

S.A. BROMELIAD GAZETTE

Vol 38

Number 3

July, August & September 2014

PUBLISHED BY:

The Bromeliad Society of South Australia Inc

Editor- Derek Butcher. Assist Editor – Bev Masters



Born 1977 and still offsetting!

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President: Adam Bodzioch

58 Cromer Parade Millswood 5034 Ph: 0447755022

Secretary: Bev Masters

6 Eric Street, Plympton 5038 Ph: 83514876

Vice president: Peter Hall

Treasurer: Jeff Hollinshead

Committee: Glenda Lee

Penny Seekamp

Trevor Seekamp

Julie Batty

Dave Batty



Life members: Margaret Butcher, Derek Butcher,
Len Colgan

Email address:

Secretary – bev.masters@bigpond.com

Web site: <http://www.bromeliad.org.au>

[Follow us on Face book](#)

Pots, Labels & Hangers - Small quantities available all meetings.

For special orders/ larger quantities call Ron Masters on 83514876



Part of Masters Bromeliad display area (photo Bev)

Meetings Venue:

Maltese Cultural Centre,
6 Jeanes Street,
Beverley

Time: 2.00pm.

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

**VISITORS & NEW MEMBERS
WELCOME.**

MEETING & SALES 2014 DATES:

[25/10/2014 & 26/10/2014 Sales](#), 9/11/2014 130PM start, pup exchange, special afternoon tea – bring a plate of finger food to share, plant auction.

MEETING & SALES 2015 DATES: 11/1/2014, 8/2/2015, 15/3/2015 (3rd SUNDAY), [28/3/2015 & 29/3/2015 Sales](#), 19/4/2015(3rd SUNDAY), 3/5/2015 (1st SUNDAY), 14/6/2015, 12/7/2015, 2/8/2015 (1st SUNDAY), 6/9/2015(1st SUNDAY), 11/10/2015, [24/10/2015 & 25/10/2015 Sales](#), 8/11/2015 Pup auction etc

Applications for membership always welcome.

Subscriptions \$10.00 per year Feb to Feb

July, August & September 2014

Page	Details
1	Cover page – Photo: Committee: Meeting & sales dates 2014 : Meeting & sales dates 2015
2	Roving Reporter July meeting: <i>Deinacanthon Urbanlanum</i> & its uses article
3	Roving Reporter July meeting cont:
4	Roving Reporter July meeting cont: <i>Deuterocohnia brevifolia</i> cultivars -Derek
5	Roving Reporter July meeting cont: <i>Dyckia</i> article – Derek 12/2001
6	Roving Reporter July meeting cont:
7	Roving Reporter August meeting
8	Roving Reporter August meeting cont: Article <i>Aechmea</i> ‘Mary Brett’ -Derek
9	Article <i>Aechmea</i> ‘Mary Brett’ cont: -Derek, Article <i>Billbergia elegans</i> -Derek
10	Roving Reporter August meeting cont: Letter to Editor & response: Article by Adam
11	Article by Adam cont: Garden visit: Roving Reporter September
12	Roving Reporter September cont: <i>Usneoides</i> article
13	Roving Reporter September cont: <i>Usneoides</i> article
14	Roving Reporter September cont: <i>Usneoides</i> article cont:
15	Roving Reporter September cont:
16	Roving Reporter September cont: From your Secretary, Reminders

Roving Reporter July meeting

Lots of missing faces – must have been the cold weather. They will only know what they missed at a meeting with a difference by reading what follows!

It was a meeting in two contrasting halves. One half was how plants have taken some 14 million years of hybridising, mutation and survival of the most adaptable to produce species and the other half on how to produce a myriad of *Vriesea* hybrids with squiggly marks on their leaves in just over 10 years.

First things first. When this Society first started we treated ‘The Pricklies’ as being roughly Pitcairnioideae but in recent years things have changed. Everyone seems to want to be involved in the exciting field of Phylogenetics. All this means is the systematic study using DNA to classify taxa based on common ancestry. Something I have noticed is when budding botanists are going for their doctorates they do describe new species based mainly on morphology (what a plant looks like) but then they disappear to do more exciting work in what is supposed to have happened in the past. I do read their papers (up to 5 times) and my ancient brain takes in just a little bit. So these days what is still the same ‘Prickly’ may not be a Pitcairnioideae especially if it is a *Puya* or a *Hechtia* which seem to have evolved from a different ancestor. Luckily both genera are better in our gardens so rarely come to meetings unless very small plants. Perhaps now is the time to remember that the basic unit in botany is the species. You then decide which genus to put it in, and this is not as easy as it sounds because sometimes it will not fit and we see a new genus named. You then decide which subfamily it is in and thence to the family Bromeliaceae. I think I can tell a Bromeliad from a Rose or an Orchid but sometimes subfamilies are not always remembered. It was easy when you remembered seed with parachutes for Tillandsioideae, squashy berries for Bromelioideae, and the dry capsules for the rest. Now things are more complicated. Luckily with our competitions we have the Trophies named after people but as to what section covers what genera will be a moving event! AND yet you would like to judge like with like not their ancestry. More discussion!

And so to the plants on display

First let us deal with the odd ones out. We saw *Hechtia tillandsioides* which is an oddbod itself, having very few spines on its leaves (hence its name) compared to the viciously spined plants that make up the rest of the genus. As with Cycads you have separate male and female plants. With animals and insects you have the power of walking to find a mate but a plant has no option but to sit and wait. I still wonder how they manage to survive in the cruel world of evolution. This oddity is no doubt part of the reasoning that it now in the subfamily Hechtioideae.

There are 4 species with virtually spineless leaves and I am still not certain which one is what we grow in Australia. All I do know is that we all grow the male plant!

Now to the *Puya* which is, as we say, is now treated as the subfamily Puyoideae rather than Pitcairnioideae. Here there are problems. If you look over the last 100 years there are many cases of species moving from *Puya* to *Pitcairnia* and back again. Even today there are query marks on some species! So discussion continues.

The popular plant was a *Dyckia marnier-lapostollei* owned by George Nieuwenhoven

Roving Reporter July cont:

I will bet you will wonder where the very prickly *Deinacanthon urbanianum* belongs other than in the collection of Len Colgan. Len has flowered it and its photo appeared in the Bromeliad Society Journal but Len cannot smell because he made no comment as to its scent.

The following makes interesting reading

DEINACANTHON URBANIANUM and the Uses Given to it by the Mataco Indians by *Alberto Castellanos* in Brom.Soc. Bull. 4(5): 79-81. 1954

A monotypical South American genus, its only species was described as *Rhodostachys urbanianum* Mez in Flora Brasiliensis (1891), 182, tab. 51, proceeding from the Argentine Republic, Province of Cordoba, Chacra de la Merced, a place near Cordoba city, capital of the province. Later this species was separated as the genus *Deinacanthon* in the Monograph of Bromeliaceae published by Mez in 1896.

In Argentina the plant is popularly called *chaguar* or *chahuar*, and the fruit *chalude*.

Its geographical area, quite extensive and unique, covers the following South American territories: Paraguay (Puerto Casado) and Argentina (Formosa, Chaco, Salta, Santa Fe, Santiago del Estero, La Rioja, Cordoba, San Luis, Mendoza). It is thus a characteristic species of the Chaquenian and central botanical provinces, which extend over Argentina, Paraguay and the south of Bolivia.

This peculiar plant forms tufts on the clay-soil plains by means of its rhizomes; it is only rarely found in the stony ground of the lower "*curras de nivel*" corresponding to the hills which exist within its geographical area. It often happens that they grow under small and open-branched bushes, whose leaves impart little shade; this favors the growth of *Deinacanthon* which is a heliophilous and xerophilous plant. When these patches appear in the open country they are impassable because of their terrible spines.

As do all other Argentine Bromeliaceae, it flowers early in the spring. Its whitish flower opens in the center of the foliar rosette and sends forth a cadaverous smell. It secretes abundant nectar, which often overflows over the perianth leaves, and can only be sucked by the flies that are attracted by the flower's unpleasant odour.

The plant stores water in the aquiferous parenchyma of its phyllodes which occupies the upper portion of the limb and when abundant makes them rigid and reaches half a centimetre in thickness, being easily seen with the naked eye in a transverse section. On the contrary, when it is exhausted the phyllodes are reduced to their fibers and they curl somewhat, looking like wires.

The fruit takes a long time to ripen, from spring to the end of summer, consuming the greater part of the water stored in the aquiferous parenchyma. Then the recurving phyllodes open the rosette, an opportunity of which the wild hogs take advantage. Foxes, in spite of their carnivorous diet, eat them occasionally, using their front paws to detach them from the plant, if they are still upon it when they have reached maturity.

In the Chaquenian territories I have seen the Mataco Indians employ the fibers of *Deinacanthon*'s phyllodes in the making of nets which they use for carrying the results of hunting or fishing.

They achieve the manufacture of these nets in the following manner. Very carefully, in order to avoid the terrible spines, they take the peripheral phyllodes of the rosette between the forefinger and thumb and separate them with a sharp pull; afterwards, by means of their iron-like nails and great ability, they rid them of the marginal spines. Once disarmed, they twist them quickly and strongly, submitting them to a sudden mechanical retting until only a greenish bundle of fibers remains in their hands. They allow these to dry and then start weaving their nets which they sometimes dye with dark colors. For a long time the nets retain a characteristic nauseous smell which makes one think of the indolent Mataco Indians themselves.

These nets are very tough; they can resist weights of many kilograms as I have had the opportunity to test in the Santiaguénian Chaco. The only condition required is that they must always be dry, for, once wet, they easily break. This quality denotes a perfect adaptation to the long periods of drought which are characteristic of the plant's geographical area."

For obvious reasons the plant is very rare in Australia – who would want to grow it but Len! AND he zealously guards its offsets. BUT how did he obtain it? How did he get it past Quarantine? It all goes back to 1996 when Big Len and Uncle Derek did their 'world' tour when we went to the USA and Germany and had a marvellous time. While in California we stayed with Dutch Vandervort's family and as you may know Dutch was a prickly nut. Pricklies grew everywhere. I was interested in a small furry like *Abromeitiella* which we now know as 'Chlorantha' (more about this later) but Len had his eye on a prickly beast under the name of *Deinacanthon*. Dutch had to break the pot to get an offset for Len!

Roving Reporter July meeting cont:

The most popular pricklies were *Deuterocohnia* and *Dyckia* of which there were several on display. It would appear that 13 million years ago these two genera had a common ancestor and for some reason *Deuterocohnia* stayed in the Andean mountain chain but *Dyckia* roamed into the flatter Brazilian areas. How do I know this? Well, in 2013 we saw a 200 page doctoral thesis by Nicole Schuetz on *Deuterocohnia* and there were startling revelations. In the old days I always had problems with deciding if a plant was a large *Abromeitiella brevifolia* or a small *A. lorentziana* because there was not much to go on in Smith & Downs 1974 description.

Over the years lots of botanists have looked at the problem and gave their ideas so it was no real surprise when Nicole resurrected the name *abstrusa* for a large grey plant which we do not have in Adelaide and relegated some of the old *D. lorentziana* to *D. brevifolia*. So whoever brought in the plant called *D. lorentziana* has to consider the new trend. Now let us look at *D. brevifolia* subsp *chlorantha* which was used by Schultze-Motel in 1975 for a plant growing in the Berlin Botanic garden. I was aware what this looked like hence my interest in a plant I saw at Dutch's place. Nicole has widened what she sees as representing *D. brevifolia*, and *D. brevifolia* subsp *chlorantha* bites the dust. But I think this form is somewhat unique in cultivation and am retaining the name as a cultivar

***Deuterocohnia brevifolia* cultivars by Butcher July 2014**

In 2012 we saw 'Little Marj' registered in the Bromeliad Cultivar Register and details can be read on the BinA website <http://www.bromeliad.org.au/> or the BCR <http://botu07.bio.uu.nl/bcg/bcr/index.php> In 2013 we saw the Doctoral Dissertation on the genus *Deuterocohnia* by Nicole Schuetz where the old *Abromeitiella* genus was finally laid to rest as being within *Deuterocohnia*. The species *D. brevifolia* was redefined and it would appear that the subspecies *chlorantha* of Schultze-Motel has finally bitten the dust. I rather liked this subspecies because it is widely grown in California and Australia. Moreover, it has never been propagated from seed as far is known but by offsets and as such can claim cultivar status. Each plant is on average, 2cm diam and each leaf is green with scattered lepidote on the upper face with about 10 bristles each side. While slow growing it can form quite large mounds in large shallow pots. While in nature you will find the species growing on rocks it seems quite happy growing on a minimum of soil in cultivation. This is now registered under the name *Deuterocohnia* 'Chlorantha'



D. lotteae is easy to identify when in flower, as the photo shows

Deuterocohnia lotteae (photo J. Batty)

And so to the *Dyckia*.

Undoubtedly the rarest one there was *D. lindevaldae* that big Len had obtained around 2006 when he was visiting Heidelberg Bot Gardens in Germany. He was in their good books because he had arranged for them to get certain *Encholirium* species that they did not have. Apparently they had a batch of 6 plants and they let Len have one. His survived quarantine but it seems the remaining 5 succumbed at the Bot Gardens. Len still hasn't flowered his although it did seem happy enough. While talking about Heidelberg I must mention the saga of the frozen seed. About 2000 Len was at Heidelberg and got some *Dyckia* seed that had been frozen to make it last longer. Kew Gardens is well known for its frozen seed bank collected from all corners of the world which can be accessed if there is some future catastrophe. Anyway, Len sowed the seed and I was lucky to get a plant. We knew the number and only had to flower the plant to decide what it was. It did not flower for him. It did not flower for me. So, last year, in desperation I gave a plant to Julie Batty with instructions to flower it! Meanwhile I asked Heidelberg for identification but alas they could not help. So here I am pondering whether frozen seed will germinate but never mature enough to flower. We wait!



Dyckia lindevaldae
(photo J. Batty)

Roving Reporter July meeting cont:

One *Dyckia* we do have a bit of provenance on and one where one of the winners of the special raffle will be involved is *D. frigida* Corsica. The immediate reaction might be to enquire where does Corsica fit in and we know that dyckias come from South America. This species was originally described from a plant growing under cultivation in Europe. About 5 years ago a photo came up on Florapix and it seemed to agree with the original description. So I contacted the photographer who lived in Corsica. The original plant had come from Marnier-Lapostolle's garden in France and I was promised seed. This duly arrived and germinated and the next task is to get flowers so we can check its identity. So, Geoff, we are banking on you being observant in the future. Another challenge comes from NSW some 14 years ago and I still haven't flowered the plant. Here is a story

Dyckia 'Ruby's Soft Spot'

by Derek Butcher 12/2001

It all started when Franc Hancock who lives just south of Coff's Harbour was at a BSA meeting at Ryde School of Horticulture where Ruby Ryde said she had a soft spot for dyckias. It was here he was invited to visit Keith and Ruby where he was given an unknown *Dyckia* by Ruby. We all know that Ruby has a soft spot for species too so when the plant flowered I just had to try to identify it.

There are over 125 *Dyckia* species these days and I could have checked the plant against each of these descriptions to find out what it was. Or I could have used Lyman Smith's Key to the 100 or so species around in 1974.

A Key is simple to understand and follow – or it should be. It is based on a system of questions regarding some part of a plant be it leaf or flower parts. If the answer to the first question is in the affirmative you move on to the next indicated question. Because it is based on plant parts which can be variable, these keys can be difficult to follow and the *Dyckia* Key is notorious. Remember too, that Lyman Smith dealt in dried specimens not living ones.

Anyway, I got to Sub-Key III and kept hovering around *D. leptostachya* but there were a few attributes in the description that did not link. If ever you grow *Dyckia* from seed, accidental hybridisation is always at the back of your mind because dyckias are very promiscuous.

Recently there was discussion on the Internet regarding *Dyckia* 'Lad Cutak'. On investigation I found that an article in the American Journal in 1999 showed this to be a hybrid by Lad Cutak himself and yet the Bromeliad Cultivar Registry showed this as being by Mulford Foster. I found the reference in B.S. Bulletin in 1961 and on the same page I noticed you could buy *Dyckia* 'Lad Cutak' seed!! The parents of *D. 'Lad Cutak'* are *brevifolia* and *leptostachya* and it is what is known as an F1 hybrid. Everybody knows (or should I say everybody with 5 years experience in growing plants from seed should know) that seed from an F1 hybrid does not breed true. To the contrary, it produces everything but, with a bit of mother and a bit of father thrown in. Could any of the seed sown in 1961 have produced an almost *D. leptostachya*. We'll never know but it certainly has me thinking.

Another species I looked at in the same Sub-Key was *D. commixta*. I don't know how many of you have looked inside a *Dyckia* flower but when you have pushed aside the sepals, petals, and stamens you are left with a rather large ovary, on top of which is a stubby style and on top of this are the stigma lobes. We guessed that from the finish of the ovary to the start of the stigma lobes was 2-3mm whereas it should have been only 1mm for *D. commixta*. Secondly we could not discern whether the three styles were very close together or were just one! What was in our favour was the petals which were bent inwards at the top. Here again there seemed to be too many discrepancies.

So we have this *Dyckia* which is almost but not quite, and my solution is to accept Franc's name of *Dyckia* 'Ruby's Soft Spot'. I won't describe it to you other than to say it is a medium sized *Dyckia* with narrow leaves that can be maroon coloured on the top surface. Its photo will be part of the Bromeliad Cultivar Registry if any of you wish to check. To find the BCR first get your computer on line and then enter <http://BSI.org>, Cultivar Corner, then Online Registry.

Observant ones would have noted a very similar plant which had 'Helen Clewett' on the label. Now, I got this from Ross Little, also from NSW but said to have been grown from seed so the plant must flower somewhere sometime. At least I am intrigued about this happening and hope someday to solve yet another problem of mine.

We had a few plants in flower from Bill Treloar and it would appear that Bute this winter is not producing the amount of sunshine to get flowers to properly emerge from the leaf vases!

Roving Reporter July meeting cont:

We also saw several Tillandsias including a group of *T. fasciculata* types that showed little effect of the ethrel that Adam had dosed them with to induce them to flower. One *Tillandsia malyii*, of the *T. tectorum* complex and my pride and joy was in flower after waiting 8 years from importation. I had imported *T. malyii* from Lotte Hromadnik in Austria and this is what she had to say about the plant.

“To date, this form with its conspicuous, strongly curly upward bent leaves has been treated as a variety of either *T. tectorum* or *T. reducta*. More detailed examinations, particularly comparisons between the inflorescences, have now yielded several essential differences from both species. Thus, it has to be described as a new species.

This new species is named after Ing. Ludwig G Maly, in honour of his 80th birthday. This gentleman not only had a remarkable collection of cacti in Vienna, and later in Maissau, Niederosterreich, but also was one of the first individuals in Austria to cultivate *Tillandsia*. At the Viennese International garden show in 1964, he constructed an artificial tree with epiphytes and many flowering plants of *T. ionantha*. This was our first introduction into *Tillandsia* and the beginning of decades of interest in this genus.

Besides several other visits to South America, Ing. Maly also travelled in Peru. In 1976, he visited the location of the species now named after him, which was some years before our trip there.”



Tillandsia malyii (photo J. Batty)

First I would like to comment on availability of hybrids these days. 30 years ago you saw many nurserymen's lists advertised in the Journal of the Bromeliad Society and in Australia I can remember Olwen Ferris having such a list. To make it worth your while you had to have sufficient stock to include a name. Hybridists are not that worried about extra stock but more interested in creating new hybrids. This is different to the hybridist involved with foodstuffs which have greater attention to selection because after all, it will not sell unless it tastes right. These days we have what I call a boutique market aided by E-Bay where you buy almost unique stock. While it used to be up to the hybridist to cull in seeking for superior plants it seems this facet of hybridising is left to the general public. If you wanted “a plant like that” your better chance of success may well be with a purchaser rather than a hybridist. There is nothing magical about hybridising these days now we have ‘advanced’ from the primary hybrid stage (species x species) because even selfing a hybrid can produce remarkable plants provided you do this in quantity. In 1997 I was contacted by Josef Bek in French Polynesia for *Neoregelia* seed and I explained I could only help him out with hybrids and he was happy to get involved. So I collected ripe berries from a selection of hybrids (not all concentrica hybrids!) and sent them to him. No names -just *Neoregelia* hybrids. Two years later he sent me a photo of his backyard full of *Neoregelia* hybrids. About 2005 Josef moved to Costa Rica, quite near the legendary Chester Skotak, taking with him some of the better hybrids. Tragically, he died shortly after arrival. His partner moved to Madeira, taking with him these hybrids. Such was the demand for these plants in Madeira several were registered even though parentage was unknown. So it all depends on your keenness in growing on plants from seed.

And so to the ‘slide’ presentation by Luke Price on the *Vriesea* hybrids of Jack Koning and his offsider from near Port Macquarie in NSW. Luckily we had a cloudy day so were all able to see the screen quite clearly. Anyway, Jack Koning and his offsider Tamera Ison, have been playing with the night flowering *vrieseas* called collectively ‘Glyph’ because of their leaf marking, for over 10 years and have produced some real beauties. They have been releasing registered plants regularly over the years in their drive to find the ultimate. This is a trait with most if not all Bromeliad hybridists, where, in their quest for their holy grail they are loath to destroy what are inferior plants to them, but still sell them. This practice frustrates the Cultivar Registrar because he knows this means lots of unidentified plants are in circulation.

Roving Reporter August meeting

Even colder than the July meeting but more members came to the meeting. Adam had escaped to Singapore but we had an able stand-in with Bill from Bute and sufficient plants had been brought in to brag about. Many were *Neoregelia* to show how hardy they can be. In fact two *Neoregelias* got voted in as favourite plants and on this occasion it was decided to give two awards. Their owners, Jeff Hollinshead and Julie Batty were pleased to get their awards. One interesting point here was the name on the label on Julie's plant which was ('Magenta' x princeps). Ever since I have been growing Bromeliads from 1975 I have always maintained that if a plant is worth growing it is worthy of a name. In this case we only know its parents with its seed parent going back to one of Olwen Ferris's first hybrid. Clearly the unknown hybridists did not think much of their hybridising and yet the plant has survived the years and considered by some to be worthy of a prize. This does not happen very often and we know that if a hybridist neglects to do the right thing then ANYONE can name and register such hybrid. Dare I suggest that when this plant flowers it be given a proper name and registered. Conversely we had a Neo 'Avago' brought in by Maureen Hick all the way from Greenoch which was named and registered by one of our past members – Josie Tonkin. Now that plant has a recorded history! Another coming in from Greenoch was a blast from the past namely *Aechmea* 'Foster's Favorite Favorite'. *Aechmea* 'Foster's Favorite' was one of the first hybrids created by Mulford Foster in the USA in 1946 and in 1951 it sported a variegated offset and 'Favorite Favorite' came into being. But the tale does not end there.

In the early 1960's *Aechmea* 'Foster's Favorite Favorite' was imported to Sydney and offsets were in demand even though the plant did not particularly like Sydney's winter weather. A little while later it was rumoured that a more hardy form had come into being somewhere "Up North". Olwen Ferris, these days known as the Grande Dame of Aussie Bromeliads, and a Trustee of the BSI, was then the Editor of *Bromeletter* and was apt to travel the "Country" looking for the odd Bromeliad. In 1970 on her way back from Queensland she found a vigorous *Aechmea* 'Foster's Favorite Favorite'. On discussing the plant with the nurseryman she found out that it was the alleged Australian Sport obtained from a person now deceased! The trail was cold! But, was it? Olwen does not give up easily. She checked old membership lists and decided that "Up North" meant FNQ (Far North Queensland) and wrote to a lady who lived near Townsville. Yes, she did have the plant having bought it in Townsville. (Only some 1400 miles north of Sydney). BUT she understood the original plant came from Port Macquarie (Only 400 miles north of Sydney). Olwen knew of a lady who did have a small nursery in Port Macquarie and Yes, the plant had originated there! The search had ended!

While everyone in the Bromeliad World knows of Mulford Foster few Australians remember Mrs Jean Cannon who started of the "famed" Australian clone. Apparently she had got seed of *Aechmea racinae* x *Aechmea victoriana* var. *discolor* from Germany {I can't always blame Americans!} and grew on the plants. ONE became variegated!

Jean Cannon sold 3 offsets, all going "Up North" to Queensland but then her interest in Bromeliads faded as the nursery found Orchids more profitable. The original plant died through neglect. This is just one example that sharing plants around is their best chance of survival.

We must remember that our Society was not formed until 1977 so did Maureen's plant originate in the USA or Australia?!

Seeing the almost totally green leaved *Neoregelia* 'Amazing Grace' prompts me to again remind members on the importance of selecting offsets. When you have a variegated plant its offsets will vary in the amount of variegation. If offsets have very weak variegation they should be removed until you get one to your satisfaction. While the first offset produced may be the strongest it may not be the best.

Bill proudly showed off an *Aechmea* hybrid called 'Glyn's Matchstick' that had been created 'up north' in Whyalla. We saw both parents ('Mary Brett' and gamosepala) and progeny and there was no doubting its origins. Knowing you have to beat 'Mary Brett' with a stick to kill it I can see 'Glyn's Matchstick' cropping up in the future in many a back-yard in South Australia with lost label. So young members are to be reminded of what it looks like.



If you want to know a bit of history about 'Mary Brett' read on

THE "MARY BRETT" AECHMEA. By Bernard Stonor in Bromeletter 11(6):15. 1974

A small plant in a symmetrical rosette with narrow arching leaves tapering to a fine but soft point. Light green with small brown spines. Upper surface glabrous (without hairs; smooth), lower surface lepidote (surfaced with small, scurfy scales), scales small and inconspicuous. Leaf sheaths broad, inner surface dark purple. Inner leaves dark purple when flowering. Scape stout, erect; with the inflorescence wholly above the leaves. Inflorescence simple, dense, strobilate (flowers overlapping).

Scape bracts thin, acuminate, serrulate. Light red-brown but soon becoming dry.

Floral bracts thin, naviculate, acuminate. Margins mostly with small spines. Straw coloured; light red mottling. Sepals mucronate, connate for half their length, 22 mm long including the mucro, which is 4 mm long, yellow with light red tips. Petals mauve-pink. Flowers 35 mm long.

(Mr Stonor has drawn to my notice that the above plant was mentioned in September/October 1974 Bromeletter as "distachia hybrid Mary Brett" flowering in Mrs. Johnston's garden.

Soon after the death of Miss Brett a plant was given to me with offset attached.

The offset was sent to our Registrar of Cultivars, Mr. K.W. Allan who later flowered it and reported that it was a hybrid with one parent being *Aechmea recurvata*. Ed.)

Extracts from Mr. Stonor's letter: "The description was very vague but it sounds like the same plant as the one you gave me and which is now flowering. My plant is an *Aechmea recurvata* hybrid with no sign of *Ae. distachia* in the plant or in the flower. Since a number of people are growing this plant in at least three states, I would like to suggest that the plant should be given an official name, so I am writing to see what you think about it. The plant already seems to have an unofficial name Mary Brett, so I suggest that the name might be *Aechmea* Mary Brett, though this matter would naturally have to be decided by the committee. The name would conform to the International Code of Nomenclature and is not likely to have been used for any other plant. All that would be necessary would be the publication of a description of the plant in Bromeletter and we would then have a definite named plant known to everyone, instead of an unsatisfactory unnamed hybrid known only to those growing the plant. It would have to be described as a hybrid of unknown origin without any reference to possible parents. I don't know if it would be considered for registration but this might be worth trying for once it is named.

I will enclose a description of my plant and I expect other members would send a description of theirs so there should not be any difficulty about the description.

(About eight years ago seed was sent to the Seed Bank of *Ae. recurvata* variety *recurvata*. From a planting to test viability I raised 8 plants that proved identical to the plant Mary Brett, with one difference. Some have mauve - pink petals while others have yellow petals.

The donor of this seed could not remember what Aechmeas were flowering at the same time as his *Ae. recurvata* so could not give any clues as to the second parent of this **AECHMEA 'MARY BRETT'** by Olwen Ferris. in Bromeletter 17(2): 11. 1980

Roving Reporter August cont:

About 12 years ago, a gentleman from the south coast of N.S.W. paid me a visit at Thornleigh, Sydney, N.S.W. He brought with him a plant of *Aechmea recurvata* var. *recurvata* for identification and the seed from it for the Seed Bank.

After having the seed in the Seed Bank for two months, I test planted about 12 seeds of each batch for viability. All 12 seeds from this plant germinated. Later I could see that they differed greatly from my own batch of seedlings of *Aechmea recurvata* var. *ortgiesii* X *Ae. recurvata* var. *benrathii*. The latter showed their *recurvata* parentage but the former had wide, stiff leaves. Somewhere along the line the birds or bees had taken a hand in things and we had a group of hybrids on our hands.

About this time, three very nice, friendly people paid me a visit and asked if I knew how they could join The Bromeliad Society of Australia! This was my introduction to Doreen and Peter Johnston and their friend, Mary Brett.

Mary fell in love with one of my hybrid seedlings and promised to let me know when it flowered so that perhaps I could have a guess at the other parent in the cross. She lived just long enough to see the plant flower, a simple upright spike with orange bracts and yellow flowers. After her death, the Johnstons suggested the plant be named *Ae. 'Mary Brett'* after their friend, and when I look at the other siblings, some with yellow flowers like Mary's plant while others have the lilac-blue of *Ae. recurvata* and one has a branched inflorescence, I always think of this remarkable woman who lived to help others.

She worked as a teacher, helping accident victims who had lost a limb or use of limbs, to find a new way of life. In her last years she got her diploma in German so that she could understand and help people who found English difficult to understand.

It is fitting that in this small way we can remember her in this sprightly, upright, neat growing *Aechmea*, that can take hard going along with the good and be depended on to flower annually and grace the garden with a long lasting inflorescence. The stiff upright vase has blue tips to the bright green leaves and is bronze to dark blue at the base. Here

I grow it in full sun, but it is better with just a little filtered shade during the hottest time of the day.”

Bill was pleased the way his *Billbergia sanderiana* had flowered and rightly so. As all of you must know by now, both Bill and I share a passion for species versus hybrid.



Billbergia sanderiana (photo J. Batty)

“*Billbergia elegans* by Derek Butcher in Bromeleetter 37(3): 2-4. 1999

Plants under this name have had a chequered career in Australia, with some dead ends.

It all started in the 1960's where confusion reigned as to what was a *Billbergia sanderiana* and what was *Billbergia elegans*. Eventually all turned out to be *Billbergia sanderiana*. The problem arose when Adda Abendroth collected plants near her home in Teresopolis, near Rio de Janeiro: She sent seeds to Australia and plants to Lyman Smith for identification. It took some years for Lyman Smith to decide that the plants were *Billbergia sanderiana*. Meantime 30 years on we still come across a *Billbergia sanderiana* with *Billbergia elegans* on the label, because some growers assume the label is always right. It can take some time to correct some plant names and finding a true *Billbergia elegans* is just one example.

Addendum:

Since writing this article I have had further information on this problem and Harry Luther has again come to the rescue. Mind you, my query to him was on what I thought was an unrelated problem. Let me do a bit of unravelling!!

Roving Reporter August cont:

Peter Franklin and I have been trying to get hold of old copies of the Bromeliad Society Bulletins by any means at our disposal and photocopying them. In a 1962 edition I found that Mulford Foster had named a *Billbergia amoena* var. *penduliflora*. On investigation I found that Lyman Smith had then treated it as a *Billbergia sanderiana* which I thought strange and asked Harry for his views. He pointed out that in his view *Billbergia amoena* var. *penduliflora* was the same as *B. elegans* and sent me a photocopy of the herbarium specimen of Foster 683 where it was noted "Rich Salmon scape and primary bracts". *Billbergia sanderiana* is very distinct and is related to *B. chlorantha* and *B. kautskyi*, whereas *Billbergia elegans* seems related to *B. amoena*. *B. amoena* seems to be a plant of coastal or near coastal rainforests. *B. elegans* seems to be a species from inland drier habitats."

So even the great botanist, Lyman Smith, can get confused but we have it right – for the moment. DNA investigations may tell a different story!

It is nice to know that 'Burnsies Spiral' is still around but is it a Neoregelia? Bill has the same experience as I. It just grows and grows with nary a flower. Please send me a photo if you ever get yours to flower.

Letter to Editor 9/2014

1/09/2014, Pauline & Geoff wrote:

Hi Bev and Derek,

As a relatively new grower of Broms., and with a particular leaning towards Tillandsia and then Billbergia, I find the Society's Gazette extremely interesting, news worthy and educational. The article in the latest Gazette, that included information on T. 'Cotton Candy', was particularly pertinent as I have obtained two pieces of that plant from different sources during recent trips to Queensland.

To add additional interest to articles, would it be possible to include notes, comment, on the culture of the mentioned plants. I understand that cultivation can be a very debatable subject and adds considerable interest to the topic of how and where plants can/should be grown. But for new or inexperienced growers some general guidelines would, I am sure, add further value to the articles, especially when commenting on particular genera or plants that have come under notice and are worthy of inclusion in the

Gazette. It would also recognise that the cultural comments would be applicable to broad South Australian conditions only. By way of example, and in the case of 'Cotton Candy', and especially for South Australian conditions, is it best grown mounted, can it tolerate full sun in both summer and/or winter, could it be fertilised, should it be kept dry in the winter, etc., etc.? I know that when at the next meeting these questions can be asked of the more experienced growers around, however comment throughout the Gazette would add another dimension to the articles and be available for future reference.

Many thanks for the Gazette, Geoff Edwards. Member.

Editors response

Dear Geoff

A very good suggestion which is very hard to answer. My articles are biased towards identity because that is my passion. I regret to say that my husbandry abilities leave much to be desired. Successful growing has so many variables as our Booklet on growing Bromeliads in South Australia shows. Even in one backyard there are several ecological niches which the astute gardener knows about. It seems to revolve around ones ability to listen to plants wants. Some call it green fingers. One thing we do stress in our booklet is that plants obtained in Queensland do need time to acclimatize to Adelaide conditions. You seem more worried about successful growing whereas I would be more interested as to whether it had the right name. To follow blindly any biased advice I could give on successful growing would be foolhardy. To give our Gazette more balance can I suggest you write about your experiences in growing 'Cotton Candy' whether good or bad. Perhaps your letter will inspire members to write to us about their Bromeliad experiences. We can learn a lot from others
Derek

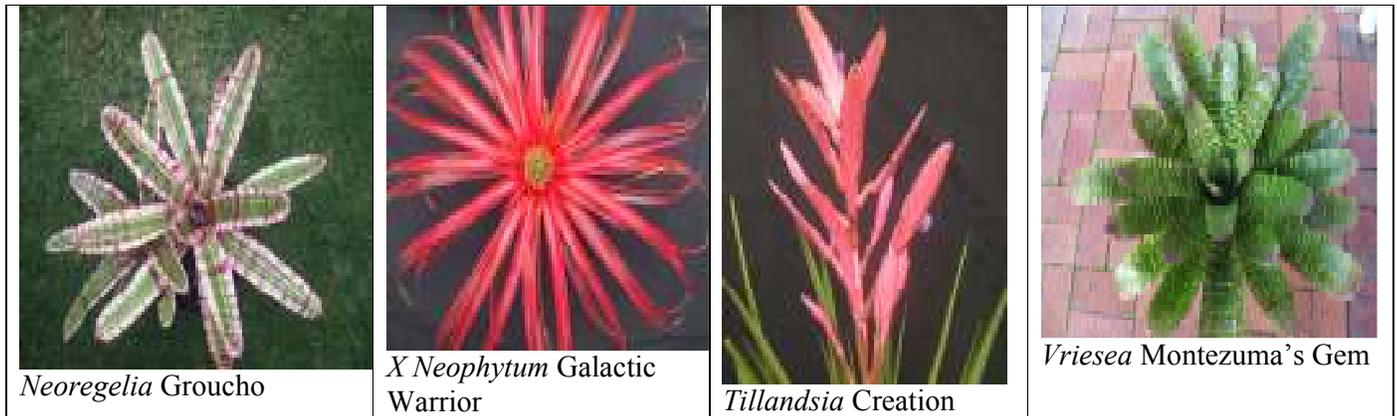
PS Any personal queries will be answered. I am as close as your computer

Article written by Adam for Spring 2014 edition S.A. Garden & Outdoor living

Most garden club members and plant fanciers enjoy plants because of the colours of the flowers. This is no different for the growers of bromeliads but with the addition that many bromeliads also have brightly coloured leaves and unusual markings such as hieroglyphics and striations. It has been said that bromeliads embrace all the colours of the rainbow.

Article written by Adam cont:

Bromeliad hybridists attempt to reflect the colours and features of their plants by naming them accordingly. Some, however, provide names that are to create interest and the sales of those plants. Examples of recently registered plant names are *Tillandsia Creation*, *Billbergia Hallelujah*, *Neoregelia Groucho*, *Guzmania Optima* *Vriesea Montezuma's Gem* and the spectacular bi-generic *X Neophytum Galactic Warrior*. (Photos A. Bodzioch)



Do these plants actually live up to their names? For example, are *Creation* or *Hallelujah* the work of a superior being? Is *Groucho* so named because it looks irritable? Is *Galactic Warrior* a futuristic plant?

Also, are there smaller miniature plants available that can be placed into the smaller gardens and patios of today? Where can you see these plants for yourself? Where can you buy some of these exquisite but durable plants? Why not come and have a look for yourself at The Bromeliad Society of South Australia Spring Show and Sales on Saturday the 25th October, between 9am and 3 pm, and Sunday the 26th day of October between 10am and 3 pm at the Maltese Cultural Centre, Beverley. Entry is free as usual.

There will be many local growers available to provide advice and discuss the ideal growing conditions for the potted bromeliads, which are very adaptable plants, as well as advice on how to mount *Tillandsias* (otherwise known as air plants) on to a variety of media including wood, stone, wire, almost anything.

There will also be books on bromeliads available as well as culture notes on how to best grow bromeliads for South Australian conditions.

Garden visit September.

A note from Auntie Margaret
September at Bev and Ron's Garden

A very well maintained garden. The front garden very colourful with a lovely red *Camellia* amongst other flowering plants. Under the arch of *Jasmine* in full flower, then on to the Bromeliads in the back garden, where we found an array of colourful, well grown, weed free, plants. *Aechmea 'Shining Light'* with a large flower-head. A group of '*Glyph*' *vrieseas* were in good colour and in spike. Then on to shadehouses filled with Bromeliads, both hanging and on benches mixed with other plants.

The Bromeliads were in colour so early in the Spring. Members were amazed at the variety and amount of the plants. It was a very pleasant afternoon.



Part of display area (photo J. Batty)

Roving Reporter September

I was certainly roving this time because we had a sort of Garden Party at the Masters' residence and what an experience! It had to be a joint effort because as someone said, "You couldn't do this on your own!"

Roving Reporter Sept cont:

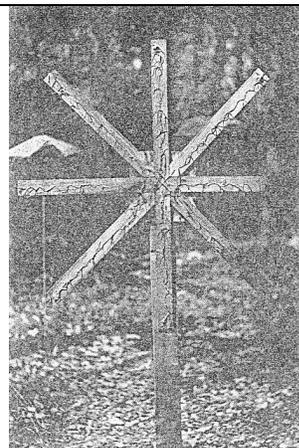
We even had good Spring weather as icing on the cake. Several new faces were there and were impressed and some perhaps even shocked and overwhelmed. Over the years, when trying attract new members to the Society I have always said there are unmentioned advantages in joining a club. You can acquire plants at sales days and on the internet and read books, but you never really learn about growing plants this way. At meetings you can chat and hear Latin names and things and sometimes this sinks in. Another way to learn is to travel. Starting 30 years ago we used to travel ‘up Queensland way’ for our winter break visiting other Bromeliad growers collections. We used to take up Cactus plants with us and many died because of the warmer conditions there. We used to bring back Bromeliads with us and many died because of the cold! But we slowly learnt that plants do need to acclimatize over years not days! We also saw how THEY grew their Bromeliads and slowly realised that their practices should not be copied. BUT we had the Bromeliad bug and wanted more.

When you can get a chance to visit local Bromeliad fanatics like Bev and Ron you are in for an experience. It is a challenge when on your own but if with others, like on a scheduled garden visit you can seek others’ opinions. The first thing you notice that there is no space to grow weeds. The second may well be “Do I really have to have so many plants?” But then most of us realise the opportunity to see how well they grow plants and their positioning around the garden. I do suggest you do not copy what you see but use this knowledge to adapt to your own garden AND you only use what space you have available!

One of the different things I saw was how to grow *Tillandsia usneoides* differently and successfully. Ron makes a circle with wire & covers it with aquarium tubing & adds the wire hangers similar to traditional wire baskets. Just let your Spanish Moss hang free so that it gets all the wind as well as being close enough to keep up some humidity.



Tillandsia usneoides (photo J. Batty)



Tillandsia usneoides as a cross

Tillandsia usneoides or Spanish Moss to the uninitiated by Derek Butcher 2004

All of us grow this plant with varying forms of success. Some of us even grow the 6 or is it 7, or 8 different forms that are around. It is hard to nail down some of these forms because they seem to change according to season and where you have them hanging around!

Experiments in the 1950’s showed that the plant grows faster when the strands are horizontal but they do not stay horizontal for long! In Adelaide we have found that our dry conditions are not conducive to continual fast growth with main growth being when and if Autumn rains come and Spring. The Spring growth is to prepare itself for flowering around Christmas time. Surely you have all smelt its fragrance. If you obtain just one strand, your chances of success are minimal. You need a clump which will retain some moisture for a longer period by staying close! But then again it needs to hang to dry out!

Just how do you hang it ? It will hang on anything and many things have been tried. Galvanised wire seems to be OK but plastic coated is preferred. Why? Plants need trace elements to survive and plants like *T. usneoides* are adapted to retain these when they get the chance and can kill themselves with overload. Copper sprays are used in Florida to keep *T. usneoides* in check!

Roving Reporter Sept cont:

About 30 years ago some bright spark thought up pine cones because as they open up there are small ‘pegs’ to hang your *T. usneoides* on! But then we found that *T. usneoides* was even slower using this method and we put it down to growth inhibitors used by Pine trees to hinder plant growth other than Pine nuts! Sneaky but true! So we started to tell everybody in South Australia, “Keep away from Pine Cones, cos you’ll do better using something else!” I notice that Brom groups in Northern NSW are advocating the use of Pine cones but this may be because *T. usneoides* grows too fast there because of their rainfall it needs to be slowed down!

Anyone who has grown *T. usneoides* for some time with some success will know that any part of the plant that is at the centre of the bundle will be dead. This indicates that the bundle is too fat but it needs to be fat to retain moisture, at least here. A dilemma! I have gone part way to success by making a short cylinder of plastic netting – the squares are about 2.5cm. I stuff the strands into the holes, hang the contraption up and eventually you get a regular sort of shape! Growth is mainly at the bottom and the weight pulls down the plant away from the plastic squares. So you pull off the bottom strands and place them on top! I think this is called recycling.

Be careful where you grow your *T. usneoides* because foreign birds like blackbirds will pinch it for nesting material. Do not go to extreme precautions like one of our members who kicked the birds out of their cage and replaced them with *T. usneoides*! You can, of course scour the neighbourhood for blackbird’s nests and pinch it back BUT you will find that your 6 different forms have been mixed up. (Blackbirds are not as discerning as I first thought) Native birds seem more cooperative because we have had a Honeyeater make a suspended nest in a clump.

Everybody knows that Spanish Moss is an air plant, does not need water and is best grown in the kitchen. When such people tell me this I say they should lightly spray their plant with water. If it stays grey it is D.E.A.D dead!

And here is another one

Tillandsia usneoides - Hoaxes and non-hoaxes by Butcher 2006

In 1998 I was given a test by Tom Lineham(past Editor of the BSI Journal) who sent me a photograph entitled *Tillandsia usneoides* but the photo had been taken somewhere in Alaska. If you did not know the locality you would assume it was correct like I nearly did. It is in fact a *Usnea*.

In 2002 I was sent a photo of *Racinaea insularis* by Sandra Pozo on the Galapagos Islands. But what were the hanging festoons in the photo? Was this a first sighting of *T. usneoides* on these islands. False alarm because they were lichen of some sort!

In 2006 on my asking on the internet on Brom-L about a blue flowered *T. usneoides* as mentioned in Smith & Downs, Eric Gouda of the Utrecht University, Belgium obliged by doctoring a photo so we had a blue petalled flower. He even sent a red flowered one for good measure. By this time even the most naïve were having doubts of these claims!

We must remember that the petals of this *Tillandsia* are not always green. In 2000 when Wolfgang Tittelbach – Editor of Die Bromelie – said there was a yellow flowering form, I took it with a pinch of salt! Anyway, I acquired a small piece and a couple of years later it flowered yellow which had me in raptures and bragging to Walter Till. Walter deflated me somewhat, by saying it was found somewhere in N Peru and was not that rare. I decided it should be recorded somewhere and this is how the cultivar name ‘Spanish Gold’ came into existence. The interesting thing is that it sets seed readily but the seed is not viable. Perhaps it needs another clone.

This seed setting had me wondering because although I was always seeing green flowers on my various bunches of *T. usneoides* hanging around the garden I had never seen any seed. This puzzled me because of my experience with the sub-genus *Diaphoranthema* of which *T. usneoides* is a member. I have rather an extensive collection of this group and find that if a plant looks like it is going to flower you always seem to find a seed pod later on. On some occasions the flower does not even need to open! Why is it so?

In 2006 Greg Dauss of California sent me a photo of roots on a *T. usneoides* seedling. I knew this was not a hoax because I knew that you could not get roots on a ‘cutting’, seedlings were still ‘smart’ enough to anchor themselves wherever they germinated by the use of roots. I just had to ask Greg how many times was he getting seed to set on his *T. usneoides*. In his experience he had only seen the thick leaved form perform.

Perhaps others may like to comment on their experience.

Any more hoaxes or non-hoaxes?

Roving Reporter Sept cont:

You can thank Julie Batty for this because I asked her to look around for something different to write about. She was confused in seeing similar looking red striped plants variously called ‘Rhubarb’ and ‘Nina Rehak’ and wanted to know the difference. She also found a plant that had *Neoregelia Burbank x carolinae*, *Sarmentosa x chlorosticta* on the label which must have taken ages to write out and she knows that such things have me frothing at the mouth. Formulas should only be used by hybridists as a record of what they think they have done. They SHOULD give proper names just as humans give to their own offspring for identity purposes. BUT ALAS! This label is a fascinating one and starts off some 40 years ago. There was this nursery in Queensland called Burbank who grew seed from Brazil called *Neoregelia carolinae*, one or some of the seedlings had red longitudinal stripes which was a rarity in those days. Olwen Ferris got her hands on one and grew seed. Some of the seedlings were striated and would have been distributed under the name *N carolinae* striated. In the 1980’s I was pushing for Bromeliad hybrids in Australia to be listed and *N. ‘Burbank’* came into being. Lots more hybridising was done but many offspring did not have striations! In the late 1980’s Norm Kretschmann in Qld in his many hybrid experiments sent seed to our very own Josie Tonkin. So ‘Rhubarb’ (Big Red x ‘Burbank’) became a reality in Adelaide. We have no idea what happened in Qld! Norm’s hybridising continued and he again sent seed to Josie who selected out ‘Fireworks’, again with red stripes but whose parentage was quoted ‘Burbank’ x (*carolinae x sarmentosa*). Does this look familiar? If I say that in 1934 Lyman Smith had *Neo sarmentosa* var *chlorosticta* whereas these days these are treated as separate species. In Australian gardens you still see labels for a *N. chlorosticta* plant with a label saying *sarmentosa v chlorosticta* OR *sarmentosa x chlorosticta*.

I would suggest that when Bev next writes a label for her plant named after its grandparents be simply called ‘Fireworks’ and save time! I am still on the hunt for a photo of ‘Rhubarb’- hint hint to Bev

And now to the final confusing plant by the name of ‘Nina Rehak’. In the Bromeliad Cultivar Register we read, “Name first seen at the Illawarra Brom. Conference for a plant of dubious origin called *carolinae striata* hybrid. Widely distributed by Nina which is probably why it acquired this name.” To my mind there must be links to circulation of ‘Burbank’ in the 1970’s with its early name of *carolinae striata*. As I say, every Bromeliad has a story be it fact or fiction.



Neoregelia ‘Fireworks’ (photo J. Batty)

We saw lots of the *Vrieseas* grown for their squiggly marked leaves and regrettably so many in spike. I say regrettably because they are not known for impressive flower spikes with the actual flowers appearing at night so the longer you can keep them in leaf the better. Something you may have noticed is the way the leaf markings and colour change as the plant gets older. So you don’t buy by the name of the label but what it looks like and if it appeals to you.

The hybrids you see these days are all intertwined based on probably only 5 or 6 species.

Why do some hybrids stand the test of time but so many fall by the wayside? We saw one of the oldies in flower namely *Aechmea* ‘Jackson’. This has been around for over 50 years and yet its origin is a mystery. In the 1950’s Ed Hummel in California was hybridising his heart out and such was his paranoia of others copying him he rarely divulged parentage. I have his catalogue for 1962 and it does not give much detail other than name and price. He must also have released hybrids for others to name because Seaborn Nursery (also in California) named one ‘Jackson’ in the 1960’s. In the 1970’s a similar plant was named ‘Bill Barrett’ by Aerial Gardens Nursery in Texas but its parents were claimed to be (*ramosa x chantinii*). Anyone who knows both parents would immediately refute the idea! Anyway, by the 1980’s plants with these two different names had got to Florida and someone decided they were the same. The Register is so marked. It is just another example of slack naming procedures that only come to light because someone takes the interest to record them.



Aechmea ‘Jackson’ (photo J. Batty)

Roving Reporter Sept cont:

Finally I must mention *Tillandsia belloensis* that Ron was growing successfully in a pot, hanging up high. While I prefer to see the grey leaved tillandsias grown mounted on wood the green leaved ones are better grown in pots in Adelaide's conditions. And I am writing this for the benefit of our intrepid photographer, Julie who wonders why we should grow the less impressive *Tillandsia polystachia*. To a keen Tillandsia grower you could have a large collection of species plants in the *T. polystachia* complex where you could clearly identify some and scratch your head over others. The following may help Julie decide what species she prefers



Tillandsia belloensis (photo J. Batty)

This all started with Linnaeus in 1762 with a plant found in the West Indies. Over the years more and more plants were found that could share this name. Let us now go to 1977 when Flora Neotropica No 14 part II was published. *T. polystachia* is widespread and was reputedly from Florida, West Indies, Mexico to Brazil and Bolivia. The Florida reference can now be deleted because it appears that Lyman Smith was referring to the now *T. x smalliana*. While the plant seems more common in the Northern Hemisphere Lyman Smith decided to use a drawing of Foster's 1140 which had been collected in Mato Grosso, Brazil but which clearly showed the elliptic, acute primary bracts which are much shorter than the spikes.

In 1983 in Feddes Repertorium, Wilhelm Weber described *T. belloensis* citing a collection made by Renate Ehlers in 1982. In 1992 Lloyd Kiff in Distributional Check-List of the Genus Tillandsia made *T. belloensis* synonymous with *T. polystachia* but prompt action by Renate Ehlers in Bromeliad Society Inc. Journal 1993 p74 reinstated *T. belloensis* to its correct status.

In January 2000 Andrew Flower from New Zealand wanted to know why plants called *T. polystachia* he had grown from seed by this name just did not fit! . This prompt by Andrew reminded me of Renate Ehlers' article in the BSI Journal in 1993 and I supplied him with my translation of Weber's description of *T. belloensis*. His plants fitted the description! I even found its photograph in Isley's Tillandsia book (1987) under the name of *T. polystachia* This really set alarm bells ringing and - shock - horror the error was still with us in Hiroyuki Takisawa's Tillandsia Handbook. On page 78 the white flowered form of *T. polystachia* seems correct but the plant said to represent a typical *T. polystachia* is typical *T. belloensis*. On page 3 where *T. belloensis* is featured, this seemed to have a much narrower spike than a typical *T. belloensis* but further investigation has revealed that the plant is within the description.

These discrepancies had me contacting Renate Ehlers and her penchant for detail now has me the proud owner of 22 photocopies of herbarium specimens from all manner of places from this *polystachia/parvispica/belloensis* complex.

Clearly the closest to *T. polystachia* as in Smith & Downs, is Ehlers EM82212 found near Nejapa in Oaxacana, Mexico.

I think I can now tell the difference between these three species but much overlapping of habitat and slight variations in form has convinced me that 22 herbarium specimens is but a start to truly solve this puzzle.

A key to the three species and one natural hybrid, under current interpretation based on my own Tillandsia key is as follows:-

Petal color – blue/violet, Stamens – longer than petals, Inflorescence – compound, Plant – not with grass-like leaves, Scape – protruding from the leaf rosette, Floral bracts – close together and rachis not visible, Spikes – sword-shaped more than 4 flowered,

Leaves forming an open funnel-shaped rosette

1.

Leaves at base forming an oval to cylindric bulb and then spreading wide

x smalliana

1. Primary bracts – elliptic and acute, shorter than spike, Inflorescence – dense, cylindric to spindle shaped to 30cm long, Floral bracts – glabrous, Leaves green.

polystachia

Roving Reporter Sept cont:

1a. Primary bracts – narrow triangular, shorter than the spike but longer than the sterile section, Inflorescence lax with upright spikes, floral bracts – sparsely scaled and exceeding the sepals. Leaves strong, whitish grey
parvispica

1b. Primary bracts – narrow triangular with long blade, Sheath – of those for the basal spike equals the spike and the blade much surpasses, Inflorescence – upright with spikes partly erect and visible especially in the top section, Floral bracts – glabrous, green with red edges. Leaves green.

belloensis

From your Secretary

What a lovely Spring day we had, it was great to see so many familiar faces here in our garden along with a couple of visitors whom I believe have become members.

Sincere thanks to the ‘helpers’ on the day- you know who you are!

As many of you already know I am a self confessed ‘plantaholic’ branching out primarily to Bromeliads thereby a ‘bromaholic’ and I make no excuses or apologies other than to say that I am sure this addiction is as challenging but a lot more rewarding and considerably less costly than other compulsions!.

Just a couple of hints arising from Derek’s roving,

The plants hanging up high in the shade houses are there during the cooler months to benefit from the winter sun, we have now lowered them about a foot to minimise the possibility of burning because of the harshness of our summer. This continues to be a learning curve as some are more prone (sensitive) than others & we learn from our failures –I hope!

It is indeed a combined venture- thankfully we both prefer to be outdoors resulting in sharing the workload, challenges & benefits. It is a work in progress, already there’s alterations to a Vriesea area which is I think part of experimenting with ‘out door’ rooms.

I am extremely fortunate that Ron is a handy person & very obliging altering benches, shade houses for more space etc but as importantly he is also bordering on becoming a ‘bromaholic’! Not that he will admit it!

Like gardening in general finding the best spot for a plant continues to be trial & error (often more error) as is the case with usneoides (Spanish Moss) some areas that have good air movement can become too windy & drying so we now place it in areas where the humidity can be increased & we more closely monitor, however we continue to deal with frustration, disappointments & losses.

Thankyou for your interest,

Bev

Reminders

Next meeting is our break up for the Festive season. Committee meeting commences ½ earlier @ 1230PM, General Meeting starts ½ hour earlier @ 1.30PM.

Please bring a plate of ‘finger food’ to share for our special afternoon tea.

When you bring in 2 Bromeliad ‘pups’ 1 goes on the swap table- drawn via raffle tickets & 1 goes on the table for auction.

2015 Meetings & sales

Our meetings are usually the 2nd Sunday of the month with a couple of exceptions however 2015 bookings are more dotted through the months so please check the front of Gazettes, facebook & 2015 magnets that will be available with the last gazette for 2014 late November early December.

Happy gardening