

# ***Far North Coast Bromeliad Study Group N.S.W.***

Study Group meets the third Thursday of each month  
Next meeting 21st June 2012 at 11 a.m.

Venue: PineGrove Bromeliad Nursery  
114 Pine Street Wardell 2477  
Phone (02) 6683 4188

Discussion: May 2012

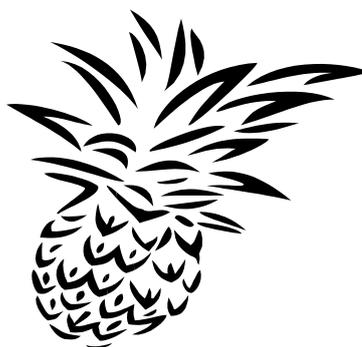
General show & tell

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## **Meeting 19th April 2012**

Ron opened the meeting at 11:30am. In attendance were some 27 members. Apologies were presented for eight members. One new starter Trish Anlezark was welcomed.

### **General Business**

Ron left a bag of panty hose, for tying broms on trees, for anyone wanting them.

This meeting the raffle raised \$105. Thanks again to plant suppliers and ticket buyers.

Q'd Brom Soc. Autumn Show this weekend, 21 - 22 April.

### **Member's Show and Tell**

Ron talked about it being that time of year when bromeliads should be prepared for more sunlight. It is the time to prune lots of shrubs and trees to let in the sunlight, remembering of course to keep the shade lovers well covered. However most broms will accommodate a little more sun, particularly the *Neoregelias*, which can also be shifted to a more sunny position at this time of year, in order to commence the sun hardening process for next spring and summer. This is the time to put sun loving broms in the full sun.

At this time Ron recommends to continue fertilizing and removing pups. He gave as an example of a brom benefiting from additional sunlight, particularly morning sun, *Aechmea blanchetiana*, which responds to the sunlight by turning a brilliant orange colour.

Meg mentioned she possessed a lovely orange *Ae. blanchetiana* as well as a red form. Ross thought this red form was probably a hybrid of *Ae. blanchetiana* X *Ae. callichroma* of which he got pups from a grower in Northern Queensland. He also has a group of "blanchetiana's" ? ex John and Genny Catlan labelled as *Ae. blanchetiana* wild collected seed ex Oscar, Brazil. These also appear to be hybrids as there are five variations in this particular seed batch. (photo p.9)

Laurie displayed a number of different plants starting with *Tillandsia minutifolia* (was *Tillandsia bryoides*), followed by a rather attractive flower head of his own *Billbergia vittata* X *Bill.* 'Hallelujah' hybrid. He also showed an inflorescence of a plant he got from a friend tagged as *Ae.* 'Shellharbour', Laurie was questioning the naming of this plant, it was thought it may be *Aechmea* 'Shelldancer'. Ross thought it could be *Aechmea dichlamydea* var. *trinitensis*, so the inflorescence was left to assist Ross in sorting out the plant's identity. After later inspection it is agreed the plant is *Ae.* 'Shelldancer'. Laurie also displayed two specimens of *Neoregelia* 'Predator' quite unlike each other with no two leaves the same. Finally his *Neoregelia* 'Perfection' (underdone with respect to light) was used as a good example of variation in variegates as discussed last month.

Ross just had to show off his *Vrieslandsia* 'Harmony Too' which is a John Arden hybrid using *Vriesea* ('Sunshine' x *sucrei*) x *Tillandsia mooreana*. (photo p.8)

Trish won a green *Neo.* with a red centre in a 2010 raffle. It was labelled as *Neo. compacta*. Since that time it has had green and red pups on the same plant. Trish grew on the red pup which has re-pupped and stabilized. She brought an example of the red plant to show. It was obviously not a *Neo. compacta* but may well be a *Neo. compacta* hybrid. The only conclusion to be drawn was that the original label was incorrect. (photo p.8)

Marie showed a *Fosterella spectabilis* which had self sown seed in a pot plant and had germinated. Apparently this is a common occurrence for *Fosterella*.

Ross also exhibited his *Tillandsia cyanea* cultivar 'Pinkie' which has both pink bracts and pink petals. A normal *Till. cyanea* has pink bracts and blue petals. There are a number of *Till. cyanea* cultivars including 'Rosita', 'Tri Flor' and 'Tricia'.

Many of Helen's *Orthophytums* had been beaten about by last year's hailstorms. Grown under full sun many of them were appearing 'tatty', so she decided to experiment with the light level. In October 2011 she placed many of them under the benches in much more shade, also leaving some in full all day sun. The differences between the full sun and the shaded plants were astounding. Many of the shaded plants were attractive. Obviously there is a need for experimentation in light exposures for individual preferences in *Orthophytum* and for that matter in all bromeliad genera.

*Orthophytum* plants in this trial included: 'Copper Penny', 'Silver Cloud', 'Starlights', 'Donna Shaw', *saxicola* and *sucrei*. One interestingly odd observation was the better development of trichomes on the shaded plants. (photo p.8)

Ross, using Marie's winning *Vriesea* 'RoRo', (photo p.8) introduced the discussion regarding the parentage of *Vriesea* 'RoRo' and *Vriesea* 'Highway Beauty'. Parentage has been accepted as *bituminosa* X *saundersii* and *platynema* X *saundersii*. There is a problem in that both 'RoRo' and 'Highway Beauty' have yellow multi-branched inflorescences with reddish bracts. *Bituminosa* and *platynema* have single spiked green/yellow inflorescences. *Saundersii* provides the multi-branching but has a mostly yellow inflorescence. Where does the red come from? Michael Kiehl (USA) has noted that his plants labelled with the reverse crossing to ours appear to be the same plants.

A decision has been made that there is no *bituminosa* in the parentage of the plants which will now be consolidated as *platynema* X *saundersii*, the existing names of *Vr.* 'RoRo', 'Highway', 'Highway Beauty' and 'Shiraz' will remain. (article p's 14,15)

Note: 'RoRo' leaves have green margins with a white centre, whereas 'Highway Beauty' has albomarginated leaves with a green centre. (photo's p.9)

## **Inorganic Nutrition** by Les Higgins

Plants are autotrophic and need only small amounts of inorganic nutrition (chemicals). At least 77 elements are known to be either essential or beneficial to plant growth. Mercifully not all plants need all elements. Many plants have a high demand for a few specific elements while other plants can be debilitated or killed by injudicious use. The more comprehensive the nutrient combination is, the better the plant grows and total amounts of chemicals are reduced.

For bromeliads, Nitrogen (N), Potassium (K), and Iron (Fe) are in highest demand. Potassium is the overall key element, which supports flowering, colour and maturity. Phosphorous (P), Calcium (Ca), Magnesium (Mg) and Sulphur (S) are also required but in lesser amounts. Bromeliads are sensitive to Copper (Cu) and this element should be avoided.

It's not easy to select the most suitable commercial fertilizer pack from the large array in retail shops. A pack with K higher than N, and P somewhat lower, is a good starting point. Some packs list the element and its percentage. That percentage is of little value except to give the weight. Note that very few packs contain Fe and those that do have insufficient amounts. One essential ingredient in all bromeliad potting mixes is rusty metal. Rusty nails are excellent to satisfy the high demand for Fe. The plant releases citric acid from the roots which reacts with the rust turning it into an iron (Fe) it can use.

When using fertilizers incorporating Urea or Ammonia, remember the C:N ratio. Leaf analyses gives the bromeliad C:N ratio as Carbohydrate 20 : Nitrogen 1. Plants squander their carbohydrate reserve to take up Urea and Ammonia. The result is reduced flowering potential, increased cold susceptibility and possible death. The problem is easily solved.....add a soluble carbohydrate to the nutrient mix. A spoonful of white sugar will do, and is almost pure sucrose. Molasses is 35% sucrose, has trace elements and also kills nematodes. The sucrose is utilized instead of the plant's store and usually increases the plant's carbohydrate percentage.

In temperatures below 20 degrees Celsius, urea-ammonia toxicity can occur. The roots rot off. Long before frosts are imminent ensure that the only N source provided is as Nitrate. Imports from warmer climates are invariably below the optimal level for carbohydrates, a disaster as winter approaches. A survival technique is to load up with K, use only nitrate for N, and saturate with iron sulphate. Potassium nitrate (K 38.5 N 13.5) and Iron sulphate are available in small bags.

Silica (Si) is an interesting element. Claims include that it stiffens the sieve tubes and thus prevents aphids using their proboscis to enter the sap stream. It prevents blotches and blackened areas forming on leaves. It also adds leaf shine.

A nutrient that is formulated for bromeliads is Pine-Tech Triple Ten™. This is a fusion fertilizer (fusion = bringing many elements together) and is from a range

made by Nutri-Tech Solutions P/L, Yandina, Queensland. It is a generic (generic = a number of related formulations that have the same basic mix) which is finely tuned to individually supply specific nutrients to a biological soil farmed crop. Pine-Tech Triple Ten™ not having been conceived for pot culture has very low levels of Ca, Mg and S.

The generic label on all the Triple Ten™ Range states: N10, P10, K10, natural enzymes, hormones, vitamins, colloidal minerals, chelates and beneficial microbes. At a guess Pine-Tech Triple Ten™ would have higher N and K than declared. Vitamins would include B1. Hormones include Auxins to stimulate rapid multiplication of roots. Cytokynins multiply green growth. Colloidal minerals are perhaps derivations of Nutri-Tech Shuttle7 trace elements (a formulation that includes Si and K fulvate which breaks down to form Fulvic acid, a component of the cell's electrolyte). The chelate is Carbon (C). Beneficial microbes are probably those horrible greblies that turn potting mix to sludge.

Pine-Tech Triple Ten™ suggested application rate is 20ml in 10 litres of water with five grams of Epsom Salt.

Note phosphate combines with Ca to form insoluble tri-Ca-phosphate. It is better not to add lime to any potting mix. As long as lime is present it takes phosphate out of the nutrient solution. Ca nitrate or Cal-tech are among the chemicals that can be used as a separate foliar spray or pot drench.

Plants have the ability to concentrate minute quantities of chemicals into usable amounts. Epsom salt contains the impurities Strontium in the Mg and Arsenic in the Sulphate. Strontium can substitute for Ca whilst Arsenic is a well known growth inhibitor. Epsom Salt 'Food grade' purchased at health food shops is the purest possible for a reasonable price.



## **Helen's Heuristic Hunt # 2 -- Answers**

Unscramble the letters to find the word - clue - genus

OUTPYTMOHRH  
TAPHSRCTNUY  
LNEUIESQA  
KYACDI  
GREIELAONE  
MCEAEHA  
NASNAA  
DUANMIRLIU  
LDSATNILAI  
AIGREBLLIB

ORTHOPHYTUM  
CRYPTANTHUS  
QUESNELIA  
DYCKIA  
NEOREGELIA  
AECHMEA  
ANANAS  
NIDULARIUM  
TILLANDSIA  
BILLBERGIA



## **A Modern Horror Story** by Jimi Prinz

Ever wonder why the Government places such strict controls on insecticides and chemicals associated with the plant industry ? Well, the answer lies with these bodies of ours. I think, to begin this discussion, a bit of word study is indicated. Ever hear the words “synergistic” or “potentiate” as applied to chemicals ? Roughly, they mean about the same thing. They both refer to increased action of a given set of chemicals; that is to say, one set of chemicals increases the action of another set.

For example, suppose you are using one insecticide and mix it with another. You may entirely neutralize both substances, BUT you may also increase the action of them both and wind up with a vicious mixture. Get some of it on you and really wind up with trouble when your poor liver tries to get rid of the junk. Many of these modern insecticides we use are known to penetrate the skin and you don't have to get very much of it on your skin to have big bad trouble when your blood stream dumps it into your liver.

I have actually seen people mix two or three of these products together and dunk their plants in the ‘gunk’ with their bare hands. I wouldn't put my hands in ONE of them. In the first place, I have more than my share of respiratory problems and some of those fumes choke me up ‘til I can hardly get a breath of wind. Now if it can do that, with-out even getting it on me, I really think I'd be pretty dumb to go sloshing around in the stuff. So I have a pretty low tolerance to it, but if it can do that to me, think what it could do to you.

When using ANY of these chemical compounds, think about ventilation, READ LABELS and follow them, protect your hands with gloves and NEVER, NEVER mix any of these chemical products. Makes for much happier plant lovers, not to mention longer lived ones.

Reprinted from: Bromeliad Society of Houston Inc. April 1982, Vol. 15, No. 4.

## **Fosterella**

L.B. Smith established the genus *Fosterella* in 1960 to honour Mulford B. Foster. A number of the species now known as *Fosterella* were previously described in other genera. The first being *Fosterella micrantha* was originally described as *Pitcairnia micrantha* by Lindley in 1843. *Fosterella* are small terrestrial plants growing from Mexico to Argentina in dry to semi-humid forests. Most have small inconspicuous white flowers, except for *Fosterella spectabilis* with it's showy, semi-tubular, red to coral orange petals which makes this species collectable. Most of the readily available species are easy to grow in our gardens requiring little extra care.



## From Around the Shade House

A few members made arrangements again to attend the Qld. Bromeliad Society Autumn Show held at the Table Tennis Centre in Brisbane. Don was unable to join the party this trip so June, Marie and Ross headed off to Brisbane.

Of course we stopped for a Yatala pie for our breakfast. On arrival at the Centre



Shane Marie June Ross

we met up with Reg, Heather and Lesley, later to find Shane with a group of other familiar faces from my Hunter District Society days. A good day was had by all with some new acquisitions added to our collections. Always good to catch up with long time friends we don't get to see often enough and make some new ones. I know of two happy collectors who managed to get their new Tillandsia book from Peter Tristram.

Looking forward to the next Show.

### **A question asked this month:**

What's the gel stuff at the base of some of my Bromeliads ?

Many Bromeliads are of the tank type water holding variety, this environment supports many life forms, mainly frogs and insects. The droppings from these animals and corpses also decaying leaf litter assists in feeding the plants.

The following quote taken from: Bromeliads by Walter Richter

“Epiphytic Bromels constitute an immense swamp in which animal and vegetable waste products are dissolved by the enzymes in the leaves. The process involves the jelly - like substance exuded by the inner faces of the sheaths. As a rule, putrefaction occurs only when there is too much pollution. Normally the leaves absorb the end product of the organic waste by way of their scales. The water in the funnels remains fairly clean and in dire need, potable.” (drinkable)





*Vriesea* 'RoRo' -- Marie Essery  
1st Open and Judges Choice



*Guzmania* hybrid -- Kay Daniels  
1st Novice



*Vrieslandsia* 'Harmony Too'



Trish' red neo. ?? and a *Neo. compacta*



*Orthophytum* 'Copper Penny'  
L/H shade grown -- R/H full sun grown

*Orthophytum saxicola*  
L/H full sun grown -- R/H shade grown



*Aechmea blanchetiana*  
note floral differences ▶



*Aechmea* 'Red Embers'  
not blanchetiana red



*Aechmea blanchetiana* ?  
w/c seed ex Oscar, Brazil



Cork bark being harvested



*Guzmania musaica*



Vr. 'RoRo'  
albomarginated



Vr. RoRo  
variegated



Vr. 'Highway Beauty'

Photo's supplied by: Ross Little, Derek Butcher, Trish Kelly and [www.corkinstitute.com](http://www.corkinstitute.com)

## **Bill Morris -- 50 years as a Trustee to the BSI.**

Bill first began collecting Bromeliads in the early 1950's, his first plants being four Billbergia's and a *Aechmea recurvata*. Bill found it difficult obtaining plants and finding other interested people. Bill's father was in the U.S.A in the early 1950's and was able to make further contacts for him. Dr. Lyman Smith directed Bill to the BSI, which he joined and from where he was able to contact other growers in the U.S.A. and Australia. In those early days he obtained plants in Australia from Charles Hodgson who was the first Australian to be made a Trustee to The Bromeliad Society, he also obtained plants from Charlie Webb who grew from seed and also imported plants.

In 1962 Bill was inducted into The Bromeliad Society as an Australian Trustee. This same year, Bill and 35 other interested growers in Australia got together for a meeting at the Terrey Hills home of Mr. And Mrs. Duncan, at this meeting the decision was made to form a Society. The following year, 1963 saw the formation of what is now known as The Bromeliad Society of Australia Inc. Having it's first general meeting on the 6th of July 1963 at the YMCA in Pitt Street Sydney with 45 in attendance, Bill became one of the two Vice Presidents.

Bill offers a debt of gratitude to overseas growers who sent seed to himself and many others in Australia. These include Mulford Foster, Julian Nally - Florida, David Barry -- California, Charles Lancaster -- Costa Rica and Adda Abendroth - Brazil. There are probably many others, but these, particularly Adda, supplied seed of an estimated over 200 species of Bromeliads for cultivation in Australia. Seed was also sought from commercial suppliers in both Brazil and Germany.

Bill has been responsible for the creation of many hybrids in several genera, mostly in *Neoregelia* and *Billbergia*. He grew many plants from introduced seed, one of note was out of seed batch received from Adda Abendroth of *Neoregelia concentrica*, from this seed batch Bill got an albomarginated plant now known as *Neoregelia* 'Bill Morris' pictured below and also Bill with some of his *Billbergia* hybrids in his friend Val Honeywood's shade house.



Photo's by:

◀ Ross Little

Val Honeywood ▶

Article summarised from:

### **The Early Days**

by Bill Morris

Hunter District Bromeliad  
Society Inc.  
Newsletter August 1998.



## **From Bark to Tillandsia Mount**

Cork is the bark taken from the *Quercus suber* tree which is grown from an acorn in the forests of southern Portugal, Spain and other countries from around the Mediterranean. Being the only tree in the world that allows its bark to be cut off whilst not doing the tree any harm. This process can be repeated every nine years which makes this a very special and valuable tree.

These trees can live for 200 years or more, however the first cut known as 'virgin cork' can only be taken after the tree is 25 years old. This is the cork slabs that we get and use for mounting our Tillandsias and other small bromeliads on. The next cut is often referred to as the 'second cut' or 'best cut'.

Cork trees absorb three or even five times more carbon dioxide than other trees. In Portugal alone which provides about 55% of the world's cork production the cork tree offsets almost five million tons of carbon every year. Spain provides about 30% whilst other countries including Algeria, France, Italy, Morocco and Tunisia provide the remaining 15%.

Cork trees grow in other parts of the world but commercial production comes mainly from the Mediterranean region, where the cork tree grows naturally.

## **Burley Griffin's Cork Oaks** reprinted from: The Lanes, Canberra.

Centred in Canberra at the base of Black Mountain next to the busy Glenlock Interchange, is a cork oak plantation *Quercus suber*.

The plantation was initially established with acorns that Walter Burley Griffin, landscape architect and designer of Canberra, had imported from Spain in 1917. Walter Burley Griffin (1876 - 1937) had a vision for the new city of Canberra to be self-sustainable and a cork plantation was included in his original plan for Canberra. The plantation was established by Thomas Weston (1866 - 1935).

The plantation is comprised of nearly 4500 ninety-year old trees established on 8 hectares (20 acres). It is the largest mature commercial plantation of cork oak in the Southern Hemisphere. Cork oak is a species native to southern Europe and has been harvested for centuries. The harvest, which involves the delicate stripping of cork tree's out of bark, can initially be carried out when the tree is about 25 years old and requires 3 'cycles' of harvesting (1 cycle every 10 years) before it produces cork of a high quality.

The plantation was left untouched until 1948 when harvesting or 'stripping' was commenced and the cork was found to be of both high quality and commercially valuable. In 1981 the plantation was harvested by ACT Forests by professional cork strippers from Portugal and again in 2001 when two Portuguese 'cork strippers' - Manuel Silva and Manuel Graça, helped harvest the plantation.

(photo of cork stripping p.9)

**Guzmania musaica** by William T. Drysdale

*Guzmania musaica*: one of the finer bromeliad species, is a challenge to grow well; therefore, it is desirable to know the conditions under which it thrives in nature. In *The Gardener's Chronicle* for October 17, 1871, appears an article describing the natural habitat of this plant. It was written by Gustave Wallis, who designates himself as a "Botanical Traveller". It was Wallis who discovered this beautiful bromeliad and introduced it into Europe under the name of *Tillandsia musaica*. The entire note is here reproduced because it not only describes the plant but gives an interesting insight into the character of Wallis.

"I am anxious to give you some remarks about this splendid plant, because Mr. Linden has probably forgotten to name me as it's discoverer, as he has done in the case of so many splendid novelties, which have adorned his stoves and his *Illustration Horticole* and his button holes. He even by mistake attributes to others the discovery of plants which I was the first to gather and I hope nobody expects me to bear this any longer with-out protest. I discovered *Tillandsia musaica* during December 1867 and sent it to Mr. Linden in 1868. I paid it another visit in 1873 and saw it bearing many fruits. The plant grows at 3,000 feet elevation in a certain very dense wood next to Teorama, at a small distance from Ocaña, in the Magdalena territory. It is no epiphyte, since it very often grows on the soil and only sometimes ascends trees. Very often I found a profusion of young seedlings. The capsules were not ripe in December, nor in January. The inflorescences stand on stalks of 1½ to 2 feet in length. The broad bracts of the younger inflorescences are very showy. I believe the bracts were scarlet, the flowers white, waxy. There are two other species, which I observed, very near this. The one was found in fertile woods of the Murri stream, a tributary of the Atrato, at a long distance from the locality of the first. This may now be well developed in the nursery of Messrs. Veitch. The other one is a *non plus ultra* of the highest effect. It would be a grand thing for winning first prizes at exhibitions and gaining the honours for the sacrificed health of the collector. It has never been introduced alive to Europe. It grows at 5,000 feet and beats the two named plants in it's strong texture, beautiful colour and high growth".

Wallis' *Tillandsia musaica* was subsequently named *Billbergia*, *Vriesea*, *Caraguata* and *Massangea* before Mez gave it the current classification.

Another noted plant collector, Albert Bruchmueller, wrote of this plant also in *The Gardener's Chronicle*. His note, appearing in the issue January 23, 1875, p.115, is as follows:

"*Tillandsia musaica* -- this handsome plant figured for the first time in *The Gardener's Chronicle*, on p.487, Vol. 11, 1874 is at yet very rare in Europe. Wallis and Roezl both sent over some boxes filled with these plants but very few of them arrived alive. In 1873 I brought a few boxes over with me. Some of the plants travelled well but many died after unpacking. It is, no doubt, one of the prettiest of stove epiphytes, particularly as regards the variegation on the leaves, which is of all known colours. I promised to send Mr. Bull some dried flowers, for none had been seen in Europe and he was doubtful whether it was a true *Tillandsia*. After my return I collected some flowers and forwarded them with a

sketch and it has now been ascertained to be a variety. This plant flowers in January and February, when it throws up a spike and flowers but once, after which the plant does not produce any more leaves but keeps its colour as before. When the flower is gone it produces below the stem a stolon 10 to 12 inches long, on which the roots and leaves form, the roots taking hold of the first tree or palm they reach. The flower spike is from 12 to 15 inches high, of a flesh colour changing to a brilliant scarlet as it reaches maturity. The flowers are close together, white and thick like wax, from an 1½ inches long, about 20 to 25 flowers forming a bullet shaped inflorescence, which stands upright on a spike. In places where this plant grows, moisture is abundant during the whole year but I observed they grow more vigorously where well ventilated than in thick forest. It is only found in one small district at an elevation of about 5,000 feet and as it is a scrambling plant the trees and palm are covered with it from top to bottom. Some of the plant, when not within reach of a tree to climb upon, have five or six shoots or branches, forming quite a clump and I noticed that they do quite as well this way, growing in a kind of leaf - mould to an enormous size, the leaves being 4 inches broad and from 18 to 24 inches long. When I cut some of the plants off, I found a year later that the trunks or stems had produced a lot of young ones, forming large tufts of beautiful specimens. Very large plants can be formed in this way for decorative purposes, covering walls, rock work or tree ferns and where moisture can be conserved, would make a beautiful display. I have some plants in my garden (here at Ocaña) growing among rocks, fully exposed to the sun. They do well and keep their beautiful colours. Seed is very difficult to obtain and the reason when it is thoroughly ripe must be carefully watched as it some times damps off by the excess wet. It is very likely I shall have the chance of getting some of it if I pay great attention to it after the flowering season is over. All the plants that have been sent as yet have damped off, very few having arrived in good condition; but I think a stock of it might be obtained by a means of seed. There are several varieties amongst them, some being light green and darkly variegated, others of a brownish colour; some have long and some short leaves. There is no doubt it is one of the most elegant decorative plants ever introduced. The charming and remarkable variegation of the leaves, like illegible writing, will soon cause it to gain attention for decorative purposes." (photo p.9)

### **Gustave Wallis -- Bromeliad Explorer**

Born, May 1st, 1830 at Luneberg, Hanover. He was deaf and dumb till age six before he could articulate. He developed the love of nature and botany during his school days which gave him the desire to see foreign lands and the tropics. His first venture to Brazil collecting was in 1856, however it was in 1858 that he commenced his journey from the mouth to the source of the Amazon River. His final trip began in 1875, he fell ill to fever and died June 20th, 1878.

Wallis introduced into horticulture: *Tillandsia lindenii* and *Guzmania musaica*.

Reprinted from: BSI Journal, 1968, Vol.18 (3)

**Vriesea 'Highway Beauty' (*platynema* (NOT *bituminosa*) x *saundersii*)**  
**and Vriesea 'RoRo' (*saundersii* x *platynema*)**

Revisited by Derek Butcher, April 2012

This problem has been bugging me since 2001 when Peter Huddy thought he had solved the problem of two variegated Vrieseas that had been imported to Australia under parentage formula from the USA. We know that parentage formulae are often reversed and that forms of variegation do vary.

In 2011 *Vriesea* 'Shiraz' was registered:

***Vriesea* 'Shiraz' (*platynema* x *saundersii*)**

Hybridist unknown, named by Peter Huddy, South Australia in 1995.

Plant 60cm diam, flowering to 90cm high. Has never shown signs of variegation in 20 years cultivation in SA. Although this has the reverse parentage to that reported for the variegated 'RoRo' there appears to be great similarity and thus similar origins. The only way to answer this problem was to try to find someone in the USA who was still growing plants called *Vr. bituminosa* x *platynema* (variegated) and this was Michael Kiehl of Michael's Bromeliads in Florida. Michael promised to send me a photo of the plant in flower and did so in March this year. We now have photos of all plants involved in this saga. They have a red floral bract, yellowish sepals and light green petals. All have discolor leaves. The problem seems to be on what was considered to be *Vr. bituminosa* when the hybrid was done many years ago. If we look at *Flora Neotropica* by Smith & Downs 1977 we will see that even the botanists had problems with identity involving *Vr. platynema* whereas, these days, most of us know how to identify *Vr. bituminosa* with its brownish petals (see Foster's painting of his *Vr. bituminosa* for another problem regarding colour.)

The most likely scenario is that first we had *platynema* x *saundersii* (now called 'Shiraz') which sported variegation but some had different variegation and some bright individual felt one had '*bituminosa*' in it not '*platynema*' - and even reversed the parentage.

We should continue to use the names 'Shiraz', 'Highway Beauty', 'Highway' (non-variegated 'Highway Beauty') and 'RoRo' because so many are growing plants under these (as well as *saundersii* x *platynema* and *platynema* x *saundersii* plus or minus the notation 'variegated and *bituminosa* !') but remember we are dealing in all probability with the same hybrid. In our experience the plant in Adelaide called 'RoRo' has a more stable variegation pattern but then this could be different in a different climate. All have the *V. saundersii* spotting of the leaves at some time in various intensities in their life to flowering.

*Vr.* 'Highway Beauty' was named from a plant in Adelaide, South Australia because it had so-called '*bituminosa*' in its parentage. This particular clone is still here but I would doubt that an offset actually escaped from here. The only logical solution is that growers in Australia and/or the USA were growing variegated plants with '*bituminosa*' somewhere in the formula on the label and automatically assumed it must be 'Highway Beauty'. We know this happened in New Zealand

where Peter Waters maintains their 'Highway Beauty' does not link to *V. bituminosa*.

This is yet another example of non-action by the hybridist and while we now have a tenuous solution it is a muddled one.

Previous writings on the subject follow:

***Vriesea* 'Highway Beauty' (*bituminosa* x *saundersii*)  
and *Vriesea* 'RoRo' (*saundersii* x *platynema*)**

by Butcher 10/2009.

Remember that since 2005 there is only one name for a variegated Bromeliad irrespective of the form of variegation it has. These forms can be added as adjectives if felt necessary.

Towards the end of 1990's Peter Huddy of Adelaide, acquired these variegated plants from Queensland under the formula as quoted and wondered why they had not been given names and registered them. Despite searches he was unable to trace a source but it seemed to be in Florida. In 2001 he decided to grandfather them into the system. The *bituminosa* reference took Peter to bitumen and thus 'Highway' and the other he used the nickname of his daughter. Strictly speaking only the plants named by Peter should have these names but what do you do with plants around the world with this quoted parentage. Formulas are so misleading. It is a pity these plants were not given names by the hybridist concerned or even by the person when the first variegation appeared. If anyone has information in this regard please contact the writer.

How accurate is this formula? Could the formula have been 'corrected' after the first release. Could the label have been carelessly written. We know that in the 1980's little care was taken that the seed parent comes first.

In my search for references to these parentages I tried all avenues. There is no reference in the Journal of the Brom. Soc. There is reference to a (*bituminosa* x *saundersii*) and reverse in Brian Smith's 1984 Manuscript. This, no doubt, came from Hill's 1984 catalogue which has reference to Bert Foster. One can only assume this was not variegated because this form always attracts a higher price. It would also seem to be the plant that got to Australia in July 1986 and recorded in the ledger of Pinegrove Nursery, NSW, under #2952.

What is recorded for variegated plants? In 1993 we see in the catalogue for: The Olive Branch, Qld reference to *saundersii* hybrid variegata and *saundersii* hybrid *albomarginata*. Is there a tenuous link here?

***Vriesea* (*bituminosa* x *saundersii*) References found:**

1997 Pineapple Place, Florida, (*saundersii* x *bituminosa*) variegata.  
note reverse parentage.

2004 Michael's Bromeliads, Florida, (*bituminosa* x *saundersii*) variegated.

***Vriesea* (*saundersii* x *platynema*) References found:**

1986 Pinegrove Nursery #2941 (*platynema* x *saundersii*) variegated (from USA).  
2004 Michael's Bromeliads (*saundersii* x *platynema*) albomarginate.

### **Novice Popular Vote**

1st	Kay Daniels	<i>Guzmania</i> hybrid
2nd	----	-----
3rd	----	-----

### **Open Popular Vote**

1st	Marie Essery	<i>Vriesea</i> 'RoRo'
2nd	David Lewis-Hughes	<i>Guzmania musaica</i>
3rd	four equal thirds	-----

### **Judge's Choice**

1st	Marie Essery	<i>Vriesea</i> 'RoRo'
Hon. Ment.	David Lewis-Hughes	<i>Guzmania musaica</i>

### **Comments from the growers:**

Kay grows her *Guzmania* in her shade house with no extra special attention than she gives any of her other plants to achieve a wonderful result.

Marie bought her well grown *Vr.* 'RoRo' from PineGrove two or three years ago. It is grown under 70% shade cloth. The plant has never flowered or pupped.

David's *Guzmania musaica* was acquired a few years ago at a Brisbane show. It receives very little sun under beige shade cloth. This was a very nicely grown plant and a delight to see with an inflorescence.

### **The Four Bones** taken from: HDBS Newsletter, October 1997.

It is said that the membership of any Club/Group is made up of four BONES.

Firstly, there are the WISHBONES - those who spend their time wishing someone else would do the work.

Then there are the JAWBONES - those who do all the talking and very little else.

Thirdly, there are the KNUCKLEBONES - those who know almost everything there is to know about what anyone else tries to do.

Finally, there are the BACKBONES - those who get under the load and do ALL the work.

### **WHICH BONE ARE YOU ??**

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