

TROPICAL FERN AND EXOTIC PLANT SOCIETY, INC. NEWSLETTER

Volume 16, Issue 13

May 2015

Message from the President

I hope everyone is enjoying spring in South Florida and the start of the rainy season!

For those of you who could not attend last month's meeting, we voted to return to Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden for our 2016 show and sale.

This month, we are looking forward to the lecture by Bruce McAlpin on emergent aquatic plants.

For the June meeting, we do not have a raffle table sponsor so we are asking members to examine their collections and see if they have a plant that they could donate to the raffle table. If you can do so, please contact Ralph Hernandez at this (Monday, May 25th) meeting or call him at:

786-261-4856.

APRIL MEETING IN REVIEW

DATE: April 27, 2015

SPEAKER: Dr. Lise Dowd, scientist, researcher, and President of TFEPS

TOPIC: The Fairchild Million Orchid Project

TREASURER'S REPORT: \$9,803.80

MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT: 7:35 pm

HOSPITALITY TABLE: Emalyl Isreal and others with the customary spectrum of great food!

RAFFLE TABLE: StelMar Gardens

MEETING ENDED AT 9:10 pm

Lise spoke about the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden Million Orchid Project, which was inspired by a similar (and somewhat larger) project in Singapore some years ago.

The crux of the project is to propagate Florida native orchid species, both terrestrial and epiphytic, to plant into public areas.

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The idea had many benefits, not the least of which is to make the orchids so numerous in local trees and gardens that there will be a much reduced demand for them to be poached from the orchid's native habitat. Started about two years ago by FTBG, the process seems straightforward enough: grow orchid seed aseptically in agar-based seed germination media in glass bottles, thin out the seedlings (re-bottling them) after 3 to 5 months, grow seedlings to a larger size, then remove them from the bottles to be grown in a nursery.

With as many as a million seeds in a small seed pod, the potential to produce plants is unlimited! The challenges start to sprout as fast as the plants: how many seed bottles need to be produced? How can help be enlisted to propagate the plants? How many seedlings can be efficiently produced? The answers were revealed in Lise's program: as the capacity to cultivate the seedlings grew (literally,) the ease by which the laboratory staff could produce plants also grew. Local high schools began assisting in the program and the Fairchild nursery staff and volunteers continued to gain expertise in cultivating the seedlings just removed from the bottles. The program has already released plants "into the wild" in Coral Gables, mounting numerous small seedlings onto trees in selected areas. The plants will be for sale to municipalities and schools soon, and hopefully to the public afterwards.

It is an exciting prospect to think that in the next few years, we may see thousands of native orchids blooming on trees and in protected ground areas throughout our vicinity.

Lise's program was extremely well executed with a clear and linear approach to the world of growing orchid plants from seed to flower, with the end goal of re-introducing them to areas where we can enjoy them publicly. It is a laudable program and worth supporting.

Respectfully submitted,

*Craig Morell, C.P.A.
Certified Plant Addict*

Tropical Fern and Exotic Plant Society Press Release

Meeting: Monday, May 25, 2015

Topic: Emergent Aquatic Plants

The **Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society** presents **Dr. Bruce McAlpin** who will speak on **Emergent Aquatic Plants** on Monday, May 25th at 7:30 pm. The meeting will take place at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, 10901 Old Cutler Rd., Coral Gables, FL in the Corbin Building.

Most ferns, and some exotics, demand moist soil at all times. However, many worthy horticultural plants need completely saturated soil. They thrive with roots covered in several inches, or up to a foot of water. Dr. McAlpin will “show and tell” how to grow emergent aquatic ferns and other botanically interesting plants that do well in our semi-tropical climate. As always, he will concentrate on propagation and the correct methods and materials for successful cultivation of these water loving plants.

Bruce retired from Miami Dade College where he was a professor of botany. Prior to that he worked at Marie Selby Botanical Garden, Las Cruces in Costa Rica and the New York Botanical Garden. He earned his Master’s and Ph.D. in Plant Anatomy from Duke University.

There is no admission fee and the public is invited to attend this presentation. There will be plants for Raffle donated by Peter Kouchalakos (PCK Orchids) and Jody Haynes. Refreshments will be served.

For more information please visit www.tfeps.org or call 305 232-2257.



MOUNTING PLAQUES

Made of 1" x 3" Pressure Treated Lumber

12' x 12" - \$ 7.00 15' x 15" - \$10.00

18' x 18" - \$13.00 24" x 24" - \$20.00

Contact—Bob Benaim 305-793-9755 or,

bobbenaim@gmail.com

Yes, We Have No Bananas Today

By John Banta

The dramatic saga of the banana's development from an obscure, minor tropical fruit to the giant of the fruit business is the subject of many great books like Charles Wilson's, *"Empire in Green and Gold"* or Frederick Adam's *"Conquest of the Tropics"* or Dan Koppel's, *"Banana: The Fate of the Fruit That Changed the World"*. All great reads!

But, our immediate interest is in some of the current problems facing the banana industry and what an industry it is! The United States consumes over 4 million tons of bananas per year! The banana is the eighth most important food crop in the world: a 9 billion dollar a year industry.

The major problem is that the entire banana industry depends upon only one variety of banana, the "Cavendish" and it is being devastated by an uncontrollable fungus disease, *Fusarium oxysporum*, or (Foc TR4.) Actually, the Cavendish banana is not one of the best tasting bananas and is often derisively referred to as the "Hotel Banana." Its main quality is the ease of culture and marketing. There is a quick fix to the fungus problem but it involves genetic modification. The red pepper (*Capsicum*) has resistance to *Fusarium* but the industry is reluctant to have the "GMO" label attached to its major product.

We will have to wait for the next episode and hope for the best.



2015 OFFICERS:

President: **Lise Dowd (305) 662-2368** Vice President: **Marie Nock (305) 232-2257**
Secretary: **Craig Morell (305) 667-1173** Treasurer: **Bob Benaim (305) 793-9755**

2015 DIRECTORS at LARGE:

Steve Forman (305) 662-2368 **Vivian Waddell (305) 665-5168**
Leonard Goldstein **Ellis Brown (305) 253-5669**

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT:

Marnie Valent: (305) 233-5929

2015 DIRECTORS:

The board consists of TFEPS officers, the immediate past president, and elected directors at large.

2015 COMMITTEES:

Hospitality:

Emaly Israel (305) 235-0886 **Martha Bogaard (305) 661-2305**

Membership:

Sherrin Smith (305) 213-2598

Raffle Table:

Ralph Hernandez (305) 633-9099 **Skye Palmer (305) 595-9291**

Special Events:

Marie Nock (305) 232-2257

Webmaster:

Bob Benaim (305) 793-9755

TROPICAL FERN

&

EXOTIC PLANT SOCIETY

Membership Application - 2015

We offer four different memberships options:

Yearly:

_____ \$ 15.00 for individual

_____ \$ 17.00 for two members at the same address

Lifetime:

_____ \$ 125.00 for individual

_____ \$ 150.00 for two members at the same address

Yearly dues are for calendar year - January - December

This is for a New Membership: _____ or for Renewals: _____

Please Print

Name: _____

Phone: H or C: _____

E-mail: _____

Name: _____

Phone: H or C: _____

E-mail: _____

Street Address: _____

Zip Code + 4: _____ + _____

H - Home Phone C - Cell Phone

Enclose check payable to: TFEPS

Please mail to: TFEPS - Membership

P.O. Box 902094

Homestead, Florida 33090-2094