



Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society, Inc.

Newsletter

Volume 12, Issue 4

Editor: Reggie Whitehead April 2010

March in Review

President Mike Twyford called meeting to order at—7:40 p.m. Our treasurer's report balance—\$14, 442.93. Hospitality by Emaly Israel, Martha Bogaard, and Marie Nock. The Raffle table was provided by—Dolores Fugina and Richard Button (*Bloomin' Good Nursery*). In addition to the *Bloomin' Good Nursery* raffle plants, David Foster brought in a large specimen of a maidenhair fern to add to the table.

Marie Nock introduced the speaker, Dr. Bruce McAlpin, a well-known horticulturist from many venues. He got his doctoral degree at Duke University, and went on to work with the legendary Bob Wilson at La Selva in Costa Rica, then on to the New York Botanical Garden, Marie Selby Botanical Garden, and most recently as a teacher of Ornamental Horticulture at Miami Dade College for more than 20 years. Recently retired, he now lives in the town of Muse, near LaBelle in southwest Florida. Bruce had several major points, but his first was: "build a greenhouse !" or at least some sort of weather-control structure. Our climate is fickle, and we have a penchant to grow plants that get damaged, even at temperatures above freezing. His second main point was to propagate a back-up copy of your choice plants, in case the parent plant dies.

One of the primary points to consider in propagation is the choice of potting or propagating medium. Bruce mentioned that in the olden British days, most potting mixes

called for a "sandy loam with leaf mould". For us in Florida, this is difficult to construct. Around 1950, Cornell University started working with "soil-less media", which contained no actual mineral soil such as decomposed rock or clay or loam. The new media used peat moss and vermiculite, which is a great short-term mix, but this mix breaks down rather fast, and the vermiculite goes "squishy". Newer soil-less media contain perlite, a longer lasting silica material which doesn't break down, and adds porosity to the mix. Bruce uses Pro-Mix as a base for his mixes, and often adds coconut chunks, or pine bark soil conditioner, small lava rock, or long fiber sphagnum moss to his mixes, depending on the degree of aeration the plants require.

There are myriad propaga-

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Next Meeting, Monday, April 26

The Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society presents **Craig Morrell** who will speak on ***Feeding the Needy: Old, New, and Almost Forgotten Ways to Fertilize Plants.*** Now that's a mouthful, figuratively speaking. Craig is one of our gifted speakers whose knowledge is to be savored. We do hope you will come out to hear all that he has to offer.

See you there.

2010 Show and Sale

Where has the time gone? Our Annual Show & Sale is almost here, June 5 and 6.

All members are encouraged to participate in the show which will take place once again in the Garden House at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. There will be ribbons awarded in several major categories. This year's show will feature a landscaped setting, with our plants as the focal point.

There will be 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place ribbons, for not only ferns, but also for flowering plants as well. Larger rosettes will be awarded to **Best Native Plant, Best Flowering Plant, Best Fern, Most Unusual Plant** and **Best in Show**. We are awarding a special ribbon, **Sweepstakes**, for the most Blue Ribbons awarded to an individual.

Members may bring in plants on Thursday, June 3 beginning at 10 a.m. Your plants will need to have Plant Entry Cards and a Plant Entry Sheet. You may pick up cards at the May meeting, or on June 3 when you bring your plants in.

All plants must be identified before they are entered for display. If you are unsure of the botanical name, someone will be there to help you on June 3. All members are encouraged to participate in the display. Judging will be on a fair scale affording both the novice and seasoned grower a chance to win awards.

While there will no doubt be

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The Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society, Inc.

Officers for 2010

President		
Mike Twyford	(305) 444-6332	
Vice President		
Marie Nock	(305) 232-2257	
Secretary		
Craig Morell	(305) 667-1173	
Treasurer		
Tom Moore	(305) 666-0219	
Hospitality		
Martha Bogaards	(305) 661-2305	
Emaly Israel	(305) 235-0886	
Special Sales		
Marie Nock	(305) 232-2257	
Librarian		
Juan Espinosa-Almodovar	(305) 444-3103	
Raffle Table		
Skye Palmer	(305) 595-9291	
Webmaster		
Bob Benaim	(305) 793-9755	

Board of Directors will consist of the above officers and chairs; and the following individuals.

Steve Forman	(305) 662-2368
Debbie Lamb	(305) 251-8675
Reggie Whitehead	(305) 613-5944

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many ferns entered, there will be major awards given to non-fern plants as well.

The success of this show depends on the generous nature of our members, who by the way made the past shows so successful.

All you will need to bring are your plants, we handle them from that point on. You will need to come back on Sunday after the show to collect your ribbons and plants.

Remember, we will begin accepting plants at 10 a.m. on Thursday, June 3. You may bring plants in, up until 7 p.m. that evening. ***However, it would be extremely helpful for plants to arrive early in the afternoon so that they may be properly placed in the display.*** If you need help in getting a plant to the garden, please let Tom Moore know (305) 666-0219. We will try to accommodate all reasonable requests.

Grooming Plants

It is never too late to discuss some of the basics. Our show will have an easy judging standard, however, we still require that plants be as free as possible from glaring blemishes. This means, no pests and no leaves or fronds that are severely marred by pests. Plants will be judged on quality, appropriate number of leaves or flowers, or (in the case of ferns) fronds on a specimen.

Small plants, or young plants certainly should be entered in the show, reasonable care should be made to show them off to their best advantage. This rule of thumb also applies to older, mature plants. Plants should be well-supported and established on their mountings or pots (if terrestrials).

When transporting plants to the show, particular care should be given so that important foliage is not damaged. Wrapping plants in newspaper and plastic helps reduce damage and breakage of award-winning specimens. If you are transporting a hanging basket of ferns

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where the rhizomes have covered the base of the basket, you might want to use a plastic crate to rest the bulk of the plant in so that you do not damage the rhizomes. Also, you could place cushions of wadded up newspaper underneath the plant to keep the fronds from being crushed.

Display Plants

If you participating as a vendor, your display plants also will need to be brought in on **Thursday, June 3, beginning at 10 a.m.** More information for vendors is covered in the vendor packets (being sent out very soon). Since our vendor's plants will be an essential part of the display, it is imperative that these plants be at the Garden in a timely manner so that they may be incorporated into the design — your show designer will be extremely grateful for your help in this regard. Other member's display plants should also be brought in during this period.

Selling Plants — Member's Table

Members wishing to sell through the Member's Table will be able to bring their plants in on Friday, June 4 and Saturday morning, June 5 **before** 9 a.m. Members may bring in up to 30 plants per day.

Your plants **MUST** be double tagged. One tag will go to the cashier (please mark your tag with your initials) and one tag remains with the plant. The society collects 15% of your sales. Member's participating on the Member's Table will be mailed a check from our Treasurer, shortly after the weekend sale.

Volunteers Needed

The society will need volunteers to help with the show and sale.

When you bring your plants in on Thursday, we will be setting up the show. If you can spare some free time, our show designers would welcome your help with arranging the exhibit. We will be arranging the display from 12 noon until 7 p.m.

We will need volunteers to sit at our Membership Table (passing out literature, greeting guests, etc.) and volunteers are needed to man the holding area. Volunteers are also needed to monitor the display and answer questions (to the best of your ability, no training required). This also serves to keep plants out of harms way.

We are hoping that you will be able to put in a little time in some capacity. We will not need you for the entire weekend, just an hour or two. There will be a sign-up sheet at the May meeting, or call Tom Moore (305) 666-0219 or e-mail: tommoore7@aol.com.

Fairchild has also changed its policy for free entrance for society members. If you are a member of the Garden you are automatically admitted free. If you are a member of the society and are working for the show, you will be able to attend for free, if not you will be charged the general admission price for the Garden, \$20.00.

This show and sale, will be another great experience for us. Please participate in any way you can. We would love to have your plants in the display, or your time as a volunteer.

On Friday, June 4, volunteers, are of course invited to attend our Appreciation Luncheon. If you would like to bring something for the Appreciation Luncheon, please contact either Emaly Israel (305) 235-0886 or Martha Bogaards (305) 661-2305.

This is a luncheon that is set up amidst the backdrop of the display, "food among the plants," so to speak. Our luncheon will begin at 1 p.m., prior to judging of the show.

Our Show and Sale has become extremely important to us, and being the only plant show in South Florida that brings in so many tropical plants in one giant display, we will work hard once again to put our best face forward.

Last year's sale brought in many new species of plants that were not in cultivation. Our Show and Sale is the perfect venue for getting new plant material. We will still have the plants you've always loved, and the plants that have eluded you in the past. The bottom line is, please come, and tell your neighbors and friends. And, while at the Garden, take the time to look around and enjoy Fairchild. There is a dedicated shuttle that runs between the new Visitor's Center and the Garden House, this will also help you get your plants back to your vehicle. There will also be porters who will be standing by to help you as well.

Please arrange your schedules so that you are able to participate during the show weekend. Even if you are unable to enter a plant, or volunteer some time, please drop by to support the society, your presence will mean a lot to us. See you in just a few weeks.

See you at the Show and Sale

(Review continued from page 1)

tion techniques for plants, and some of them looked radical. In one method, Bruce cut off the top 1/3 of the bulb of a **Calanthe** orchid, and will plant the cut top in a week after the cut edges heal over. The cut bulb cone will sprout several small plantlets at the very top of the bulb, and the cut bulb base will also sprout new plants. Some deciduous **Dendrobiums** can be propagated by cutting leafless canes and laying the canes into furrows in moist perlite. This tactic also works well with **Phaius** orchid flower spikes. Terrestrial **Sobralia** orchids often produce rooted offsets (keikis) on the tips of the canes, which can be cut off and potted. Bruce likes to use 5 or 6 small plantlets in a 6 " pot, to make a full plant quickly.

Bruce also showed some radical ideas of propagating aroid bulbs, using a grapefruit-sized **Taccarum** tuber as an example. He cut a wedge out of one side of the tuber, and after the cut surfaces heal over, he'll plant the wedge next to the main tuber, and new plants will sprout from the wedge. He made another vertical cut in the opposite side of the tuber to start the division process next year. The cut will heal quickly, and make a natural division line where the cut healed. **Taccarum** can be propagated using mature leaf cuttings 10"-12" long, cut in June, but no later than July, and placed into moist perlite beds, will produce small tubers within a year. This tactic also works with many species of **Amorphophallus**, and numerous allied genera.

Bruce continued by speaking about timing when propagating plants, using a Variegated Manihot as an example, which propagates best when cuttings are taken in November. Cuttings taken in the Spring don't root nearly as well. (secretary's note: I've found this to be true of **Brugmansia** as well).

Some plants need to have at least a few roots to grow on from cuttings, such as most aroid species in the **Meconostigma** group (trunk-forming "selloum" type) of aroids, many species of **Pandanus**, and many bonsai plants. **Begonias**, **Peperomias**, and **Euphorbias** such as *E. milii*, root better when the cuttings are set at 45 degree angles into rows of moist perlite, allowing for improved drainage and increased humidity around the cutting at the same time.

One of Bruce's favorite groups is the **Adenium** succulent group. He feels they are best propagated by air-layers, in April. Also called marcottes, this technique calls for removing a narrow strip of outer bark all the way around a stem, wrapping moist sphagnum moss around the cut, and wrapping heavyweight aluminum foil around the moss to keep it moist.

For germinating very small seeds, Bruce uses milled sphagnum moss, which he makes by grating long-fiber sphagnum moss through a metal grill used for paint rollers. The resulting moss is evenly fine-ground, and quite suitable for using as a lightly compacted 1" thick layer on top of a well-drained sterile medium used for seeds. The moss is naturally antibacterial, and is a good "bed" for very tiny seeds such as **Begonias**, fern spores, bromeliad and **Impatiens**. Bruce recommends wearing heavy rubber gloves and a dust mask when working with peat moss and sphagnum moss, since there is a nasty fungus one could contract after handling the materials for a long time, especially if you have open cuts when handling such products.

Bruce prefers to put many small seedlings into a community-pot. Once the seedlings get a few inches tall, he will separate the largest ones into larger pots, such as 3" or 4" diameter pots, into a potting mix suited for the plant type. He showed a small pot of **Impatiens mirabilis**, a caudex type of **Impatiens**, which grows readily from seed, as long as the seed is fresh and is sowed immediately. This holds true for many species of plants, especially palms, and plants with very small seeds.

Bruce demonstrated another technique of propagating by using a tall plant of a slow-growing **Dracaena goldieana** as an example, wherein he cut the tall stem into 4 node sections, removed all but one leaf, and wrapped a tennis-ball sized handful of moist sphagnum moss around a group of 4 cuttings, then firmly pushed the ball into a small plastic pot. Placed under a greenhouse bench and watered every 2 days. These cuttings will root well, better than by most any other technique.

Bruce concluded his program by demonstrating the use of pre-emergent herbicide called Ronstar, which does a good job of preventing weed seeds from germinating on soil surfaces. Ronstar is also called "Preen" at retail garden centers, it can work for up to 3 months, and greatly helps your plants to avoid weeds from overtaking your plants.

Bruce has been a member of the society for many years, and always brings new techniques to his programs, educating those who have not heard him before. The meeting ended at — 9:25

Respectfully submitted,
Craig Morrell

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden's Spring Sale

If you would like to sell some of your plants through the Tropical Fern and Exotic Plants Society's booth during Fairchild's Spring Sale on Saturday and Sunday, April 24th and 25th, please contact Marie Nock for details.

This year's Spring Sale will be a two day event at Fairchild. The society is in the process of securing its own credit card system so that we may better serve the public. (*Plant societies are now responsible for their own cashier responsibilities during the Fairchild sales*). Marie's e-mail is snock1@earthlink.net; her phone is 305 232-2257.

New Member

George Gann
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Cold Damage

by John Banta

If ever there was a Florida Winter to teach us a few things about cold damage to plants this was it. The cold arrived in January with below freezing temperatures and persisted at below normal temperatures until March. The winter loss of a few tender ornamentals is to be expected but the loss of bearing size mango trees is something else! Don't be too quick to prune off cold damage.

Waiting for signs of breaking buds is a wise choice in determining where the dead and live portions of the branch are. Cleaning up after a freeze can be most depressing. It is only natural to wonder if there wasn't something we could have done to mitigate the damage?

Yes, the reduction of nitrogen rich fertilizers after October and use of high potassium and phosphate fertilizers go-

ing into Winter can make a difference. But is that the extent of the available action we can take? Actually not. There is a new product. StollerUSA's Bio-Forge is an antioxidant that purges plant cells of excess ethylene. Ethylene is a gas that regulates a wide host of plant processes such as inhibiting root formation, inducing flowering and senescence. The ability to resist drought and cold in plants seems to be linked. This is what Bio-Forge is marketed for. One pint will treat an acre. A good friend has provided me with a small sample so maybe next winter won't be such a disaster. I'll keep you informed.

Next Meeting, Monday, April 26, Craig Morrell, Feeding the Needy (Fertilizing) 7:30 p.m.

This Newsletter is also available through PDF and our www.tfeps.org website.

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