

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

Edition: January 2023

Agenda: General Discussion

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

Study Group meets the third Thursday of each month  
Next meeting February 16th 2023 at 11 a.m.

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## Meeting 15th December 2022

The meeting was opened at approximately 11.00 am  
The 11 members present were welcomed.  
Three apologies were received.

### General Business

All were welcomed to the meeting which was our Christmas Party, so lots of Merry Christmas and Happy New Year wishes were offered.

Quite a few comments were made about our display asking for the identities of some of the plants. Refer to pages 9, 10, 11 and 12 for details.

Helen had decorated the tables with little Santas, Christmas trees, flashing lights and bon bons. Coral brought along extra decorations to help sparkle the meeting area up adding more tinsel and a large bright star which was promptly hung up!

Once everybody was seated, Mrs Clause (Coral - who always shines with Christmas spirit) had a bag of gifts (chocolates etc.) for her lucky draw which was fun for all whose number was called. Everybody eventually receiving a gift.

Thank you Coral and Gary for all your input to help keep our little Group going.

Thank you to Mitch for picking up the hot foods and bread rolls for our lunch.

Lets not forget Debbie who was kept busy in the kitchen with Coral preparing our lunch, it was a wonderful feast, thanks Deb and Coral.

Thank you also to everybody who brought a plate along.

Before lunch Helen conducted a quiz on Christmas general knowledge, it was a bit of fun with the bell being rung quite a few times. Considering the cross table chatter (we weren't cheating!), the scores were quite surprisingly not very high. The quiz is printed on p.13, without looking at the answers first, see how *you* go.

The shields and trophies for the annual Popular Vote Competition were awarded after lunch, the results and photos pages 8 and 16.

To finish off, the Christmas Gift Swap was conducted by Helen calling out the names of attendees in order of most meetings attended to go first and so on.

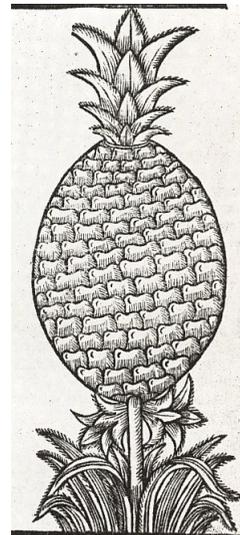
### Show, Tell and Ask!

Keryn brought a plant along for an identification check/confirmation which she was assured was *Nidularium rutilans* as she suspected.

Kayelene is on a quest for all things pineapple and asked if anybody knows where she might find brass pineapple objects similar to our pineapple bell. I'm sure an internet search will find one for Kayelene.

Unfortunately I have only ever seen one other bell the same as this one, it belongs to East London Bromeliad Society, South Africa. Ours is used to help keep order during our meetings. It's very handy when the chatter gets out of hand.

The pineapple (*Ananas comosus*) was long considered a symbol of wealth and status. In Victorian times it was only the wealthy upper classes that had access to foreign fruits and could afford them.



"This highly artistic, slightly impressionistic and, at the same time, considering the circumstances, notably realistic, illustration of a pineapple is said to be the first pictorial representation of that fruit known in European literature after the Discovery of America in 1492. It appears with other woodcuts in the famous *Historia General de las Indias* of 1535, published in Seville, and authored by the celebrated historian, Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo. Oviedo is considered, by Samuel Eliot Morrison, as one of the four main contemporary authorities for the Discovery Period, the others being Peter Martyr, Fernando Columbus and Las Casas."

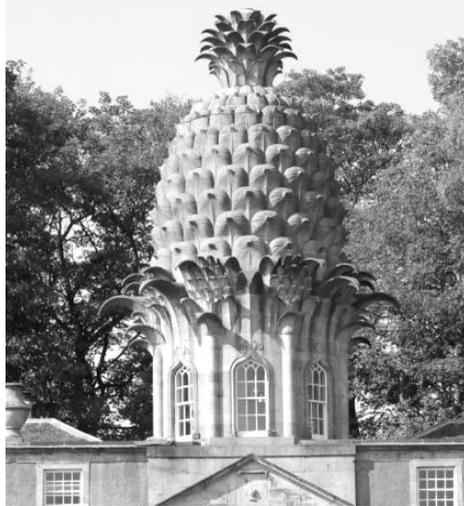
Photo by courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library  
from the original edition of 1535.

**The Pineapple story** begins with Christopher Columbus, who brought the pineapple, which originated in South America, back to Europe. Christopher Columbus encountered the pineapple (*Ananas comosus*, of the extensive bromeliad family) in the West Indies on the island he named Guadeloupe in November 1493. The pineapple is thought of as an obtained prize from the New World. (ed: from the Taxon List Jan. 2023 - *Ananas comosus* is now > *Ananas ananassoides*)

The pineapple became a treasured possession in Europe, but it was of practical use for sailors in tropical regions, who were vulnerable to developing scurvy from a lack of vitamin C during long voyages. They observed the healthful effects of eating pineapple, even though the connection between the devastating disease and diet deficiencies was not yet scientifically understood.

They were also famously difficult to transport from the colonies without spoiling, therefore due to their rarity, they became insanely popular and a status symbol in the 16th and 17th centuries. Only the incredibly wealthy could afford such a decadent prize. Many famous people from that time adored the fruit; Charles II, Catherine the Great, Louis XV and King Ferdinand of Spain, to name but a few.

They became a sign of hospitality and of generosity. Pineapples would be the centrepiece at dinner parties, not eaten but viewed, almost revered. Some would even rent a pineapple for an evening and carry it around like an accessory! It is clear that having a pineapple was a huge status symbol. They were incorporated into sculpture, civic architecture, design in private houses, courts and statues. You can see pineapples atop St. Paul's Cathedral in London, but perhaps the most impressive is the giant stone behemoth that sits astride the archway of Dunmore House in Falkirk.



Sweets, like sugar and fruit, were not considered as a commonly imported commodity. Therefore, the pineapple with its intense sweetness, became so desirable and widely sought after. Soon, thereafter, pineapples were highlighted on banquets and considered to be the height of extravagance in Europe. After about two centuries Europeans perfected the hothouse method of growing them.

In later centuries, the Story of the Pineapple remained in the early American colonies when pineapples were used as symbols of hospitality and friendship. Legend tells about the sea captains of New England sailing to and from the Caribbean Islands with exotic fruits and spices.

Then, as clipper ships returned to port, their families would spear a precious pineapple on their iron gatepost as a common symbol to welcome friends and neighbours into their homes. This symbolized celebrations and safe returns. Thus, the pineapple served as an invitation to visit, share food, and listen to tales about recent voyages.

In early settlements, pineapples were traditionally given as a gift of friendship. Over time, colonial Innkeepers added the pineapple to their signs. Also, pineapples carved into bedposts were a common sight at Inns throughout New England. In modern times, hotels and service industries continue to proudly display and use the pineapple as a symbol of hospitality.

Eventually, as with most things, the pineapple's celebrity faded. In the 18th century they were more easily imported from the colonies and were more readily cultivated in Britain. They were no longer scarce and coveted, becoming more commonplace and quotidian. Other trends dominated the cultural consciousness, although the fruit itself did remain popular. In 1900 James Dole started the first commercial pineapple plantation in Hawaii. It grew 75% of the world's pineapples at its height. Now the global demand for pineapples is supplied by Thailand and the Philippines. Today we are more likely to see pineapples in tins, or quite possibly on the side of a cocktail glass. But at one time they were too expensive to even dream of eating!

They were simply to be admired and lusted after as they adorned a hostess's table, or a King's elbow.

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Hi there.

Did some shopping up the coast and look what I found!  
Just after asking about pineapple paraphernalia!!  
Love them.

Kayelene





Coral and Gary



Keryn and Pam



Debbie



Shirley



Helen and Verde the eclectus parrot



Ross



Mitch and Michelle



Kayelene



Open, Decorative and Judges Choice Champion 2022 - Mitch Jones



Tillandsioideae Champion 2022 - Gary McAteer

## What Was in Our 2022 Christmas Display ?



*Tillandsia rodrigueziana* the 'crowning glory' of our display was grown in full all day sun by Lesley Baylis in a 300mm squat 'port pot'.





A nice pair of *Aechmea* 'Patricia' were the centre piece of the display.

Grown under 70% white shade cloth by Ross Little in a 300mm squat pot reaching 800mm tall including the densely branched orange inflorescence.



To the right of centre was *xVriecantarea* 'Seeger' grown by Helen Clewett under 70% green shade cloth.

The golden yellow bracts of the inflorescence made a striking contrast to the rich red foliage and red spike.



*Neoregelia* 'Morado' grown by Ross under 70% black shade cloth made up most of the front row for its brilliant pinkish purple centre colouring and its concentric patterning. An easy to care for plant for the garden that grows to around 400mm across.



To the far left of centre was *Tillandsia fasciculata* var. *clavispica* a multi headed clump grown in full all day sun by Lesley Baylis.

The inflorescence that stood around 700mm high made a real statement, a sight to behold.

To the left of centre was a hybrid created by John Buchanan: *Vriesea* 'Easter Monday' unreg. parentage unknown.

Grown by Ross under 70% black shade cloth it grows to around 500mm across and 750mm high including the simple inflorescence.



*Neoregelia* 'Lorena' also grown by Ross under 70% black shade cloth, this was placed front centre.

An easily recognised hybrid due to the dark red splotches of spots and the darker reddish leaf ends.

Created by Chester Skotak in the 1990s it's certainly one to own.



In the display were a couple of wow factor Skotak hybrids: *Neoregelia* 'Dr Jeffrey Block' which grew to almost 900mm across for Ross under the 70% black shade cloth.

On the far right of the display was another hybrid created by John Buchanan ca. mid 1990s with:

*Neoregelia*

'Red Devil' x 'Little Prince'

We named this cross:

*Neoregelia* 'Devil Prince'.

It grows to 600mm across.



**Vale:** Genny Vauhkonen (Catlan).

Partner of the late John Catlan.

Genny and John had a wealth of knowledge between them and were always happy to pass it on. All questions on the topic of Bromeliads were always answered with a smile.

On searching the Bromeliad Cultivar Register, the (BCR) there are 62 registered hybrids attributed to the Catlans covering many genera. If you haven't got one of their creations, you should have.

Advice from Genny: If you want to grow plants well, you should learn about your plants, both from where they originated and how they grow.

RIP Genny



Photo of Genny borrowed from facebook

## Christmas General Knowledge Questions

1. What day of the year was Christmas Day in 2020?
2. Which animal carried Mary before she gave birth to Jesus?
3. Which world leader celebrates his birthday on Christmas Day?
4. When do the 12 Days of Christmas start?
5. Which country annually sends a Christmas tree to be erected in London's Trafalgar Square?
6. Which monarch delivered the first Royal Christmas Day Message?
7. Which country is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition?
8. What happened in the 1914 Christmas Day truce during the First World War?
9. In which year was the first Christmas card sent?
10. What indispensable item for the Christmas table did Tom Smith, a confectioner, invent?
11. Which ocean can Christmas Island be found in?
12. In what type of building was the baby Jesus born in?
13. What is your star sign if you are born on Christmas Day?
14. What time was the Queen's speech traditionally broadcast?
15. What gifts did The Three Wise Men give Jesus on his birthday?
16. Who was crowned King of England on Christmas Day in 1066?
17. Which country traditionally plays the Boxing Day Test Match every year?
18. Which plant based Christmas tradition was started by servants in Victorian Britain?
19. Which plant has bright red and green leaves and is sometimes known as the Christmas Flower?
20. How many ghosts appear in A Christmas Carol?

**Answers:** 1. 360th day 2. Donkey 3. Justin Trudeau 4. Christmas Day  
 5. Norway 6. King George V 7. Germany 8. A game of football between British and German soldiers 9. 1843 10. The Christmas cracker 11. Indian Ocean 12. A stable 13. Capricorn 14. 3pm 15. Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh 16. William the Conqueror (William I) 17. Australia 18. Kissing under mistletoe 19. Poinsettia 20. Four (Jacob Marley, Ghost of Christmas Past, Ghost of Christmas Present, Ghost of Yet to Come.)

## The Fibonacci Sequence and Pineapples

by John Catlan

Look at any plant - tomato, strawberry or pineapple, count the number of petals, or the way the leaves are arranged. You will find them set out in pairs, threes, fives, eights or thirteens, but never fours. Plants don't like four.

Plants stick to numbers in the series 1,2,3,5,8,13,21,34 where each number comes from adding the previous two together. The series is called The Fibonacci Sequence. Mathematicians love this string of numbers, as do plants. You will find these numbers in the five seed chambers you find when you cut across an apple, or the 34 or 55 spiral whorls in a sunflower head. We do not have four leafed clover or a four-leafed anything else.

**Phyllotaxis;** arrangement of leaves on stem.

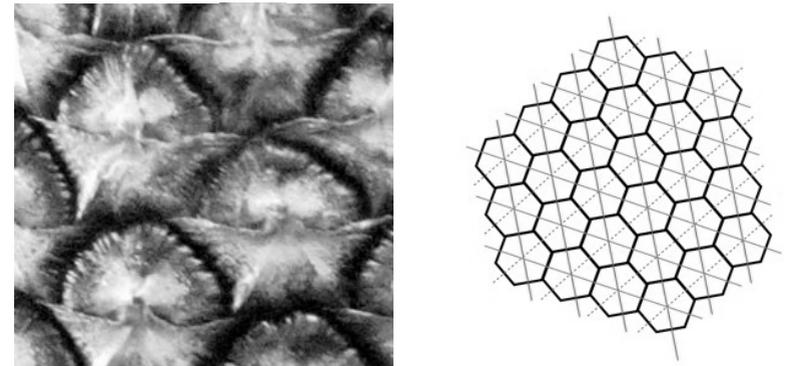
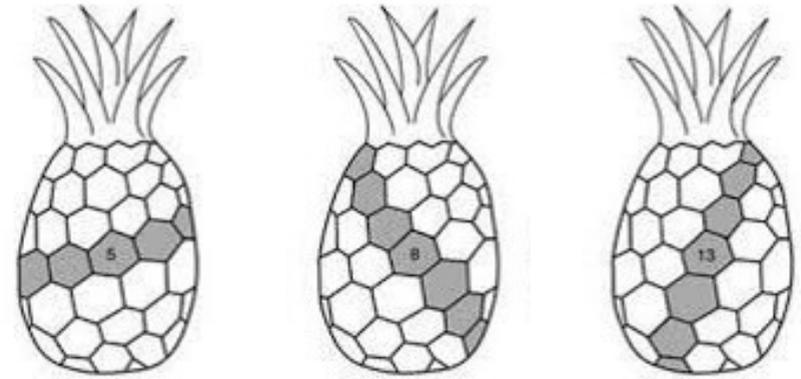
In the following, note how the Fibonacci Sequence seems to rule: the flowers of a pineapple and thus bromeliads have three petals.

When I seriously started to look at the shape of Neoregelias and what made the shape appealing and what was right for the plant, the work on pineapples was the bench mark to copy. Once you understand how leaf shape is formed you do not have to strip a plant, you can line up leaves and count, but I will explain in detail. The leaf phyllotaxy can be determined by removal of the leaves and marking the growth bud at the base of the leaf then noting the number of leaves which have to be removed before another leaf bud appears on a line on the stem extending vertically above the first number bud, and also noting the number of spirals that have been made around the stem. We find the leaf phyllotaxy is 5/13. The five is the number of spirals around the stem and thirteen the number of leaves removed in the five spirals until another bud, the fourteenth is found directly above bud number one.

When a pineapple is formed hormones change the phyllotaxy from 5/13 of the leaves to 8/21 of the fruit. In normal fruit the number of rows of each type of spiral is constant, there being eight of the long gently sloping rows and thirteen of short steep ones.

The fruit hormones cuts out and the phyllotaxy changes from 8/21 of the fruit to 5/13 of the leaves abnormalities in fruit and top development, such as double fruit, fan tops, multiple tops are the results of irregularities in these hormone driven phyllotaxis change.

Reprinted from the book: Under The Mango Tree - by John Catlan



Pineapple scales form diagonal rows.

## Bromelain

Bromelain is an enzyme extract derived from the stems of pineapples, although it exists in all parts of the fresh pineapple. The extract has a history of folk medicine use. As an ingredient, it is used in cosmetics, as a topical medication, and as a meat tenderizer.

Bromelain enzymes are called fruit bromelain and stem bromelain.

## Blood Water

from: Under The Mango Tree - by John Catlan.

If you tip the 'well' water out of some Neoregelias you can sometimes find it is tinged with red. I know that Bromeliads contain B-carotene, and if you cook anything that contains B-carotene in acid water for more than a few minutes, the B-carotene becomes soluble. Bromeliads acidify the water in their cups down to pH 5.5 so maybe some of the colouration is caused by the B-carotene becoming soluble, too.

Incidentally, there are over 300 different Carotenoid pigments.

## **Open Popular Vote Champion - 2022**

1st Mitch Jones

## **Tillandsioideae Champion - 2022**

1st Gary McAteer

## **Decorative Champion - 2022**

1st Mitch Jones

## **Judges Choice Champion - 2022**

1st Mitch Jones



### **Web Links for Checking Correct Identification and Spelling ?**

Bromeliad Cultivar Register (BCR): <http://registry.bsi.org/>  
Refer to this site for correct identification and spelling of your hybrid or cultivar.

New Bromeliad Taxon List : <https://bromeliad.nl/taxonlist/>  
Refer to this site for latest species name changes and correct spelling.

Bromeliads in Australia (BinA) <http://bromeliad.org.au/>  
Refer to this site for its Photo Index, Club Newsletters many with  
Table of Contents Index and there's Detective Derek Articles.

Keep these web sites set as desktop icons for quick reference access.

### **Where do I Find the Dates ?**

**[www.bromeliad.org.au](http://www.bromeliad.org.au)** then click "Diary".

Check this site for regular updates of times, dates and addresses of meetings  
and shows in your area and around the country.