



# Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society, Inc. Newsletter

Volume 16, Issue 2

February 2014

## January in Review

Date—**January 27, 2014**

Speaker- **Georgia Tasker**, Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden staff writer

Topic- **The Plant Riches of Ecuador**

Treasurer's report balance—**\$ 10, 759.84**

President **Ron Keifert** called meeting to order at—7:30

Hospitality—**Emalyl Israel** and **Martha Bogaard**

Raffle provided by— **Frank and Sally Tastinger**

Meeting ended at— 8:50 p.m.

President **Ron Kiefert** opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the new roster of people, himself included. Marie Nock announced the Spring Sale in April. Marie introduced the speaker, **Georgia Tasker** who is legendary in many circles for her decades as garden writer for the Miami Herald, as author of several books on gardening and horticulture, as an outstanding photographer, and being an extraordinary speaker.

Georgia spoke about her recent travel to Ecuador, along with Steve and Marie Nock. (*Secretary's note: this would surely constitute a*

*Dream Team of plant people, in one of most fabulous and flora-rich areas in the world*). Georgia presented an excellent power-point program, stating that Ecuador is a global megadiversity site. This translates to astonishing diversity in many ways, be they insects, birds, plants, invertebrates and so on. Like many tropical countries, it is subjected to heavy development pressure, especially from oil exploration, leading to both deforestation and pollution issues. On this trip, she went to the southern / south-

eastern part of Ecuador, on which trip they visited the amazing **Ecuagenera** nursery group. The owners, **Ivan and Pepe Portilla**, also have a hotel and tour business, in addition to nurseries in 3 distinct climates throughout the country.

There are 16,000+ orchid species in Ecuador, as well as 15,000+ native plant species, with an extremely high degree of endemism (native species). Many of the orchid species are exquisitely detailed, but exquisitely small, often less than a few inches tall, some

are far smaller. American botanist **Alvin Embree** did a great deal of work in Ecuador, and the genus **Embreea**, as well as several species with the species name of "*embreei*" honor his work. Georgia and company visited the El Pahuma Orchid Preserve, the Belavista Preserve, and Cajas National Park, a park with 235 lakes. Ecuador has 130 species of hummingbirds, with curious names such as the Racket-Tail Hummingbird. With a mind-boggling 2700 species of butterflies, one could spend a lifetime just taking inventory of the orchids and butterflies, let alone the native plant species. Many species in the Gentian and Aster families are bright color-spots in the mountain landscapes. (*Secretary's note: from personal experience, Ecuador is amazing in many respects, but much of the really interesting orchid and bromeliad flora is at some altitude,*

*(Review continued on page 2)*

## Next Meeting,

**Monday, February 24**

The **Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society** proudly presents Dr. Michael Maunder who will speak on **Botanical Gardens: A Personal Selection of the Good, the Great and the Weird**. The meeting will take place at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, in the Corbin Building.

Dr. Maunder is Associate Dean for Research Engagement at Florida International University and Interim Director of the Kampong. He is a graduate of the School of Horticulture at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and earned a Msc. And Ph.D. from the University of Reading. Mike has 25 years experience in habitat and species conservation with extensive field experience in the Middle East, Caribbean and Eastern Africa.

There is no admission fee and the public is invited to attend this presentation. Raffle plants will be donated by **Bloomin Good Nursery** (Dolores and Richard Button) for Raffle. Refreshments will be served. For more information please visit [www.tfeps.org](http://www.tfeps.org) or call 305 232-2257.

# ***The Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society, Inc.***

## **Officers for 2014**

### **President**

Ron Keifert (305) 445-7228

### **Vice President**

Marie Nock (305) 232-2257

### **Secretary**

Craig Morell (305) 667-1173

### **Treasurer**

Bob Benaim (305) 793-9755

### **Board of Directors**

Steve Forman (305) 662-2368

Debbie Lamb (305) 251-8675

Mike Twyford (305) 444-6332

Marnie Valent (305) 233-5929

Reggie Whitehead (305) 613-5944

*(and current officers)*

### **Committee Chairs**

**Membership** — Sherrin Smith (305) 213-2598

**Hospitality**—Emalyl Israel (305) 235-0886

Martha Bogaard (305) 661-2305

**Raffle Table** — Skye Palmer (305) 595-9291

Argeo Hernandez (305) 633-9099

**Special Events** —Marie Nock (305) 232-2257

**Webmaster** — Bob Benaim (305) 793-9755

*(Review continued from page 1)*

*making them largely unsuitable for low-land culture without extra effort. Much of Ecuador is mountainous, some of which is above the level at which we'd need oxygen to be comfortable.)*

The program ended amongst a flurry of questions. Georgia showed us once again what good pre-and post-trip research can yield when combined with great photography. It was a pleasure to hear the accuracy of good taxonomy applied to the right photos, and she spoke to a nearly standing-room-only crowd. As an ending note, Ivan Portilla will be the September TFEPS speaker, bringing interesting and uncommon plants for sale.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Craig Morell, CPA*

*Certified Plant Addict*

### **Trinity Churchside Garden**

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E-mail: sas56chevy@aol.com



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Contact – Bob Benaim, 305-793-9755 or

staghomrescue@gmail.com

***35th Annual  
Spring Sale  
at Fairchild Tropical  
Garden***

***Just around the  
corner***

**DUES ARE DUE**

Dues for 2014 are currently being collected. Have you rejoined TFEPS? If not, *Please* do so today.

Please make checks payable to TFEPS (and mail to):

Bob Benaim, Treasurer  
P.O. Box 902094  
Homestead, FL 33090-2094

Dues are (still):

\$15.00 - single

\$17.00 - for two members at the same address

(Dues may be paid at our February meeting.)

(Also, if there are changes that we should know about, e.g. phone number or e-mail address, please use the application and include it with your dues.)

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR NEEDED**

The current editor is retiring from this post and so, we are looking for a new editor. If you are interested in putting our newsletter together, please contact, Ron Keifert at (305) 445-7228, or e-mail him at: hwy253@hotmail.com

*Welcome New Member*

Lester Kallus  
2 Ingrid Road  
Setauket, NY 11733  
(631) 689-8899  
lkallus@earthlink.net

*February 24..... Bloomin Good Nursery*

**Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society**  
**P.O. Box 902094**  
**Homestead, FL 33090-2094**

**\_\_\_ Individual Member \$15.    \_\_\_ Household Membership \$17.**

**\_\_\_ Life Membership \$125.    \_\_\_ Life Household Membership \$150.**

**(Yearly dues are for calendar year - January - December)**

**This is for a New Membership: \_\_\_ or for Renewals: \_\_\_**

**Member's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of additional member:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Street Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip + 4:** \_\_\_\_\_ **+** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Amount enclosed: \$** \_\_\_\_\_

## *Waltzing Genes*

by John Banta

The concept that genes are the recipe of any life form encourages the belief that genes are stable and immutable. This position leads to a natural suspicion of genetically modified organisms (GMO). The recent failure of a proposal in Washington state for compulsory labelling of GMO foods reflects a degree of common sense. Virtually every food we eat has been genetically modified. The purpose of the last 200 years of plant breeding has been to modify the genetics of food plants. I realize that current meaning of GMO foods refers to gene movement encouraged by laboratory methods.

The idea of lateral gene movement is the major force in evolution. The concept of horizontal gene movement (gene transfer between very different organisms) is rather new. For example, it has been noted that the largest flower in the world, **Rafflesia** in the family **Malpighiales** has commandeered at least 2% of its genetic material from its host plant (a vine, **Tetrastigma** in the family, **Vitaceae**). If horizontal gene movement occurs naturally is it asking too much to transfer a mutant gene from **Arabidopsis**, in the family **Cruciferae** into **Rubus** (Rosaleae family) in order to produce a seedless raspberry? This procedure has already been used to produce a seedless Cherimoya.

*Next Meeting, Dr. Michael Maunder, Botanical Gardens, Monday, February 24, 7:30 p.m.*

*Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society, Inc.  
6880 S. W. 75 Terrace  
South Miami, FL 33143*