

Bromeliad Society



February 2026 Volume 59 Number 2



The President's View

By Michael O'Neal,
BSH President

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Learning Bromeliad Culture—Then and Now

Bromeliad culture is such an important topic, with so many facets, and it's something I never seem to tire of learning more about. Recently, I received a **nice gift** from some friends: a 1974 edition (originally published in 1954) of *Bromeliads: A Cultural Handbook*, compiled by the **Bromeliad Society International**.

It turns out the handbook appears to have last been published in **2003**, and despite being just a **72-page booklet**, it's absolutely **crammed with information**. I've really enjoyed paging through it—not just for the cultural advice, but for the **history**. It's fascinating to see what has changed, what has stayed the same, and how our understanding of bromeliads has evolved over the decades.

Taxonomy: Always a Moving Target

One of the most interesting things to see is how genera have changed over time. In 1974, **Acanthostachys** and **Neoglaziovia** were both **monotypic**—each containing a single species.

(President's View Continued)

February Meeting



Join us on February the 17th for an interesting presentation on Professor Werner Rauh as given by Ms. Pam Koide Hyatt from Bird Rock Tropicals in California. During her travels she has discovered more than a dozen species of *Tillandsias* new to science as well as many more natural hybrids. She will speak and bring plants to sell. See page 3 for more info. Join us at:

7 pm
1475 West Grey, Houston
Hospitality donors: A-M

Zoom in at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89412131955?pwd=KcnmZawPlxsZ6M7Cgyaazm4pEbiX4h.1>

Meeting ID: 894 1213 1955

Passcode: 194524

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Today, both genera are recognized as having **about three species each**.

So... roughly one new species every 20–25 years? Maybe we're due for another soon. 😊 Several genera have come and gone—and in some cases, come back again. **Sincoraea** was once merged into *Orthophytum*, and **Wittmackia** into *Aechmea*, only for both to later be split back out as distinct genera.

And then there are the names that may spark memories for some of our longer-standing members:

Cryptanthopsis, *Thecophyllum*, *Aregelia*, *Chevalieria*, *Caraguata*, *Sodiroa*, *Massangea*...

I'll admit, I don't remember any of those—but I'll bet a few of you do! 🧐 🌿

One fun discovery for me was learning that **Disteganthus** is actually **still a valid genus**, with about **three recognized species**—just one I'd never encountered before. Yet another rabbit hole to explore. 🐰

Then vs. Now: The Numbers

The 1974 handbook listed the number of species as approximately:

- **400+ Tillandsia**
- **160+ Aechmea**
- **240+ Vriesea**

Today, those numbers have grown significantly. Current estimates put us at roughly:

- **~650 species of Tillandsia**
- **~250 species of Aechmea**
- **~300 species of Vriesea**

It's a great reminder of how much exploration, classification, and reclassification has happened—and continues to happen.

Cultural Lessons That Still Stick

Beyond taxonomy, I also picked up some practical nuggets that still resonate today:

- **Dyckia thrive on neglect.** Perfect for me. 😊
- **All members of the Tillandsioideae subfamily have smooth leaves—no spines. No wonder they're so popular.**
- **Leaf structure tells a story.** Bromeliads with thin leaves that hold water at the base are often **epiphytic (growing on trees and pulling nutrients from the air)**, especially when small. Larger plants with thicker leaves are more likely **saxicolous (growing on rocks)** or **terrestrial (growing in dirt)**. I'd never really thought about using these traits to help determine the best growing medium—but it makes a lot of sense.
- **Houseplants flip the rules.** Most bromeliads grown as houseplants started life as epiphytes, with hard, anchoring roots and nutrients coming from the air and falling debris. Indoors, that environment is reversed. To compensate, we need to encourage softer feeding roots by placing nutrients below the plant and supplementing with light foliar feeding.
- **Potting mix ideas Most bromeliads prefer well-draining soil**, especially in humid conditions. The handbook even recommended **Osmunda fiber**—something I'd never heard of, which probably tells you how little I grow orchids. 🌸

(President's View continued)

✿ A Freeze Story (and a Lesson Learned)

By now, many of us have also had a chance to test our freeze preparations. I hope yours were successful and uneventful. I managed to get everything done just in time—finishing shortly before dark on Saturday, the first day of the freeze.

I did have a close call, though. I decided to add a **more rigid plastic roof under the flexible plastic covering — giving my ongoing “temporary” (there’s an oxymoron for you) greenhouse just enough structure to keep rain from pooling**. Unfortunately, it rained before I had the plastic fully secured, and the torrential downpour collapsed part of the roof structure. Fortunately, I escaped with **no significant damage**, got the roof back up, and made it through the freeze without losses.

Always More to Learn

Reading through this old handbook reminded me why I enjoy this hobby so much. Whether it’s new species, shifting taxonomy, or rethinking how we grow our plants, bromeliads reward curiosity. Even decades-old books can still teach us something new.

And honestly, that’s part of the fun. 🌿 ✨

I look forward to seeing you, and Pam Koide-Hyatt's presentation, at the February meeting.

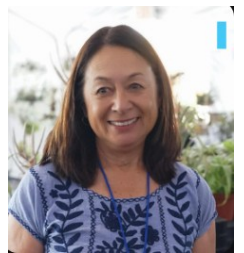
Mike

XX

The Legacy of Professor Werner Rauh and Travels in Peru

By Pamela Koide Hyatt

Professor Werner Rauh (1913 – 2000) was the director at Heidelberg Botanical Garden and Herbarium from 1960 until his retirement in 1982. He traveled extensively until his last expedition to Madagascar in 1994 and continued to visit the Botanical Garden until a few weeks before his death in 2000. He completed more than 36 expeditions to Central and South America, southern Africa and Madagascar. From his travels he collected thousands of plants, field notes and herbarium specimens which are a part of the Botanical Garden and Herbarium. The Werner Rauh Heritage Project, funded by the Klaus Tschira Foundation, is a relational database to store all the information found in these field books as well as link the information to the living collections, herbarium and the garden’s existing database.



This presentation has two parts. The first part Pamela will discuss the works, travels and plant discoveries of Professor Rauh. We will examine how all Rauh’s work has been documented in the Werner Rauh Heritage Project. The second part will discuss her experience of traveling with Professor Rauh to Peru for nearly one month in 1988. There will be original images from travels with Rauh as well as updated images of Bromeliads and Cactus from a recent trip to Peru in 2019.

WHAT IS THE BEST PATH MATERIAL FOR A TINY YARD?

Bromeliads



Trying to make your small garden look bigger? Try these tips:

Light-colored, small-textured materials like pea gravel, alternatively, some light grey pavers are best for small gardens. These reflect light and don't overwhelm the space like large, dark slabs might.

HOW WIDE SHOULD A GARDEN PATH BE?

For a main walkway, 36 inches (91 cm) is standard. However, if you are trying to make a garden look bigger, you might find it helps to narrow the path to 18-24 inches (45-61 cm) as it reaches the end of the yard so it creates a great sense of distance.

CAN I BUILD A PATH OVER EXISTING GRASS?

Absolutely. Using no-dig stepping stones or mulch paths with a weed barrier is a quick afternoon project. You don't always need to excavate to get the look of a pro-designed path.

From Gardening KnowHow

Announcing: Quarterly Luncheon
Pay your own way and have fun with friends.

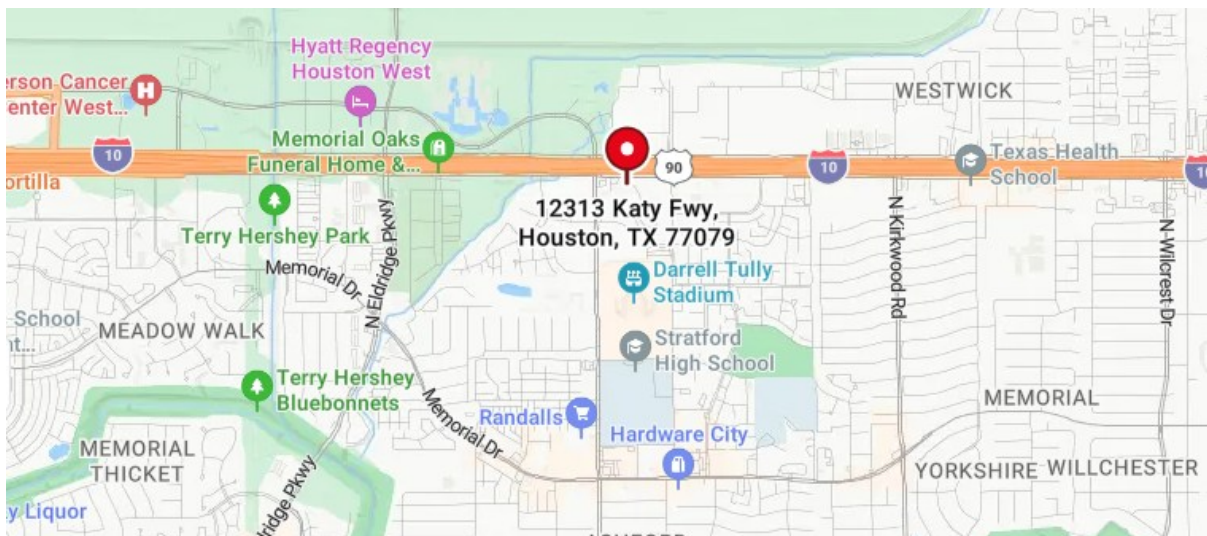
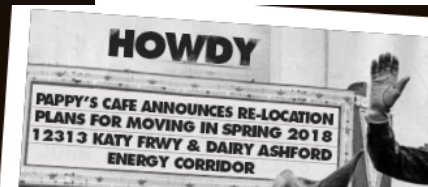
Our first luncheon for 2026 will be held on Sunday, March 1 at Pappy's Cafe 12313 Katy Freeway at 12:30 pm.

A time to get together and discuss whatever.

Seating is limited so please RSVP to Shirl Stowe at

email: birddogl19@outlook.com

See you there



Reminders

Updating Your Contact Info

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

There will be no plant raffle at the February meeting because of the speaker's sale.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Don't forget to send me pictures of your plants. They don't have to be in bloom. For the March edition, get them into me by Feb. 23

Conference registration includes access to all conference seminars, the bromeliad show, the auction, and early entrance to bromeliad sale. Included meals are listed below.

- Conference Opening Reception with All American Buffet (Wednesday evening)

- Plant Auction with Complimentary Appetizers (Friday evening)

- Keynote Address with plated Banquet Dinner (Saturday evening)

Bus tours and extra dinner tickets are optional and can be purchased for an additional fee. See BSI.org website.



Conference Registration — \$425 per person

All conference registration fees are final and non-refundable.

[Conference Registration and Payment – WBC 2026](#)

Witness the artistry of nature and the skill of dedicated growers! Our **judged plant show** will feature a stunning array of bromeliads, meticulously cultivated and presented for your admiration.

BULLETIN BOARD



February Birthdays

Alicia Baker	2/26
Harrison Burks	2/19
Gretchen Fontenot	2/12
Vickey Gurka	2/18
Laurie Skov	2/17

Raffle Results from January Meeting

Donors: Dave and Linda Whipkey, Mitch Fontenot, Kathy Stahl, Ruby Adams

Winners: Mike O'Neal, Rick Richtmeyer, Ruby Adams, Mary Sobieski, Scherie Townes, Vickey Gurka, Gretchen Fontenot, Mary Wood, Dabid Whipkey, Donald Green

**Thanks to everyone who participated.
\$70 collected**



Houston Cactus and Succulent Society

www.hcsstex.org

Regular meeting fourth Wednesday of month at 7:00 PM

Metropolitan Multi-Service Center

1475 West Gray, Houston, TX 77019

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.



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

Houston Orchid Society

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

Regular meeting third Sunday of month at 2:00 PM

Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center

2020 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004

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ASK the EDITOR

What do I do in case my plants are damaged by cold weather?

Don't panic! Don't do something for the sake of doing something.

Observe the plant. It can take up to three days or more for damage to become apparent. After a week or so you can start making decisions.

Damage may be slight like some tip damage. Put plant into safe place, ignore damage until the plant dries out then trim the damage, and don't change the cultural mix it's in.

Damage could be major, mushy leaves and stems. If you are attached to the plant, throw it away. If it is precious to you, remove most of the damaged areas without cutting into the healthy parts. Cut back on water and fertilizer by putting it in a hospital area and watch it. Wait and see what happens.

Damage could be severe. It may look completely dead. Move to the hospital area. Remove damaged tissue. Keep on the dry side. Don't fertilize. WAIT. Given time, it may throw a pup, but that could take months. If new growth appears, water and fertilize.

Thank you for your question.

If you have any questions about bromeliads, please send them to me,
lindawhipkey@gmail.com

I will answer them to the best of my ability.