. But I also believe it is a tool that is here to stay, and when used thoughtfully, it can genuinely help with many things.

## The End of an Era



It was not entirely unexpected after my visit to Tropiflora last September, but I was still saddened to hear the news about the coming end of Tropiflora as we have known it.

For decades, Tropiflora has been one of the foundational institutions of the bromeliad world—providing plants, guidance, stability, education, and inspiration to growers all over the world. During my time in bromeliads, they have simply always been there. It's difficult to imagine the bromeliad world without Tropiflora.

At the same time, all things evolve eventually, and time always wins in the end. I'm very happy that Dennis Cathcart will be returning to speak for us again in November, and I'm sure we'll hear more (Continued)

.thoughts from him then.

## Last Reminders



Enough rambling from me for one month. Go water your bromeliads. Make sure they are not burning up in this heat. Order that plant from Tropiflora that you've always wanted but never quite decided to buy.

And hopefully I'll see many of you at the July meeting, where I'll try to entertain you with stories and photos from the World Bromeliad Conference and some Southern California bromeliad adventures.

One scheduling reminder: the board meeting this month will be held on the 16th *before the regular meeting*.

Happy 4th of July, everyone!



See you soon,

**Mike**

## Reminders

XX

**Don't forget to send me pictures of your plants. They don't have to be in bloom. For the August edition, get them into me by July 28.**

**If you have a nandina from the March program earlier this year, send me a picture of how it's doing.**

### Updating Your Contact Info

If your contact info in the directory has incorrect information, let me know so I can edit the directory. lindawhipkey@gmail.com

### Raffle Plants Needed

If you should have a few duplicate plants or pups that you don't need, bring them for the Plant Raffle at the meeting. Include their names on the tags.

Raffle for June  
Brought in \$73

#### Donors

#### Winners

The Whipkey's  
Malcolm

Rick Richtmyer  
Malcolm McCorquodale  
Shirl Stowe  
Debbie Taylor  
Vickey Gurka  
Bianca O'Neal  
Amy Vanzant-Hodge  
Ross Thyer  
Mary Wood

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*Hohenbergia edmundoi*

Cherie Lee

Best of Division II Section A

*Racinaea aeris-incola*

Cherie Lee

Best of Division III



*Catopsis morreniana*

Frank Lee

Best of Division IV



*xSincoregelia* 'Firecracker'

Cherie Lee

Best of Division V



*Tillandsia* 'Marron'

Frank Lee

Best of Division VII Section B



*xDycklirium*  
*Dyckia burle-marxii* X  
*Encholirium horridum*

Cherie Lee

Best of Division V Section A

*Tillandsia bermejoensis*

John Schmidt

Best of Division VI  
Section A



SHOW PICTURES CONTINUED



*Tillandsia chiapensis* (Giant)  
X *Tillandsia roland-gosselinii*

Frank Lee

Best of Division VI Section B



*xSincorphytum* 'Blaze'

Cherie Lee

Best of Division V Section B



*Billbergia* 'Domingos Martins'

Frank Lee

Member's Choice

## An open forum on BSH conservation and education activities – Ross Thyer

Following on from recent conversations with our governing board, I want to put forward an idea to our members for a potential conservation initiative for the society. The purpose of this short article is to solicit feedback, comments, and gauge the interest of our members. However, I think it is good to make a case up front for why the BSH should invest in these such activities – and I can think of three reasons.

Firstly, such activities are well aligned with the objectives of the society; *to increase the knowledge of Bromeliads through interchange and dissemination of information, to provide forums and media through which experiences in propagation, care, feeding and other treatment of Bromeliads may be reported, discussed and published for the common good, and to encourage study and research of Bromeliads.*

Secondly, these activities can double as marketing and recruitment activities for the society. The activities and their results can easily be shared online or via social media and may appeal to new demographics that cannot easily engage in other aspects of the hobby.

Finally, these activities allow us to connect with others with shared interests in the state of Texas, ranging from landcare groups, researchers, and private individuals.

Helping to conserve Texas native bromeliads  
Texas has five native bromeliads, of which two, *Tillandsia recurvata* and *T. usneoides*, are commonly seen in Houston and occur widely in the gulf south. However, the remaining three species, *Tillandsia bailey*, *Hechtia glomerata*, and *H. texensis*, are only found within the state of Texas (and Northern Mexico) and are of conservation interest. Each has a very restricted range in south Texas and populations have declined through habitat loss – particularly affecting *T. bailey* and *H. glomerata*.

I propose the BSH takes an active role in promoting the conservation of these species. In

practice, this would consist of three initiatives: (i) collecting and germinating seed from wild plants in Texas, (ii) establishing a stock of plants of Texas origin which can be used to produce seed and offsets in cultivation, and (iii) returning plants back to selected locations in South Texas in collaboration with land owners and local conservation groups.

This would not be an instant process, propagating bromeliads by seed takes time and many *Tillandsia* are especially slow to mature. However, an emphasis on seed grown plants maximizes the conservation value and is an area where we could uniquely contribute as a society by using the experience and resources of our members to work out how to do this well (and reproducibly). This is legitimately valuable information for plant conservation and gives the project a sense of commitment and longevity. In addition, this mirrors efforts by the various bromeliad societies in Florida who are working to conserve their local species, many of which are threatened with extinction due to the invasive bromeliad weevil. Specific activities for the BSH to undertake

- An annual trip by members to South Texas to: (i) collect seed, document the range and biology (flowering times etc.) of these species, (ii) later, return plants in collaboration with local groups, (iii) later still, monitor the survival of returned plants.
- Seed germination and cultivation of seedling flats (mesh for *Tillandsia*).
- Keeping notes and preparing written instructions for propagating and cultivating these species.
- Sharing this knowledge at appropriate forums in the state of Texas

What are the challenges?

While none of these species are formally endangered, seed collection from state lands would require a permit. This appears feasible (has a small fee) but is something we would need to look into. Private land does not require a permit, but generally landholder permission. There are some researchers at UTRGV and conservation groups in the area who manage protected land that might be good partners for this aspect of the project. As mentioned above, growing *Tillandsia* by seed is a slow process. (continued)

(continued)

Some things would be more practical to start from offsets and it may be possible to investigate tissue culture.

I think a conservation initiative broadly along these lines would be feasible for the BSH given there is no rush on decision making, it largely involves us growing bromeliads and documenting the process (which we enjoy), and we can plan some fun society field trips. The floor is open for comments.



# Cultural Tips for July 2026

Scherie Townes and Rick Richtmyer

## Natural Controls for Pests and Diseases of Bromeliads

We were both a part of the panel that presented at the June meeting. The panel consisted of John Schmidt, Rick Richtmyer, Scherie Townes and David Whipkey. Our topic was pests, rot and diseases of bromeliads. It was certainly thought provoking as the down side of chemical treatments were discussed. The down sides included danger to the person who applies the chemicals, danger to the environment, including our aquifers, contamination of our soils, and harm to beneficial insects, birds and bees.

Scherie Townes presented an alternative to chemicals and organics in the form of natural controls. This topic and the recipes to control pests and diseases were enlightening and many of those present asked for the recipes. Scherie has used them exclusively for many years on her bromeliads, vegetable gardens and flower gardens. Here are the recipes and what they are used for that she presented at the June meeting.

Below is a list of some of the recipes that she uses.

### FOR APHIDS

OK For Bromeliads

1 small onion chopped

2 medium garlic cloves chopped

1 tbsp liquid dish soap

2 cups water

Blend above, strain, pour into sprayer bottle

Mist plants

### FOR CATS

They knock my plants off their benches!

5 tbsp flour

4tbsp powdered mustard

3 tbsp cayenne pepper

2 tbsp chili powder

2 quarts warm water

Spray where you do not want cats, my whole green house and shade house!!!!

### FOR SQUIRRELS

Yes I have trouble with squirrels eating the tops out of my bromeliads

I spray this on the top of the fence, down the sides of the fence, around the windows and doors of the greenhouse to keep them out

2 tbsp cayenne pepper

2 tbsp tabasco sauce

2 tbsp chili powder

1 tbsp murphy soaail soap

1 qt of warm water and mix

Pour into sprayer

Continued

## INSECT DEATH

1 cup tobacco tea  
½ cup mouth wash  
2 tbsp dish soap  
Remainder water to fill ½ gallon bottle

Place Insect death in spray bottle. Use about  
Every two weeks as needed  
FOR BROMELIANDS

## BUG THUG SPRAY FOR ALL OTHER PLANTS

3 tbsp baking soda  
2 tbsp Murphys Oil Soap  
2 tpsb canola oil  
2 tbsp vinegar  
2 gal water

Begin applying with a sprayer in early spring,  
use twice a month as needed

## POWDERY MILDEW

For Bromeliads  
4 tbsp baking soda  
2 tbsp dish soap  
1 gal warm water  
Pour into spray bottle  
Mist plants that have mildew

## SPIDER MITES

Leaves losing color  
1 cup baby shampoo  
1 cup mouthwash  
1 cup tobacco tea  
Mix in 5 gallons of water  
Spray every two weeks

## TOBACCO TEA

1 gallon of hot water  
1 inch x 3 inches chewing tobacco  
ankle high stocking  
place tobacco in hose and tie off, place  
hose in hot until liquid becomes dark  
brown, remove hose and store tea im  
closed bottle to use in recipes

## Bug Be Gone FOR ALL OTHER PLANTS - alternative

1 CUP Murphys Oil Soap  
1 cup mouthwash  
1 cup tobacco tea

place in pump up sprayer and use if needed to  
prevent unwanted insects

## Fungus Fighter

For Bromeliads  
½ cup molasses  
½ cup powdered milk  
1 tsp baking soda  
1 gal warm water  
(mix molasses, powdered milk, baking soda  
into a paster with a little of the water)  
Steep paste in remainder of the water for  
several hours  
Strain

## SNAILS AND SLUGS

Diatomaceous earth made from minerals  
and shell particles

# BULLETIN BOARD



## JULY Birthdays

MEYLON LAMAR ADAMS	7/9
MARY CINOTTO	7/25
AARON DAVILA	7/23
CHRISTOPHER GOODGAME	7/22
ALLYN PEARLMAN	7/12
JIM PICCOLO	7/4
ROSS THYER	7/14

Membership dues in the Bromeliad Society Houston are \$20 for individual \$30 for family.

The membership goes from January to January.

To join, send your check to:

Allyn Pearlman  
6422 Bankside Drive  
Houston, TX 77096

With your check, include your address, cell phone/home/work phone numbers; your birthday month and day and your email address. The email allows you to receive the monthly bulletin and important communications. Also, designate a phone number to call in case of an emergency cancellation of the meeting.



## Houston Cactus and Succulent Society

[www.hcsstex.org](http://www.hcsstex.org)

Regular meeting fourth Wednesday of month at 7:00 PM

Metropolitan Multi-Service Center

1475 West Gray, Houston, TX 77019



We have a large selection of Aechmea, Billbergia, Cryptanthus, Dyckia, Neoregelia, and Tillandsia. Please compare our prices and our quality.

15019 8th Street West, Santa Fe, TX 77517 ■ 409-925-6933

[www.jimbosnursery.com](http://www.jimbosnursery.com)

## Houston Orchid Society

[www.houstonorchidsociety.org](http://www.houstonorchidsociety.org)

Regular meeting first Thursday of month at 7:30 PM

First Christian Church | 1601 Sunset Blvd



## Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

[www.tgcfersoc.org](http://www.tgcfersoc.org)

Regular meeting third Sunday of month at 2:00 PM

Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center  
2020 Hermann Drive., Houston, TX 77004

## July meeting: Great Plants and Experiences from Southern California

Famous gardens, unforgettable nurseries, spectacular bromeliads, and unexpected discoveries — come see the highlights from a remarkable Southern California plant adventure!

Southern California is home to some of the most famous bromeliad nurseries, botanical gardens, collections, and growers in the hobby today. From award-winning show plants and artistic displays to world-class gardens and rare plant auctions, this trip offered a remarkable look at the creativity, diversity, and inspiration that make bromeliads such a fascinating group of plants.

At our July meeting, Mike O'Neal will share highlights from his trip to Southern California and the 2026 World Bromeliad Conference in Costa Mesa, California. A dozen members from the Houston Society attended the conference along with tours and visits to some of the most famous bromeliad destinations in the region, including Bird Rock Tropicals, Rainforest Tropicals, and The Huntington.

Through photos, stories, and observations from the trip, attendees will experience award-winning bromeliads, spectacular artistic displays, rare plants, memorable gardens, famous nurseries, interesting speakers, and even a few unexpected discoveries along the way. Whether you are interested in bromeliads, botanical gardens, unusual plants, travel destinations, or simply seeing some of the most inspiring places and displays in the hobby today, this program promises something memorable for every plant enthusiast.

### What You'll Learn

- Highlights from the 2026 World Bromeliad Conference
- What makes Bird Rock Tropicals, Rainforest Tropicals, and The Huntington such important destinations for bromeliad enthusiasts
- Examples of award-winning bromeliads, artistic displays, and rare auction plants
- Interesting ideas from conference presentations on evolution, hybridizing, provenance, conservation, and plants in habitat
- Inspiration and ideas that can influence your own growing, collecting, and display techniques
- Places, plants, and experiences worth considering on a future Southern California plant trip

Meeting Date:

Tuesday, July 21, 2026

Time:

Social Time: 6:30 PM

Meeting & Program: 7:00 PM

Location:

Metropolitan Multi-Service Center  
1475 West Gray Street  
Houston, TX 77019

## Officers, Directors, Committees

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**SECRETARY**  
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## Our meeting in July

### Raffle

The raffle is one of our favorite meeting traditions! Members are encouraged to bring bromeliads, offsets, divisions, or other plant-related items to donate. Your contributions help make the raffle more exciting while giving fellow members the opportunity to take home something new for their collections.

### Show & Tell

Bring an interesting bromeliad from your collection and share it with the group. Whether it's a show-stopper, a recent acquisition, an unusual species, something currently in bloom, or a plant with an interesting story, we'd love to hear about it. Show & Tell is a great opportunity to celebrate successes, learn from each other, and exchange growing tips with fellow members.

### Refreshments

Members whose last names begin with A–M are asked to bring refreshments to share with attendees. Thank you for helping make our meetings welcoming and enjoyable for everyone.

### Social Time

Catch up with old friends, meet new growers, exchange tips, and talk bromeliads before and after the meeting.

Whether you attended the conference yourself, are thinking about a future Southern California plant trip, or simply want to see some of the most beautiful and inspiring plants, gardens, displays, and discoveries in the bromeliad world today, you'll leave with new ideas, inspiration, and plenty of memorable images from an unforgettable week in Southern California.