

S.A. BROMELIAD GAZETTE

Volume 33 Number 3
May/June 2008



Vriesea rodigasiana



Published by:-
**THE BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF
SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC**

Email address:
Secretary - tillands@senet.com.au
Web site: <http://www.bromeliad.org.au>

Meetings Venue:
Maltese Cultural Centre, 6
Jeanes Street,
Beverley
Time: 2.00pm.
Second Sunday of each month
(unless advised otherwise)

President:	Mr. Len. Colgan, 1 Ailsa Avenue, Warradale, 5046	82969426	
Secretary:	Mr. Derek. R. Butcher 25 Crace Road, Fulham, 5024	83567728	
Pots:	Available Feb., March, Sept., and Oct., meetings	83514876 0402250922	Ron Masters for order or pick-up. David Wecker

2008 Meeting dates :

May 4th (1st Sunday!), Jun 8th , Jul 13th , Aug 3rd (1st Sunday!) Sep 14th , Oct 12th ,
Sales day Nov. 8th , Meeting Nov. 9th .

Coming Events - 2008

May 4th Terrestrial pricklies

June 8th Bigenerics

July 13th Reports from Cairns (Australian Bromeliad Conference)

Applications for membership always welcome.

Subscriptions \$10.00 per year Feb. to Feb.



March meeting from the Secretary's desk

Leaf knuckles were mentioned in our last newsletter about *Aechmea nudicaulis* but no real reason was given for this happening. Maurice Kellett, one of our members from Victoria who comes over for Womadelaide, had two answers! One was about God when he was creating all the living creatures he came across a prickly plant and threw it away leaving his thumb print. The second, equally as believable was that engineers had proved this was an ideal shape for catching water in dry climates. My view is that God knows we have a dry climate in Adelaide and all our Bromeliads should be kinky! I rest my case!

And so to the Summer brag where it was great to see newer members bringing in plants and showing they can do just as well as us oldies! Adam was in fine mood (mode?) as he lead us through the plants. Just a few comments on pertinent points

First we saw a fine *Vriesea* that had been bought at the ABC Expo, having come from Queensland. Identification was the plea.

Let me digress!

We are one of the few Bromeliad Societies around Australia (even the World) that takes a keen interest in plant identification and I suppose this rubs off on newcomers. We are fairly accurate on species because we go back to the records to check. We have virtually nobody who hybridises so plants that do get to South Australia from the hybridist get documented smartly. In other words we push the hybridist to do the right thing. Other States especially Queensland – worse luck) are more “laxadaisical” and many hybrids get around unnamed, or named and unrecorded. It is when these hybrids get to resellers from the hybridist, problems like the one we had do occur. All you can do is continue to call it ‘*Vriesea* hybrid’ and leave it at that. Do not give it a pet name that is not recorded! The problem of buying bromeliads in Queensland potting mix was highlighted by Bill Treloar. Bill has a mix that suits his watering regime that suits his conditions at Bute. All plants get the same treatment so he can judge watering requirements. Different mixes will give you additional problems. In this case a Queensland mix will mean watering 2 to 3 times a week whereas an Adelaide mix (which is generally between a Bute mix and a Queensland mix) things can last a week or more.



Maureen Hick bragged about her Neo. ‘*Riens Pride*’ which decided to produce lots of red centre leaves instead of flowering. Certainly something we do not often see in Adelaide but is quite prevalent in the Philippines where lack of seasons confuses the plant! What had Maureen done to confuse her plant?



A pot of *Aechmea recurvata* var. *benrathii* had been brought in which started discussion as to why the offsets had long thin leaves compared to the parents. Some were of the view that it was caused by more shade whereas others maintained that you can expect this happening and the leaves will broaden closer to flowering. I wonder if the owner of the plant will give it less shade and then the leaves broaden. What comes first – the chicken or the egg!

March meeting cont:



Vriesea 'Sunset' is one of the few Vriesea hybrids that faithfully retains its variegation. It should have been called 'Kent's Sunset' because he named it without checking that others had used the name before. Regrettably it does not give many offsets!

I was a bit confused about Len's *Hohenbergia leopoldo-horstii* because he said it would have had better colouring if he had given it more light. But then he might have had brown parchment leaves which would have been self defeating! Despite the lack of extra light it was still worth bragging about. The amount of light you give a plant is just as variable as the potting mixes already referred to. In Cairns they talk about 'full sun' but their full sun is not like Adelaide full sun! Some people take shade to the extreme so you get long green leaves on your plant but it will still flower.

Two genera that do appreciate more sun are *Neoregelia* and *Billbergia*. You can be rewarded with colourful leaved plants and also get burnt plants if you are over zealous. Experience will help you decide because every backyard is different.

There were several variegated *Neoregelia* on display all showing the influence of Chester Skotak except for 'DeRolf' which occurred we assume as a sport from *N. johannis* in Brazil somewhere. A few of these hybrids were named by Chester Skotak but the vast majority were disposed of under parentage leaving the recipient to actually name and register. As far as we know 'Yin' still has a plant patent in the USA.

The next plant was a *Neo zonata* brought in by David Kruszewski which was not really a brag. It must be 4 years ago that I asked for flowering *N. zonata* and he seems to bring one in for me every year. My own plant is not that regular. This is an interesting plant because it seems to be an offset of original plant/s (seeds?) that got to our shores in the 1960's. The scale in the original drawing was incorrect causing the plant to be confused with *N. pascoaliana* – a much larger plant. So if you are after a *N. zonata*, see David – it seems he has lots! If you are into plant identification there is a *N. 'Marnier Lapostolle'* which is a hybrid between *N. zonata* and *N. ampullacea*!

Back to the dilemma of plant names. It must be 4 years ago when the large retail stores around Australia were inundated with plants called *Aechmea 'Primera'* complete with a warning Plant breeding rights label. The trouble was they were not 'Primera' but one of Skotak's hybrids such as 'Maya' etc. We never did identify them properly but it did get me sending an Email to the Australian Plant Breeding rights office having a whinge. My view was that they are quick enough acting on us selling a PBR plant without approval but what about people hiding behind the PBR when they had no right to do so. I was advised to try the Trade Practices Act people!

Anyway, Geoff Jarrett has this plant. What does he call it? You can't really use *Aechmea 'Not Primera'* and I can only suggest 'Aechmea hybrid'.

Aechmea orlandiana looked great in its clay pot. Suggestions were made to growing this as an epiphyte where it does well in Queensland but not necessarily in Adelaide. If it ain't broke don't fix it is my motto. A clay pot seems to be a good compromise.

There were a couple of brightly coloured *Billbergia* hybrids and a x*Neophytum 'Burgundy Hill'*. There was discussion as to whether a flowering 'Peek-a-Boo' was a bigeneric or not. You may be pleased to know that it is a Hummel hybrid with unknown parents but is thought to be an *Aechmea*.

It was good to see a revival in *Cryptanthus* with several on display. They are not easy to grow, not liking our cold wet winters, but with a little care can give you that warm fuzzy feeling when grown well. We have always recommended "overwintering" in terrariums. Terrariums are just old aquariums with cracked glass!

March meeting cont:

Talking of Terrariums I met the proprietor of Prestige Nurseries at the ABC Expo. we all knew about Prestige nursery in the late 1970's when Ede Schaefer was with us because he kept supplying them with plants. I thought these family-type plant nurseries had disappeared years ago and here was one still selling offsets from the good old days. We talked about the decline in interest in *Cryptanthus* and we agreed that they should hold their stock – somewhere- until such time as terrariums were popular again!

Bob Poole from Virginia has shown how he can Summer brag with his *Cryptanthus* 'Silver Streak' but he has the challenge of bringing in the same plant for our Winter Brag in this coming August! In the meantime, I would ask Bob to see if he can photograph his plant in all its glory for the official records.

Finally, we did have the Tillandsia stand. There was my *T. lydiae* trying to flower. Only waiting 6 years! This is somewhat a rarity with most importers giving it too much water after quarantine and the plant just giving up the ghost throughout Australia – not just Adelaide!

It must be 20 years ago that I got seed from Karel Knize in Peru of *Tillandsia micans* - a rare species. Len brought in one of the seedlings now flowering where it turned out to be one of the many forms of *Tillandsia latifolia*. Do we complain to the supplier? Will he remember? If there are three words that describe a Bromeliad grower they are Patience, patience and patience!



April meeting from the Secretary's desk

Public Relations.

Every so often we send out Apostles to spread the word and the latest was Maureen Hick who was chauffeured to 'Maggies' at Semaphore in March. This is a group of elderly women who get together on a regular basis to listen to others on a wide range of subjects. Maureen says she took along all manner of props (not the kitchen sink!) to help her and everyone there now knows what a Bromeliad looks like and how easy they are to grow.

Thanks Maureen.

Guest Speaker

My mother said that if it didn't have a smell it was no good. What better recommendation could you have for Neutrog. It was good to have Angus at our meeting to entertain us for an hour on organic fertilizer. After all, he was the founder of the organisation. Based basically on scientific composting of what comes out of chicken houses it has now become an international concern in only some 20 years. Who would think that South Australian droppings would be in such demand?!

Over the years we have handed out leaflets about Neutrog and even had sample bags in the past. So while we have been using and have been aware of the various products it was good to get some reassurance. It comes in pelletised form so is best mixed with your potting soil. I hope nobody drops a few pellets in the centre cup because you would sure get a reaction! I would suggest this would be akin to letting water drip there off treated pine! I have found Rapid Raiser very good in the past without trying the specialised mixes such as that recently recommended for Orchids (and Bromeliads) which has specially added trace elements.

April meeting cont:

There is only one trace element that Tillandsia growers seem to panic over for no real reason other than a report by Mulford Foster in the 1950's that his tillandsias died when he attached them to the mounts using bare copper wire! The problem is that all plants need trace elements and depending where they evolved can manage on deficiencies in any one. Thus excess to what the plant considers as a norm can give 'stomach ache' or something similar!

We know that epiphytes like *Tillandsia* rarely get a chance to access trace elements which are heavier than other nutrients and don't get easily blown around or absorbed by rain. So they grab it when they can. Benzing tells us that there are two or three metals that can have deleterious effects – not just copper.

So, good things come in little parcels. As Angus pointed out trace elements in Neutrog come in very small proportions in mainly organic form depending on the specialised mix.

Fertilising by gardeners (and farmers) is usually done in excess with the plants only taking up nutrient they can use and they are more efficient in doing so from organic fertilisers than inorganic chemicals. What they don't use is wasted which is one of the reasons for blue algae in the river Torrens!

I have always been recommending to new growers that Bromeliads do not need extra fertilising. Normally you get an open potting mix to which you can add Neutrog as you see fit. Remember too much and it is wasted! Plant your bromeliad and wait for flowering. In the normal course of events the nitrogen (the growth factor) will get used up first but there will be sufficient nutrient left to assist with flowering. You remove the offset and start again with fresh potting mix. If you do not remove offsets then removal of 'mother' is suggested and repotting in fresh potting mix or consider fertilizing. These then are the basics but if you want bigger plants and bigger inflorescences and therefore more watering, then you can consider top dressing with a little Neutrog or use liquid foliar feed.

Talking of foliar feed this is currently in a development stage at Neutrog. Those who grow mounted tillandsias may well be interested in this product.

Every one present was able to take home a sample bag with 4 different mixes which was conveniently left near the door!

Time was at an essence when Bill Treloar started introducing us to the plants on display. It was a blessing in disguise in that we had much less than we usually do.



A plant without a name was identified as *Billbergia pyramidalis*. I spent some 5 years trying to find a true *B. pyramidalis* var *concolor* from the many plants in cultivation to no avail. This plant is widely grown by non-bromeliad gardeners! This prompted me to write an article in Journal of Brom. Soc International where I pointed out how variable this species was and none rated the name *concolor*. Concolor means, in this case, totally red petals whereas anyone who has grown some of the forms will know the petals can vary from almost totally red with a blue tip to very little red to a large proportion of blue. There are also winter and summer flowering forms so keep an eye open for these if you like the spectacular flowering of this species to occur at least twice a year! We must not forget the easy to grow, variegated form called 'Foster's Striate' or the variegated one called 'Kyoto' which does not like Adelaide and loves getting citrus scale on the leaves.

April meeting cont:



A *Vriesea rodigasiana* that had been allowed to offset and produce 4 plants was the pride and joy of Margaret Butcher because it was at last in flower.

A paradox came next and it is hoped that if others come across this plant they change the name to *xNiduregelia* 'Ruby Ryde'

What I wrote in 2002 follows

Know your *xNiduregelia* 'Ruby Ryde'!

Subtitled - I promise this will be the final name change!

Do you have a plant with any of the following names on the label? *Wittrockia paradoxa*, *Nidularium paradoxum*, *xNiduregelia paradoxa*, or 'Butcher's been at it again', If so read on.

This plant has a fascinating history, so no wonder was it having trouble in keeping up with its name changes. At the 1995 Australian Bromeliad Conference I was handed a plant with a somewhat gooey centre by Ruby Ryde which I assumed she had obtained from Brazil a few years before. How could I ask Elton Leme to help me out with identification? I just had to poke around in the mushy mess where the flower had been. I felt sure I was handling *Wittrockia paradoxa* which had been described by Elton Leme in 1989 because I appeared to be dealing with a paradox with the number of oddities I found in the mushy mess! Incidentally, if you try to find *Wittrockia paradoxa* it is now called *Aechmea paradoxa*! 2 years later I was delighted to get an actual flowering specimen, again from Ruby.

The plant looked like a *Neoregelia* with a *Nidularium*-like inflorescence. This time there was no mushy mess when I took the inflorescence apart and I found compound flowers in the outer part of the inflorescence and simple flowers in the centre. What am I talking about? I'll digress. If you have ever looked closely at a *Neoregelia* inflorescence (well most!) you will find it boring because all the way through the inflorescence you will find one floral bract next to a flower. In a *Nidularium* you will find little bunches of flowers with a bract for the bunch as well as floral bracts for each flower (This is compound! Mind you, in *Nidularium* you may also find bunches on the bunches making them compound compound or tripinnate!) This cannot be said to be boring! Elton Leme had described a *Nidularium fraudulentum* in 1987 which had these attributes. It was not a paradox, it was a fraud! This just had to be the name and I told the world of my discovery (Well, at least Bromeleter May/June 1997!).

Meanwhile Elton in Brazil was rather worried about this plant with odd characteristics and investigated it further in conjunction with Walter Till. It was decided the plant was a bigeneric between *Neoregelia* and *Nidularium*.

In my role as Cultivar Registrar you can see my dilemma. Should I try to identify with the written descriptions of what I consider are dubious examples of wild plants or give the plant I got from Ruby Ryde a Cultivar name. The more I think of it the more I believe OUR plant is better called *xNiduregelia* 'Ruby Ryde' to stem the tide of name changes.

April meeting cont:



Adam brought in both varieties of *Vriesea ospinae* and both in spike. Most of the vrieseas that we grow are from SE Brazil but here the plants come from Colombia where it is humid and more constant temperatures. Even so this species is one of the easier ones to grow. There is one problem in that it frequents jungle scrubby areas and naturally grows towards the light in whatever direction it sees fit. The only answer with pot culture is forever cutting off the bottom of the plant and repotting. Grown for its magnificent leaf markings with the flowers just a bonus.

Len has succeeded in getting a spike on what seems to be a new species found by Lydia Kohres in Mitla, Mexico. We wait with baited breath that it does its thing so it can be given a species name.

A much easier problem to solve was a flowering plant that Len said was Pam Koide's best hybrid but not good enough to give it a proper name. It was said to be *flabellata* x *fasciculata* but *fasciculata* comes in many shapes and sizes. In this case I'll be pushing Len to take its photo so we can pressure Pam into giving it a name.



ABC Gardening Expo, Wayville Showgrounds

Feb 29th to March 2nd 2008

We knew we had our own Show ans Sales for March 15/16 and this seemed to an ideal opportunity to get out publicity to a different audience and one that we knew was garden-minded! There were many rules and regulations and we had to fill in 5 questionnaires and even then there were problems with a change of decision with the 5th questionnaire without advising us such change! All good fun!

About 10 am on the Thursday, Len, Adam and Butchers bought our iridescent orange 'safety' vests and started work. The three males also had name badges to hang round their necks which said 'Ask' in big letters. What you had to ask for was in much smaller print! Adam had brought in a flowering *Guzmania* and *Aechmea*, Margaret had brought in a flowering *Vriesea* and *Neoregelia*. Len had brought in his large posters and we able with velcro to get them attached to the back and side wall of our stand. We borrowed two chairs from the Cookery demonstration area! All was in readiness for the show to begin. Leaflets were there by the hundreds for handing out as freebies.

The aforementioned plus Bev & Ron Masters, Colin Waterman, Jackie & Warren Thompson, John Murphy, and Joy Stinson & Pat Goldfinch, were the learned attendants. We did have a bit of competition from the girls from Brisbane Bromeliad Centre who had come all the way down from Brisbane to show how they grow and sell Bromeliads in Queensland. We were able to direct potential customers to that stand with the warning that they could expect the plant to stay in colour for the next few months and to enjoy it while it lasted. By then winter would be on its way and our winters are much different to Qld winters. If they were lucky enough to get offsets they should treat that as a bonus!

ABC Gardening Expo cont:



I felt we needed a bit more to talk about and I bought a pineapple complete with the rough end just so we could explain that this was a bromeliad too.

One thing that I did notice that many of the visitors knew about Bromeliads compared to when we did the same sort of promotion 30 years ago. But there were still several who had not got the message that you keep the babies and throw away mother!



No dramas were reported. On Sunday morning John Murphy brought in a plant to be named. All I could tell him was that it was the variegated 'Burnsies Spiral' which had been around for over 30 years. The genus was in doubt because I had never had it proved that it had actually flowered. we only had anecdotal evidence. John promised to try the apple and plant in the plastic bag trick. So you never know!

But 'Burnsies Spiral' had offsets so this was yet another prop we could use to amuse the public.

We will not know what attendance we will get at our show because of our "spruiking" but we do know that Adam has a few plants from Brisbane Bromeliad Centre that he will put into a plant arrangement as a raffle prize for our Show.



March Show 15th-16th

Who would have thought in a record breaking heat wave for Australia Capital cities we had a very successful weekend. In the week prior to a Show you usually have time to prepare your plants both for show and the sales. This time, most of us had a 1½ hour slot in the morning to work, before scurrying indoors!

Setting up on the Friday was not a particularly happy time because we were aware of the weekend weather forecast but we had many helpers including newer members which was great inspiration for us oldies. Plants were more faded than sunburnt but the Show must go on!

March Show 15th-16th cont.

Saturday dawned and someone must have been praying because we had cloud cover. So everywhere was shade temperature! Saint Peter (he has been called other things!) came to the rescue by eventually tracing the whereabouts of the remote control for the airconditioners. We were now in real airconditioned comfort which also meant our customers stayed longer. One edifice that did create quite a bit of interest was Peter and Jeanne's totem pole complete with living bromeliads!

Dave Wecker and his team still had much to think about while trying to find out Trophy winners from the plant display.

Winners this year were!

JOSIE TONKIN TROPHY
for Tillandsias

Derek Butcher
Tillandsia mollis



PRESIDENT'S TROPHY
for Bromelioideae

Bill Treloar
Billbergia 'Elegant'



GUMMOW TROPHY
for best specimen plant,
Bromelioideae

Bill Treloar
Aechmea purpureo-rosea



MARIE ROBINSON TROPHY
for green leaved Tillandsioideae

Margaret Butcher
Vriesea 'Sunset'
(Kents)



NEOREGELIA TROPHY

Lainie Stainer
'Chiquita Linda'



EDE SCHAEFER TROPHY
for Champion plant

Bill Treloar
Billbergia 'Elegant'

See photo above

So Saturday stayed cloudy, the crowd was steady after the initial stampede and the workers were happy.

Despite the weather man promising more cloud for the Sunday we were greeted with beautiful blue skies and it was stinking hot by the time we opened the doors at 10am.

March Show 15th-16th cont:

The air-conditioning seemed to work even better and the few customers we had in the morning just stayed and stayed and learnt lots about growing Bromeliads in heat waves with water restrictions!

By afternoon even the birds had gone home so eventually we closed up shop early!

All over the weekend I had been eyeing the First prize in the raffle that had been donated by the girls from Brisbane Bromeliads. It was an extra large pot filled with 3 Guzmania and 1 Neoregelia which I found hard to lift and was taller than me, or so it seemed. What usually happens with these raffles is that winner is never at the 'drawing' and the Secretary has to take the left-overs home so he can contact the winners later by phone.

This time drastic action was necessary and thanks to Dave Wecker and his mobile phone and Hon Pres. with his luck, contact was made with the winner. The winner lived nearby and did have a truck to take home the prize! So, EVERYONE was happy.

The second prize winner was traced so the Secretary had only the 3rd prize winner to follow up. If every member had a Latin name I would remember it. In this case the ticket said 'Jackie T' which did not ring a bell. One display plant had been left at the show and I rang Warren Thompson to tell him how forgetful he was. The next day I rang 'Jackie T' leaving a message for her to contact me regarding a prize! I was somewhat surprised to get a phone call from Warren claiming the prize. You see 'Jackie T' is who we have in our records as 'Jacqui T' All's well that ends well!

And that's not all. The Treasurer was happy and reported the following
Those on the door may be pleased to know that they sold \$350 in books and nearly \$260 raffle tickets. Those workers in the sales area will be pleased to know that we got \$1268 in commission because \$6342 plants were sold.