BROMELETTER

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC.

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Photo Front Cover

Tillandsia stricta rigid leaf

by

Harold Kuan

Greeting to all BSA members,

During this time of social isolation the garden and bromeliads have been a great distraction and advantage for many. We hope everyone has been well and relished this extra time among the beautiful broms. There have been more people joining online bromeliad interest groups so if you're browsing these sites, please encourage people with basic questions to join our society.

During this isolation the aim was to keep BSA members connected and learning. Thank you to Annamari, Joy and John who sent in articles, to Harold and Terry who agreed to phone interviews and to Ray for his photographs and input. There have been 5 Bromeletters in 2020 (incl this one), so if you have missed any contact Ian.

Please send in photos of your currently flowering broms and any items you would normally bring for 'Show and Tell' to **editor@bromeliad.org.au**

Our June meeting is cancelled, remember to check the website for information re recommencement of meetings. We hope we will soon be meeting again.

From Larissa (Editor).

BROMELIAD SOCIETIES AFFILIATED WITH THE BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC.

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C/- Sue Loughran, *sueloughran1@bigpond.com*

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Graham McFarlane
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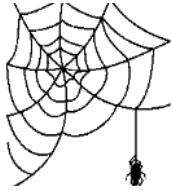
Ian Hook
Allan Beard
David Scott

WEBSITES

Bromeliads in Australia	http://bromeliad.org.au
Encyc of Bromeliads	http://encyclopedia.florapix.nl/
BSI Cultivar Register	http://registry.bsi.org/
Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies	http://fcbs.org/
Bromeliario Imperialis	http://imperialia.com.br/



NIDULARIUMS—THE UNDER APPRECIATED BROMELIADS

by Annamari Kilpinen, May 2020

Among the many bromeliads I love, Nidulariums hold a special place in my collection. I don't really know why - there were some in the garden when we bought our house and as with so many bromeliads they readily multiplied. I guess part of their charm is the long lasting blooms, holding their colour for months. The flower is actually a rosette of shortened leaves from within which the true flower or inflorescence rises. My original plants were a large size brom with lush green on green spotted foliage and a red coloured bloom which gradually changed colour over time to fuschia. (Photo above right)

Nidulariums are a small genus with only 49 species and I only have a smattering of these, but still a good representation of how different bromeliads within one genus can be.

On joining the Bromeliad Society of Australia and attending the monthly meetings, I came to know and add more Nidulariums to my collection. One of my most recent acquisitions I bought at the Bromeliad Conference in Qld last year and is a Nidularium Litmus (Photo left) which has a very unusual flower which turns a blue shade.

Others in my shade house include:

Nidularium fulgens which is a medium size brom with gentle green on green spots on the leaves - this one I scored from a neighbour up the road who kindly places plants excess to her garden needs (generally broms!) on the nature strip outside her home, for anyone to pick up.

Nidularium atalaeaense with an orange toned foliage and rather tough leaves which make me wonder if it will be able to handle more sun than most Nidulariums.

Nidularium innocentii var lineatum (Photo right), which has softer leaves with very delicate white longitudinal striping along the leaves, that contrast beautifully with the flower when it is in bloom.

Nidularium bahia variegate (Photo left) is another variegated Nidularium but in this case the white striping is in the centre of the leaves.

Nidularium cariacicaense (Photo middle right) has reddish tones in the centre of its narrow leaves and a beautiful burgundy toned flower.

Nidularium portos compoi is very unusual with reddish tips on its foliage when flowering, and pups on long stolons.

Nidularium leprosa (Photo left middle) which has lots of tiny dark fuschia spots over its leaves.

Nidularium procerum (Photo right) has a much taller inflorescence than any of the other Nidulariums I have, and a reddish flush at the base of the leaves.

Another Nidularium has burgundy tones (Photo bottom right) over fine striping on top surface of leaves and burgundy undersides.

Let me know if you have any Nidulariums I could add to my collection!

MEMBER PROFILE - HAROLD KUAN

Harold first became interested in plants when he began to get some tropical indoor plants to spruce up his room. During one of his searches for plants on Instagram, he came across a Tillandsia ionantha and was impressed that a plant didn't need soil to thrive. So began his interest in bromeliads which is predominantly in Tillandsias but also anything that is slightly unusual or spiky. Currently he estimates Tillandsias make up 80% of his collection, but Harold also likes Billbergias, Dykias, Neoregelias, Aechmeas - really any bromeliad with colour, sculpture or unusual form.

These days he rarely buys online, but obtains new bromeliads from the BSA shows and meetings, as well as Chris Larson and Peter Tristam.

From the start Harold had a pergola area to house his plants, and now 95% of his plants are undercover. He states they are easy to maintain this way as they don't get too wet and rot.

Photos:
Above right - T. ionantha curly top;
Middle - T Hyde's Silver
Bottom right - Aechmea benrathii

Once Harold joined our club (approximately 5 to 6 years ago) he found that his Tillandsias needed a stand for showing in the competitions and this pushed him to make the wire stands we have seen his entries displayed. along. Harold obtains the mesh from Bunnings, which he cuts with bolt cutters and then bends. With no previous training in metal work, he just figured out how to make them as he went along. Harold obtains the mesh from Bunnings, which he cuts with bolt cutters and then bends the wire to the shape he thinks will work.

For wood mounts Harold finds branches and large pieces on walks around his neighbourhood but purchases cork from an orchid supplier. Harold prefers to mount his Tillandsias individually by species or hybrid and says he leaves the artistic bromeliad arrangements to his mum.

After Harold joined the club, mum Janet also became enthusiastic about bromeliads while dad is a support and sounding board.

Harold says he learnt a lot especially about growing and taking care of Tillandsias from club members, particularly Terry Davis.

Photos:

Above right - Harold

Above left - Tillandsia Nellie Rose

Bottom Right - Tillandsia Graceful

Front cover - Tillandsia stricta rigid leaf

PITCAIRNIA

Sources: Except from Bromeliaceae - A Layman's Guide to the Sub Families and Genera compiled by D. Maywald: FNCBSG April 2020; Photos: R.Henderson

Pitcairnia were named in 1789 by L'Heretier to honour Dr. William Pitcairn, English physician and gardener (1711-1791). The genus ranks as the second most prolific of the bromeliad family, after Tillandsia.

They are most abundant in Columbia, Peru and Brazil, but can also be found in areas from Cuba, Mexico and south to Argentina. Pitcairnia feliciana is found growing on cliff faces in tropical West Africa, and is the only member of the Bromeliaceae family not native to the Western Hemisphere.

Almost all Pitcairnias are terrestrial or saxicolous and prefer moist areas, some are also found growing epiphytically. There are 408 species in the genus (to Nov 19).

Pitcairnia are found growing in moist, shady positions and they are very striking plants when in flower. Most of these plants are grass-like and for the most part smooth edged, lacking the spines generally found in other Pitcairnioideae genera. They bear tubular flowers with yellow, red, or white petals and although each flower lasts only a single day the rather tall, thin inflorescence will continue to bloom for several months.

The leaves of many Pitcairnias are spineless, while those with spines generally have small ones. The leaves are quite variable in length and shape. Some have several types of leaves on the one plant. Perhaps the most graphic example of this variation can be found in the deciduous species Pitcairnia heterophylla, where the leaves drop off at the start of the dry season to help the plant conserve moisture. The short brown spikes that remain are a primitive type of leaf that contains no chlorophyll.

Pitcairnias can be propagated easily either from seed or, for many species, by detaching a piece of the underground rhizome (taking care to obtain a piece with roots attached). The underground rhizome can be severed by either using a knife or, in some cases, a spade! Other Pitcairnias form bulbous-like growths that can be broken apart to provide new plants.

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These plants will thrive if grown in a mixture similar to that used for most indoor plants. Re-pot the plants once a year. They typically like bigger pots for their size than other bromeliads. For example, a single offshoot of many species can often be grown into a small clump that requires a 250 mm bucket within 30 months.

Plants should be watered until water starts to flow through the base of the pot, at least three times a week in summer. Twice a week in winter should be adequate, except during periods of low humidity.

Pitcairnia leaves generally do not suffer from insect attacks, although grasshoppers can attack young leaves on rare occasions and aphids can cause significant damage to flowers.

Pitcairnias will grow well under 50% shade cloth in winter and 75% for the rest of the year. They also thrive in shaded, but well drained areas in the garden, but are unlikely to do well in situations that receive the full afternoon sun, especially in summer.

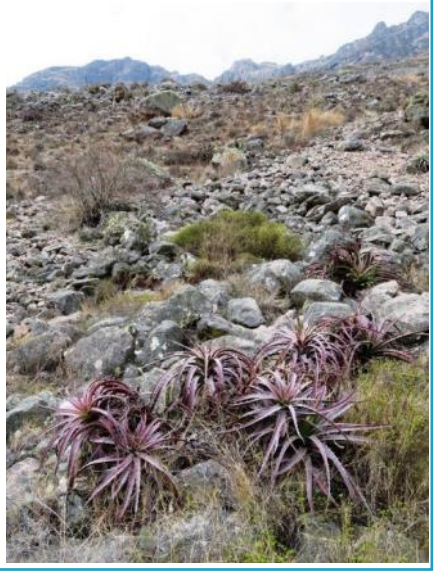
When grown in the ground, Pitcairnias relatively tall (usually 500 mm or more) green, grass-like foliage can form an effective backdrop to a garden.

References:

- Butcher, Derek, “Bromeliaceae and its eight sub Families”
- Butcher, Derek and Gouda, Eric “The New Bromeliad Taxon List”.
- Far North Coast Bromeliad Study Group (FNCBSG) Newsletter, Index Glossary.
- Wikipedia Pitcairnioideae.
- “A Bromeliad Glossary” second edition compiled by Pamela Koide Hyatt, Bromeliad Society International 1998.

IN THE WILD

Photos taken by James Hall on his trip to Peru and Brazil (2019) and posted on the Facebook Group 'Bromeliad Buy, Swap, Sell - Oct 2019



HECHTIA CHANGES

by Derek Butcher April 2019

The following has recently been published and somewhat concerned me. Based on the concepts of Barfuss et al (2016) they could have achieved similar goals by treating them as subgenera under *Hechtia*

"The re-establishment of *Bakerantha* and a new genus in Hechtioideae (Bromeliaceae) in Megamexico, *Mesoamerantha b*y Ramirez-Morillo, Romero-Soler, Carnevali, Pinzon, Raigoza et al in Harvard Papers in Botany 23(2): 301-312. 2018"

Eric Gouda is of the same opinion as me and this is reflected in detail given in The New Bromeliad Taxon list https://botu07.bio.uu.nl/bcg/taxonList.php

It may be of interest to note that *Viridantha* is treated at generic level by the Mexicans but is shown at subgenus level in The New Bromeliad Taxon list in line with Barfuss et al (2016)

Because *Hechtia tillandsioides* has already been involved in a hybrid mentioned in the BCR such a move will save a new nothogenus being coined

Taxa involved are

Bakerantha caerulea
lundelliorum
purpusii
tillandsioides
Mesoamerantha guatemalensis
dichroantha
malvernii

While I believe the better solution is by using subgenera we wait for further publications which prove that genera status is the only option.

Report from Treasurer Alan Mathew for May 2020

Opening balance at bank 1.5.20	$19,142.48
Income:	$755.10
Less Expenses:	$1980.70
Closing balance 30.5.2020	**$17,916.88**

NONG NOOCH TROPICAL GARDENS

Source: www.nongnoochtropicalgarden.com

It doesn't look like any of us will be travelling overseas any time soon ... so here's a visual trip to Thailand to the wonderful gardens of 'Nong Nooch Tropical Gardens' in Pattaya.

In 1954, Pisit and Nongnooch Tansacha purchased the 600-acre plot of land with the intention of developing the land as a fruit plantation instead they decided to plant tropical flowers and plants.

The garden opened to the public in 1980, and management was transferred to Pisit and Nongnooch's son Kampon Tansacha in 2001. The garden currently fills 500 out of the 600 acres.

The garden is well known as one of the world's best palm and cycad collection.

I have only included photos from the bromeliad section of the gardens, so enjoy and get inspired. For more about the gardens visit the gardens website (see Source).

AECHMEA MAGDALENAE ANDRE

Source: Natural Fibers Handbook with Cultivation and Uses, NIIR Board of Consultants & Engineers
Photos:www.plantsoftheworldonline.org; semanticscholar.org;jstor.org

Aechmea magdalenae Andre is a member of the pineapple family and was initially described as a species of Ananas or Bromelia but has now been classified as one as the Aechmea species. The plant and its fibre are known by several names 'Pita' in Columbia; 'Pita floja' in Southern Mexico and Central America; 'Silk Grass' in British Honduras. Resembling the pineapple plant but larger, it has leaves up to 3 m long, 10 cm wide in the middle with a tapering tip. Leaves are dark green on the upper surface and silvery underneath. The fibres are white or light cream coloured, lustrous, finer and more flexible than other hard fibers and have a high tensile strength.

Aechmea magdalenae occurs widely in Central America and in South America from Columbia to Ecuador. It is usually found in light alluvial or sandy soils with plenty of humus, where the altitude is low. In Columbia it can be found as high as 2700 feet and sometimes grows in places which are submerged for short time periods during the rain season. However it will not tolerate swamps or badly drained soil. It forms a dense undergrowth in open forests where it is partly shaded and is often found in the shade of forest trees, where it covers the ground and forms masses which are known as ' pitales' in Columbia. In some parts it spreads excluding all other plants except large trees.

Stand of Aechmea Magdalenae Andre in native habitat—photos on left of page Reinaldo Aguilar

AECHMEA MAGDALENAE ANDRE—cont

This plant have been the basis of ancient industries in the localities to which it is endemic.

In places where the plant occurs on a large scale, locals use it for sewing leather in saddles, buckles, belts and shoe soles.

The fibre is strong, durable and very resistant to see water, and in Columbia it is used for fishing nets for which it is particularly valued owing to its resistance to see water.

They make sewing thread, rope and twine as well as fabrics and lace. Photo above right shows local designs in fabric bags made from pita fiber.

In Mexico it was at one time use for strings in musical instruments. For centuries the native Indians in Columbia have use the fibre for making a burial wrap for the Chiefs.

- continued

To make the fibre, locals harvest the leaves with a machete, beat them with a wooden club and scrape the pulp (photo c), leaving the fibre then wash. Alternatively the butt end of the leaf is beaten exposing the ends of the fibres which are then pulled out by hand. The remaining material is then retted (softened) in slow running cool water for 5-10 days. For producing the best fibres this process should start as soon as the leaves are harvested.

The Pita floja fibre has many useful properties and from time to time developing it on a commercial scale has been attempted unsuccessfully. One difficulty is finding an efficient machine for extracting the fibre and a large number of plants need to be available in just one area as it is uneconomical to use leaves of Pita from scattered areas.

Although Pita floja grows abundantly in many wild places and has been domesticated and used regionally it has not been adopted elsewhere or traded globally

The Aechmea magdalenae Andre produces tasty, sweet edible fruit which may be eaten cooked or raw. They have an acid flavour and so area better when made into beverages. The elliptic to ovate fruits are 5 - 6 cm long, and approximately 2 cm. diameter. The yellow fruit becomes orange and soft when ripe.

Photos of Ngobe women of Chalite, Panama extracting fibre—Source jstor.org.

SHOW and TELL

by John Schembri - May 2020

Aechmea Blanchetiana A friend gave me an Aechmea Blanchetiana, as it was only getting a bit of morning sun and not growing well. This plant loves full sun. I have it in 6 spots around my garden and the best spot is north facing next to the driveway where it is sheltered on the western side by a tree from the really harsh afternoon summer sun. This is a great upright growing feature plant for your garden and one bromeliad which really does love full sun.

Neoregelia *super fireballs*

I first started growing bromeliads in 2010 and was in the plant collecting phase buying new and colourful bromeliads for my garden. I soon realised that smaller ones or ones with an upright growing habit will look better in the garden if you have several growing together to provide a big splash of colour.

In 2015 I rescued plants from an old garden in Homebush. The federation house was sold and the gardens were being cleared to make way for townhouses. The garden contained several older bromeliad species and I was fortunate to get a clump of Neoregelia *super fireballs* which I planted under a big Banksia tree. The plants on the northern edge get more bright filtered light and morning sun and colour up more. Those closer to the trunk get less and are not as bright and fade to green.

WOODEN HANGERS

by Joy Clark - May 2020

If you have an artistic bent with plants then growing plants, especially mini neoregelias, on pieces of wood or on larger sticks is worth a try.

These projects can range from just tying or gluing plants onto sticks or getting more involved with drilling holes and wiring the plants in place on driftwood.

I have done both with success.

First, the easy way

You will need a small branch (with character), wire and glue, jute string, wire cutters and a number of mini neo's.

Step 1.to make the hanger, take a length of wire and tie to the top of the branch. I use green 1.6mm plastic wire Make a loop in the other end for hanging. Hang it up to make sure that it falls to your liking.

Step 2. Cut a number of mini neo's with about 2cm stolon. You will need some large and some small plants.

Step 3. This is the artistic part. Roughly arrange them near the stick, keeping the larger ones at the bottom and getting smaller as they ascend. If you like the arrangement then start tying with the jute string from the bottom and work up. Put a small dab of glue on the plant before tying. You could also use stocking for tying.

Allow room for these plants to grow and multiply. I tie a wide hessian strip around the end of the stick to give a neater finish.

Secondly, the harder way

You will need a piece of wood, chunk of old tree or driftwood with character. (Make sure your chosen piece of wood is not too thick that you can't drill through it), thin coated wire for tying plants, thick coated or galvanised wire, about 1.6mm, for the hanger, glue, pliers, wire cutters and marking pen.

Step 1 work out which way your piece of wood will hang best and drill a hole in the centre near the top. then a second hole about 2cm below this. Insert your desired length of wire through the bottom hole leaving about a 5cm tail, then thread it through the top hole, bend up for the hanger and tie off with bottom tail piece. (see picture)

Step 2. Arrange your minis near the piece of wood, once again, larger at the bottom smaller near the top. Working from the BOTTOM place the plant on the wood so that it sits firmly then make two marks close to either side of the plant base for the drill holes. Do this for the other plants. When completed marking, drill your holes.

Step 3. Starting from the TOP place a dab of glue on the lower side of the plant that has contact with the wood, place your plant's base between the drill holes and tie securely with the thin coated wire.

Putting medium size specimen plants on wood or solid sticks is another option. I have done this with Aechmea orlandiana and its hybrids a lot and find them very attractive when they grow into a colony.

Tips:

1. Stoloniferous neoregelias plants are good for these arrangements. You can add a mum with a pup to the wood to give a bit of a 3D effect amongst the flatter plants
2. If a plant isn't stable on the wood, I do a second wire tie on the stolon to secure firmly.
3. A couple of strands of usneoides (Spanish moss), wound through the plant hides the stems and drill holes.
4. You can also use Tillandsia plants. They multiply readily on stick arrangements and look super attractive.
5. You will need to water Neoregelia arrangements frequently to prevent drying out and encourage root growth.

PROPAGATING FROM SEEDS

Source: Terry Davis

You will be familiar with Terry as he is our regular competition judge, photographer of the competition winners, one of two Show coordinators and administrates the society Seed Bank. The Seed Bank list is included in each Bromeletter and on our website, and is regularly updated. Terry kindly provided the following information to inspire you to collect and grow from seed.

Harvesting Seed

Tillandsias – have three sectioned seed pods pods, harvest when the pod colour changes colour green to brown. This means it is about to open, its preferable to pick the pod before it opens. Once tillandsia seeds are harvested use within three months to be viable.

Alcantareas and **Vrieseas** behave similarly but have a coarse seed that lasts for 12 months.

Neoregelias form a berry under where the flower blooms. The berry has a sticky inner liquid. When the berry changes from green to white it is time to pull the berry off, squeeze out the seed, wash off the sticky substance and dry off. These seeds will last for a while.

Dykia and **Hechtia** have larger seeds that are winged.

Growing Seed

Tillandsia seeds – cut up fly screen mesh and lay flat on trays topped with gutter guard. Keep moist, this may mean misting 3 to 4 times a day especially in hot weather.

Alcantareas and **Vrieseas** place seeds on top of good potting mix and keep moist.

Neoregelias and **Bilbergias** like a finer potting mix; place seeds on top of mix and keep moist. Neoregelia seeds can sprout within 4 to 6 days.

Dykia and **Hechtia** place seeds on top of fine potting mix.

Terry sterilises his seed potting mix, by first wetting it, then heating in the microwave for 1 to 2 minutes. He uses takeaway containers to raise seed that have holes in the bottom. New seedlings need to be watered and fertilised.

When to plant seeds

The right time to plant is as close to the time the seed is ripe, whether that is winter, spring or summer. Each species is different.

Which species should I grow from seed?

Depends what you're collecting but if you are wondering where to start, here is a list starting from easiest progressing to the most difficult:- Dykia (easiest), Neoregelia, Bilbergia, Alcantarea, Tillandsia (the hardest).

Ensure you label seeds and the growing containers you are using correctly.

If you have extra seed please contact Terry asap.

Below is the list of seeds in our Seed Bank.

Al. extensa	27.11.19	Terry Davis
Al. imperialis rubra	15.10.19	Terry Davis
Pseudalcantarea viridiflora (red under leaf)	23.10.19	Terry Davis

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 replenish our supplies.

NEW MEMBERS WELCOME

We would like to welcome **John Hurtado** our recent bromeliad enthusiast.

If you would like to become a member,

please see application details on the next page.

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

LABELS WE NEED FROM TIME TO TIME

Source: Facebook group—Bromeliads Buy Swap Sell

VALE LEN SUMMERS

It is with great sadness that we advise of Len's passing on the 12th May 2020 at the age of 93. Len pushed the boundaries of tillandsia growing in Melbourne and taught many members a lot about bromeliads. Some visited Len, met him at conferences and have plants from his collections from his many forays to the north to obtain new plants.

Recently a Tillandsia was named after him, as described in BSI registry below:

Tillandsia 'Len Summers' - Mature stemless rosette 9-15cm. high. Of uncertain origin but known to have been first grown by Victorian grower Len Summers possibly 30 years ago. This cultivar acquired names as "Len's pruinosa" and "Pruinosa Califani".

Detailed analysis of specimens so-named shows some variations compared to the official botanical description of T. pruinosa.

Reg. Doc. 3/2020 by Chris Larson.

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.

MAIL ORDER PAYMENTS BY MASTERCARD/VISA.
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- **CARDHOLDER** name details, as shown on card.
- 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	*AUTHOR*	*PRICE*
Bromeliads for the Contemporary Garden	Andrew Steens	$20.00
Bromeliads: A Cultural Manual (Rev. ed. 2007)	BSI	$ 6.00
Bromeliad Hybrids 1: Neoregelias	Margaret Paterson	$25.00
Bromeliads Under the Mango Tree	John Catlan	$10.00
Bromeliad Cultivation Notes	Lyn Hudson	$10.00
Growing Bromeliads – 3rd Ed. by BSA IS BACK!.		$20.00 (member price)

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