

TROPICAL FERN AND EXOTIC PLANT SOCIETY, INC. NEWSLETTER

Volume 16, Issue 18
December 2015

Message from the President

Happy Holidays Everyone!

Don't forget our Holiday Party on Friday, December 18th at 7 PM in the Garden Room at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. As usual it will be filled with wonderful food and good fellowship. Don't forget to let Emalyl know that you are coming and what side dish or dessert you will be bringing.

For our meeting in the new year: at our last board meeting, the board decided that it would be beneficial to appoint a Show Chairperson who is not also a club officer. So, if you have always wanted to run our society's show, now is your chance! Let us know at the January meeting and, if there is more than one person interested, we will vote on the chairperson at that meeting.

I look forward to seeing all of you there!

Tropical Fern and Exotic Plant Society meeting notes:

Date: November 23, 2015

Speaker: Dr. Chad Husby

Topic: The Curious Whisk Ferns- The Psilotums

Treasurer's Report: balance TBA

President called meeting to order at: 7:40pm

Hospitality: Emalyl and company

Raffle provided by: Redland Nursery

Meeting ended at: 9:15pm

Continued, next page

Dr. Husby is well known in the fern world, amongst other worlds, as the former Collections Manager of the Montgomery Botanical Center. Recently he made the move to Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, where he is the new Botanical Horticulturist. Chad's work with Psilotums puts him in a small group of aficionados who cultivate these extraordinary plants, some of which have subtle characters which set them apart. The genus has only two species:

P. complanatum, and *P. nudum*—known to many growers in our area as a volunteer plant.

Psilotums are among the most ancient and simplest of all plants. They have no roots, just above-and-below-ground stems, and have a symbiotic relationship with fungi. There were as many as 200 cultivated varieties of Psilotums a century ago, notated in many aged Japanese fern texts, but a fraction of that many varieties exist today. The cultivar 'Bunryu-Zan' is a heritage variety that grows strongly enough to be cultivated here without much fuss, growing well in calcined clay media such as Profile. As a pure medium, this material is stable over a long time, doesn't compact, allows perfect water drainage, and many plants have an affinity for it.

Psilotums are fairly petite, some growing to only a few inches tall, and with some fantastic branching structures. Some of the *P. complanatum* varieties, especially the Asian varieties, can grow quite long stems, over three feet long. Chad brought in several examples of these curious, alien-like plants, some of which have branching stems that look like frog fingers. Some of the Japanese cultivars have been grown for centuries, and have been in existence for hundreds of years. It was clear that he had a great interest in these groups, and had grown them for quite a while.

Perhaps he should start his own Psociety for these Psilotums.....

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Morell, C.P.A.

Certified Plant Addict

Yes, We Have Bananas Today

By John Banta

How many children have had to eat over-ripe bananas on their cereal because Mother wants to use up the bananas before they get brown and mushy? That may be a problem of yesterday now that Hydrogel (chitosan) is being considered as an antioxidant spray. When bananas are harvested they are not ripe and they continue to ripen on the way to the market. The banana fruit respire in order to ripen. This process is retarded via cooling until we buy the bananas. Then we are advised not to put the fruit into the refrigerator as that will cause them to turn brown. So the bananas set out in the kitchen and quickly get covered in brown spots and become mushy. Now, thanks to shrimp and crab shells the shelf life of bananas has been extended from days to weeks. The coat of chitosan prevents oxygen from reaching the fruit thus slowing down respiration (ripening). In as much as the banana peel is discarded there is no problem with washing or harmful additives.

The banana remains the favorite breakfast fruit.



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