



Pup Talk

November 2023

THE SADDLEBACK VALLEY BROMELIAD SOCIETY

We Will Meet: Thursday, November 2, 2023, 7:00 p.m.

At the Norman Murray Community & Senior Center

24932 Veterans Way, Mission Viejo, CA

Our November program will feature a slide program by Cristy Brenner on the 2004 World Bromeliad Conference in Chicago, Illinois. We will also have a “member’s plant table,” so please bring several plants to donate if you can.

Our Society has been approached by the Bromeliad Society International (BSI) as a possible host for an international conference in Southern California in 2026. We are considering the idea, but since most of our members have never attended one of these wonderful conferences, we are going to do presentations on several of them throughout the next year. Cristy has attended all World Bromeliad Conferences (WBC) since 2000, but the 2004 Chicago conference was the first one in digital format, so we’ll begin with it.

These conferences offer so much to the Bromeliad enthusiast: An incredible variety of the best Bromeliads in a judged show; garden tours; educational seminars; a silent auction; and a very entertaining live auction (one plant sold for \$4,200 in 2006)!

The 2024 conference will be held in West Palm Beach, Florida, next May. See BSI.org for conference information and consider signing up. Please join us for a look at why several of our members always attend these conferences—even in Australia!



Hylaeaicum pendulum v. brevifolium (formerly *Neoregelia pendula v. brevifolia*) in the Chicago conference show.

DIRECTIONS: Meetings are the first Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM in the Norman Murray Community and Senior Center, 24932 Veterans Way in Mission Viejo. Visitors Welcome! Where is that? Off the I-5 take the La Paz exit. Go east on La Paz past Marguerite Parkway to Veterans’ Way. Turn left. The parking lot is at the road’s end. We are in room Sycamore B.

This Meeting Includes:

Bromeliads and More Wonderful Bromeliads:

- * **Show & Tell** – A meeting highlight. Bring in your bloomers, show stoppers, interesting plants, questions, even disasters. Help all of us learn and enjoy while you get a free raffle ticket.
- * **Raffle Table** – A chance to add to your collection; buy lots of tickets!
- * **Silent Auction** – We usually have special plants for you to bid on.
- * **Library & Information** – Want to learn even more? Check out a book and read up!
Or ask our bromeliad experts that question that is bugging you! We love to talk Bromeliads!



Upcoming Events (mark your calendars):

November 2 — Our monthly meeting with a presentation about the BSI world conference in Chicago in 2004. (Also member's plant table)

November 5 — South Bay Bromeliad Society meeting (Palos Verdes).

November 14 — San Diego Bromeliad Society meeting (special location—see their website)

December 2 — **Saturday Field trip to Andy Siekkinen's garden and sales area. (See below and more information at November meeting).**

May 22-25, 2024 — World Bromeliad Conference (BSI) in West Palm Beach, Florida.



November refreshment signups: Tom & Jodi Matossian, Kate Guerra-Hershey, Patti Dunn, Trish Wiemann. Thank you!



Our annual Holiday “member’s appreciation nursery tour” will be held on Saturday December 2, at 10:00 a.m. at Andy Siekkinen’s home and sales area in San Diego (address available at November meeting). Each SVBS member will receive a \$50 voucher to spend at Andy’s (member must be present and one per family membership).

Carpools may be arranged at the November meeting and please leave early (no later than 8:30 from M.V.) because southbound traffic is very heavy on a Saturday morning. Please bring:

- Drinks, snacks, lunch
- Boxes for your plants
- A walking stick or cane if you need it for stairs or irregular surfaces.

Andy will be offering a variety of Bromeliads (his sales table at the June San Diego show and sale is shown at left). The great thing about Andy’s plants is that they are well-acclimated to our Southern California weather.

Our October Show and Tell Featured:

Cristy Brenner

xVrieslandsia 'Arden's Comet' (see article
page 5)

Patti Dunn

Goudaea ospinae #1

Guzmania sanguinea #5

Guzmania sanguinea (dark form)

Tillandsia 'Samantha' #3

Mary Kermani

Aechmea nudicaulis #4

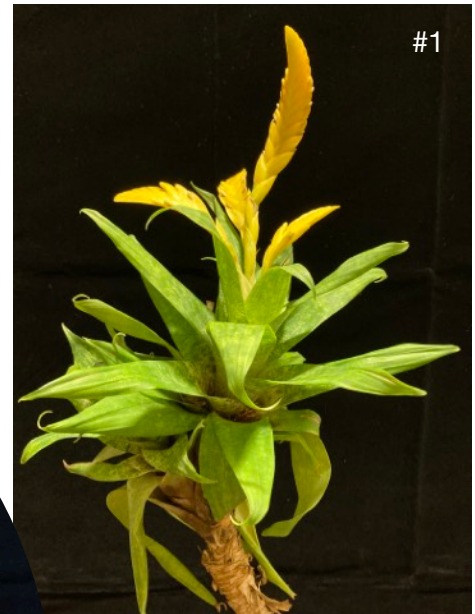
Tom Phillips

Tillandsia secunda var. *major*?

#11

Carolyn Parsons

Billbergia 'Limestone' #2



October Show and Tell, continued

Cary Serklew
Neoregelia hybrid



Scott Sandel
Tillandsia species
Vriesea 'Chartreuse Goose'
Vriesea 'Cherry Snow' #7
Vriesea 'Tasman Candyman' #10
Vriesea 'Tasman Pink'

Jeff Sorensen
Guzmania sanguinea #6
Nidularium innocentii #9

Kerry Wakely
Tillandsias on wire tree #8



Remembering John Arden by Cristy Brenner

John Arden (shown at right in 2012) is a legend in the Bromeliad world. He was a master hybridizer who created beautiful plants that are absolutely amazing. I am very fortunate to have visited his garden and greenhouses in Vista with our society on several occasions before his passing in 2015. Last summer, after many years of waiting, one of John's most unusual hybrids finally began to bloom, which has prompted this article. I brought my plant called *xVrieslandsia* 'Arden's Comet' for our October show and tell. Rather than show you my plant, I am showing you the far better grown plant in John's greenhouse and the two parent plants that he used to create 'Arden's Comet'.



Nancy Groves standing next to 'Arden's Comet' showing the size of the inflorescence (left). Closeup of the maroon inflorescence with its pale green flowers (center).



xVrieslandsia 'Arden's Comet' is a cross between *Vriesea simplex* (left) and *Tillandsia australis* (right). These photos are both from my garden, but I believe that the plant to the right of John Arden in the top photo is also *Vriesea simplex*—or because of its larger-sized inflorescence, it may be a *Vriesea simplex* hybrid.



Our visits to John Arden's greenhouses in Vista were always exciting, with hundreds of his different hybrids in bloom and an opportunity to purchase some of them. Fortunately, many of them live on today in our collections.



John showing one of his hybrids to Don and Jeff.



At left is a huge x*Vrieslandsia* 'Arden's Fireworks' (*Vriesea* 'Sundance' X *Tillandsia australis*).



I had planned to include some background information on John Arden, but in doing research, I discovered that Robert Kopfstein (former SVBA president and now active member of the San Diego Bromeliad Society) had already done a great article in the May, 2014 issue of *The Bromeliad Blade*, newsletter of the San Diego Bromeliad Society. His article was written in preparation for a SDBS tour to John's garden about a year before his passing. With Robert's permission I am including most of his article without photos of Robert's plants because I have used photos from our own visits to John's growing area. If you were fortunate enough to have known John Arden and you have some of his beautiful creations you will really enjoy this article. For our newer members, we hope that the history of this wonderful Bromeliad "magician" will be interesting.

John Arden, Hybridizer by Robert Kopfstein

Anyone who has had the opportunity to visit the greenhouses and lath structures of John Arden cannot help but be amazed at the life's work of this amazing (and patient) man. The plants of course, speak for themselves. Hundreds upon hundreds of Tillandsias and Vrieseas splash across the benches and hang from above in waves of color and form. The effect is that of an artist's palette, swatches of red, burgundy, yellow, green, color after color. And the variety of shapes lend a structural quality to it all—it is almost like entering a tropical Garden of Eden.

This remarkable display of bromeliads is the result of decades of painstaking labor, all done singlehandedly by what appears to be a very modest, soft-spoken and decidedly unassuming man. John always speaks of his work and his plants in understatement, yet whenever he enters any of his creations in a bromeliad show, be it local or at a world conference, he invariably places on the head table, and more often than not he wins best of show: hands down.

John Arden's love of plants began when he was very young. Born in 1926 on the coast of Latvia, his father was a government employee who was in the department of forestry. As a child John roamed the forests of Latvia, learning about the flora and the birds that were native to the area. But this idyllic childhood was interrupted in 1939. World War II was about to begin, and in eastern Europe the Soviets were on the move, invading Latvia in 1939, and taking over the government. Because he was a Latvian government official, John's father was sent to Siberia. With the German invasion of Russia in 1940, the Soviets were pushed out of Latvia; however, by 1943 the fortunes of war on the eastern front had shifted, and once again the Russian army re-invaded Latvia, and seventeen-year-old John fled west to Germany to escape the Soviets.

With the defeat of the German army in 1945, John went to work for the U.S. Army in a civilian supply depot. His co-workers were Latvians, so language was not a problem. By this time John had mastered German, and some Russian. He spent some time in a displaced person camp in Germany; these camps were set up to house the hundreds of thousands of Europeans who had lost nearly everything in the devastation of World War II. By the end of 1949 (12/31/1949) John married Sophie, and a little more than one year later in 1951 he and his wife immigrated to the United States on a troop transport ship. He came to America by way of Ellis Island, along with many thousands of European refugees who sought peaceful, stable lives after the tumult of the 1940's.

Speaking little English John and Sophie traveled by train (in 1951 most people did) to Los Angeles because he had an aunt who lived there. He went to work for the May Company earning 90 cents per hour. This job gave him the opportunity to attend night school where he learned to become a machinist. His machinist skills landed him a job at a machine shop on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood, a city not especially known for its machine shops. After a series of jobs John became a specialist in the lathe, and he and his wife bought their first house in Culver City. Later, about 1970, they moved to a house in Torrance, California, and by this time children John, Livia, and Jayne rounded out the family.

The house needed landscaping so John began to check out the various nurseries in his neighborhood. And because it was not far from home, he went to see the newly created South Coast Botanic Garden where there happened to be a bromeliad exhibit. John had the opportunity to meet some of the members of the South Bay Bromeliad Society, including Charles Wylie, Kathy Doerr, Leslie Walker, Stan Oleson, and George Allaria. It wasn't long before he was hooked on broms, and of course the enthusiasm of the society members only added to the excitement.

Soon John went on two or three trips to Mexico to see bromeliads in habitat, and to collect some Tillandsias. His interest at the beginning was in all of the bromeliad genera, and about one year later joining the bromeliad society John learned about hybrids. By this time he was thoroughly enamored of the plants. At first John knew little about the process of hybridizing – one of his early attempts was to cross a Vriesea with a Cryptanthus. However, bit by bit, he learned more – mostly by trial and error. He had help in growing bromeliads from seed from Stan Oleson, who had experimented for years with the best techniques to plant and care for the seedlings. Eventually John attended a bromeliad hybridizers world conference in Florida where he met hybridizers Herb Hill and Don Beadle. While at the conference John had his first serious encounter with Vrieseas and he bought some stock for hybridizing. Back in California, the crosses in his greenhouse subsequently multiplied exponentially.

During some years there would be upwards of 1000 tags on his stock and the greenhouses would be filled with seedlings of Vrieseas and Tillandsias growing, growing, with John keeping a sharp eye on which of the plants in the various grexes showed promise. To grow out a Vriesea or Tillandsia seedling to a reasonably mature plant takes four to seven years, and a whole lot of attention and patience, not to mention record-keeping. John keeps spread sheets and photos on his computer, and he has logged in more than 5000 crosses which he has made. What John usually does not mention to his visitors is that hybridizing on this scale also requires talent and an artist's eye for beauty. Most bromeliad enthusiasts are fortunate if they have the skills to grow the plants well. Hybridizing, as practiced by John Arden, takes those skills to a level which most bromeliophiles can only dream about. His creations are truly gifts to all of us who appreciate beauty in nature.

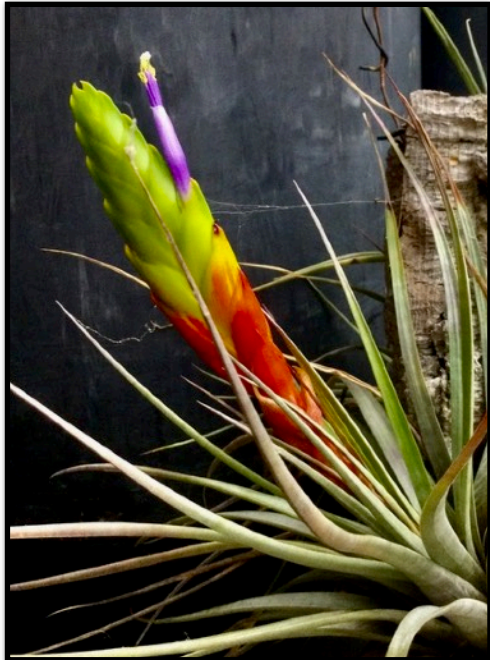


Photo by John Arden

According to Robert, one of John's favorite hybrids was *Tillandsia* (now *Barfussia*) *laxissima* X *Tillandsia* (now *Racinaea*) *dyeriana*, which he called 'Bird of Paradise'. I don't believe that name was ever registered and now both parent plants have new genus names. Unfortunately, I have never seen one of these and I have no idea how to acquire one of these amazing John Arden creations. It is very similar in appearance to *Racinaea* 'Dr. Suess' (*Racinaea spiculosa* X *Racinaea dyeriana*), which is available in cultivation, but probably requires tropical conditions.

2023 Society Officers/Committee Heads

President:	Chris Bruce	Publicity:	Kathy Jones
Vice President/Programs:	Jeff Sorensen	<i>Pup Talk</i> Editor:	Cristy Brenner
Secretary:	Carolyn Parsons	<i>Pup Talk</i> Team:	Pete and Patti Dunn
Treasurer:	Mary Kermani		John Marzolino
Fundraising:	Yvonne Wilson	Refreshments:	Launi & Tony Cory
Librarian:	Paul Selzer		Kathy Jones
Membership	Nada Chatwell	Supplies:	Don DeBok
Plant Table:	John Marzolino	Webmaster and Zoom	John Marzolino
	Michael McGuire		



Where did the phone numbers and email addresses go?

Now that *Pup Talk* is on a website that is accessible to everyone, some board members are concerned about the security of their personal information. If you are a member, be sure to keep your membership roster that has all of the contact information. Rosters are available from Nada at the meetings.

Our Web Address: bromeliadsociety.org

Tillandsia fasciculata. Photo by Ed Voelker



SVBS 2023 DUES/MEMBERSHIP

Dues are \$15 per membership (for one person or for two or more at the same address). Please send a check & info to: Saddleback Valley Bromeliad Society 24891 Camberwell Street, Laguna Hills, CA, 92653

Membership Name(s): _____

Newsletter via: [] email (dues \$15/year) or [] USPS (Dues \$20/year) or [] Both (Dues \$20/year)

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Pup Talk, November, 2023

Saddleback Valley Bromeliad Society

1068 Santa Cruz Circle

Costa Mesa, CA 92626

FIRST CLASS PLEASE!

Saddleback Valley Bromeliad Society

Pup Talk

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The Saddleback Valley Bromeliad Society next meets Thursday, November 2, 2023, at 7:00 PM.

Festivities include a:

- * **Program** on BSI Chicago Bromeliad conference;
- * **Plant raffle and silent auction** (Bring a show & tell plant to receive a free raffle ticket!);
- * **Show & Tell** with lots of our plants to see and enjoy;
- * **Lending library** for books you need to learn;
- * **Friendship; and Information.**

A big thank you goes to all who contributed information, writing, photos, and production of this newsletter including Cristy Brenner (Ed.), John Marzolino, Patti & Pete Dunn, Chris & Hank Bruce, Jeff Sorensen, Robert Kopfstein, and Ed Voelker.

Pup Talk is a publication of the Saddleback Valley Bromeliad Society. Any opinion expressed herein is not necessarily that of the Society. Send comments, inquiries, and articles to: cbrenner4@cox.net. Deadline is mid-month before month of publication. When credit is given, nonprofit publications may reprint from us.

The Saddleback Valley Bromeliad Society is an educational organization promoting the study and cultivation of bromeliads and fellowship among those who do. We are an affiliate of the Bromeliad Society International.

