

**ILLAWARRA BROMELIAD SOCIETY
INCORPORATED
NEWSLINK**

January 2019



***Billbergia* 'Hallelujah' – a beautiful Don Beadle cultivar**

See articles pp. 7-10

Photograph by Birgit Rhode - www.bromeliad.org.au

(From 13th Australasian Bromeliad Conference 2003, Auckland, NZ)

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MEETINGS - The Society meets at 12.00 noon on the first Saturday of each month (except January and December) in the Laurel Room* at the Ribbonwood Centre, DAPTO. *Scribbly Gum room for November meetings only.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS - Due 30th June each year: \$15 single/\$25 family.

NEWSLINK ISSUED QUARTERLY - January, April, July, and October and at <http://www.bromeliad.org.au>

VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

NEW MEMBERS: A very warm welcome to Robyn Stanford who joined our Society at our November meeting. Also a belated—but very warm—welcome to Cheryl Mathews who joined back in June. We wish you both a long and happy association with us!

COMPETITION RESULTS:

- **POINTS SCORE WINNERS:** Hearty congratulations to our Points Score winners for 2018.

Open	-	Noel Kennon
Novice	-	Anne Mobbs
Tillandsia	-	Noel Kennon

But thanks go to all of our members who participate in our monthly competitions as seeing all of these beautiful plants on display is, for many of us, one of the highlights of our meetings.

- **GROWING CHALLENGE:** In February 2018 we challenged participating members to grow-on a bromeliad seedling [*Pitcairnia flammea*] to the best of their ability. They brought their plants in to the November meeting and you judged that Pam Townsend was the clear winner. Her prize was a very nice plant. When queried about her success she said that the only thing that she perhaps did differently was that every morning she treated it to the dregs of her cup of black coffee. It is grown on a tray on her veranda, sheltered, but with some sunlight during the day. Congratulations, Pam!

We intend to run the competition again this year, so come along to the February meeting prepared to take custody of a seedling for nurturing through the year and judgement in November.

- **PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION:** Last year we acknowledged that there are many plants that cannot be entered in the monthly competitions because they are too big, or growing in the ground, or in flower at the wrong time. So we ran a competition for photographs of these plants to be judged by the members at the Christmas Party in December.

We had 19 entries and the winner was Michael Drury with his photograph of an *Aechmea recurvata* var. *benrathii*. His prize was a great vriesea. Congratulations, Michael!

We will run the competition again this year, and copies of the competition rules will be available at the February meeting. There were some beautiful photographs of some beautiful plants and everyone who entered our competition is to be congratulated and thanked for entering.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP AWARD: This well-deserved recognition was awarded to Sharyn Baraldi during our Christmas party in December. See Neville's notes below under "A Surprise at the End of the Year".

MONTHLY RAFFLE PRIZE ROSTER: As usual, there will be a raffle held at every General Meeting from February through to November according to the roster set out below. Every month each of the four rostered members is asked to bring up to five bromeliad plants or goods concerned with the cultivation of bromeliads for the raffle so that there will be about twenty prizes. The quality of plants should comply with the requirements of 'Plants for Sale'. Should you be unable to attend the meeting on your rostered day it is essential that you advise the Program Officer (Noel Kennon, [02] 4262 7614) so that appropriate rearrangements can be made.

February	-	Graham Bevan, Jim Clague, Ann Kennon, Maureen Wheeler
March	-	Bob Stevens, Michael Drury, Freda Kennedy, John Toolan
April	-	Jørgen Jakobsen, Steve Wain, Carol Burgdorf, June Casey
May	-	Neville Wood, Ted Clare, Jan Stammers, Rhonda Patterson
June	-	Jim Clague, Sandra Carnie, Beverley Irvine, June Smith
July	-	Deniece Crutchley, Barbara Jones-Beverstock, Brian Smith, Maadi McKenna

August - Monica De Clouett, Edwina Caruana, Anne-Marie Brun, Ann Kennon
 September - Sylvia Clare, Noel Kennon, Eileen Killingley, Graham Bevan
 October - Neville Wood, Beth Clague, Lydia Chinnock, Suzanne Burrows
 November - Pam Townsend, Val Miller, Fred Mirande, Jørgen Jakobsen
2020
 February - Christine Stevens, Yvonne Perinotti, Maria Jakobsen, Elizabeth Bevan

ROSTER FOR CLEANING UP AFTER THE MEETING:

February - Heather Thain, Les Thain, Joy Scholz, Anne-Marie Brun, June Casey
 March - Isabella Chambers, Lisa Chambers, Beverley Irvine, Val Miller, Ana Mallon
 April - Glenrae Barker, Christine Stephens, Pam Townsend, June Smith, Deniece Crutchley
 May - Denise Wetzel, Ana Mallon, Cheryl Matthews, Jan Thoroughgood, Glenn Martin
 June - Monika Rose, Ann Kennon, Noel Kennon, Robyn Stanford, Carol Burgdorf
 July - Elizabeth Bevan, Graham Bevan, Maadi McKenna, Yvonne Perinotti, Bob Stephens

GENERAL MEETING – 2ND FEBRUARY 2019 – STEVE FALCIONI - ECO ORGANIC GARDEN PRODUCTS

Steve will be coming from Sydney to give us updated information about Eco products in relation to the growing of bromeliads. He has visited us on several previous occasions and offered Eco products for sale; however, as his company has recently been acquired by Yates he will not be able to sell Eco products to Society members. Steve's rooftop garden is featured over 6 pages in the June 2018 issue of *Gardening Australia* magazine with some beautiful photographs (See <ecoorganicgarden.com.au>)

GARDEN VISITS #1 – SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2019: We will visit three gardens on this day, starting at 10.00 am at Ann and Noel Kennon's home (7 Whitely Place, Kanahooka) where we will have morning tea. At approximately 11.15 am we will depart there for Yvonne Perinotti's home at 19 Cachia Blvd, Horsley and then leave there at 12.30 pm for Anne-Marie Brun's home at 27 Ritchie Crescent, Horsley where it will be set up for lunch (BYO). Tea and coffee will be supplied but please bring cake or slice to share for morning tea and lunch.

MARCH 9-10 SALES DAY AT WARILLA: It has been decided that this year we will hold our sales day over two days—Saturday, 9th and Sunday, 10th March—with setup commencing at 7.30 am on the Saturday and opening to the public from 9.00 am – 3.00 pm on the Saturday and 10.00 am – 2.00 pm on the Sunday. It would be helpful if members could advise by the February General Meeting if they require a table. The venue is the same as the last two years—the Warilla Neighbourhood Centre--next to the Swimming Pool on Benaud Crescent, but with entry from Lake Entrance Road.

WORKSHOP #1 – SATURDAY, APRIL 13: Details will be available at the April General Meeting and circulated by email to participating members.

LUCKY DRAW PRIZE: We started the Lucky Draw Prize late in 2017 and since then many members have taken home great plants as prizes. This activity will continue for as long as members donate the prizes, and this year is covered. But if you would like to contribute, if only for a month or two, please see Noel.

UPCOMING EVENTS . . .

April 6 – 7	COLLECTORS' PLANT FAIR – HAWKESBURY RACE CLUB, CLARENDON Saturday entry \$14/Sunday entry \$12/Weekend pass \$20. <collectorsplantfair.com>
May 11 – 12	BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA – AUTUMN SHOW AND SALES – FEDERATION PAVILION, CASTLE HILL SHOWGROUNDS – Saturday 9am – 4pm/Sunday 10am – 3pm
Sep. 7 - 8	ILLAWARRA BROMELIAD SOCIETY SPRING SHOW – Uniting Church Hall, CORRIMAL
Oct. 17 - 20	GOLDEN BROMS – 20TH AUSRALASIAN BROMELIAD CONFERENCE – SEA WORLD, GOLD COAST - Registration to June 30 \$350/\$375 thereafter. <goldenbroms.com>

A SURPRISE AT THE END OF THE YEAR – Neville Wood

Once again, following a successful year, the Society held its annual Christmas Party instead of the December meeting. It was a chance to chat to other members, a thing that's becoming increasingly difficult at monthly meetings now due to the greater number of members.

While we waited for the food to be ready, Italo Baraldi provided a great selection of background music which we all enjoyed. Once more a fine lunch was provided, with a main course of hot or cold food with veggies or salad which everyone enjoyed. Punch was available to wash it all down while we chatted until the desserts were ready. Like last year, there was no shortage of food, with several members having "seconds" and, in a couple of cases, even "thirds".

Following this the presentation for winners at our annual show and the monthly points score competition took part with the successful exhibitors being presented with their respective trophies. The high point of the whole day was the final presentation which had been a well-kept secret and that was the presentation of a Life Membership Award to Sharyn Baraldi, who for once was actually stuck for words.

Sharyn has been a member of this Society since 2001 and probably many of the newer members don't know her or what she does, but it is the different roles she has taken on that make her one of the quiet achievers of this Society. Since joining she has always been a willing worker and has turned her hand to many different tasks and it is these different tasks she has taken on that make her a very special person within this Society.

People always admire the large display at our annual show but not all know it has been designed and supervised by Sharyn, and although she does have helpers the theme and the way it is all set up is designed by Sharyn and planned many months before the show.

She spends her own time during the year preparing the props and selecting the other equipment she needs. Although she has the props made in advance it's not until the day of the show setup that she actually knows what plants she will have available to use as these are provided by members for use in the display. It takes a lot of skill to be able to position these plants not having previously known what would be available, but each year she seems to manage it with no problems.

For the last 14 years she has been a regular attendee as one of the four extra members required to attend our committee meetings and it's rare that she ever misses a meeting. Since I joined in 2004 she has always been involved with our monthly points score competition and since 2005 has been the officer in charge of Plant Competition Records where she supervises the registering of plants, results of the competition and the "signing off" of plants at the end of the meeting when members collect their plants to take home.

Sharyn has also been one of the first to offer her beautiful garden for "Garden Visits" for the Society and regularly makes her property available for Society workshops when a venue is required. She also supervises the light refreshments at our annual sales days, and is always the first to volunteer if extra help is needed for other jobs along the way.

At our annual Christmas party it is Sharyn who organises the swapping of gifts between members and it was her idea to have an extra little gift for the last two people to pick their presents this year; once again, at her own expense.

Sharyn could definitely be described as one of the Society's "silent achievers" and I consider it was a high point of our Christmas presentations to see Sharyn recognised with a well-deserved Life Membership Award. Congratulations Sharyn!

VALE: We lost two bright stars from the Bromeliad world towards the end of 2018—Renate Ehlers who passed away in September and Don Beadle (Mr Billbergia) who died on Halloween, October 31. See extract from an earlier tribute to Renate written by Len Colgan, South Australia (<bromeliad.nl>) below.

October 6, 2018: Plant Results

Open:

1 st	Steve Wain	<i>Aechmea racinae</i> var. <i>tubiformis</i>
2 nd	Noel Kennon	<i>Cryptanthus</i> 'Imposter Red'
3 rd	Jørgen Jakobsen	<i>Neoregelia</i> 'Luna'

Novice:

1 st	Anne Mobbs	<i>Neoregelia</i> 'Inferno'
2 nd	Anne Mobbs	<i>Neoregelia</i> 'Rosea Striata'
3 rd	Anne Mobbs	<i>Aechmea</i> 'Big Stuff'

Tillandsia:

1 st	Michael Drury	<i>Tillandsia stricta</i>
2 nd	Steve Wain	<i>Tillandsia</i> (ex Bak)
3 rd	Noel Kennon	<i>Tillandsia ionantha</i> (Mexican)

November 3, 2018: Plant Results

Open:

1 st	Jørgen Jakobsen	<i>Aechmea</i> 'La Tigra' (mounted)
2 nd	Beth Clague	<i>Nidularium</i> 'Litmus'
3 rd	Jørgen Jakobsen	<i>Guzmania wittmackii</i>

Novice:

1 st	Ana Mallon	<i>Neoregelia</i> 'Bottoms Up'
2 nd	Anne Mobbs	<i>Neoregelia</i>
3 rd	Anne Mobbs	<i>Neoregelia</i> 'Inferno'
3 rd	Belinda Drury	<i>Cryptanthus bahianus</i>

Tillandsia:

1 st	Noel Kennon	<i>Tillandsia recurvifolia</i>
2 nd	Noel Kennon	<i>Tillandsia aeranthos</i>
2 nd	Beth Clague	<i>Tillandsia fuchsii</i> var. <i>gracilis</i>
3 rd	Beth Clague	<i>Tillandsia bulbosa</i>

VALE – RENATE EHLERS: Renate and Klaus Ehlers used their travel agency in Stuttgart, Germany, to organize their first trip to Mexico in 1972, along with a group of fellow cactus enthusiasts. This changed their lives forever. The bromeliads they encountered became their new passion, especially tillandsias. This signalled the start of almost annual return visits to Mexico, interspersed with other expeditions in Central and South America. Because Klaus and Renate were willing to venture into the most remote locations in Mexico, often enduring shabby or even no accommodation, and having to combat both human and natural impediments, they were able to find many new tillandsia species previously unnamed and undescribed. This inspired Renate to study the botany of tillandsias, and she soon learnt about taxonomy from some of the world's foremost bromeliad authorities. She and Klaus created their own tillandsia herbarium in their home, and assembled most available information on this genus. With Klaus always by Renate's side, taking photographs, they amassed a mindboggling array of tillandsia images, ranging from whole plants in habitat down to tiny taxonomic details taken from their own impressive collection, many of which appeared in her two books, "*The Red-Flowered Tillandsias from Brazil*" and "*The Green-Blooming, Small, grey Tillandsias from Mexico*". Renate named and described more than 100 new species and was keynote speaker at the 1995 Bromeliad Conference in Adelaide where her warmth, humour and unquestionable knowledge won over the audience.

DON BEADLE – MR BILLBERGIA'S DEEP LEGACY

By Karen Andreas <fcbs.org>

In the beginning *Billbergia* was a modest little plant, often plain green with three leaves, a few spots and a quick-lived inflorescence. It was relegated to the back of collections, neglected and disrespected. Then *Billbergia* met Don Beadle; neither was ever the same again.

Born in Lafayette, Louisiana, Don Beadle never quite fit in. "I couldn't play the banjo and I couldn't talk Cajun," he says, so he booked out of Louisiana at age 19, joining the Air Force. College followed four years of military service and Don Beadle was now a petroleum engineer. He started with Philips Petroleum and worked his way into smaller and smaller companies until he had his own, Macero Minerals in Corpus Christi, Texas.

In Corpus Christi, John Anderson and Don were neighbors, sharing coffee and cigarettes every morning before work. Thus began a lifelong friendship that, in later years, made them a popular duo of auctioneers, sought after as much for their stories and banter as their auctioneering skills. It was during those early days that Don discovered bromeliads. He went to a bromeliad society meeting and the addiction was immediate. His first bromeliad was *Aechmea* 'Black Jack'. "You just can't kill this plant," Don says with great fondness. John became a renowned grower of aechmeas. "John never did anything half-assed," Don remembers.

Don was fascinated by the variety of bromeliads and wanted to collect every one in the world. The impracticality of it soon became apparent, and so he narrowed his focus on the lowly and lonely billbergia. "I collected all the species I could find—there were about 20 available at the time," he says. He looked for cultivars, although they were few and far between. "Mulford Foster had made 'Fantasia' and [Robert] Wilson had made 'Catherine Wilson' but, in general, billbergias had not really caught on in popularity." Don was fascinated by the idea of making hybrids and found the process exhilarating.

Preserving pollen was the first big challenge. After only two or so days it would turn green and lose viability. Once he figured out that freezing the pollen kept it viable for up to two years it became "compulsive, an addiction," he remembers.

Still, he was growing green billbergias. It was a limiting process until Bob Whitman found 'Domingos Martins', the gorgeously spotted cultivar of *vittata*. "I lusted after that bromeliad with a passion," Don says. After much coercion and a year's wait, Don got a pup and went to work. He crossed 'Domingos Martins' with 'Ed McWilliams' and *Billbergia* 'Hallelujah' was born. Prized for its rich deep red leaves and its white and pink spots, its foliage appeal long outlasts its stunning magenta scapes and purple flowers. 'Domingos Martins' revolutionized hybridizing and today is found in many billbergia cultivars.

Don continued to create better, more beautiful, sexier billbergias, to the extent that they soon moved to the forefront of sales and shows. Everyone wanted a Don Beadle billbergia. Billbergias were no longer the red-headed stepchild of the bromeliad world. 'Afterglow', with its rich, deep pink blush does literally glow as light shines through its leaves. 'La Noche's' dark, banded leaves are dramatic and stunning. 'El Capitan' is another dramatic billbergia whose sturdy leaves have both banding and spots.

Don quickly ran out of plant growing space and built his first greenhouse. More hybridizing soon followed, as did a larger house and a larger greenhouse, where he lived and grew bromeliads for ten years. He came to Florida to visit Harry Luther and Wally Berg, who, as it turned out, were off in South America on a collecting expedition. Through happenstance, he ended up at a realtor's and told the agent he wanted a "house on the beach with room for some greenhouses." The agent later called him with news of a place with a freshwater pond and three greenhouses full of dead plants: Don made the deal over the phone.

So in 1986 Don sold his Corpus Christi house and moved to First Dirt Road in Venice, home to Los Milagros Nursery. He fell in love with the place, rebuilding the greenhouses and growing like mad. To date, he has created more than 140 named cultivars and many more yet to be named.

While he continued to hybridize, Don was breaking ground in yet another area: photography. He set up a dedicated space for taking pictures and decided it would be more dramatic and compelling to photograph bromeliads in clumps rather than singly, then the norm. Every day he checked for blooms so he could catch the flowers at their (quick) peak. He experimented with lighting, finally settling on blue photo bulbs for the most honest light. Using a Nikon camera with a full array of lenses, he honed his photographic skills and incorporated double exposures into his photographic repertoire. When Don decided to create a photographic record of species, Harry Luther suggested that Don dissect the flower and capture its qualities in intimate detail. In those pictures, Don started using “that little white ruler that I love. I got unadulterated pleasure from the photography. It gave me a lot of satisfaction.”

Don’s presentation at World Conferences became standing room only events, as those who attended the recent one [2012] in Orlando can attest. Audiences sat in rapt silence as Don’s slides were shown, with minimal but very often pithy commentary from Don, and to the accompaniment of quiet music. His photographs set the standard for both scientific presentation and artistry. His technique and the quality of his legacy are evident today. The next time you see a beautiful picture of a bromeliad, you will catch the echoes of Don’s influence.

The legacy does not end there, however. In 1998 Don Beadle compiled the last published Bromeliad Cultivar Registry for the BSI. This monumental work was the bromeliad bible of nomenclature and bloodlines of every known cultivar at the time. Don compiled this tome on a computer—it is hard to imagine now how revolutionary this technology was at the time—yet he understood that it was obsolete in many ways as soon as it was published. [My copy of this 1998 edition contained 423 pages, while a revised electronic version dated 31 December 2006 ran to 605 pages—Ed.] Beyond having taken on this labor- and time-intensive task for the bromeliad world, he recognized that changes, new information and new cultivars would overtake the publication within a very short time. He also believed that the Internet would be a way to offer accessible information.

To that end, Don first suggested to the BSI those digital files be made available on compact disk but he was ahead of his time with technology. That was an impractical suggestion as most people at that time did not have access to the kinds of programs that would handle such a document. So Don offered the files to Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies’ webmaster, Michael Andreas. Michael was able to create the format for the Internet and make the living, flexible Cultivar Registry available for world access. Don’s work at organizing, educating and providing information about bromeliad cultivars lives on.

In 2000, Don’s life took another turn and he sold Los Milagros, the nursery and the property, to Michael Kiehl who moved his nursery, Michael’s Bromeliads, to First Dirt Road. Don now had time to indulge in other passions—tennis, his boat, and Joann Buell, his lovely companion of so many years “She makes all things so worthwhile,” Don says of Joann with that twinkle in his eye.

Today, Don can often be found at Michael’s Bromeliads. Don has reorganized the Beadle billbergia collection that lives and thrives there, sharing information and memories with Michael Kiehl. Don’s amazing collection of photographs now live on the website of the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies (fcbs.org) in yet another collaboration with Michael Andreas.

Don’s passion for bromeliads led to ground-breaking billbergia cultivars that made this genus one of the most popular; his ground-breaking bromeliad photography set the standard for bromeliad pictures; his passion for knowledge led to the Bromeliad Cultivar Registry; his vision for an accurate registry accessible and available to one and all took him beyond his peers and now serves the entire world.

Don Beadle’s legacy has had a deep impact on our bromeliad world. We are all the richer for his being our friend and mentor.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT BILLBERGIAS

By Don Beadle, Corpus Christi, Texas – From *J. Bromeliad Society* Vol. 41(3) May-June, 1991

It may well be that billbergias were appreciated by the natives of ancient South American civilisations before recorded history. But they did not leave the proof of their appreciation the way the early 19th century Europeans did in their many marvellous horticultural journals, gazettes and magazines. That was the age of the great collectors and the great collections, and billbergias, as well as all other tropical plants, were brought to Europe where they charmed and intrigued the horticultural community. Hand-coloured drawings of these early imports dramatically illustrate this interest.

The collecting began in 1815 with the venerable *Billbergia pyramidalis*, followed shortly by *B. zebrina*, *B. amoena*, and *B. vittata*. There are now over 60 described species with about 30 distinctive varieties. The native range for billbergias is primarily eastern Brazil in the lower elevations, but several species are found in Peru, Ecuador, and Venezuela and as far north as central Mexico.

Billbergias resemble aechmeas in form and habit and in fact differ taxonomically in only small ways such as structural details of the pollen grains and whether or not the sepal tip is “prickly” (the *Billbergia* is not). In habitat, billbergias are usually epiphytic in clumps, preferring airy locations with bright shade or indirect light. In captivity, billbergias are often individually imprisoned in heavy, wet soil, in dank dismal, deep shady locations.

Glowing descriptions of the beauty of the billbergia bloom inevitably end with the deflating phrase, “unfortunately, the bloom is short-lived, lasting no more than two weeks”. This, coupled with the outrageous allegation, “Billbergias are the easiest to propagate and grow of all the bromeliads,” has done much to disillusion, discourage, and deter the grower from an adventure with the *Billbergia*.

Billbergias have much to offer the grower today. A variety of sizes allow the growing of 7 cm tall, stoloniferous rosettes and 1+ metre clumps of *Billbergia rosea* or *B. stenopetala*. The thin, tubular shape of the helicoid billbergias allows enjoyment of the colour, form and spectacular bloom without the sacrifice of growing area. The efforts of hybridisers have resulted in the availability of new hardy, and constantly colourful cultivars to which the bloom is merely an embellishment.

Culture

Billbergias prefer to be grown in a porous, open mix with good drainage. Since the majority of growers custom design their own concoction no specific recommendation is made here. I use the commercial *PROMIX* because of its convenience and availability. Billbergias do not universally develop large, strong root systems and the *PROMIX* packs well enough to support the tall plants when they become top heavy when watered. I grow many of them high overhead in the shade house and have never become adjusted to having them diving down on me when I fill them with water.

Pot shape and size seem to be more a matter of aesthetics than anything else, particularly in judged bromeliad shows. I become embarrassed when I behold a single small billbergia alone and forlorn in the center of a huge, unattractive plastic pot. Please, do not do this. Most tubular billbergias suffer from a lack of conventional shape when displayed as single plants. They are naturally gregarious and seem to prefer clumping and community life and are best shown competitively as neat clumps. When left to choose their own arrangements, they unfortunately seldom conform to our ideas of what orderly should be. The attractive arrangement of a clump requires the grower to remove the old mother plants when they begin to lose their glamour. Gaps need to be filled in by removing young offsets and replanting them in a more appropriate spot. Pruning should be merciless in order to keep a loose, open clump that will allow free access to air and light. An unattended clump will soon pack the pot with green, scaly, skinny things that will do little toward encouraging the grower to acquire more billbergias. The spectacle of a well-grown, hanging pot of colourful billbergias in full bloom is a rewarding and spiritually uplifting sight.

Watering is another subjective matter. Most growers schedule their watering by the clock and calendar, mystical signs, weather conditions, their general emotional state, etc. I recommend a dispassionate approach based on whether the billbergia is wet or dry. My only problems have occurred from excess in one direction or the other. Billbergias do not seem to be overly sensitive to watering and I will confess to leaning toward too little rather than too much. When overly indulged, the billbergia tends toward being tall, lanky, and green. The imposition of a degree of stress into the everyday life of the billbergia seems to produce a hardier, more compact, colourful, well-formed plant. This desirable condition is more easily attained when the billbergia is kept on a strict diet.

No single factor contributes more to the unattractiveness of a billbergia than does overfeeding. Balance, in billbergias as in all things, is the key word. If you grow healthy plants in locations where they get good light for long periods with lots of moving air, you may feed them well and reap all the benefits therefrom. If you grow them in low light in stagnant conditions, then feeding is a shamefully cruel process and you should look within and seek counsel!

My soil-less PROMIX provides only small initial doses of trace elements that are quickly used up. Peters Peat Lite 15-16-17 contains a balanced basic mixture of nutrients together with the needed trace elements. I usually mix Peters to a concentration of well under ¼ tsp per gallon, which is continuously added to my water by a marvellous little proportioning device. I do not know if this is the proper amount but it has apparently done no harm.

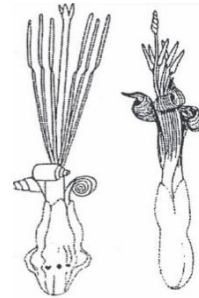
A summary of ideal growing conditions for billbergias would be to grow them in open, elevated, airy locations with good light for long periods with moderate amounts of good water, and with a MINIMUM of fertilizer. Most billbergias will survive from just above freezing to over 45°C. *Billbergia sanderiana* surprised me by ignoring -8°C for 30 hours. The large helicoids begin to expire or to be seriously damaged in the range 5-9°C. They are surprisingly tender. The best temperature range for colour and conformation seems to be cool, to 10°C at night with a balmy 20-23°C day. I thrive under these conditions myself, but if they exist in south Texas it's for only one or two days in the spring and fall, and that's all. We are dealt conditions that are probably not ideal for the variety of plants we try to grow, and I have found billbergias willing to adapt to a wide range of conditions. I've seen them grown well in Illinois basements, New York apartment windows, hilltops in California, under the trees of Florida, anywhere at all in Australia, and even in the unrelenting winds of Corpus Christi. But this cannot happen by ignoring the particular needs of the plant. I note that the people who grow show-quality neoregelias and vrieseas invariably grow show-quality billbergias. The reciprocal is true also. The key must be caring.

Billbergias are a little more obliging at breeding time than are some other bromeliads. The appropriate parts are readily accessible and the process is well known. I have, however, set seed only about 15% of the times I've attempted to make a hybrid. That cold fact, to me, fails to validate that bit of frivolous folklore that suggests how easy it is to propagate the *Billbergia*. Billbergias frequently fail to bloom also. When a neoregelia fails in this fashion, it becomes famous.

I heartily recommend hanging pots to permit the use of otherwise unused space above the rest of your plants and allow maximum exposure to free air and light. Almost any pot can be adapted to hang with a modicum of ingenuity and will add much to the appearance of your growing area. The spectacle of sunlight through the leaves is an added pleasure not available when your billbergia lies under a bench. Today's grower, when beginning a billbergia collection, is presented with a dizzying array of desirable billbergias from which to choose. In the past, only old standard, garden varieties were available. The packed pots of *Billbergia nutans*, *B. pyramidalis*, and a token helicoid or two usually defined the *Billbergia* for the average grower. A modern collection could begin with Richter's *B. 'Fascinator'*. Carrone's *B. 'Pink Champagne'*, Thom's and Schwarz's *B. 'Strawberry'*, *B. 'Manda's Othello'* and Beadle's *B. 'Caramba'* and *B. 'Hallelujah'*. For foliar colour in species *Billbergia*, try *B. amoena* var. *viridis* or *B. amoena* var. *rubra*. Interesting form with attractive spines is available with *B. horrida* and *B. sanderiana*. Try them. You'll like them!

BILLBERGIA NOTES:

- The genus *Billbergia* is divided into two sub-genera, *Billbergia* and *Helicodea*, with most of the cultivated species belonging to the *Billbergia* subgenus. The figure at right shows examples of billbergias, such as *B. zebrina* (at left) and *B. brasiliensis* (at right), which have petals that become tightly recoiled and for that reason are called 'watch spring' or helicoids, a feature unique within the *Bromeliaceae* family.
- Being 'photoperiod plants', billbergias require a long night situation and so generally are winter bloomers.
- Notes from a talk given by Vic Przetocki at the Western Australian Society's January 2012 meeting (Vic having produced some beautiful cultivars himself) say that, "The potting mix should be open and friable allowing for good drainage and the mix should contain pine bark. I did try a mix of coarse coir fibre and perlite and although the billbergias did develop a good root system it became evident that something was missing. Plants that didn't grow well were *Billbergia vittata* and hybrids that had *vittata* in their background but once potted into a mix containing pine bark they started to grow at an increased rate. I can only put this down to the mix being more acidic than the coir fibre. Charcoal and perlite are also good additives to a mix. A potting mix that does not contain coarse materials will tend to go muddy over time and re-potting will be more frequent."



USING COFFEE GROUNDS TO CONTROL SCALE... A NATURAL ALTERNATIVE

By Andrew Devonshire (Reprinted from *Bromeliad*, Journal of BSNZ October 2018, Vol. 58(10))

I like to research a number of topics using online resources and a few years ago while researching issues with growing palms I came across an interesting write-up on using old coffee grounds as a treatment for scale. Now I do enjoy a good cup of coffee and I buy my own freshly ground coffee to make 1 or 2 cups to get me going in the mornings. But I had been washing the spent coffee grounds down the kitchen waste, or occasionally throwing them out into the garden.

After discovering coffee grounds can help to control scale, I thought I would give it a try on my clump of Golden Cane palms. To my surprise the treatment seemed to work very well. I then made a mental note to try this out on my bromeliads as I had often noticed scale, especially on the older, more established plants. So, during October 2017, I set up a test for control of scale on bromeliads using these old coffee grounds. I had a neo hybrid with a bad case of scale so I spread out one heaped teaspoon of used coffee grounds around the surface of the potting mix. I also lifted the plant from the pot and discovered a few areas where mealy bugs were attached to the roots. I eased the plant back into the pot and put it back in the same location on a shelf in the plastic house.

Some 6 months later and after just the one treatment I checked on the plant and I'm pleased to say the scale control was about 99% successful and when checking the roots I found no sign of any mealy bugs.

I now use old coffee grounds around a number of my bromeliads, both potted and planted out in the garden as a preventative. One tip—do not pile it on too thick around potted plants as it can go mouldy. The best option seems to be to spread a little of the dry coffee grounds around the base of the plant, then water it in during a normal watering session.

Ongoing use of coffee grounds does not seem to cause any adverse effects for bromeliads—coffee has a pH of about 5, whereas sphagnum moss and peat (common components of potting mix) have a pH of 3.5-4.5. I have found the best results are when the coffee grounds are applied in Spring and then repeated during the summer growing period.

2019 PROGRAM: You will see two things that are strange about the program for 2019:

- (1) The plant sale at Warilla will continue over two days in March. It seemed to the Committee that having worked to set up for a Saturday sale why not leave the set-up overnight and offer plants again on Sunday. The facility was available and overnight security was guaranteed so that is what we are going to do.
- (2) The September General meeting will be held on August 31 which will enable us to run the Show on the first Saturday and second Sunday of September, to fit in with the scheduling of *Spring into Corrimal*, an event always held on the second Sunday of September.

2019 PROGRAM

February 2	Eco Products with Steve Falcioni	
February 23	Garden Visits #1	
March 2	"How We Learned About Bromeliads"	Anne Mobbs and Deniece Crutchley
March 9 – 10	Plant Sale – Warilla	
April 6	"World Bromeliad Conference 2006"	Neville Wood
April 13	Workshop #1	
May 4	"Bromeliads in Colombia"	Edwina Caruana and Steve Wain
May 18	Garden Visits #2	
June 1	"That Bottlebrush"	Graham Bevan
July 6	Christmas in July – Soup 'n Sweets	Entertainment – Noel Kennon (Quiz)
July 20	Workshop #2	
August 3	AGM	
August 17	Workshop #3	
August 31	"Growing Bromeliads in Bundaberg" (September General Meeting)	Maureen Wheeler
September 6	Annual Show Setup	Uniting Church Hall, Corrimal
September 7	Annual Show	
September 8	Annual Show Pack up	
September 15	Sunday Coach Trip to Central Coast	
October 5	Grace Goode's Heritage	Eileen Killingley
October 19	Garden Visits #3	
November 2	"Bromeliads or Minerals"	Noel Kennon
November 16	Workshop #4	
December 7	Christmas Party	