

# BROMELETTER

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC. bromeliad.org.au



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Please send articles for Bromeletter to editor@bromeliad.org.au and all other correspondence to: The Secretary, Bromeliad Society of Australia Inc. PO Box 340,RYDE NSW 2112. 1

## **CONTENTS**

Management Details	Page	2,3,18,19
Ants		4,5
Aechmea 'Clara'		6,7
Financial report; Seed Bank		7
Potting soil		8
Cinnamon		9
Vale		10,11,18
Member profile		12,13
Vriesea sucrei		14,15
Bromeletter index		15,16
Inspiration		17

President	lan Hook	(president@bromeliad.org.au)	0408 202 269
Vice President(1)	Kerry McNicol	(membsec@bromeliad.org.au)	0439 998 049
Vice President (2)	Joy Clark		0409 717 794
Secretary	Todd Cameron		j.tbsasecretary@gmail.com
Treasurer	Alan Mathew		0430 806 636
Assistant Treasurer	Sari Kilpinen—Hu	ighes	0424 272 467
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Member	Carolyn Bunnell		02 9649 5762
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Ian Hook Kerry McNicol Annamari Kilpinen Joy Clark Peter Fitzgerald Ron Farrugia Terence Davis Ian Hook / T. Davis Joy Clark Di Tulloch Photo Front Cover Bromeliads growing in the rocky walls in the mountainous areas of Rio de Janiero Supplied by Rodrigo Freitas Greeting to all BSA members,

I trust you are all well and using the time to get to all those jobs that you simply never had time for and being thankful for the delight bromeliads bring you.

The recent isolation measures may mean no meetings for several months to come, and your committee will reassess the situation regularly and let you know.

However our newsletters will be now coming monthly to keep us all connected. They will obviously be altered in format due to no guest speakers, competitions and show and tells but will include member profiles so we can get to know some members. Some of our members have been unwell during this time - Alan Mathew has undergone carotid surgery but is now home recovering. Mark Belot had his shoulder surgery over 7 weeks ago, which was more complicated than his surgeon first suspected and is making a slow and steady recovery, but not driving or lifting his large broms yet. We wish both Mark and Alan the best health during this time. Cheers and keep well, Ian Hook

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http://bromeliad.org.au http://encyclopedia.florapix.nl/

WEBSITES

http://registry.bsi.org/ http://fcbs.org/ http://imperialia.com.br/



## **ANTS**

Sources: BJSNZ Feb 19 -Vol 59, No2 Article D.Timmins; richard-seaman.com. Photos D. Timmins; expeditioned.com; inhabitat.com; researchgate.net.

Have you ever picked up a bulbous tillandsia - like Till. seleriana, Till. bulbosa or Till. caputmedusae and thought it felt terribly light in comparison to its weighty appearance? This is nothing to be concerned about. I have noticed mine send offshoots literally facing down. Even over time, they don't bend and search in an upward manner as you might imagine.

This is part of the intention of the plant to drain water from the hollow chambers in the bulbous base. These hollows allow the plant to provide an ideal environment to house a small colony of ants. Even its leaves tend

to become tubular allowing an entry point for the ants, although holes often become apparent over time in the base of the leaves as ants create new doorways.

4

This means the plant has a reliable food source bought in by the ants and the ants have a safe environment to live in.

The plants that have modified their anatomy like this are called myrmecophile (meaning a symbiotic relationship with ants).....

#### HINT

If you have a myrmecophilic tillandsia, hang it so the water drains and doesn't gather in the base of the leaves (leads to rot) and don't be concerned if your plants has 'ants in its pants'.



## **LEAFCUTTER ANTS**

Ants make up the largest biomass on earth and their intricate relationships are present throughout nature, one interesting species is the leafcutter ant.

In Costa Rica, leafcutter ants take down

leaves from tree, not to eat but to take back to their nest, in order to create a mulch and 'farm' food for themselves and their young.

Millions of workers carry leaf pieces larger than themselves (photo above) that had been passed on to them by specialised chewing ants. The leaf pieces are taken back to their massive underground colonies, where the leaves are chewed to a pulp. The decaying pulp is mixed and stored with ant faeces in chambers the size of footballs. Strands of a specific fungus grows on the decomposing pulp and is the food that



the ants eat. This particular fungus only grows in the nest chambers of leafcutter ant colonies.

There can be 300 or more of these chambers inside the nest, and the earthworks to build these nests can involve the removal of 18000kg of earth during the lifetime of the nest. The leafcutter ants nests are huge, sometimes 10 metres across and 6 metres deep, with several entrances metres and house two or three million ants in a single colony. (photo below of excavated leafcutter ant colony)

The efforts of the leafcutter ants can be seen as a moving highway on the forest



floor. The ants are meticulous in keeping nests clean and free of debris, plants and other obstructions. Leaves from any one tree are only taken to one part of the nest, rather than distributed throughout the nest. This prevents a widespread disaster if the leaves turn out to be infected, or toxic to the fungus.

## Aechmea 'Clara'

Sources: http://registry.bsi.org/: Graeme Barclay -JBSNZ Vo 59 No 8 Aug 2019

Aechmea 'Clara' remains one of the classic bromeliads first described, in 1879, by Baker and often referred to as the Grecian Urn plant. This hardy species has been widely cultivated around the world and has been used to make many hybrids. Due to its urn-shaped rosette, attractive silver banded leaves and highly ornamental and long-lasting bloom it has been extensively used in tissue culture.



The donor plant of *Aechmea* 'Clara' used by Deroose Plants, of Belgium, was reportedly a normal pink practical clone of *Aechmea* fasciata. The date of the tissue culture was not recorded, but probably was during the 80s and 90s when such practices were common. These tissue culture projects can produce mutations in the genetic make-up in a few or more plants. The floral differences are noticed when the plants bloom, then selections are made and cultivar names assigned to desirable clones or groups of plants. This no doubt happened in the case of *Aechmea* 'Clara'. Such plants are no longer a true wild collected species and are referred to as 'species mutation' as no other genes are introduced from another plant in the tissue-culture process. Therefore, they are not hybrids, but can technically be classified as a species.

Aechmea 'Clara' has a large compound inflorescence much larger and denser than a normal Aechmea fasciata. The primary and floral bracts are a very pale, pastel pink to creamy white, rather than the brighter mid-pink tones seen in the normal species. The leaves are spineless, as in other tissue cultured Aechmea fasciata clones. Well known Hybridiser, Chester Skotak mentions that all spineless Aechmea fasciata plants probably originated from a single spineless Japanese clone that probably came from tissue culture. He has made many crosses using these plants and reports that these clones have the ability to pass on their spineless genes to further hybrids. It's possible Deroose used one of these Japanese clones in their project that produced Aechmea 'Clara'.

## Aechmea 'Clara'

**Description**:- Mature rosette to 50cms diameter x 50cms.tall in spike. Spineless, grey-green leaves, lightly-cross-banded silver. Erect, thistle-like inflorescence of white or pale pink bracts and cornflower blue petals ageing to red.

Beautiful white inflorescence which contrasts well with the silver banded foliage.

Water:- Free draining potting mix - keep moist but not wet.

**Light:** - Morning sun; Then dappled - filtered sun; protection from frost, but this species is generally cold-hardy.

**Fertilizer:**- Slow release fertiliser higher in potassium than nitrogen. Regular feeding to attain good shape and robust bloom.

This plant provides a good example of how to use the 'advanced search' function in the BCR. Go to BSI BCR website (http://registry.bsi.org), click on advanced search in the main menu bar, you will be directed to a page with a number of labelled data boxes the seventh box down is 'notes'; type in 'fasciatus group' into the 'notes' field and click 'search'. You will get the results of all registered cultivars of Aech. Fasciata including Aech. Clara. Click on each name to view.

<b>Report from Treasurer Alan Mathew for April 2020</b>
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Closing balance 30.4.2020	<u>\$19,142.48</u>
Less Expenses:	\$283.79
Income:	\$150.00
Opening balance at bank 1.4.20	\$19,276.27

## Below is the list of seeds in our Seed Bank.

Seeds cost 50¢ per packet (plus postage) for Members and Seed Bank supporters or \$1 per packet (plus postage) for all other enquiries:

# Contact Terry Davis (02) 9636 6114 or 0439 343 809

For a full list please go to *bromeliad.org.au* 

As you can see we are short on seed, so if you have seed to donate please contact Terry in order to send them to him.

Al. extensa	27.11.19	Terry Davis
Al. imperialis rubra	15.10.19	Terry Davis
Neoregelia kautskii	3.10.19	Terry Davis

## **POTTING SOIL**

In our No 2 issue Kerry gave us her proportions for her potting mix. However it is important to remember that your particular site will have different wind, sun and rain factors, causing differences in evaporation rates and soil water retention. Then there's species preferences, some like more moisture, some like wet feet, some like it dry....so it's good to remember one size doesn't fit all. Above all get to know your species requirements.

So just to give you more ideas here are other potting recipes.

## From Terry Davis

165 litres coconut chunks - soak several times2 bags (120 litres) horticultural pine bark20 litres perlite20 litres beanbag foam

Terry keeps most bromeliads under cover, waters with tank water every 3-4 days in summer, and once a week in cooler months. He mists to cool in the heat of the day and uses liquid fertiliser as required for each particular species.

From Scott Sandel (San Diego Bromeliad Society - Bromeliad Blade)

30% light potting soil
20% coir chunks (All About Coir was in our Jan/Feb 2020 issue)
15% ground coir
10% medium size orchid bark
10% large aggregate size perlite
15% 3/8" volcanic lava rock gravel

## From Carolyn Bunnell

Carolyn has used numerous commercial orchid mixes over the time she has been growing bromeliads including a mixture from a Pennant Hills Orchid nursery. Carolyn uses a mix of bark, sharp sand, charcoal, perlite and powdered cow manure. Her advice is to consider your own environment. Carolyn's garden is open with no trees for shade and is open to the west, so water retention is a major factor to consider; therfore she adds sand to increase water retention. For tillandsias she keeps the soil mix open (no sand) and is careful with mini Neos in small pots, which dry out quickly.

## **CINNAMON**

#### Source - R. Starck BJSNZ Vol 59 No2 February 2019

It's always good to get tips from fellow bromeliad enthusiasts, here are some tips from New Zealand society member Ralph Starck, on the benefits of cinnamon.

Ant deterrent. If you have a problem with ants in your home or green house cinnamon is a good deterrent as ants don't like to walk where cinnamon powder lays.

Rooting agent. Cinnamon is a rooting agent, and is as useful as willow water or hormone rooting powder. A single application to a cut stem will stimulate root growth in almost every plant variety.

Fungicide control. Warding off fungus based diseases is a problem that hits small seedlings just as they begin to grow. Cinnamon kills the fungus and prevents this problem and works for fungal problems in older plants too.

Healing plant wounds. Dust cinnamon on the wound of plants which are suffering from cuts, as the cinnamon promotes fast healing.

Ralph buys his cinnamon in larger quantities and keeps some a small lidded jar in his potting area. When he removes a pup he dips the pup in the jar of cinnamon then pots up as normal. Then he applies cinnamon with a brush on the scar area of the mother plant. He has been using this method with success for over 3 years.





#### **VALE RUBY RYDE**

It is with great sadness we heard the news that Ruby Ryde passed away on the 20<sup>th</sup> April, aged 90 years. Ruby and husband Keith were active members at both the Central Coast and the Australian Bromeliad societies. Ruby was the president from 1985-1988, and a life member. The following excerpt was written by Ruby in 1985 for the Nov/Dec Bromeletter – titled '**When Ignorance Was Bliss'**.

Some years ago my thoughtful husband, knowing my passion for plants of all kinds, especially the unusual ones, took me to a Cactus and Succulent exhibition..... overwhelmed by all I saw on display – Cactus, Succulents and

Bromeliads, I joined the shoppers who patronised the exciting crammed sales tables. One friendly gentle man had a mixed table of all of the above. I couldn't resist the gorgeous Neoregelia carolinae with deep red inner leaves – I had never seen anything like it! The spots on the Neoregelia chlorosticta 'drove me wild'. Tillandsia flabellata in flower – something different again and Aechmea recurvata var benrathii in flower was a must.



Neo carolinae

All were very keenly priced – however I hesitated to buy another plant not in flower but with quaint banding on the leaves (I felt I had spent my limit for the day)



Aechmea chantinii

...and only \$1.50. After some persuasion I bought it – its name tag read Aechmea chantinii which really meant nothing to me at the time.

I took all my new 'treasures' home and placed them in my shade house (Sarlon cloth roof and walls) on a bench on the eastern side. They were all nicely potted so I didn't alter anything. They grew, or thrived together each flowering and reproducing as their time arrived. Aechmeas chantinii flowered ...it was beautiful. Happy on its bench, it produced one offset which in time flowered also.

At the June 1976 show I joined the Bromeliad Society and learned that Aechmea chantinii was choice and rare! I shifted my plant, split the now formed clump and generally 'fiddled about'. One pup died the first winter – the next winter saw the end of the other two.

My dear friends....replaced my lovely lost plant with one of theirs. But I never get the results from Aechmea chantinii as I did in the earlier days.

A true example of 'when ignorance is bliss' wouldn't you say?



Keith and Ruby found a common love of these plants and spent many happy years hunting specimens in Australia and indeed, in their native habitats in South America. They made a few expeditions sometimes with other members of the Society, resulting in many collected specimens and seed being imported back to Australia. Their interest tended

toward the

spikier species, Aechmea, Dyckia, but they still maintained an interest in all things bromeliad. Ruby has grown and named 2 Dyckia, Keith Ryde and Ruby Ryde. She also was the grower of xNiduregelia Ruby Ryde—photo right (was *Wittrockia paradoxa*, then *Aechmea paradoxa*) from seed obtained from South America, when intergeneric plants were unusual, if not, rare.



Our condolences to all of Ruby's family. The family request that friends do not send flowers but donate to Dementia Australia (email confirmation to samlryde@gmail) and cards to Stephen

– PO Box 1053 Mittagong, 2575.



<u>Dyckia Ruby Ryde</u> cv of fosteriana 'Silver' X 'Big Red' by Ruby & Keith Ryde. Medium to full sun. Orange/Yellow bells. F2. Int. Registered, 2003. Grand Champion Flora Royal Horticultural Banksia medal.

#### **MEMBER PROFILE**

Bob and Pat Sharpley's love of bromeliads started when their son bought his first

house, from an older couple approximately 10 years ago. The overgrown garden had a delapidated shade house and while Bob was helping get the house in order, Pat decided to rescue some plants. At the time they didn't even know what these were, but there were lots and they had an attractive red inner colouring. They brought the bromeliads home and put



them in their garden where they grew profusely and Bob recalls even whipper snipping the broms (not recommended) to keep them in order. At some stage someone told them these were bromeliads and shortly after Pat saw an ad for a bromeliad sale. Pat went on her own, as Bob was working and bought a car load home not even knowing what they were. The sale was at Joy Clark's place, where Pat also got flyers for the next BSA show and meeting. They went along to their first meeting and met Robyn Firth, who encouraged their interest, often inviting them to her property where she had a magnificent collection. Within a few meetings Robyn had Bob and Pat on the committee and they have been active



members since and served on the committee up to 2019.

Bob has a magnificent set up, with shade houses along his perimeter fences, fitted with fans, thermometers, watering and misting systems. There is nothing too good for the precious bromeliads. These days Bob does most of the daily bromeliad work (and has extremely high standards) and Pat is the purchasing officer! What do they collect or have passion? "Anything with colour, it must have colour!" And their shade houses are a delight to the senses, with beautiful, vibrant colours. Bob states he has learned from 'trial and

error' or 'school of hard knocks', to see what works for his bromeliads in his particular environment, which is exactly how we all learn.

After several trials Bob uses the ANL (Australian Native Landscape) orchid and bromeliad mix. He doesn't fertilise his neos and doesn't change the position of any bromeliad without



reason. When cleaning up a bromeliad, he first checks if it's looking good, and if it isn't growing well, he moves it. Bob often judges if the plant is in right position on how well the pup looks. He states it is a matter of getting to know the different positions in your yard and your bromeliad species. Some bromeliads need light to



colour up (eg red) but some need more shade.

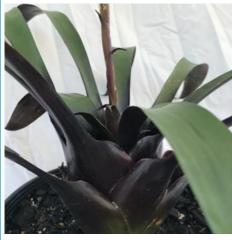
Another tip is to take care when choosing and installing watering systems as difference brands have varying spray patterns and spray distances. Bob avoids buying Holman fittings as they deteriorate quickly, and primarily chooses Gardenia (German) fittings, hoses, hose reels, nozzles which are more expensive but last longer. Bob has found using brass hose fittings is not always the best, as in his garden brass heats up in the sun and melts the hose. The best misting systems have piping with an inner white

layer that protects from UV, so the piping doesn't split after a few years in the sun. So talk to Bob or Pat, if you have Neo related problems or questions, that is what being a member is all about - sharing the joys and pitfalls of bromeliads.

## Vriesea sucrei

#### by Drew Maywald—April 2020

Vriesea sucrei is a species named by L. B. Smith and R. W. Read in 1975. Its habitat is the Atlantic Forest Biome in South Eastern Brazil. This plant is one of the first Bromeliads that I purchased and the name tag said it was Vriesea sukre (Tall Sword Red). I put it in my garden where it gets dappled shade from the trees overhead. I did not take much notice of it until the inflorescence started to develop. When I lifted it from the garden I realised how



lovely Vriesea sucrei is.

The 16 or so leaves are soft, unarmed



and form a rosette. The elegant leaves are about 200 mm long and 20 mm wide at the widest part, <sup>3</sup>⁄<sub>4</sub> way along the length of the leaf. They then taper to a soft, fine point. From above, the leaves are a lovely green colour (British Racing Green said my wife Helen), but on the under-side the leaves are a stunning deep purple colour, and they stylishly curl at the tips.

The red inflorescence rises from the centre of the rosette on a stalk around 600 mm long. The yellow petals of each flower are up to 40 mm long and tipped with green. The tip of the delicate green stamen contrasts against the pale anthers covered in golden pollen. The flowers bloom progressively from the bottom of the inflorescence to the top, over several weeks.





I don't give my Vriesea sucrei any special care. It gets a dose of weak liquid fertiliser every now and again and gets watered about three times a week in the summer. It likes shade and grows well in the dappled shade from my palm trees. The flowers are sterile so it reproduces from offsets.

I have raised up from the ground so I can admire the beautiful flowers and the vivid purple on the undersides of the leaves every day.

## Bromeletter Index - By Drew Maywald

An Index of the Bromeliad Society of Australia's journal, Bromeletter, is now complete and available to all members. Access to the Index is via the link on the club's web site.

To access the index, click on the link: INDEX This will take you to the home page of the index.

#### Bromletter Index Table of Contents To Access the Contents: Put your mouse cursor over the Blue Contents you require, and click on the Link displayed Billbergia #gid=1277619915 [2] **Table of Contents** Articles **Competition Results** Show and Tell Aechmea Seed Bank Billbergia Neoregelia **Glossary of Terms** Journals and Annual Indexes Tillandsia Vriesea Pests, Diseases & Controls **Other Bromeliads** Fertiliser, Potting Mix & Watering **Artistic Entries**

Index created by Drew Maywald: drewmaywald@gmail.com

16

The index consists of a number of folders which can all be accessed by hyperlink To go to a folder simply put your mouse cursor over the folder you want to see, eg, <u>Articles</u>, and click on the link which will be displayed, eg,: #gid=2024523714 These instructions are available in each folder in the index.

Each folder has been organised alphabetically, and once you are in a folder you can simply scroll down to access the entry you require, or you can conduct a search by pressing <Control F> on your key board. A search box will appear in the top right of the screen. Enter the topic of your search which can be an article or plant name, author, part of a name, or any other detail. Scroll down the folder to see all the results of your search which will be highlighted in green. Click on the X on the right of the search box to close it.

All the folders on articles and plants are set out the same way, and each entry contains a link to the relevant edition of Bromeletter, so that you can read the article or see the photograph in the journal. Once you have finished with a particular folder return to the home page by using the "Return to Contents" hyperlink.

The Articles folder contains an index to all articles, descriptions and discussions, published in Bromeletter. Each of the plant folders contains all the information about a specific genera, published in Bromeletter, and also includes a list of photographs and drawings, with links to the relevant edition of Bromeletter.

The index also includes quite a large glossary of terms based on Derek Butcher's glossary. To find a term you can simply scroll down to the entry you require; or use the alphabetical hyperlinks on the right of the Glossary folder; or simply conduct a search by pressing <Control F> on your key board.

I will continue to maintain the index and add details from future and past editions of Bromeletter as they come to hand. However, should you have any feedback about the index; or ideas on how it can be improved; or if you have editions of Bromeletter not contained in the Index, please contact me at

drewmaywald@gmail.com.

## **INSPIRATION**



Photo— Pinterest



Above: 'Apollo's Poetry' photo Bromeliad Paradise

Below: Billbergia Pyramidalis - photo Larissa Victoria



Neo bahiana f. viridis photo Adisak Chaiyasithi



Below: Aechmea recurvata benrathii - photo Ray Henderson



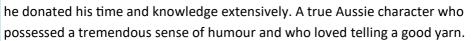
Please send through any great photos of your bromeliads for the next issue.

## **VALE JOHN CATLAN**

It is with great sadness that we advise of John's passing on Friday 10 April 2020.

John was a pioneer in bromeliad growing and hybridising in Australia, and he was also a collector of highly unusual plants generally. His horticultural knowledge was huge and he was more than happy to share that knowledge with others.

John was also a founding and life member of the Gold Coast Succulent and Bromeliad Society, where



## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION:

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: Renewal is due 1st January for membership year January to December. Annual Membership (Single/Family): Australia A\$25 Overseas Membership: Asia/Pacific Zone A\$40.

Rest of the World

A\$45.

New Membership requires a \$5 joining fee, plus Annual Subscription. (Those joining after our spring Show are covered for the following year.) Note: Un-financial members must add \$5 rejoining fee when re-applying for membership.

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Members using Mastercard or Visa mail order facility should provide the following details, printed clearly in block letters, on a separate sheet of paper:

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- Mastercard/Visa number and expiry date.
- CARDHOLDER signature (essential).
- Payment details (membership renewal, book purchase, postage, etc.) •



## LITERATURE for Sale

http://www.bromeliad.org.au/Contacts/BSALibrarian.htm

#### TITLE

Bromeliads for the Contemporary Garden Bromeliads: A Cultural Manual (Rev. ed. 2007) Bromeliad Hybrids 1: Neoregelias Bromeliads Under the Mango Tree Bromeliad Cultivation Notes

AUTHOR	PRICE
Andrew Steens	\$20.00
BSI	\$ 6.00
Margaret Paterson	\$25.00
John Catlan	\$10.00
Lyn Hudson	\$10.00
	¢20.00

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