

## **Aechmea fasciata (Lindley) Baker**

by Derek Butcher June 2017



This plant has been in demand since it was first named in 1828 and was a great interest to botanists in the 1800s as shown by the number of synonyms below:

### ***Aechmea fasciata* var. *fasciata***

*Billbergia fasciata* Lindley, Bot. Reg. 13: pl. 1130. 1828.

*Hohenbergia fasciata* (Lindley) Schultes filius in Roemer & Schultes, Syst. 7(2): 1253. 1830.

*Billbergia rhodocyanea* Lemaire, Fl. Serres 3: pl. 207. 1847. Type. *Van Houtte Hortus ex Van der Maelen Hortus* (no known specimen, so the original plate).

*Hoplophytum fasciatum* (Lindley) Beer, Bromel. 129. 1856.

*Billbergia glaziovii* Regel, Gartenflora 34:260, pl. 1203. 1885. Type. *Glaziou* in Petrograd Hortus s n (holotype, LE n v).

*Aechmea leopoldii* hortus ex Baker, Handb. Bromel. 58. 1889; nomen.

*Aechmea hamata* Mez, Mart. Fl. Bras. 3(3): 347. 1892. Type. *Berlin Hortus s n* (holotype. B: photo F 11314).

*Aechmea rhodocyanea* Wawra ex Mez, DC. Monogr. Phan. 9:255. 1896; nomen

*Quesnelia rhodocyanea* Wawra ex Mez, DC. Monogr. Phan. 9:255.1896; nomen

### ***Aechmea fasciata* var. *purpurea* (Guillon) Mez, Pflanzenreich IV. 32:152. 1934.**

*Billbergia rhodocyanea* [var.] *purpurea* Guillon, Rev.

Hortic. 55:453. 1883.

What is interesting to me is that there are no herbarium specimens in REFLOA but 28 of var. *fasciata*.

As Adda Abendroth says, see below, this variety is probably more common than the Type but then how do you discern leaf colour in a herbarium specimen.



Not only were botanists interested in this species but the nurserymen in Europe started to cross and back cross seeking plants with larger inflorescences. I quote from a letter from Adda Abendroth in Brazil to Olwen Ferris in Australia on June 17th 1968 "Years ago Dr. Oeser sent me some *Ae. fasciata* seed from Germany. Several plants raised from it flowered and put their wild sisters to shame. Mature plants are about twice as big, clad in a real snow-dress in winter, and have a larger and richer spike and more simultaneous flowers. The flower bracts are slightly curled. It is our light-green variety plus a successful beauty treatment. Our light-green form is faithful as to shape and size and habits. It blooms in early Spring, or a little later, sparingly. The plants grow on tree trunks or branches in virgin forest. The colonies are not large, to 3-5 shoots. Another variety has dark green leaves, sometimes tinged with red. Size about the same as the light-green form but not so even, colonies somewhat larger. Habitat the same.

The third form appears growing on nearly naked branches of old trees, mostly single rosettes 20-30cm in diameter. The colour is rosy, shape nice and even. This form, when planted in shade (tied to a branch or a trunk ) has darker and longer leaves. The rosy pink seems to develop only high up in the trees, exposed to sun and wind.

The fourth is the variety *purpurea* which has wine-red leaves. Habit like the dark-green form. In deep shade the leaves get very long and fall over. The red is almost black making a striking contrast with the white bands. This is more common than the total of the other three."

It was not until 1981 that we see Adda involved in a new variety:

***Aechmea fasciata*** var. ***pruinosa*** Reitz, *Sellowia* 33: 55. 1981

Leaves, scape bracts, and flowers white farinose; densely covered in scales forming a white skin.

Type: Brasil, Santa Catarina: Ipanema plant cultivated in the State of Rio de Janeiro, collected *Adda Abendroth s.n.* 14 Feb. 1981. Holotype HBR.

In 'Bromeliaceas' by Reitz 393-397, 1983 we read:

"Variety, so far, is only known by the type, from the interior of the forests of the State of Rio de Janeiro and possibly very rare; collected in State of cultivation, in Itapema, Santa Catarina by R. Reitz." This indicates it is rare in the wild but actively cultivated in Brazil and it seems strange that a plant with this name has not been quoted outside Brazil. According to REFLOA no further herbarium specimens have been lodged. However, it does seem to link to the cultivar 'Silver King' which is shrouded in mystery but emerged in this period.



Variations have been reported in Seidel's Catalogue in 1976 but nothing has been described botanically other than the following:

***Aechmea fasciata*** var. ***flavi-vittata*** Reitz, *Sellowia* 33:55. 1981.



Leaves with longitudinal lines alternately green and yellow.

Type: Brasil, Santa Catarina: Brusque, cultivated in the State of Rio de Janeiro, leg *J. Pehnke s. n.* (15.2. 1981), Holotype HBR.

Again we read in 'Bromeliaceas' by Reitz 393-397, 1983:

"The variety, so far, is only known by the type, from the interior of the forests of the State of Rio de Janeiro; collected in State of cultivation, in Brusque, Santa Catarina, by R. Reitz." This indicates it is rare in the wild but actively cultivated in Brazil and it seems strange that a plant with this name has been rarely quoted outside Brazil. According to

REFLORA no further herbarium specimens have been lodged. In any event, variegated plants do not reproduce from seed and should be treated as cultivars. As such I will be adding *Aechmea* 'Flavi-vittata' to the BCR. Most variegations in cultivation have white stripes not yellow and we find reference to this in Seidel's Catalogue in 1976. Interestingly, they are not mentioned in DeLeon's article on variegates in *Journal Brom Soc* 35(1): 34-37, 1985. In fact nobody seems to have given them a proper cultivar name.



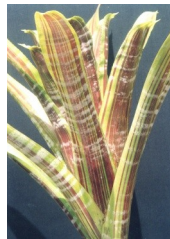
For want of a term I will use *Aechmea* 'Albo-vittata'. Variegation is most likely to occur in cultivation via 'sporting' or mutation in seed raising so it's highly possible that this happened to one of the many infra-specific cultivars rather than a 'wild' species.

The list and photos below are infra-specific *Aechmea fasciata* cultivars:

- |                        |            |               |                |
|------------------------|------------|---------------|----------------|
| 'Aton'                 | 'DeLeon'   | 'Mackerel'    | 'Smoothie'     |
| 'Auslese'              | 'Frost'    | 'Morgana'     | 'Snaakse Ding' |
| 'Big Mama Fasciata'    | 'Ghost'    | 'Primera'     | 'Stalker'      |
| 'Canvey Pink Surprise' | 'Ivory'    | 'Sangria'     | 'Supernova'    |
| 'Checkers'             | 'Leucadia' | 'Silver King' | 'White Head'   |



'Clara'



'Kiwi'



'Sangria Blanco'

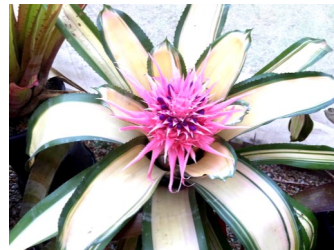


'Silver Queen'



◀ 'Supreme'

'Supernova' ▶



Photos supplied by:  
Derek Butcher and the BCR