

# Scurf

**Bromeliad Society of Broward County**

August 2003



**NEXT MEETING: MONDAY, AUGUST 18TH, 2003, 7:30**

**SPEAKER : NO SPEAKER THIS MONTH! WE ARE  
PLAYING BINGO. DON'T MISS ALL OF  
THE FUN!**

**Plant sales will be open to members**

**Plant raffle will also be held**

We meet the Third Monday of every month (except January)  
at 7:30 p.m. in the Broward Agricultural Extension Building  
3245 College Avenue, Davie, Florida

### **Calendar of Events**

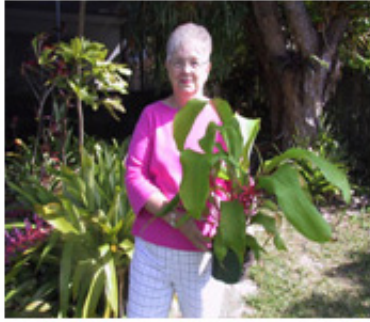
**July 26th – August 2nd 2004 – 16th World Bromeliad Conference** hosted by the Bromeliad Society International and the Greater Chicago Bromeliad Society Westin O' Hare Hotel in Rosemont (Chicago), IL.

**November 7th – 9th 2003 – Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society's Standard BSI show and sale.**

Judging Nov. 7th show and sale open to the public Nov. 8th, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. , Nov. 9th 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Terry Park, 3410 Palm Beach Blvd, Ft Myers, Fl contact Larry Giroux (239) 997-2237 or Brian Weber (239) 591-4268

**November 15th 2003 -** Bromeliad Extravaganza will be held at the Miccosukee Indian Hotel in Miami, a one day sale and auction. More info to follow.

## President's message



Ken Marks did a good program on Tillandsias last meeting. Our meeting this time will be doing bingo, a fun thing are and we are not charging for the cards. The plant sale and raffle will still be part of the evening.

Richard has Dennis Cathcart for our program in September in "Terrestrial Bromeliads."

We are still looking for help at the meetings. Only one person signed as a helper. Another clipboard will be passed around this month, please help. Welcome Larry Davis and Larry Searle.

Good Growing,  
Polly

On the front cover: "Various Fasciatae"  
Photo by Tim Hendrix  
Grown by Bud Hendrix

# Spanish Moss: Its Nature, History and Uses

by  
Dennis Adams  
Information Services  
Coordinator

## Origin of the Common Name, "Spanish Moss"

Native Americans called the plant "tree hair", which name the French explorers turned to "*Barbe espagnole*" -- "Spanish Beard" -- to insult their bitter rivals in the New World. The Spanish retorted with "*Cabello francés*" ("French hair")



"Spanish Moss", a milder variation of the French taunt, has survived. Another common name is "**Graybeard**".

## Legends of Spanish Moss

**One legend** that does not flatter the Spanish explorers is the story of Gorez Goz:

- **Gorez Goz was a bearded brute who bought a beautiful Indian maiden for a yard of braid and a mere bar of soap. The mere sight of the Spaniard so frightened the girl that she ran away from him.**



**Gorez Goz chased right behind her, until at last he climbed up after her to the top of a tree. The maiden dove into the water and escaped, but Gorez Goz's beard got hopelessly entangled in the tree's branches. There he died, but we can still see his "greybeard" on trees throughout the Lowcountry – as the Spanish moss out on the limbs.**

On the Gulf Coast (near Mobile, Alabama) Rufus Joseph Tillman used to tell a more romantic version of the story to his great-granddaughter, Sherry Hicks:

- **A Spanish soldier fell in love at first sight with an Indian chief's favorite daughter. Though the chieftain forbade the couple to see each other, the Spaniard was too lovestruck to stop meeting the maiden in secret. The father found them out and ordered his braves to tie the Spaniard high up in the top of an ancient oak tree. The Spaniard had only to disavow his love to be freed, but he steadfastly refused. Guards were posted to keep anyone – the chief's daughter above all – from giving food or water to the poor Spaniard.**
- **The Spaniard grew weaker and weaker, but he still would not renounce his love for the girl. Near the end, the Chief tried to persuade him once more to stay away from his daughter. The Spaniard answered that not only would he refuse to disavow his love, but that his love would continue to grow even after death. When at last the Spaniard died, the chief kept the body tied up in the tree as a warning to any other would-be suitors.**
- **Before long, the Indians began to notice that the Spaniard's beard continued to grow. The Indian maiden refused ever to take a husband -- unless the Spaniard's beard died and vanished from the tree. As the years went by, the beard only grew stronger and longer, covering trees far from the Indian maiden's village. Legend says that when the Spanish Moss is gone, the Spaniard's love will have finally died with it.**

(Family tradition has it that Mr. Tillman's great-grandfather, James Tillman, was born in Beaufort, South Carolina in 1776, so Ms. Hicks wondered if these ties could account for the similarity between these legends.)

## Spanish Moss in Nature

The collective fragrance of the tiny Spanish Moss flowers is most noticeable in the Lowcountry night air, from April to July. After fertilization, the blossoms produce pods bearing seeds that become airborne when released, and which stick fast to tree branches. A sail-like structure on each seed catches the seed up in the currents of air. The seeds lodge in the cracks of rough-barked live oaks, where a seedling can fasten temporary roots to keep it in place.

A cluster of small stems grows after about two weeks, and these stems will extract most of the plant's nutrients from its surroundings. Though the plant will continue to absorb some nutrients from matter that has decayed on the tree, Spanish Moss is an **epiphyte**, like ***Tillandsia setacea***, described above. The plant's external scales may also absorb minerals from tree leaves (in the warmer areas where the moss grows, this outer layer is thinner, and the fiber is longer, heavier and stronger). Spanish Moss is **not** a parasite (**mistletoe**, on the other hand, is not an epiphyte, but a true **parasite** that draws nutrients from its host tree). A host tree may suffer if a particularly thick growth of moss blocks out sunlight, but Spanish Moss normally does no harm to the



**Spanish moss (gray and green filaments) entangled in a brown twig.**

Photograph by Dennis Adams  
(August 15, 2002)

When wet, the plant has a greenish color. Spanish Moss can absorb water up to ten times its dry weight and will often crack the branch on which it has grown after a particularly heavy rainfall. Spanish Moss, wrote botanist L. H. Bailey, "in moist regions ... gives a most weird aspect to the forests."

The moss will grow only on trees, and not on fences, telephone poles, buildings or even on vines; whatever clumps of Spanish Moss found on these surfaces have fallen there or have been blown away from limbs by the wind.

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## Spanish Moss:A Survivor

Spanish Moss, so sensitive to the air that sustains it, has provided a "litmus test" of pollution. The United States Geological Survey collected samples of the moss along major highways in South Carolina. Samples from I-95 and other interstates showed high concentrations of lead from automobile exhaust fumes, while moss from Highway 17 (south of Charleston) contained significant levels of copper, sodium, nickel and manganese. Spanish Moss will not grow directly over chimney smoke. When in the early 1970s Spanish Moss began dying out in this area, pollution was not to blame, however. An incurable mold infestation killed much of the moss, but enough plants resisted the epidemic that a strain of *Tillandsia usneoides* immune to the mold soon thrived, draping all the Lowcountry as richly as before.



Credits:

Beuford County Public Library

## **Dues are Due!!!**

They were due May 1st, if you have not mailed or personally handed your check to Bill Frazel, please do it immediately. Your mailings will resume once your membership is renewed.

Don't forget your dues support the functions of this society and your monthly Scurf. So again, see Bill Frazel or call him ASAP!

### **“Blooming Bromeliads“ Book is still missing!!!!**

It was checked out 2 months ago - please return it asap or call Polly and let her know you have it. It is very important that we have record of all books coming in and out- we have an extensive library and keeping track is key, so please, whoever has it get in contact with Polly.

**Don't forget.....you too can bring your plants, crafts, any plant related item to sell on the plant table. 20% of your earnings goes to the BCBS. It's a great way for everyone to buy great stuff that you have to offer!!!!!!**





Ken Marks and one of his Tillandsias.  
What an excellent presentation! We all learned a lot.

 **September meeting**  
will be Dennis Cathcart.

His presentation is titled "Terrestrial Bromeliads."

Dennis always brings beautiful plants for sale and his knowledge is amazing.



## Bonus Plant Winner

Diane Tuttle with:  
*Ae. Maculata*



## Name Tag Winner

Molly Lesnick with:  
*Neo. Martenlli*

