

S.A. BROMELIAD GAZETTE

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The Bromeliad Society of South Australia Inc

Editor- Derek Butcher. Assist Editor – Bev Masters



Born 1977 and still offsetting!'

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Aechmea 'Ensign' (photo by J. Batty)

Meetings Venue:

Maltese Cultural Centre,
6 Jeanes Street,
Beverley

Time: 2.00pm.

Second Sunday of each month
Exceptions – 1st Sunday in May, &
August & no meeting in December or
unless advised otherwise

**VISITORS & NEW MEMBERS
WELCOME.**

MEETING & SALES 2013 DATES: 9/6/13 (Billbergia), 14/7/13 (Derek's slideshow), 4/8/13 –
1st Sunday, (Winter brag), 8/9/13 (Workshop), 13/10/13 (Nidularium), **26/10/13 & 27/10/13 SALES**,
10/11/13 (Pup auction, special afternoon tea- bring plate of finger food to share, **earlier start** Committee
1230PM, General meeting 130PM

Applications for membership always welcome.

Subscriptions \$10.00 per year Feb to Feb

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In 2012 our very own Derek Butcher was awarded
THE BROMELIAD SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL “WALLY BERG AWARD”



Roving Reporter at April Meeting

The theme was ‘Uncommon genera’ and although not defined, most of us knew what it meant! To think that 20 genera were represented. John Murphy knew more than most because he brought in lots of oddities for Adam to talk about and for Peter Hall to ‘find fault’! Here I am using single quotes in journalistic parlance. Peter didn’t really find fault but was trying to show members how they could improve on their growing techniques and how to catch the favourable eye of the judge if the plant were on a Show bench. The prime reason for seeking higher ideals is not really to win prizes but to improve your husbandry! First we must mention Geoff Jarrett’s *Aechmea* ‘Ensign’ that won the popular plant competition. He was really worried about the offset that was almost entirely albino and looked stunning. My view with such things is that you know it will not last and when eventually the white leaves turn to brown in the cooler months that will be the time to remove the offset. The mature plant will still have time to produce another offset with no doubt more chlorophyll to help it sustain itself.

The second prize was Peter Hall’s *Aechmea* ‘Shining Light’ which he says he does not fertilise but its size suggested that some soluble fertiliser regime must have just blown in.

Roving Reporter April Meeting cont:

Hohenbergia is an interesting genus being close to *Aechmea* but with small flowers and a lot of fur to make the flowers hard to find. There are two main groups – one centred on the West Indies where they are big plants and spiny. The other is centred in Brazil where the plants are also big and spiny, BUT there are some that have leaves that form loose bulbous shapes and these are the ones you see in collections. *H. penna* is just one and this has interesting history to tell. In 1988 when this Society had several members keen on getting seed from overseas and increasing the number of species plants being grown in Adelaide we got *Hohenbergia ramageana* seed from the USA. These eventually turned out to be *H. penna*. It is not an easy plant to grow, is slow but does flower. The bottle shaped plant is fascinating. Another recent favourite is *H. leopoldo-horstii* where some are growing offsets from a plant that Len Colgan imported many years ago so we get into accepting what this species looks like from this one clone. However, about 5 years ago I was lucky to get some seed that had been collected in the wild and there are slight differences in the shape and colour of the plant. And so to a well grown *H. correia-araujoi* with its erect brownish leaves forming a tight tube but with the outer leaves bending sharply downwards at the end of the leaf-sheath as though it were a weak point. All natural but Adam was clearly not impressed with the attribute even though it would be according to type in judging parlance. So another point for competitors in a show who like to win – know the foibles of the judge! *Canistropsis* are not that easy to grow in Adelaide even when they were known under their own section under their old name of *Nidularium*! If you have a more favourable spot they are worth a try. A favourite is *Canistropsis billbergioides* which is an odd name because the plant does not look like a *Billbergia*. The plant is so variable in the wild that Lyman Smith decided to have no varieties. BUT we growers saw things differently and from a Cultivar point of view there are many named after fruits. So we saw ‘Citron’ with its yellow primary bracts.

Fosterella look so tender with their paper thin leaves and yet are ideal for Adelaide conditions. They mainly come from Bolivia growing in rock crevices and if it is really dry they drop their leaves leaving a bulb-like plant behind, only to break into leaf when the rains come. We saw *F. penduliflora* and *F. elata* but missed out seeing the reddish flowered *F. spectabilis* – which as the name suggests is the most spectacular of the lot. You may need your bifocals to see the actual flowers but they do set seed by the thousand without bothering to hybridise.

Brocchinia reducta – there’s no flies on us. Yes, the only so called carnivorous Bromeliad we seem to be able to grow in Adelaide. It needs to be kept on the damp side and John Murphy seems to be succeeding. Bill Treloar grows his as annuals – he regularly gets them from Victoria! AND there are lots of flies at Bute so that can’t be the reason why they die. I still wonder why they call them carnivorous because all they have is a slippery surface at the top of the leaf tube. And which self-respecting fly would want to try a slippery dip. On the technical side of things you may recall Len Colgan giving us a talk on how the Family Bromeliaceae could be split up about a year ago. Rumblings started 25 years ago when studies of DNA were in their infancy and only now are we seeing some semblance of order. The ideas formulated at that time haven’t changed much and instead of *Brocchinia* being in the subfamily Pitcairnioideae it is now Brocchinoideae. In any case, the plants under question are the really old ones that have evolved to such an extent they are very difficult to grow under cultivation let alone in Adelaide! So this knowledge is just something you can put to the back of your mind because you will rarely use it!

Puya and *Pitcairnia* were represented. As too was *Werauhia sanguinolenta* and as with this entire genus is a challenge in Adelaide. This is to be expected because their homeland is in countries around Costa Rica. This is one of the better species to grow because it at least has reddish leaves. It flowers at night and many have a ‘scent’ to attract bats.

Now to two genera that look alike vegetatively – *Araeococcus* and *Acanthostachys*. Well, at least the two species brought in, did and confused Adam and many others. Let us look at *Araeococcus* first and is hard to grow because it comes from the Amazon region and Venezuela etc. Most of the other species are green leaved. If you are keen you would not find any appendages at the base of the petals. So Bev is to be congratulated in getting her plant past the “Annual” stage. *Acanthostachys* – which means spiny stalk – is much easier to grow and has been around ever since our Society was formed. We knew *Acanthostachys strobilacea* as the Poor-man’s pineapple. All I can say is that poor man must have been very poor to even contemplate trying to eat it. Margaret doesn’t like the plant because it causes her some sort of dermatitis.

Roving Reporter April Meeting cont:

Some 5 years after our Society was formed the Germans decided that a virtually unknown *Aechmea pitcairnioides* was really an *Acanthostachys*. Shortly after this Bill Morris in Newcastle got some seed and plants were distributed of this prickly plant. I feel sure that all plants growing today in Australia can be traced to this original consignment. I know it is hard to believe but I have been growing my plant since that time and never seen it in flower. Yes, I regularly found ripe seed but missed the action worth photographing some 6 months earlier. Perhaps its prickly and offsetting nature warned me off a closer look.

How about that pot full of clumping Ananas which had bracteatus and Bunnings on the label. Apparently it had been 'rescued' by John Murphy when Bunnings were tossing out tired stock. What interested me were the spineless leaves which a self respecting bracteatus would feel ashamed about. I am sure that it is really *Ananas lucidus* which is known for its virtually spineless leaves. Even more likely it is 'Chocolat' which is very popular with the Trade in Europe. It is an odd name with French origins which I would have thought 'Chocolat au lait' would have better described the leaf colour.



Ananas 'Chocolat' (photo by J. Batty)

We had both *Ochagavia carnea* and *Fascicularia bicolor* to look at. The problem is that in their clumping habit the label is often lost and if grown in too much shade the leaves will become elongated and narrow. They can be easily identified when in flower but this happens spasmodically. If the first signs of flowering are splashes of red on the centre leaves you can be pretty sure on *Fascicularia*. How do you get them to flower? I don't know but if anyone has the answer please let me know. I do know that an old member – no longer with us being in that bromeliad world up in the sky - Ivy Kirby succeeded by growing them in pots on her front verandah which got the sun for about 10 minutes in the morning whereas mine got the morning sun for a couple of hours and rarely flowered!

Adam played down his flowering *Guzmania sanguinea* var *brevipedicellata* and yet this is some achievement, not having seen it before in the flesh – so to speak. Photos look so intriguing and I recall the pronouncements by Harry Luther in 1989 about the varieties of this species. What is odd is that *Guzmania sanguinea* var *brevipedicellata* is often confused in the 'Trade' with *G. butcheri* (named after Henry Butcher a Panamanian plant collector and no relation of mine!)

I have always bemoaned the fact that *Tillandsia cyanea* grows well in Adelaide but is very temperamental when it comes to flowering. Adam showed that a whiff of Ethrel can really get it going, even to the smallest offset.

Tillandsia candelifera is a rare plant and we saw it in flower – well you could see where the petals had been. The plant has an interesting history. It all started in the 1990's when Renate Ehlers got a plant from Honduras which she felt had to be *T. candelifera* but this was treated as a synonym of *T. imperialis*. Harry Luther was aware of this anomaly because in 1994 the name *T. candelifera* mysteriously cropped up in his Binomials. Renate and I worked on this problem and came up with an article resurrecting *T. candelifera* to species status in the American Journal in 2002. About this time Len Colgan imported a plant from Renate. He said he would have difficulty in growing the plant so he gave it to me. It flowered shortly afterwards and produced one offset. It was this offset that was at the meeting showing that things are slow but sure.



Tillandsia candelifera (photo by J. Batty)

Roving Reporter April Meeting cont:

It is not often you see a Tillandsia grower like George Nieuwenhoven showing us a *Vriesea* but then you saw the size of the pot to realise that George is worried about space. The plant concerned was one of those *Vrieseas* that looked like a Tillandsia and comes from the *Vriesea corcovadensis* complex. There are natural hybrids in this group and how Mick Romanowski obtained this plant is any ones guess but is now known as *Vriesea* 'Snow White'. This leads us to *Tillandsia huarasensis* that Mick Romanowski brought back from a Peruvian trip he had with Chris Larson and Peter Tristram some years ago now. In any event this is just one species that has caused head scratching as to whether a different species is involved. So those who saw this plant will now know that as well as a difficulty in reading the name and spelling the name, there is also difficulty in identification!

If you have spare roll of chicken wire you can make it into a tube, stuff it with coconut fibre, and poke in Tillandsias. Ask Trevor Seekamp for the finer details. And while you are in the inquisitive mood ask Diane Mundy to show you her I-Pad because she has been on holidays to Peru and places and there lots of Bromeliads in the raw.



Trevor's creation (photo by J. Batty)

Nidularium innocentii* var *wittmackianum is a plant we have grown in Australia since the 1970's and its new name is just *Nidularium innocentii*. Do not be confused about the fact that Elton Leme treats *Nidularium innocentii* var *wittmackianum* as a synonym of *N. longiflorum* **BECAUSE** he is referring to another taxon. The Australian plant is just a misidentification. If you want to read the saga about why it is so, read both articles below, but don't blame me if you get confused!



Nidularium innocentii* var *wittmackianum
(photo by I. Hook)

Nidularium longiflorum* or is it *Nidularium innocentii By Detective Derek Nov 2012

You can thank Kiwi, Peter Waters for this. He is a regular viewer of the Bromeliads in Australia web site and pointed out the misidentification of photos purporting to be *Nidularium longiflorum*.

We all know we must keep an eye on Botanists who place species under synonymy with another species and change our labels accordingly. In *Nidularium- Brom. Atl. Forest* 144-153. 2000 by Elton Leme we saw an in-depth review of this genus and many of us noticed that he had placed *N. innocentii* var. *wittmackianum* under *N. longiflorum*. Many of us had been growing *N. innocentii* var. *wittmackianum* for years and here was a chance to write a smaller label. But things did not quite fit. *N. longiflorum* is said to have an uniutriculate inflorescence. Translated this means a single inflorescence without the usual flowering in the side primary bracts so often seen in 'ordinary' *Nidularium*.

The next question I asked myself was how our *N. innocentii* var. *wittmackianum* get identified as such. Looking at Smith & Downs 1979 it seemed the closest fit.

Key to Varieties of *Nidularium innocentii*

1. Leaves dark red beneath or on both sides; primary bracts red or with the apex green. 2
var *innocentii*.
1. Leaves, or at least their blades, green. 2
2. Primary bracts wholly or mostly red-purple. 3

2. Primary bracts red near the apex and green elsewhere.

4

3. Leaf-blades wholly green.

var *wittmackianum*.

3. Leaf-blades marked with longitudinal white lines.

var *striatum*.

4. Leaf-blades with numerous longitudinal white lines.

var *lineatum*.

4. Leaf-blades with a single large median white stripe.

var *paxianum*.

These days you can get access to original descriptions via the internet and I find it great fun checking up on these. Mez's original description of *N. paxianum* in 1895 does not refer to any variegation and yet in Smith & Downs 1979 it clearly states "Leaves with a single large median white stripe". If we ignore this part of the description then the plant we used to call 'wittmackianum' is very close to *N. innocentii* var *paxianum*. If we look at Flora ilustrada Catarinense - Bromeliaceas by Raulino Reitz (1983) and translate the Portuguese we also see no reference to a large median white stripe. So where did the stripe come from?

We know that Leme placed this taxon as a synonym of *N. innocentii* so you can change your labels to this species if it has flowers in fascicles around the central inflorescence. Have a careful look next time. Some may say we have a hybrid here but our plant can be traced back to the days when species were being grown in collections!

What does intrigue me is that Leme in 2000 did not mention the error in Smith & Downs 1979.

For the technically minded, if you are searching for a *Nidularium longiflorum* and you have reason to believe your plants is a species and not a hybrid, then your plant should match (in most respects!) the following:

Nidularium longiflorum Ule, *Ber. Deutsch. Bot. Ges.* 14: 408. 1896

Detail from Leme. *Nidularium* Atl. Forest 159-164. 2000

PLANT propagating by stolons to 30 cm long, 0.8-1 cm m diameter;

LEAVES 10 to 20, suberect-arcuate, thin in texture, forming a narrow funnel form rosette; SHEATHS elliptic, 6-13 x 3.5-8 cm, densely brown-lepidote, greenish;

BLADES narrowly lanceolate, distinctly narrowed toward base, 20-40 x 3-5 cm, canaliculate toward base with a slightly thicker median channel, subglabrous, green or seldom purplish-red abaxially, apex acute to acuminate, margins densely to subdensely spinulose, spines ca. 0.5 mm long, 3-5 mm apart.

SCAPE 3-10 cm long, 0.5-0.9 cm in diameter, distinctly shorter than the leaf sheaths; SCAPE BRACTS the basal ones subfoliaceous and concealing the scape, the upper ones resembling the primary bracts.

INFLORESCENCE subumbellate, bipinnate, obconic-subtubular, uniutriculate, 8-12 cm long, ca, 10cm in diameter at apex, distinctly visible above the leaf sheaths but not notably elevated above the rosette;

PRIMARY BRACTS ovate, acute and apiculate to shortly acuminate, suberect to sub spreading at apex, the basal ones 7 -14 x 5-8 cm, red or green toward base and red near apex, lepidote mainly toward the base, densely spinulose toward apex, spines ca. 0.5 mm long.

FASCICLES 3 to 5, the basal ones ca. 35 x 15 mm, 2-to-3-flowered;

FLORAL BRACTS ovate to elliptic, apex acute and apiculate, entire to remotely spinulose at apex, 25-30 x 15 mm, membranaceous, lepidote, to equalling the middle of the sepals, hyaline.

FLOWERS subsessile, 70-90 mm long;

SEPALS 23-27 x 7 -9 mm, lobes broadly elliptic to ovate-lanceolate, apex acute and minutely apiculate, connate for (5-) 8-10 mm, green to reddish near the apex, glabrous, ecarinate;

PETALS 60-65 (-80) mm long, highly connate, forming at base a narrow tube ca. 3 mm in diameter, tube white toward base and dark green toward apex, lobes ca. 10 x 6 mm, narrowly ovate, narrowly obtuse-cucullate, white, bearing 2 well developed callosities at base;

ANTHERS 5-6 mm long, base and apex obtuse; STIGMA subglobose, blades with subentire margins;

OVARY ellipsoid to obovate, subtrigonus, ca. 10 mm long, ca. 5 mm in diameter. FRUITS narrowly obovate, white, persistent calyx green to red toward apex.

***Nidularium innocentii* versus *longiflorum* by Butcher Apl 2013**

Or, more thoughts on 'Derek the hybrid detective' DD1112, Nov 2012 in Bromeliads in Australia website

***Nidularium longiflorum* or is it *Nidularium innocentii* article cont;**

You can blame this on Eileen Killingley trying to work out how I linked the plant we had been growing for years as *N. innocentii* var *wittmackianum* to be really *N. innocentii* var *paxianum* because of an error in Flora Neotropica, and thus it is just a *Nidularium innocentii* sensu Elton Leme. I did get carried away by the fact that *N. innocentii* var *wittmackianum* was considered a synonym of *N. longiflorum* and *N. longiflorum* had an uni-utriculate inflorescence. Uni-utriculate is a word coined by Elton Leme and I wonder if it has botanical significance. In Leme's description of *N. longiflorum* we see 'INFLORESCENCE subumbellate, bipinnate, obconic-subtubular, uniutriculate,' and 'uniutriculate' can easily be taken out of context. Leme uses two terms, multi-utriculate; flower fascicles more or less evenly distributed along the short inflorescence axis, and uni-utriculate; fascicles concentrated in the central part of the inflorescence. If you are looking at many *Nidularium* inflorescences you can discern the differences but not if you are only examining one inflorescence. BUT it is clear that uniutriculate does not equate with a simple inflorescence so common in *Neoregelia*.

I am convinced that *N. longiflorum* is not in Australia but for a different reason to uni-utriculate. A close look at the following key will show that one main difference is in the well-developed callosities present at the base of the petals for *N. longiflorum*. In New Zealand they say you look for an uni-utricular inflorescence and white pointed petals for *N. longiflorum*. I have already pointed out the problem with uniutricular and nowhere in Leme's description does it refer to pointed petals but says 'apex narrowly obtuse-cucullate' for *N. longiflorum* and 'apex broadly obtuse-cucullate' for *N. innocentii*. Do not get too carried away with the name *N. longiflorum* which has petals 60-65mm long compared to up to 60mm. for *N. innocentii*. What I see as the difference to look for is the callosities at the bottom inside of the petals to find your *N. longiflorum*. So if you do not believe me when I suggest you change the name on your old *N. innocentii* var. *wittmackianum* to straight *N. innocentii* then start butchering a flowering plant and look for those callosities.

Mind you I disagree with Elton Leme's decision to retain the variegated varieties of *N. innocentii* because they are only propagated asexually and as such would have been better served as being under the realms of the Bromeliad Cultivar Register

Leme's key in *Nidularium*, Brom. of Alt. Forest, 37-40. 2000

46a Plant often propagating by short axillary shoots; inflorescence broadly obconic, rosulate-capitate, multi-utriculate; flower fascicles more or less evenly distributed along the short inflorescence axis; petal lobes oblong, without callosities, apex broadly obtuse-cucullate

47a

46b Plant propagating by distinct stolons; inflorescence narrowly obconic to subtubular mainly at base, uni-utriculate; fascicles concentrated in the central part of the inflorescence (except in *N. picinguabense*); petal lobes narrowly ovate, bearing well-developed callosities at base, apex narrowly obtuse-cucullate

51a

47a *Leaf* sheaths not distinctly nerved; inflorescence tripinnate (basal fascicles 4-to-9-flowered); flowers sessile or subsessile; sepals connate at base for 7 -14 mm **48a**

48b Leaf-blade spines ca 0.5 mm long; sepals elliptic to suborbicular, 8-10 mm wide 49a

49a- Leaves concolorous green or purplish-wine mainly abaxially

***innocentii* var *innocentii* (BA, RJ, SP, PR, SC & RS)**

49b- Leaves green with white or yellow longitudinal lines or bands

50a

50a- Leaves with white or yellow longitudinal lines 1-3 mm wide

***innocentii* var *lineatum* (SC)**

50b- Leaves with white or yellow longitudinal bands over 5 mm wide

***innocentii* var *striatum* (SC)**

51b Stolons 10-30 cm long; primary bracts abruptly becoming smaller toward the center of the inflorescence; inflorescence uni-utriculate; sepals connate at base for (5-) 8-10 mm; petal lobes white, basal tube green toward the apex ***longiflorum* (ES, RJ, & SP)**

Sometimes you just have to skip a generation.....

This is, in part, a response to Peter's generous comments in the last newsletter regarding the plants I bring for display/discussion. The truth is that my collection is a mix of the good, the bad, and the ugly, all of which provide a continuous learning experience.

Some of the 'ugly' are of my own doing - like the *Vr. ospinae* pup bought from Brisbane at the beginning of winter, or neglecting to secure a hanging basket over an *Aechmea* (twice) - and some inherited. Who hasn't bought a 'wish list' plant, despite its obvious flaws, knowing they'll just have to wait for the next generation of pups.

After a recent (and possibly overexcited) play on Ebay I have also learnt the hard way to minimise the risk of a nasty surprise when buying from an unknown source interstate. Top priority for beginners in this area is to buy from a top seller and then be prepared to ask questions if you would like additional information. Not all sellers state that the plant pictured is not the one you'll get, and some photos are misleading in terms of size of pup, damage to leaves etc.

Locally grown is preferable, but if buying the occasional plant sight unseen from a bromeliad nursery interstate, or on Ebay, accept that while there is an element of chance involved the result can often be worth the effort of trying to obtain a plant not readily available here.

Meanwhile, both the *Vriesea* and *Aechmea* are recovering although never likely to make it into the 'good' category. Sometimes you just have to skip a generation!

Julie Batty

If you have a Bromeliad on your wish list our "Wanted" section may be able to help, please contact Derek or Bev with details



Roving Reporter May 2013

Having Peter Hall instead of Adam keeping us in order was different and he did a good job. In general business we discussed topics for future meetings and a four corners type meeting was discussed. This sort of meeting should always be on the agenda fairly regularly because it is more hands-on than theory. It is also a good training ground for the 'Quiet' member to have practice in spruiking to a smaller group. Anyway, a couple of newbies did point out they would like to learn more about how to grow Bromeliads well. While the world of specialised growing of Bromeliads may seem daunting, it is really a self-help situation. First, new members should have a copy of our Bromeliad Culture booklet which if read from cover to cover should show that Bromeliads are easier to grow than say tomatoes. You only have to realise that Bromeliads need wind, shade, and water in appropriate amounts to get the message. Margaret says I cannot understand dog language but I think I understand plant language. I don't mean talking to plants because you don't know if they listen but plants do tell me if they are too dry, too wet, sunburnt, too shady etc. If you do this checking on a daily or every other day you can get the message but if you leave this observation to once a month you will be too late with any remedies.

And so to the bigenerics where it was the Bill and Derek Show. Luckily members had brought in plants we could discuss. There are some 58 genera names but we had no mathematician present (Len was an apology) to tell us the maximum numbers of bigenerics you could get if each genus was crossed with another genus. Let us say - a lot, but only some 55 have been registered. These are mainly man made with only 4 actually described from the wild. Of these 3 were found in a plant nursery! You see, a bigeneric in Bromeliaceae is virtually at an evolutionary dead end because so many are mules! But hybridists think they can improve on nature or is it just that they want to prove nature wrong? A bigeneric name (or Nothogenus) is different to an ordinary genus name by having an 'x' in front of it. This is really a multiplication sign but I don't have one on my key-board! The nothogenera name is made up of the first syllable/s of one genus and the last syllable/s of the other genus involved in the cross.

The first person to be successful in the USA with bigenerics was Theodore L Mead in the 1920's which he called Billcryptas which in turn became *xCryptbergia* and thanks to Margaret looking over my shoulder, now *xBiltanthus* We had one of these on display. You may be interested to know that in my many writings I did criticise Theodore L Mead for hybridising and not keeping records. Paul Butler in Florida knew better because he had access to Theodore's stud book and subsequently bombarded me with copies of the pertinent pages. Needless to say Theodore was not one eyed Bromeliads but was one of the forgotten pioneers. This exchange of views culminated in Paul writing an article for The Journal of the Bromeliad Society.

Theodore's favourite Bromeliad was *Billbergia nutans* but as far as we can ascertain did not have *Neoregelia carolinae* or its close relatives otherwise I am sure he would have tried crossing these two species to create another bigeneric.

Roving Reporter May 2013 cont:

We now move to Australia where the first bigeneric was done by Bill Morris. Bill is so different to most other hybridists because he created and then moved on to the next challenge. Grace Goode and Olwen Ferris called one these *Billbergia* 'Bill's Baby' to make him realise he would be better off naming his plants himself! Back to the bigeneric which Bill succeeded in doing before 1961 by taking pollen from *Neoregelia carolinae* to *Billbergia nutans*. This was how the name appeared on labels for some 25 years when I started pushing Australian hybridists to name their hybrids so I could list them. To think that in those days I did not push for registration which had to be done in the USA and took about 12 months to be finalised. Anyway, in 1991 x*Neobergia* 'Noddy' came into existence. It was about this time that I was visiting Bill in Newcastle and noticed a pile of letters wrapped in brown paper in his shed. On enquiring I became the proud owner of this pile of letters which although partly eaten by silver fish were circa 1960's and correspondence between Bill and so many plant growers in Florida including Mulford Foster. It was here I found out that Foster would not believe an old colonial boy could achieve something that he himself could not do! It can be described as a *Billbergia* that turns red when flowering. BUT how many people are growing it? It is in Adelaide at my place, but where else? Is it still around in the Eastern States? At one time I knew it was at the Melbourne Botanic Gardens under formula!

Most bigenerics are just novelties and have watered down attributes of both genera. Thus, a x*Niduregelia* is half way between a *Neoregelia* and a *Nidularium*. One bigeneric that really stands out is x*Neophytum* which is great for Adelaidians because one of parents in the scape-less section of *Orthophytum* just will not grow here. To think that the less spectacular section of *Orthophytum* that produces a scape before flowering will grow here but with different problems, like flowering before it should.

This leads into the two x*Neophytum* on display. One was a 'Galactic Warrior' which is variegated. It arrived on Australian shores about 20 years ago but only got hold here in Adelaide about 10 years ago. Although you get only 3 or 4 offsets each time it flowers, it is now fairly common but you do need to give it good light to get the leaves to colour red. The other one was *XNeophytum lymanii*.



XNeophytum lymanii. (photo by J. Batty)

The following is of interest

“x*NEOPHYTUM*, genus hybr. nov. [*Neoregelia* x *Orthophytum*] Typus et species unica: - *Neophytum Lymanii*
By M B Foster in Brom Soc Bull. 8(5): 73. 1958

x *NEOPHYTUM Lymanii* spec. hybr. nov. [*Neoregelia bahiana* (Ule) L. B. Smith var. *viridis* L. B. Smith X *Orthophytum navioides* (L. B. Smith) L. B. Smith]

Inflorescentia capitata pauciflora in foliorum rosulam immersa, bracteis florigeris angustis, serrulatis dentibus; flores hermaphroditi sessiles, sepalis liberis rectis symmetricis anguste triangularibus acuminatis, petalis liberis sine squamis nectariferis, staminum filamentis tenuissimis seriei 1 liberis seriei 2 ad basim petalorum adnatis, ovario glabro inferiore. Folia plurima subcrecta 3 dm. longa minutissime denseque serrulata vaginis parvis non insignitis.

TYPE: Cultivated at Orlando, Florida, M. B. Foster 3022 (U.S. Nat'l Herb.)

In this new bigeneric cross between species of *Orthophytum* and *Neoregelia*, the predominating features appear to come from the seed parent, *Orthophytum navioides*. In fact, in many ways it has the appearance of being a giant form of that species when it reaches the flowering period. The narrow flat leaves of the seed parent are more numerous, more delicate and arching in a graceful manner and when in flower practically all of the leaves turn red while the *Neophytum* leaves are glossy, stiff, formal and nearly upright until shortly before the flowering period when they spread almost longitudinally. Then the inner leaves surrounding the inflorescence turn a beautiful crimson red as many of the *Neoregelia* species do at this period. The flower petals are white as they are in *Orthophytum* and not blue as they are in the pollen parent, *Neoregelia bahiana* var. *viridis*, which is a tubular plant of very few leaves quite in contrast to most of the *Neoregelia* species. The leaves are thick and glossy and do not change colour at the flowering period. The beautiful blue flowers, three inches in length, low in the tubular plant, are pleasantly discovered only when one peers down into the tube.

The flower pedicels are nearly an inch long but the flowers of both the *Neophytum* and the *Orthophytum* are without pedicels. There are nectar scales on the petals of the *Orthophytum* but the petals of both the *Neoregelia* parent and the new *xNeophytum Lymanii* are without nectar scales.”

As you can see, this was the FIRST *xNeophytum* to be described, and in a detailed manner. The only thing strange is that its name is in Latin whereas these days you see hybrids in English but in 1958 Latin names were allowed. How many hybrids would be registered today if they had to describe their plant in Latin?

A plant that did catch the eye was a small *Neoregelia* ‘Fireball’ x *Aechmea recurvata*. Its proper name is the rather cute *xNeomea* ‘Munchkin’. It was created in Hawaii about 2008 and would appear to have arrived in Australia under parentage. Seems like some rewriting of labels is necessary.



xNeomea ‘Munchkin’ (photo by J. Batty)

A *Quesnelia* of sorts caught Bill’s eye. Was it a bigeneric? We will have to wait for flowering. The same applies for *xHohenmea* ‘Betsy McCrory’ which we guessed just had to have *Aechmea fasciata* in its background. We were advised that it had flowered but was very slow growing. Fascinated as to what this plant flowered like I checked on the Bromeliad Cultivar Register and got a bit of a shock. The plant looks like a grey version of the *Hohenbergia correia-araujoi* which was at the April meeting so what was the plant that was under the name of ‘Betsy McCrory’. We just hope it flowers fairly soon.

March is the best month for colour in the *Neoregelias* or bigenerics involving *Neoregelia* so it is hard to see what people rave about in this group in say May to September. Such was the case with *xNiduregelia* ‘Namara’ which was drab looking, because it had finished flowering and was preparing itself for motherhood! This was named in honour of Marj McNamara from Gosford and the photos show a delightful pink colour but try to reproduce this colour here and you have a challenge. For some reason we can get vivid colours in our *Neoregelias* but a different hue to that in the eastern States. The orange shades you see in Margaret Paterson’s and Alan Freeman’s hybrids are so elusive and yet we managed so well with Grace Goode’s. Perhaps this was in the days before digital cameras so you could not get pre-conceived ideas



xNiduregelia ‘Namara’ (photo by J. Batty)

This mention of Grace Goode leads us the *Neoregelia* ‘Thor’ which I brought in especially for the bigenerics. In the good old days when we grew Neo-nids and Neolariums before we knew the proper name was *xNiduregelia* we got this bigeneric from Grace called ‘Thor’ because Grace had crossed a *Neoregelia* with a *Nidularium*. Some turned out bigeneric but Thor was clearly a *Neoregelia*. So we learnt early on never to take things for granted!

I have already mentioned the 4 bigenerics found in the wild. Three of them are *xNiduregelia* from Brazil and there is a link with what we call *xNiduregelia* ‘Ruby Ryde’. You see Ruby did make some trips to Brazil in this time frame and brought back many species from *Neoregelia* and *Nidularium* and in between. So when Ruby sent me a parcel in 1995 I had great dissecting to do. The DEN resounded to chortles exclamations and rude comment. Margaret had to shut the kitchen door. You see, I had removed the sex parts of said *Neoregelia* and found the first compound inflorescence I had ever seen. Now, there are only three *Neoregelias* with compound inflorescences from S.E. Brazil, so I thought that this was going to be easy. BUT, when I was poking around the gooey mess inside the sepals where one expects to find some of the sex parts I found petal appendages. Petal appendages meant I was probably dealing with *Wittrockia*. Out came Smith and Downs, but their key did not work on the data I had found so far. And remember I could find very little information inside the sepals. Luckily *Wittrockia* has very few species and Leme had named 2 or 3 new ones whose descriptions I had in Latin.

Because of this supposed rarity I hadn't even translated them. I felt that the plant in front of me (or rather the bits of the plant) was *Wittrockia paradoxa* so with Stearn's 'Botanical Latin', the translation began. The chortles continued as description matched bits of the plant. If I am right then I'm sure Harry doesn't have a specimen in his herbarium and I'll be working on Ruby to send him one. That way we'll get an SEL number which we can allot to this clone. But alas this did not happen. Instead, in 1997 Ruby sent a parcel with a flowering specimen so I did not have a gooey mess to deal with. I dropped the idea it was *Wittrockia paradoxa* and moved into the area of the 3 naturally occurring xNiduregelias but gave up. I decided the only option was to give the plant a cultivar name 'Ruby Ryde'.

In the intervening years the plant could have acquired the names of *paradoxa* which is now an *Aechmea* or even 'fraudulenta' but as far I am aware NONE of the naturally found xNiduregelias are in Australia and the only one we have is 'Ruby Ryde'.

There were several Tillandsias brought in and I'll comment on just 2. One had a very old label with *T. valenzuelana* on it and yet this name was changed to *T. variabilis* 30 years ago but the other problem was it was really *T. lorentziana*

George Nieuwenhoven and I have resolved our differences on the name of his rather outstanding plant that he had called *Tillandsia ortgiesiana*. As far as I am aware this species is not in Australia but its very close relative *T. occulta* is. We both now agree his plant is *T. tricolor*.



Tillandsia. Tricolor (photo by J. Batty)

We leave the best to last with the popular choice going to Sue Sckrabei with her *Neoregelia* 'Sensuous' and I am not certain if the voting was based on the name or the plant. In any event it was an Alan Freeman hybrid but I am sure the name is from Keith Golinski who you may not know is back to his real life's ambition of painting still life. This must be where its bohemian flavour comes from. BUT that is not all because Sue may not be aware that the name is not registered so if she wants the name legalised she has a decision to make. We can grandfather-in the name to the Registration system but will need a photo of the plant when in flower. She seemed overwhelmed with the presentation of her Trophy-ette. Yes, the Society is experimenting with a tangible recognition to encourage members to bring in plants for display AND to tisse them up so they attract the attention of other members.



Neoregelia 'Sensuous'(photo by J. Batty)

Creature comforts

This all started when Julie Batty sent me a photo of a *Tillandsia tectorum* which had bald patches on the leaves. This made me think of the European wasp because a few years back Len Colgan was bemoaning a similar happening. He had mentioned this baldness to Renate Ehlers who said it was the work of a wasp getting material for its nest. Apparently, it is a common occurrence in Germany in the Summer months. These are of course the European wasp that we don't like being in Australia. After all we have enough of our own pests. So Len was on Wasp watch and contacted the Local Council who found the nest and eradicated such pests. Each Summer ever since, Len has been on a Wasp Watch.



Tillandsia tectorum which had bald patches on the leaves. (photo by J. Batty)

Creature comforts cont:

So Julie was duly informed and we expected husband Dave would be appointed Wasp Watcher Number One. All you have to do is watch said wasp buzz off because it will usually head for its nest. But alas he was not keen on the idea! But netting was placed over said plant to protect it. We then cogitated! This baldness was not on a leaf sheath but a leaf blade and as the leaf grew the bald patch moved up. It could well have originated way down in the centre of the plant where no self respecting wasp would venture. Had Julie recently fertilised her plant? Yes she had, and the previous owner could well have been one who did not fertilise. The plant could have had a spurt of growth where it forgot to produce hairy trichomes!

Back to the wasp theory. Julie has found out these sorts of wasps are after woody material for their nests so why bother with trichomes. As I pointed out, Dave had not done his job properly and we do not know if it was a German wasp or a Pommie wasp. We all know that Pommies like home comfort and what better than a feathery nest.

Just thought you'd like to know. But seriously, if you do find European wasps at your place don't forget to report them.



Roving Reporter June 2013

Len Colgan had given a short talk on the Mike Keelan Show and mentioned the Society's cultural booklet. Well, an Orchid grower called in before the meeting started and wanted to buy a copy. This caused a flurry of activity because I could not find the book anywhere in our cupboards. Dave Batty saved the day by selling a copy of another book that we did have and gave a promise that we would post out a copy of the cultural booklet. What did seem odd to me was that said Orchid grower did not stay for the meeting. I always say that you learn and retain more knowledge at a meeting than any book! But there is another slant on the Cultural booklet that so many of us spent hours in adding and correcting before publication. Before the Mike Keelan Show, Len rang me up because THEY wanted to know what you did specially for Bromeliads in the winter time. Almost like where do flies go in the winter?!

Anyway, my first thoughts were nothing, because that is what I do. I live near the airport and we sometimes get frost but I knew that if you have shade cloth this keeps the plants from freezing. You know you are going to lose leaf colour in winter so you accept this. On looking at the Cultural Booklet from a different point of view I find there is no direct reference to a change in culture because most of Adelaide's problems are in the Summer. Should we say that *Cryptanthus* need an extra blanket in winter? Yes, on extra cold nights *Cryptanthus* lovers were known to throw a blanket over terrariums and they believed it worked. Should we mention that you don't take off offsets in the winter? And yet I do, if mother is rotting or I have adventitious offsets on a tillandsia or such which has finished flowering, because I know it is too cold for the plant to want to root, I don't plant it in damp potting mix! So before we rush into print I am asking for views from other growers especially those in the Adelaide hills who substantially change their habits (and their plants) in wintertime.

Len Colgan had his own 'little' display of tillandsias where he kept us entertained with his usual much arm waving. Some were in spike, some were actually in flower where Len challenged us to have a sniff. Of especial interest was a flowering *T. tectorum*, which Len did not believe was a *T. tectorum* because its leaves were not as fluffy as usual. It is more common than at first thought because he had obtained it from 3 separate sources. What was rare was that he had it in flower. He promised me he would take its photo so its identity could be explored upon. Then we learned the history of *T. schusteri* which was named after Wayne Schuster who used to be linked to BirdRock nursery in California. It grows well in Adelaide but very slowly where it seems to take 10-12 years from adventitious offset to flowering. Trevor Seekamp won an offset of *T. schusteri* in the raffle! Then to the dwarfed *T. salmonea* which was in spike, which was not too salmon because of the winter sun, and yet to produce a flower. It was found a long way from the type locality of *T. salmonea* and could be yet another of Len's rarities. Just another one was *T. rauschii* that had flowered. Finally, just two examples of potted *T. rodrigueziana* that Len had got from Chris Larson. According to Len, Chris has at least 6 forms of this species. Just in case you may ask why, I will let you into a secret. Garden World in Melbourne imports a lot of plants from Guatemala and Chris enjoys himself looking for differences in the various shipments. I maintain he is unique in this regard or Guatemala sends the ends of runs. Why? Well, Australia would be a very small percentage of the total world trade and nobody is reporting or querying identity like Chris. I think we are lucky we have such a stickler for detail but it sure causes lots of discussions here in OZ

Roving Reporter June 2013 cont:

Adam talked about the oddities with a special mention of the variations in *Vriesea ospinae*. Coming from Colombia it is odd that this plant wants to grow and flower in our colder months. What we did see was how sports occur especially when they command a high price. What we did not see was 'Smudge Grub' which is a form where the leaf makings have been stretched as though the plant has grown faster lengthwise than width wise – if you know what I mean. This often happens with *Vriesea fenestralis* AND it does happen under Adelaide conditions. I got mine from Mike Romanowski and it only happened once! My friend Oscar from Rio who will be featured at the July meeting had a similar happening and last year registered *Vriesea* 'Adroaldo'. We conjectured why this sort of behaviour had not been reported for this species. In other words why the sudden appearance of stretch marks? If you are growing *V. fenestralis* keep an eye open for odd behaviour. Recently I found that it did a similar thing for Sanders who exhibited a special *V. fenestralis* in 1893 at the International Flower Festival at Ghent, Belgium!

And so to the real reason for the meeting – Billbergias, of which we had lots on display, but mainly hybrids. First we must mention the plant that got awarded first by Popular Choice. It was B. 'Caramba' exhibited by George Nieuwenhoven, the Tillandsia man. This is a hybrid by Don Beadle and some of the more observant amongst us would have noticed that some leaves showed traces of variegation. This is a trait reported by the hybridist.



B. 'Caramba' (photo by J. Batty)

What I did notice was that newish hybrids abound compared to the 'oldies'. It is a pity but a reality. Just one example of this new is better than old in the minds of many is the example of the specialist group calling themselves 'Heritage Roses' is to go by. Then there is Vintage Cars, Veteran cars etc. Luckily there are still some of us that nurture the oldies. The other thing I noticed in these newish hybrids was the variation in plants in the same pot which you had to get your head around before moving on to other plants with different names and similar parents. Bill. 'Hallelujah' being a favourite parent or grandparent. The moral is never lose a label! There were plants still around having been created by the likes of Bill Morris and Grace Goode over 40 years ago. I was also good to see large clump of B. 'Grande' which has a fascinating history

"Billbergia 'Gerda' /'Grande' /'Royal Vase' by D Butcher 1998

Billbergia 'Gerda' should be correctly known because there is a photograph of this Mulford Foster hybrid in BS Bulletin 1962 page 71. Its parentage is *B. horrida* v. *tigrina* x *B. amoena* v. *viridis*. In 1963 (just one year after the article) an Australian was the proud owner of a plant of this name having imported it from the USA. In 1975 Bill Morris (the first Australian Trustee of the BSI) must have acquired an offset because he pointed out it had the wrong name! It looked nothing like the photograph in 1962. By this time the true B. 'Gerda' was in Australia. 10 years later in 1985 I stumbled across this "not Gerda" plant and it was decided to call it B. 'Royal Vase'. B. Royal Vase' has links with *B. vittata* and thus B.'Breuteana'!! In 1995 I came across yet another "B. Gerda" imported from the USA from Don Beadle. Don must have ESP because I then found out that he was changing this name to B. Grande' (see BCR page 55). B. Grande' appears similar to a *B. amoena* and could easily be B. 'Gerda' F2 (That is seed raised from a B.'Gerda' plant).

I would like to know how B. 'Estrella' fits into this complex.

***Billbergia* 'Royal Vase' by Butcher in Bromeleter 24(1); 10. 1986**

Back to the home front. Ever since I started compiling our Check List, I have been worried about the plant known as the "Australian *Billbergia* Gerda".

Billbergia 'Gerda' is *B. horrida* X *B. amoena*, and thanks to Bill Morris and Olwen Ferris I have seen the photograph of this hybrid in Volume XII of the U.S. Journal in 1962. This hybrid by Foster has the *B. horrida* "crimp" between sheath and blade and could be described as looking like *B. horrida*, but with the outside leaves longer and arching outwards. Bill Morris did send me a plant of what he believed was the true *B. horrida* and this does look like the photograph.

“Billbergia 'Gerda' /'Grande' /'Royal Vase' cont:

This plant was very similar to another I had under the name of *B horrida* var. *tigrina*, which could in itself make us even more thoughtful. However it does lead us even more so, away from the tall, very tight vase-like *Billbergia* that we have called B.'Gerda' for so many years. The time has come for us to stop dithering and give a new name to this plant even if we do not know for certain its parentage. The shape indicates that *Billbergia vittata* was one parent, and because it is such a regal looking plant I suggest we call it 'ROYAL VASE'.

Further investigation has revealed that the true 'Gerda' is growing in Australia but with *B. amoena* x *vittata* on the label. This plant had been imported by a Dr Dawes in the late 1950's and it could easily be a case of label swapping at the time of importation.

Further notes. Cultivars that have a great similarity to 'Royal Vase' are 'Breauteana' and 'Chas Webb'

BILLBERGIA 'GERDA': by O Ferris in Bromeleter 12(6): 13. 1975

Mr. W.M:Morris of Port Macquarie has drawn our attention to the illustration of *Billbergia* X 'Gerda' on p.70, Vol.XII, 1962 of The Bulletin (America).

The illustration shows a medium-sized tubular plant with some banding and leaf flare at the top, and an upright inflorescence. As both parents used in this cross, *Billbergia horrida* and *B. amoena* have upright spikes it is surprising that none of us have questioned the name of this attractive plant with its pendant inflorescence, steel-blue petals and rose sepals, before this.

The plant grown here as *Billbergia* x 'Gerda' was imported from America by Mrs. Joan White, about 12 years ago, but is not the plant illustrated in The Bulletin. It is perhaps a more attractive plant than the one correctly known by that name and would take a place of honour in any collection.

Note Now called 'Royal Vase'

It was nice to see *Billbergia pyramidalis* on display. I know you are going to say – but everyone has that. But it also has a fascinating history. When it got to Europe in the late 1800's it was a sensation where every botanist seemed to want to name that particular clone they had in front of them. By the time Lyman Smith looked at them in the 1950's there were some 35 synonyms to show how varied it could be. There was also this *Quesnelia blanda* also brought in by Bill Treloar and you may have heard me say that Bill was slow in changing his label. The following is what I wrote over 10 years ago

BILLBERGIA PYRAMIDALIS by Derek Butcher Feb 2002

It is harder to undo a wrong than to do a right!

Some 20 years ago at the Girl Guide Hall in Kilkenny a different looking “*Billbergia pyramidalis*” was brought into the meeting by, I think, Gerhardt Thiele. Using Padilla's Bromeliads (1976) I decided it just had to be *Quesnelia blanda*. The matter was forgotten because the plant still looked like a *Billbergia pyramidalis* and therefore not in great demand.

In the 1990's that great collector or oddities (or is it oddments?), Bill Treloar presented me with a *Billbergia pyramidalis* in flower only it had *Quesnelia blanda* on the label! This damn plant had come back to haunt me. This time I used Smith & Downs descriptions and decided it was within the realms of *Billbergia pyramidalis*. In September 1999 just after the Cairns Conference, Margaret Draddy of Sydney telephoned me regarding a query she had. It was this *Billbergia* type plant which was in flower but had no name. Don Woods of Perth was unlucky enough to be visiting Margaret at this time. One can imagine what the scenario was, when almost one entire evening was spent poring over Bromeliad books in Margaret's lounge trying to identify this THING of Margaret's! Guess what? Using Padilla's Bromeliad book Don came up with *Quesnelia blanda*! I told Margaret my experiences and red face in Adelaide and she promised to send a flowering offset for my investigation. The parcel duly arrived having been personally delivered by Len Colgan.

The next day, out came the books of the more scientific type rather than the coffee table type and comparisons were made. My Margaret was at my elbow! After I got to 5 differences between the specimen and the description of *Quesnelia blanda* I decided to check these against the description of *Billbergia pyramidalis* where these 5 differences disappeared!

So I am still on the search for a *Quesnelia blanda* but please do not send me a *Billbergia pyramidalis* in disguise. Remember that *Quesnelia blanda* is rare in cultivation and a synonym of it is *Quesnelia strobilispica* suggesting that the inflorescence looks roughly like a pine-cone!