



East London Bromeliad Society

South Africa

NEWS
LETTER

July
2021

Established: 25 July 2009

Our aim is to promote and encourage awareness and interest in Bromeliads in East London and all of South Africa!

ELBSSA is an Affiliated Society



of Bromeliad Society International

From the Chairman - Dudley Reynolds



This past year understandably has seen very little society activity, comprising of only two meetings and one event, the Bromeliad Magic Show, held in April.

We have reached another milestone in our short history. ELBSSA's twelve years of existence!! Wow! Time has flown by. Plenty has been learnt along the way and many friends have been made. I am sure most of your collections of bromeliads have grown substantially over the years.

In the garden this month everything is pretty dormant with the chilly, dry weather we have been experiencing. I am sure I am not the only one resorting to household grey water to keep the garden hydrated and prevent quilling of the bromeliad leaves. I hope that the Spring rains will come early this year. Stay safe, stay warm and stay enthusiastic. Happy bromming.

B: With not being able to meet up as a group this month to have a fun celebration of what is the society's 12th Birthday due to Lockdown, Level 4, I thought we could look at a species of an interesting little bromeliad family that I love and is currently blooming in our garden.

A bit about *Canistropsis*

There are eight species in this bromeliad genus (with some colour variations of each). They originally formed part of the *Nidularium* family. There are twenty cultivars listed on the BCR as well. Many are highly ornamental and are popular with gardeners and collectors. The genus name is from the genus *Canistrum* and the Greek "opsis" (resembling). All eight species of this genus are endemic to the Atlantic Forest biome, located in South Eastern Brazil.

Most *Canistropsis* require a shady position in a temperate or subtropical garden, so they do well here in East London. They like water and free draining soil mix. Their beautiful inflorescences provide long lasting colour.

I find them to be quite hardy, as they have survived in our garden with very little attention at times. They can form excellent ground covers, scrambling over rocks or up banks or

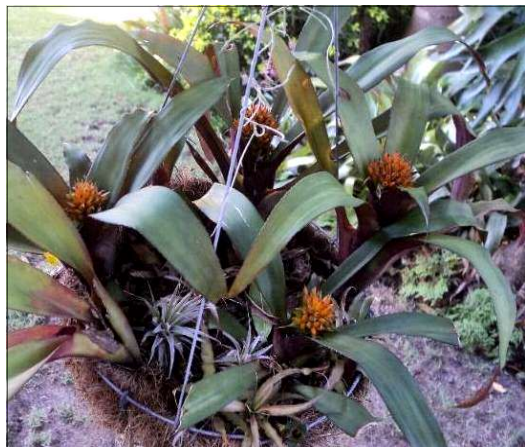


© Dorothy Berg

Canistropsis seidelii

fcbs.org

While South Africa remains on extended Covid Level 4 Lockdown due to rising levels of infections, sadly there will be no meetings held till further notice.



Canistropsis burchellii

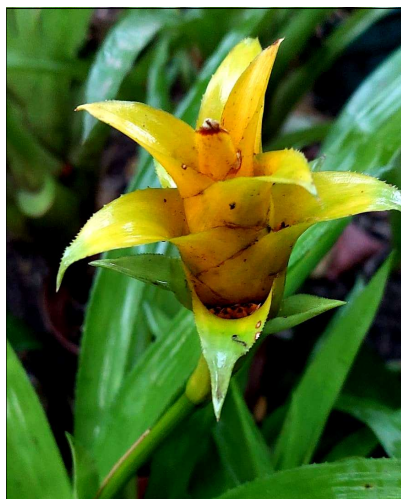
BK Black

tree trunks etc... with their long stolons. I grow some in hanging baskets.

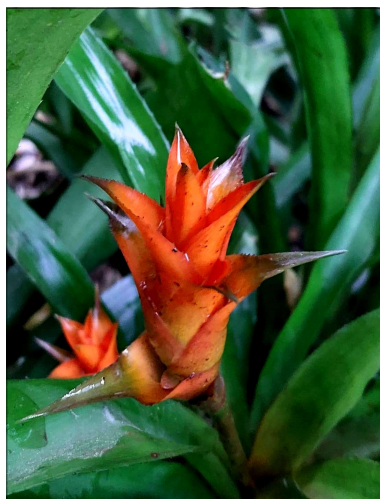
Some varieties include, *Canistropsis seidelii*, which has a beautiful flower spike, with layers of bracts clustered up the stem. There is a yellow and also a red form.

I have *Canistropsis burchellii* which I got from Lyn a long time ago, they have a darkish green upper leaf and maroon underneath, (bi-colour leaves, a good indicator of requiring shade). They have an orange pincushion like inflorescence with lovely tiny white flowers on a short scape. (stem). The fruits turn orange once mature. I love this compact small plant. Can be grown as a groundcover in very shady spots. I grow mine in a hanging basket. The pups develop on long stolons

Canistropsis billbergioides which if grown well have beautiful shiny



Canistropsis billbergioides yellow form
BK Black



Canistropsis billbergioides - orange form
BK Black



Canistropsis billbergioides - pink form

fcbs.org

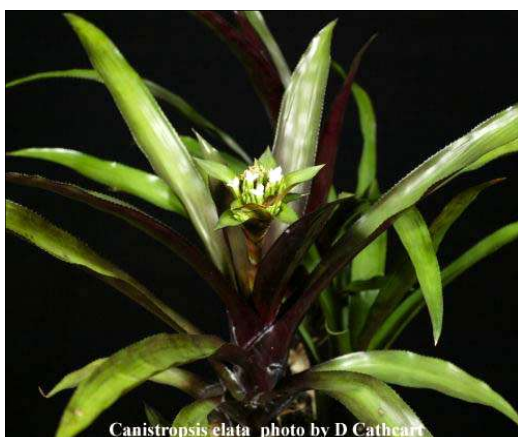
green leaves and form a rosette of about 5cm wide. I grow mine in a fair amount of dappled shade, some as ground cover and some in hanging baskets. They have bright star shaped, almost waxy inflorescences with white flowers that appear from deep down between the petals. They don't last long, but the actual inflorescence's retain their colour for a long time. There are quite a few different forms as far as colour is concerned. I have, yellow and orange in bloom now and Lyn had a pink one on the show and there is also a red form.

This is an attractive low growing bromeliad for a collector to have in their collection. They also don't bite!

There are other species as well, *C. correia-araujoii*, *C. microps*, *C. elata* and *C. marcelloi*.

If you would like to look at some *Canistropsis* cultivars go to bsi.org cultivar register or to fcbs.org

Text: BK Black
Photos: BK Black and fcbs.org



Canistropsis elata

fcbs.org



Canistropsis billbergioides - red form

fcbs.org



Canistropsis marcelloi

fcbs.org

Species of the Month - Lyn Wegner



Aechmea mexicana. I have an area in my garden, jam packed with mother plants, plants needing TLC and green plants that I move into the garden when they bloom.

I was excited to discover one of the large greenish varieties developing a flower spike and decided that must be the unnamed plant I received some years ago from Mike Whitten in Durban. He thought it could be an *xNeomea*. Of course, it had to be moved to a more visible position in the garden.

I was surprised when the spike developed further and realised this couldn't be the *xNeomea*. But what was it?

My mind was obviously working overtime as the penny dropped! This must be my missing *Aechmea mexicana*! I have the variegated and albomarginated forms and I knew I had the original species too, somewhere! Hopefully I hadn't given it away! Of course I Googled the plant and voilà! It was indeed *Aechmea mexicana*. I am looking forward to the attractive long lasting berries, white changing to blue, I think. Watch this space!



A beauty, *Aechmea mexicana* and inflorescence detail.

This species is found in Central and Southern Mexico, Central America, Colombia and Ecuador where it is found growing as an epiphyte as well as in open spaces, even in full sun. My plant doesn't receive much sun which would give the foliage a nicer colour. It was discovered by Baker in 1879 and classified about 140 years ago. It needs space! A large grower.

Text and photos: L. Wegner

Member News

- It seems everyone is truly on lockdown and hibernating!

Committee Stuff

- With regard to the new POPIA act now in force from the 1st July, protecting everyone's personal information, we will take it for granted that you do not object to your name, contact details etc.. being circulated amongst the members of the bromeliad society. If you do object please contact Lyn who deals with all secretarial matters. Your information is distributed to no one else, bromeliad fanatics only!!!!!!!!!!!!!! It also means we ask members not to distribute this information outside of the society either.
- Also please advise Barbs if you don't want your photo or name to appear on our facebook page. As some folks may object to that as well. What a world we live in.

Upcoming Society Events

You will be advised via e mail with regard to when the next meeting will be held. Although disappointing for many of us, it is not worth jeopardizing the safety of our members.

Seeing as we missed out on holding our 11th birthday meeting last year, we are planning to postpone our '12th Birthday Bash' which should have been held this month, for the NEXT MEETING that we are able to hold this year. Lyn will keep us updated.

To be advised: ELBSSA AGM and 12th Birthday Celebrations, Annual Quiz, Tilly Toss, extra Raffles and Fizz Ananas hosted by Lyn and Trevor Wegner at 'Bromeliads for Africa', Wentworth Road, Sunnyridge.



29th August: tba
26th September: tba
31st October: Carol Gregory in their farm garden.
28th November: **Christmas Bring and Braai**, Auction, BBB and loads of fun!!!!!!!!!!!!!! To be hosted by Dr Pete Pfister and Marianne Hillstead in Beacon Bay.

Upcoming International Conferences

2021: The 70th Anniversary WBC2020 Due to the global Covid 19 Pandemic this conference has been rescheduled. It will now take place on the 8 - 12 June 2022 in Sarasota, Florida, USA.

The following conference has now been postponed again, to **March 22nd to 26th, 2023** due to the Covid 19 Pandemic. This biennial **Australasian Bromeliad Conference 'Kiwi Broms'** will again be hosted by The New Zealand Bromeliad Society and held at the same venue, Waipuna Hotel. Five of our members have already registered for this conference.

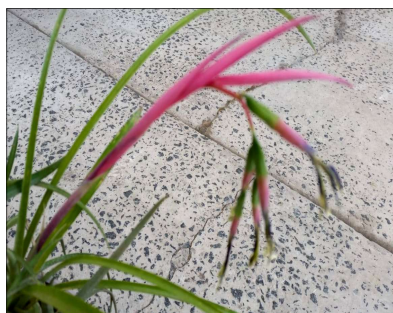
From Our Members

Local member, **Lyn Odendaal:** My *Bilbergia nutans* has many pendant flowers which have pink, blue edged petals and are backed up with long pink bracts. They get three to four hours direct sunlight per day which is essential for good leaf colour and they are regular bloomers in winter, after which the plants pup well and you will soon have a lovely specimen clump.

Billbergia nutans is commonly known as the 'Friendship Plant' as it can easily be divided and grown on, so a good plant to give to a friend.

B: It is also known as 'Queens Tears' and can withstand some neglect but a joy to have in any garden. Endemic to Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. It is capable of being grown on the side of another plant as a non-parasitic life form, or in a pot of soil on its own. Either way, its roots always remain shallow and it takes the majority of its moisture from the leaves and flowers.

Photos and text L. Odendaal

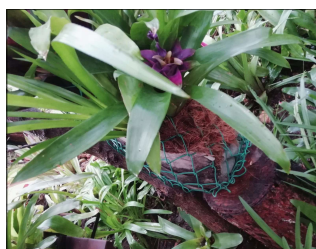


Lyn Odendaal's lovely, full flowering specimen clump of *Billbergia nutans*.

Chris van Zyl, Somerset West: Chris has been doing some mounting in his "Living Wall's" garden again and he always comes up with some new innovative ways to show off his bromeliads, driven by lack of space. If you can't spread out, you go upwards!!!

Considering Chris and Zelna live in a part of South Africa that gets winter rainfall and low temperatures, he is lucky that their home is in a sheltered spot in Somerset West. Clearly the bromeliads and Tillandsia are not complaining.

"I use old fencing wire (big holes for pups to grow out easily), old carpet underfelt or bidim, or weed cover sheeting and compost and coconut shields, which I cover together with coconut coir to make it look good and then I hang in the trees.





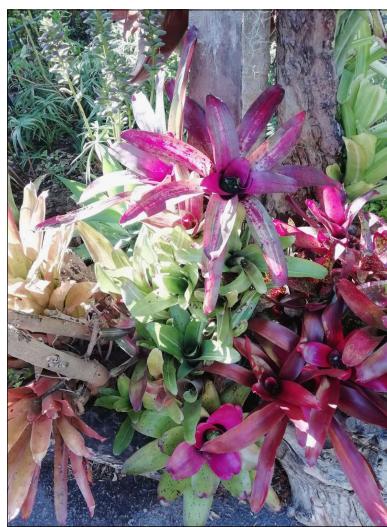
Make your own hanging baskets from old tyres covered with hessian and supported with chicken wire fencing.



And what is easier than to construct a postbox shape from old wire to show how nice *Tillandsia bergeri* with *T. usneoides* (Spanish Moss) can look ~ these created a LOT of shade in my garden not so long ago when it was so extremely dry.



Re-purposing old tyres which I have cut to display my *Tillandsia capitata* and *Tillandsia usneoides* high up in the trees



Elevating your bromeliads just gives a special dimension to your garden ~ and it is so easy to do. We have been in the fortunate position, compared to the Eastern Cape, to have received over 220mm since June 2021."

Ed: I know our climates are different, but I am green with envy.

Text and Photos C. van Zyl



Aechmea distichantha var. *glaziovii*

Left: International member, **Beth and Mark Brewer from Zimbabwe** were looking for an id of the plant *Aechmea distichantha* var. *glaziovii*, which Lyn helped them with.

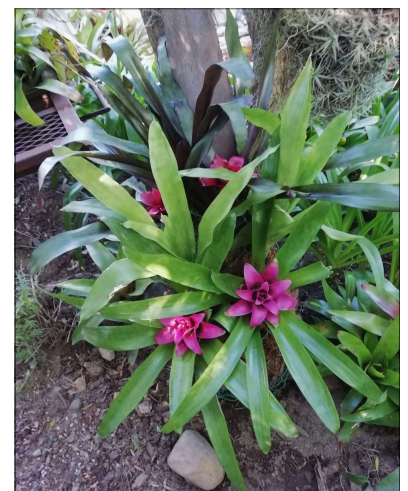
They are also looking for bromeliad seed due to the difficulties of getting plants into Zimbabwe.

If you have seed to share, Beth would really appreciated it if you could contact her:

info@specialistsafaris.com



Close-up of bottom part of coconut tower pocket.



A clump of *Nidularium rutilans* doing well in Somerset West.

From the Editor



This winter seems to be an endless ritual of never ending, but much enjoyed tasks in the garden, of cleaning up bromeliads, removing dead leaves, old mothers, topping up potting mix and generally tidying up, only for the wind to arrive and then we have huge sticks blown down from all the trees around us, which are great kindling for the next fire! Lots of Aechmea are showing up with their colourful flower spikes, which is always a cheering sight in this dry landscape we call our garden.

I am very sad we will be missing our 12th birthday celebration this Sunday, but, make no mistake, Lyn came up with the brilliant idea of just postponing it, so we will be celebrating at some stage THIS year! Look forward to that event! In fact get the Champagn out this Sunday anyway! Haha!!! If you have any stored away, seeing as the shops are forbidden to sell alcohol during lockdown!

Thank you to those of you who shared your photos and news with us this month, it is always appreciated by all. I encourage others to do the same with what is happening on your patch!

A massive cold front is about to smother the country this weekend, so keep warm, take care of yourselves, your plants and each other till we meet again.

Barbs.



Aechmea 'Hayward' and A. 'White Knight' showing off right now.

This is a publication for the **East London Bromeliad Society, South Africa** for the interest of its members. Articles may be used by non profit societies with acknowledgement to the author where applicable and East London Bromeliad Society South Africa. Please use the photos that accompany the article used. If you require higher resolution photos please request them from the Editor. Any opinions expressed in articles are not necessarily those of the Society.

When submitting items for inclusion in this newsletter, please ensure that all facts and information, including spelling, is checked and accurate.

ELBSSA is an affiliate of the Bromeliad Society International.

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We meet on the last Sunday of every month at 2.00 for 2.30pm, January to November, at various venues around East London. We have a topic for each meeting and Show and Tell where members are encouraged to bring along their brag or problem plants. There are member raffles, lucky draws for those present, tea time, library and member plant sales, plus a monthly newsletter sent out via e-mail only. Visitors are always welcome and can attend three meetings before they will need to join the society in order to continue attending. Annual subs are R120.00 for individuals/families and R60 for students.



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You will find ELBSSA on Facebook: type 'East London Bromeliad Society' into the fb search bar. You can request to join the group and will then be able to upload your photos and comments on the wall. The ELBS SA page and other bromeliad related sites are a useful and informative forum to share and 'meet up' with other like-minded bromeliad folks.

You can view most of all the bromeliads mentioned in meetings or in the newsletter at the following websites:

The BSI's official Bromeliad Cultivar Registry www.registry.bsi.org which is maintained by Geoff Lawn, the BSI Cultivar Registrar. Plus other information regarding the Bromeliad Society International and bromeliads is found at bsi.org

Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies: fcbbs.org This is another very useful site where you can also reference many bromeliads, clarify identification or just trawl through the site and add to your wish list!

Encyclopedia of Bromeliads <http://bromeliad.nl/encyclopedia/> (Bromeliad Taxonomists and Growers Society) has photographs. It also now has keys for the genera and sub-genera. If you like to be informed what is happening, just follow on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bromeliadsencyclopedia> Just type in 'Encyclopedia of Bromeliads' into the Facebook search bar.

For internet resources you can also go to TAXON (The New Bromeliad List) for the most authoritative and right up to date list of genera and species, accepted and new names and taxonomic keys - <http://botu07.bio.uu.nl/bcg/taxonList.php> or just type in 'New Bromeliad Taxon List', it's much easier!