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

Edition: September 2025

Agenda: General Discussion

Venue: PineGrove Bromeliad Nursery
114 Pine Street Wardell 2477

Phone (02) 6683 4188

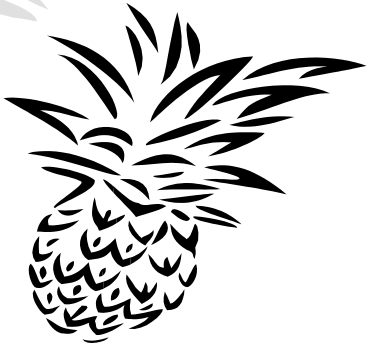
Study Group meets the third Thursday of each month

Next meeting October 16th 2025 at 11 a.m.

Editorial Team:
Ross Little
Helen Clewett

pinegrovebromeliads@bigpond.com

Life Members: Gary McAteer, Coral McAteer
Debbie Smith, Shirley Smith
Ross Little, Helen Clewett



Meeting August 21st 2025

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

General Business

Those wretched fire ants are in the news again because they are spreading further afield in Queensland again. Locally, New South Wales DPI seem to be working hard at keeping them ay bay, regular property treatments seem to be helping. Our Council posted a warning recently about these invasive ants:
“If fire ants establish here, our relaxed, outdoor lifestyle could change forever”, the Council must be concerned about their movement south from Queensland. Stay vigilant and report any suspect sightings to:
NSW Biosecurity Helpline on 1800 680 244

It has been suggested to keep a container of Fipronil at hand to combat ants, it’s available as a liquid or as I prefer granular. Follow all safety precautions and only use as directed.

For members information Helen tabled a report on our financial situation.

Show, Tell and Ask!

The editorial team requested photos of what is flowering in your garden at the moment. A short note about it would be helpful, however we can assist if necessary. Try to minimize background noise, remember the subject is your Bromeliad, not what’s behind it. Align your camera with the subject, in other words, square it up, diagonal photos can be difficult to deal with at times. We can crop no problem, we can rotate/realign but this may lose some desired subject matter. Take quite a few photos at different distances, just a few centi-metres can make a difference if focus is set on auto. Send us the best three or four photos for us to select from. We are a Bromeliad Group so garden photos are always welcome but the photos should have your Bromeliads as the main focal point.

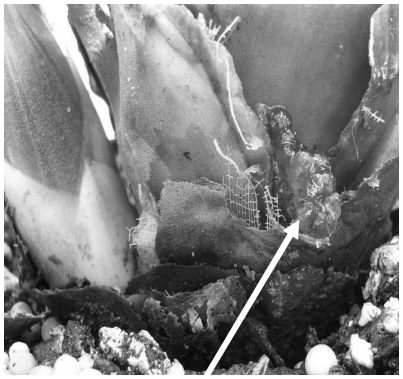
I was sent a photo of an Alcantarea growing next to a boat, the boat was about 85% of the subject matter! Most of the boat got cropped out of the photo, the problem being the actual subject, the Bromeliad then distorts, it becomes pixelated making the photo look out of focus. So please help us maintain good quality photos in our Newsletter by keeping the subject matter the focal point.

This is an open request to any readers of our FNCBSG NSW Newsletter.

A question asked by Deb this month:
What is the jelly like 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 the book: 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) .

The jelly substance is harmless, basically the plant is self cleaning.

Deb gave a brief report on her recent holiday in Scotland. As she was going to be there in Spring, she was asked to keep an eye out for Bromeliads. There wasn’t much to report on from a glass house she visited in Glasgow, however there were Guzmanias in the Inverness Botanic Gardens.

Nomenclature for the ‘X’

When writing a label for your bigeneric hybrid, the crossing of two species from different genera, an ‘X’ should precede the nothogenus to show it’s a hybrid.

In a hybrid formula the seed parent is always written first followed by the pollen parent, however this doesn’t always apply to a bigeneric nothogenus.

FNCBSG Newsletter Sept. 2012 Derek Butcher was asked: How is it decided which way round the two parents are put together to form the nothogenus of the bigeneric name ? Ross L.

Answer: It does not matter, who was mother? Just think about it. Nothogenera are covered by the ICBN rules even though 95% are man made. If a nothogenus starts in the wild who knows what mother was? Derek B.

To create a nothogenus name use the first part or the whole of one, the last part or the whole of the other (but not the whole of both) and, optionally, use a connecting vowel. Neoregelia x Orthophytum = x*Neophytum.* (note the ’x’)

Open Popular Vote

1st	Deb Baker	*Guzmania* 'Mia' unreg.
2nd	Michelle Hartwell	*Billbergia* ' Talbot Cherry Maple'
3rd	Helen Clewett	*Guzmania* 'Lyndal'
3rd	Mitch Jones	x*Vriesgoudaea* 'Fireman'
3rd	Shane Fitzgerald	*Neoregelia* 'Fruit Stripe'

Tillandsia

1st	Gary McAteer	*Tillandsia ionantha*
1st	Michelle Hartwell	*Tillandsia* 'Samantha'
2nd	Deb Baker	*Tillandsia* 'Marvelous Masterpiece'
2nd	Shane Fitzgerald	*Tillandsia deppeana*

Monthly Genus — Vriesea and Guzmania

1st	Michelle Hartwell	x*Neophytum* 'Ecstasy'

Judges Choice

1st	Mitch Jones	*Orthophytum magalhaesii*

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.

Bromeliad Species Database (BSD): www.bsi.org/members/?bsd
Refer to this site for species identification, photos, descriptions and more.

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 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.

Ananas - A Home Grown Pineapple

For many years most of us have bought and eaten either fresh pineapples or canned pineapple. However it is always exciting to see one of your Bromeliads flower for the first time.

Kayelene has flowered many of her Bromeliads over the years, but this year is her first home grown Ananas — pineapple. Well done Kayelene, hope it tastes as good as it looks.

Pineapples - genus Ananas originated in South America, specifically the region between Brazil and Paraguay, where indigenous people cultivated them for centuries before European contact. Christopher Columbus encountered them in 1493 and introduced them into Europe, where their rarity made them symbols of wealth and status.

To propagate a pineapple:
They are terrestrial in habit, firstly remove the crown and allow it dry for a few days, it can then be placed in a glass of water until roots appear, after which it can be planted into soil. Alternatively the dried crown can be planted directly into well-draining soil in a sunny position. In our Northern Rivers NSW area they can be grown in full all day sun. In 18 months to two and a half years you should have another fruit to enjoy.

The pineapple is a densely strobiliform inflorescence with polystichously arranged flowers. The ovaries are fused together to the base of the floral bracts and to the axis of the inflorescence, forming a syncarp - the pineapple.

Bromelian – is a pineapple extract, it is a group of enzymes that break down proteins, it is extracted from the stems of pineapples, it exists in all parts of the fresh plant and fruit. The extract has a history of folk medicine use. As a culinary ingredient, it may be used as a meat tenderizer. It has various potential health benefits, including reducing inflammation and improving digestion.

Monthly Genus for August was Orthophytum, Sincoraea and Related Bigenerics.

Orthophytum was described by Joseph George Beer in 1854. It is a genus comprised of 66 species and six varieties in the subfamily Bromelioideae and is endemic to Brazil.

Orthophytum magalhaesii
Judges Choice Mitch Jones

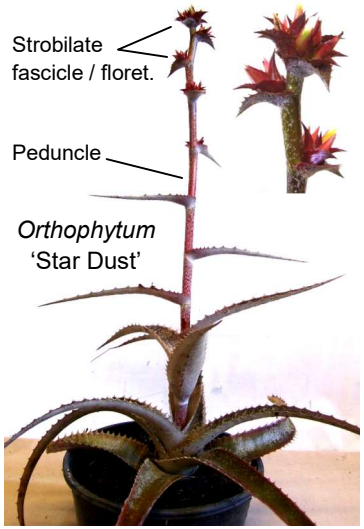
Orthophytum aff. *formosense*
grown by Ross Little

A mixed group of Orthophytum shown by Ross Little

Orthophytum live in habitats that stretch from the central-north region of Espirito Santo state, south eastern Brazil to the north eastern states of Alagoas, Pernambuco and Paraiba.

The centre of diversity of the genus occurs in the states of Bahia and Minas Gerais.

Orthophytum are terrestrial and saxicolous, they live in sun exposed areas on the rocky escarpments in the region of the Atlantic Forest or often in the grasslands on rocky soils and on quartzite and sandstone outcrops.



Orthophytum
'Star Dust'

Vegetative propagation of Orthophytums is by several methods. The strobilate fascicles can develop into plantlets on the peduncle, each plantlet can be removed and grown individually. If left on the peduncle to mature, their weight bends the long peduncle over until it touches the ground spreading new plants further from the parent plant. Also via long stolons spreading new plants further afield from the parent plant.

Sincoraea differ by mainly reproducing via short basal shoots / offsets, creating tight clusters. As the offset matures the very short stolon can be cut near as possible to the parent plant, it can then be planted into a free draining potting mix.

x*Sincoregelia* 'Kaleidoscope' unreg.
grown by Deb Baker

x*Neophytum* 'Ecstasy'
1st Monthly Genus Michelle Hartwell

Sincoraea was first described in 1908 with a single species, *Sincoraea amoena* and only having a sessile inflorescence. In 1955 it was synonymized under Orthophytum.

Rafael B. Louzada and
Maria das Gracas L. Wanderley
(Journ Brom Soc Vol.66 (1) 2016)
re-established the genus Sincoraea in its own right, separating it from Orthophytum based on morphological analysis which included all species with a sessile inflorescence, that is, one attached directly at the base and not having an elongated peduncle.

x*Sincoregelia* 'Plum Crazy' unreg.
grown by Shane Fitzgerald

Guzmania 'Mia' unreg.
1st Open Deb Baker

Billbergia 'Talbot Cherry Maple'
grown by Michelle Hartwell

x*Vriesgoudaea* 'Fireman'
grown by Mitch Jones

Guzmania 'Lyndal'
grown by Helen Clewett

Tillandsia 'Fuego'
1st Tillandsia
Gary McAteer

Tillandsia 'Samantha'
1st Tillandsia Michelle Hartwell

Billbergia hybrid
grown by Kayelene Guthrie

Tillandsia bulbosa
grown by Kayelene Guthrie

Neoregelia 'Fruit Stripe'
grown by Shane Fitzgerald

Tillandsia caerulea
grown by Mitch Jones

Tillandsia neglecta
grown by Helen Clewett

Tillandsia ‘Marvelous Masterpiece’ grown by Deb Baker

Tillandsia deppeana

This is a popular Tillandsia among collectors for its distinctive pale rose-pink to red inflorescence and blue petals. It grows as an epiphyte in pine and deciduous forests in Mexico at altitude from 1080 to 1800 metres and is also known from central Cuba.

This beauty was grown by Shane Fitzgerald.

Tillandsia deppeana was described by the German botanist Ernst Steudel in 1841. The type specimen was collected by two German naturalists, physician and botanist Christian Julius Wilhelm Schiede and Paul Ferdinand Deppe in Jalapa, Vera Cruz, Mexico in the early 1800s.

A *Tillandsia deppeana* collection in Cuba was from Buenos Aires, Trinidad Hills, Central Cuba by the Canadian botanist John George Jack in 1929.

Tillandsia deppeana seen growing as an epiphyte in the pine forests of Oaxaca, Mexico at around 1920 metres (6300’). *Tillandsia multicaulis* (below) and others like *Till. punctulata* also grow in this area.

Wendy and Ian Buddle were members of our Group for many years always asking questions and being very involved in discussions wanting to learn as much as possible about growing Bromeliads. When Ian retired, they decided to move house, relocating to Queensland. Wendy kept moving her beloved Bromeliads with her each time they moved, being three more times since that initial move.

Unfortunately Wendy and Ian find it difficult to travel the distance required to attend meetings these days. To help them keep in touch with the Group, Wendy occasionally sends a few photos of her lovely Bromeliads. It certainly looks like all those discussions on growing Bromeliads have paid off with some mighty fine looking plants grown by Wendy and Ian.

Clockwise top right to bottom left:

Goudaea ospinae

Alcantarea 'Silver Plum'

Neoregelia 'Lorena Lector'

Billbergia hybrid

Thank you for the photos Wendy, it was good to hear from you again.

Bromeliads - Houseplants for Today and Tomorrow

Part 12

by Walter Richter (Translated by Adda Abendroth, Teresopolis, Brazil)

Raising and Cultivating Tillandsias

continued: BSI 1970 Vol. 20 (3)

There are probably many growers who desire to possess Tillandsias to cultivate them. For those who so far have had not much experience with bromeliads I would advise that it would be unwise to start their adventure with the difficult members of the family, especially if desire centres on the smaller species with a lot of scales. *Tillandsia cyanea, T. flabellata, T. lindenii* and others are not too difficult to cultivate and are fairly easy to procure. Out-of-the-ordinary plants are not easy to get, they are not in the trade. Once in awhile, though, there is a chance to buy one. In the previous chapter I spoke of importing plants directly from their homeland as a means of building up a small collection. Collectors, on the whole, have a knack for discovering ways of securing what they are after for their collection. Why shouldn't the hobbyist also succeed? But there is really no need to commence with the specialties. Other species of small bromeliads will give us a pretty good idea of what tropical epiphytes are like and later Tillandsias can be added to the collection as the ultimate crown.

How to accommodate epiphytes in the home was described previously. To cultivate small Tillandsia species suspended indoors and to keep them successfully over a long period is nearly impossible. Our dry indoor air is a tremendous handicap and dust settling on the leaves is another drawback. We have three alternatives to house our plants conveniently. The first is a medium sized terrarium. It should have glass on all sides. An air regulator above or to one side is needed to balance air humidity. In the bottom goes a shallow layer of gravel, on top of it some coarse leaf-mould and forest earth, pine-needles and some moss, all in a half decayed condition. A few pebbles and fragments of roots may be placed here and there to simulate a natural setting. The bottom layer functions as a permanent source of moisture, it should always be evenly humid but not soaking wet. It not only enhances the appearance but is excellent for Cryptanthus. An appropriate section of a rough-barked branch is then placed in a slanting position inside the container, reaching from one of the bottom corners to the opposite corner or from side to side lengthwise. It must be solidly fastened for the branch to hold Tillandsias. Species that have a root-clump can go in an excavation made in the branch. Plants having few or no roots must be tied on.

If the container is to remain in a permanently heated there is generally no need for extra heat. If daylight is unsatisfactory, install a vacuum tube as explained previously. One spraying early in the morning is usually sufficient. Humidity rising from the bottom will keep the atmosphere in the container adequate for the day. By late afternoon the plants should all be dry. If the panes are foggy let in dry air from the room.

More space will be needed as collections increase. The second step is a window -case and the third is a complete plant-window. Basic installation is essentially the same as Step 1, the terrarium. The subject was discussed in Lessons I and II. As more space becomes available, a single branch will no longer satisfy for mounting plants. You will suspend singles mounted on wood or cork.

During the warmer months my friend Stettler in Bern cultivates nearly all his Tillandsias out on his balcony facing south in an apartment on the tenth floor. Individual plants get hung on the walls. They enjoy plenty of light from the sun and receive 2 or 3 sprayings a day. The plants are in perfect condition, fine and hardy, in no way pampered. The proof is their dense coat of silvery grey scales. I am convinced that it is not impossible to reproduce my Swiss friend's success in Germany despite our slightly rougher climate. A partially glassed-in porch or a similar protected nook would do and incidentally serve to house other bromeliads equally well.

So far, Tillandsia seed can hardly be found on the market except perhaps once in a while in a specialist's store. Yet attempts to grow the seed indoors have been made. I quote from a letter received from a friend:

"My Tillandsia seed bed is showing green. I sowed the seed on November 11, on the 22nd the kernels exploded at the top of the parachute end. Today, November 24, all the grains are germinating. I will keep them until germination is complete in a little glass container on the window sill where the temperature is 18-22°C. I have never let the seedlings get totally dry and I intend to continue this treatment until all the germs are out of their hull. Only then shall I hang the container in the plant-case and alternate dry and moist. For holders I use fresh alder and oak branches. I count on the tannin in this material to counteract formation of algae and moss. In addition I gave the branches a coating of Chinosol 1:1000. A few of the seeds I put on the bark in the plant-case, these often get completely dry also while germinating. The result is nearly as good as that of the other treatment."

Another letter reads:

"The Tillandsia seed germinated 100%. So far I see only little green balls. I shall put the next seeds on coarse bark. Being a little thicker, bark seems to holds moisture better than branch fragments. I don't think it is necessary to fasten the seed with thread because if the bark is wet when the seed is put on it, they will adhere anyway."

Growing Tillandsias from seed is a challenge. I can well appreciate the ever present difficulties of all kinds. But whoever is inclined to engage in activities of this sort will also have the patience necessary to carry on. Patience is essential, because development from seed proceeds very slowly, it will take years. However if the tiny seedlings have grown enough to show, their mere presence is a pleasure and caring for them is pure joy. The implements needed are extremely simple, no costly apparatus of any kind is needed.

In later steps of cultivation of seedlings, as well as of adult plants, lime-free, very soft water is the most important item. There are so many ways to come by good water that one will surely be at your command. Rain water, water from a pond or brook or water running through peat will do. Water from the aquarium also serves the purpose and contains a little nourishment. I am stressing the necessity of using the correct kind of water, purity is important. In industrial districts even rain may be so contaminated that it becomes harmful for delicate plants. In the same manner, water coming from a river can be defiled by industrial waste to the point of being unfit, even harmful. The grower must concentrate on building up favourable surroundings for his pets. Only points to ponder can be supplied in this connection and that was done. The most important item, however, is that you use your own observations to find out what helps your plants the most.

Diseases and Pests - BSI 1970 Vol. 20 (4)

Bromeliads have not been afflicted by disease so far and only few pests affect them as compared with other ornamentals. It is on purpose that I say "so far," because experience has shown that cultivated plants become subject to pests and disease only after they have multiplied considerably and are being raised in great quantities. With bromeliads this is a recent situation, only a few years old.

In a measure, therefore, they are still free from cultivation ailments that are a real menace to other plants. By cultivation ailments I mean diseases that appear in plants which are raised in very large numbers and have a comparatively short development period. In the process, the biologic balance, the interaction of plants and surroundings gets undermined to such an extent that an attack of pests or disease can hardly be avoided. The consequences of disturbing the biologic balance often takes a new and harmful shape of spontaneous alteration in the plants. It should be every gardener's prime purpose to establish the best biologic balance and keep it functioning all the time. The entire content of my book is based on this principle. It presupposes knowledge and understanding of the plants intrinsic qualities as well as correct evaluation of the conditions under which they live in their homeland and cultivation must be gauged to correspond. If the rules are followed, it should not be to difficult to build up the required biologic balance in the new location.

The gardener can, of course, intervene and give the course a different direction if that suits his commercial ambitions. If he wants to, he can accelerate development. The means is usually to give higher temperature and additional fertilizer. Both help the plants to grow faster. As long as the application is kept within limits no harm will ensue, but if it is overdone the plants are apt to get to soft. Pampered plants are easy prey to disease because their resistance is not up to standard. At this stage I take for granted that I do not have to recount all the particulars that make for better and stronger plants. All the practical measures discussed in earlier chapters point to this aim.

Diseases Caused by Fungi

A common enemy of vegetable origin is the so-called multiplication-fungus (Vermehrungspilz) often found on germinating seed and on young plants in their first steps of development. The culprits are various fungi that lead a saprophytic life in the soil and spread rapidly if conditions are favourable. A preventative measure is disinfection of seeds, or the substrate and of the dishes before planting. Seeds should not be spread too densely, spraying and watering done carefully and plants should be allowed to dry before nightfall. Good light and correct temperature are necessary. Direct action on the pest is precarious. A disinfectant (Chinosol or others) may be used in watering, spraying should be stopped and moisture reduced to the minimum required.

Of late, around 1955, a vert serious disease invaded *Aechmea fasciata*. It was named “Aechmea-wilt.” In Belgium it became so bad many nurseries were unable to keep up their stock. The malady was carried into Germany, where it is still spreading. The culprit is a fungus of the Fusarium group. Related species cause similar wilt-damage in cyclamen, carnations and other ornamentals.

The disturbance starts with a hardened greyish-brown spot on the base of one of the fully developed outer leaves. It grows into a brown fungus which spreads rapidly all over the leaf. The leaf soon droops. Gradually it dies and falls off the rosette. Subsequently the inner leaves are also attacked and in the end the whole plant collapses and breaks off close to the ground. High air humidity and temperatures above 25°C accelerate the process considerably. They are ideal conditions for the fungus to prosper. In winter the wilt progresses more slowly. For months the first symptoms stay limited to the base of the leaves and are easily overlooked. The fungus grows towards the centre of the plant and destroys all the leaves until the plant suddenly tips over without any apparent reason.

The fungus lives in the soil as a saprophyte. Thanks to its very resistant long-term spores it can lie dormant for years if conditions are adverse. It bursts into life abruptly as soon as conditions improve. It was proved beyond doubt that attack comes from the soil. Prevention is therefore limited to sterilization of seed and plant containers and especially of the soil. Direct treatment of attacked plants is as yet not possible on account of the bromeliad’s peculiar build. Unattacked plants should be strengthened to improve their resistance. Temperature and air humidity should be kept down to normal. Proper aeration must be provided especially on hot summer days. If Aechmea cultivation is continued after an attack has set in, thorough disinfection of the houses is necessary, an important item along the line of scrupulous attention to plant hygiene. It is the only way to eradicate the disease.

To be continued ……...