

Far North Coast Bromeliad Study Group N.S.W.

Edition: October 2024

Agenda: General Discussion

Venue: PineGrove Bromeliad Nursery
114 Pine Street Wardell 2477
Phone (02) 6683 4188

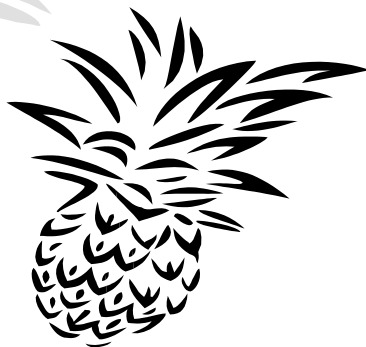
Study Group meets the third Thursday of each month
Next meeting November 21st 2024 at 11 a.m.

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Meeting September 19th 2024

The meeting was opened at approximately 11.00 am
The 12 members were welcomed.
Two apologies were received.

General Business

It took a while for everything to fall into place for our second garden visit. However the general consensus was that it was worth the wait from those who attended our September meeting at the home of Michelle Hartwell in Casino.

Shirley is finally home from hospital and attended her first meeting in many months, we were all pleased to see her arrive and wished her well.

Recent discussions have been about our monthly Popular Vote sections and adding another section to cater for 'mini Neos' and to have a trial run. Quite a few 'mini Neoregelia' were brought along to our September meeting mostly for discussion and a few nice examples were on the Popular Vote tables.

Shane brought along a couple of pots of *Neoregelia paucifolia* to show some of the natural variations of this species regards differences in size and colour. This opened the discussion about what our Group is going to accept on the Popular Vote table for 'Mini Neoregelia'. We've agreed that due to cultural variation it is difficult to set a fixed, one size fits all, therefore we are setting the size to 200mm diameter, leaf tip to leaf tip. Regarding cultural variation we will allow a tolerance of 50mm taking the overall measurement up to 250mm with added discussion on improving cultural growing conditions. The aim will be to help growers to aim toward attaining the optimum growing conditions for their plants.

Home visits can vastly improve ones knowledge of how other members grow their plants to achieve their very best results. There are a few things one should look at when visiting other growers, not just their pretty plants !

Look up, what are the plants growing under:

Trees - how dense is the canopy affording any shade.

Shade cloth - what colour and what percentage (%) is it.

Consider surrounding structures - buildings or fences, these could affect air flow. Surrounding structures could also affect how much daylight hours the plants are receiving which can affect the cultural size, shape and conformity of your plant.

Surrounding structures can also affect the incident light plants are receiving, incident or reflective light from a dark coloured wall will be a lot less than that coming from a light coloured e.g. white wall.

Feedback Corner

Feedback from readers is always greatly appreciated especially when it helps to expand our knowledge and understanding of growing conditions.

In our last FNCBSG NSW Newsletter, September 2024, page 3, we reprinted an article by Bernard Stoner: Bromeliads and Their Fauna to which we've had some interesting feedback from Eric Gouda. Thank you Eric.

Quote from the article: "And how about ants? Are they useful, harmful, or just neutral? There are species of bromeliads, notably *Aechmea mertensii* which are said to need an association with ant nests for successful growth."

Eric: "This statement is not true. Although *A. mertensii* is often found on ant nests, this is probably due to the ants moving seeds there. The species is often flowering very small on these nests, comparing to the plants not on ant nests that can grow 4 times larger.

Conclusion, the plants on the ant nests are suffering or stressed in many cases and the plants grow much better without."

Eric has made these observations in the wild as well as herbarium specimen study. All small specimens were collected from ant nests, some even about 15cm tall including inflorescence. Most other specimens were growing as epiphyte. He collected an *Aechmea* specimen from a tree once as he did not recognise it, it turned out to be a huge *Aechmea mertensii*.

In support of Eric's observation I sold a very red *Aechmea blanchetiana* to a gentleman from Darwin who reported his excitement (brag) of acquiring this red blanchetiana to our friend Lynnie H in Cairns. It didn't take long for the phone to ring "how red is this blanchy of yours", my response "as red as a red plastic bucket", hence it got tagged as 'Red Bucket'. This very red blanchetiana was one of two groups growing in our scrubby area so they were partly shaded, not in full all day sun. However they were growing on ant nests. Offsets were taken from 'Red Bucket' and relocated nearby but not on ant nests because they were large ants with 5 to 6mm mandibles. When those guys bite, you know it for another three to four days. Anyway, the relocated offsets have never gone as red as that original plant 'Red Bucket'. This to me supports Eric's observations that there must be minimal nutrients on the ant nests for some plants to grow to their full potential and the extra red of 'Red Bucket' may have been due to stress as we had always suspected. Chicken here wasn't about to plant one on an ants nest !

Bernard Stoner's thoughts of experimenting with ants may be worth trying. Plant some seed on/in an ant nest or even plant some seedlings on some nests. Grow the same seed and seedlings as per normal and compare the results.

Open Popular Vote

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------|---|
| 1st | Shane Fitzgerald | <i>Neoregelia</i> 'Half Pint' |
| 2nd | Michelle Hartwell | <i>Vriesea</i> 'Mountain Trifle' unreg. |
| 3rd | Kayelene Guthrie | <i>Neoregelia</i> 'DeRolf' |

Tillandsioideae

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1st | Shane Fitzgerald | <i>Vriesea</i> 'Strawberry Ice Cream' |
| 2nd | Michelle Hartwell | <i>Tillandsia filifolia</i> |
| 3rd | Mitch Jones | <i>Tillandsia streptophylla</i> |

Decorative

- | | | |
|-----|---------------|---------------------------------|
| 1st | Coral McAteer | 'Remembering Our Friend Warren' |
|-----|---------------|---------------------------------|

Judges Choice

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------|---|
| 1st | Michelle Hartwell | <i>Vriesea</i> 'Mountain Trifle' unreg. |
|-----|-------------------|---|

Web Links for Checking Correct Identification and Spelling ?

Bromeliad Cultivar Register (BCR): <http://registry.bsi.org/>
Refer to this site for correct identification and spelling of your hybrid or cultivar.

Bromeliad Species Database (BSD): www.bsi.org/members/?bsd
Refer to this site for species identification, photos, descriptions and more.

New Bromeliad Taxon List : <https://bromeliad.nl/taxonlist/>
Refer to this site for latest species name changes and correct spelling.

Bromeliads in Australia (BinA) <http://bromeliad.org.au/>
Refer to this site for its Photo Index, Club Newsletters many with
Table of Contents Index and there's Detective Derek Articles.

Keep these web sites set as desktop icons for quick reference access.

Where do I Find the Dates ?

www.bromeliad.org.au then click "Diary".

Check this site for regular updates of times, dates and addresses of meetings
and shows in your area and around the country.

After a few hiccups - date changes, eventually settling on September for our Group meeting to be held at Michelle's home and wonderful garden in Casino. This was another successful home visit and I'm sure we all agree we should do more of them in the future.



Quesnelia 'Tim Plowman'
and
Billbergia 'Hallelujah'
look great in large clumps.



Welcome back Shirley ❤️ ❤️ ❤️ ❤️

Michelle among her pride and joys, the patterned leaf Vrieseas, the colours were outstanding.

It's quite clear she has a passion for foliage Vrieseas.



The second extension to her growing area was also covered with 70% white shade cloth and she has had an underlay (second undercover sheet) of 30% white shade cloth for extra cover in summer made with eyelets for hooks to make it easy to put up and take down.

Michelle has amassed some amazing variation in leaf colours from the very deep dark purplish leaves to hot pinks and everything in between, variegated, albomarginated, streaked but I don't think anybody could argue that that *Vriesea hieroglyphica* is still tops.



Michelle's collection does go beyond her obsession with foliage Vrieseas to Neoregelia as we can see pictured here.



We also saw some Aechmea, Billbergia, Quesnelia, Sincoregelia and Tillandsia in Michelle's well maintained collection.



Dyckia hybrid by Mitch Jones



Tillandsia sprengeliana - Keryn Simpson



Tillandsia caulescens - Helen Clewett / *Tillandsia ionantha* var. *vanhyningii* - Gary McAteer

Tillandsia filifolia - Michelle Hartwell

Tillandsia sucrei - Coral McAteer



Neoregelia 'Half Pint'
1st Open Shane Fitzgerald



Vriesea 'Strawberry Ice Cream'
1st Tillandsioideae Shane Fitzgerald



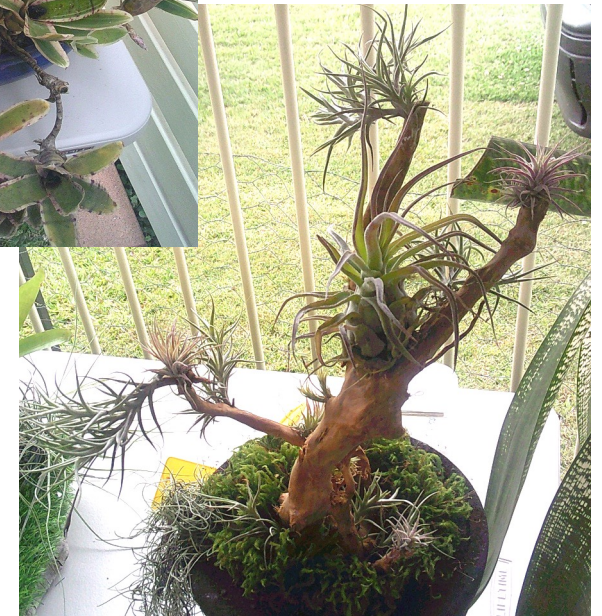
Vriesea 'Mountain Trifle'
Judges Choice Michelle Hartwell



'Remembering Our Friend Warren'
1st Decorative Coral McAteer
For those who never knew Warren,
photo above Coral's entry, he gave
inspiration to many of our members for
their decorative entries. RIP 23-10-2016.
Photo Vale: FNCBSG NSW Newsletter Nov. 2016



'It's Decorative'
by Michelle Hartwell



'Bonzai'
by Mitch Jones



Tillandsia streptophylla
grown by Mitch Jones

Show, Tell and Ask!

Keryn brought along a few plants and also showed a couple of photos of plants she wanted identification clarification for.

First one is an *Aechmea nudicaulis* possibly *Aechmea* 'Parati' ???

Go to the:
Bromeliad Cultivar Register (BCR)

Advanced Search:

Genus: *Aechmea*

Notes: nudicaulis group

Search through the 43 results until you find a match to your plant.



Tillandsia recurvifolia
var. *subsecundifolia*



Keryn showed a photo of a striated plant similar to one growing in her garden in need of identification clarification, it is:

Nidularium 'Striatum'

previously

Nidularium innocentii var. *striatum*.

Photo used here is an example for identification purpose only,
taken from the Butcher Files.

Aechmea capixabae was first collected in 1939 by Mulford and Racine Foster near the city of Santa Teresa in Espirito Santo, Brazil.



Ae. capixabae prefers a moist and shaded position and should be kept protected from frosts.



Another photo Keryn showed was identified as: *Aechmea spectabilis* which is a large plant that grows as an epiphyte in forests at 500 to 1600 mtrs altitude in Colombia and Venezuela.

However it grows quite well terrestrially in our gardens and is certainly worth the wait for its inflorescence.

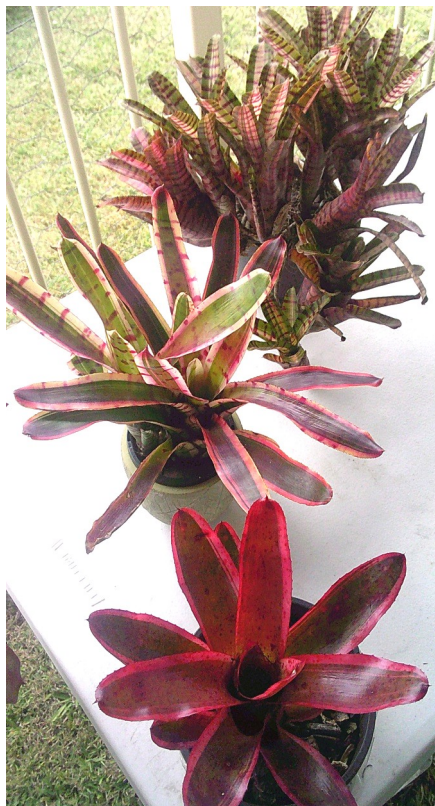


Four photos of some mini Neoregelia brought along for discussion, fitting within the 200mm agreed size range.



Neoregelia 'DeRolf'
grown by Kayelene Guthrie

Neoregelia 'Bobby Dazzler'
grown by Helen Clewett



Bromeliads - Houseplants for Today and Tomorrow Part 1

by Walter Richter (Translated by Adda Abendroth, Teresopolis, Brazil)

From: BSI 1967 V17 (4)

Bromeliaceae

That Bromeliads are truly the house plants of today and of tomorrow as well is the thesis which I intend to justify in the course of this book. That this is not my idea alone can be evidenced by the growing number of bromeliad enthusiasts throughout the world. Even in areas where bromeliads were considered mere "parasitos" in the past, they are now coming into their own. A friend of mine living in Brazil writes that in the large South American cities well-groomed bromeliads of outstanding species are in demand and fetch reasonably good prices.

The desire for rare plants is a natural outcome of the demand of modern times. Our rising standard of living makes us wish for plants around us everywhere: in the home, in the office, in the club, in places of entertainment, in all of our daily life. Ornamental foliage and flowering plants put a piece of nature into our city life, and acquiring a bromeliad is truly owning a fragment of tropical nature.

Such plants, of course, should be of a kind suitable for house cultivation. They should be able to withstand dry air, for dry air is common since homes are now equipped with central heating system or some other kind of indirect heating that automatically makes for dry air. Too, house ornamentals should not require time consuming care; the housewife has no spare time nowadays. Bromels answer these requirements.

As distance shrinks under the impact of air transportation, humans give in to their yearning for plants coming from lands no longer too far away, but, nevertheless, are still the exotic lands of their dreams. It is the call of distance that begs and charms. To share one's home with tropical animals is difficult; in comparison the cultivation of tropical plants is easy.

The simplest forms of bromels, the Billbergias, are among the hardiest of house plants. They are green all the time and look nice even when not in bloom. It is typical of bromeliads not to wither away in winter as many other plants do or remain unsightly for long periods. For instance, if you get a bromel that is not in spike, or if you have an offshoot sprouting after the mother plant has bloomed, yours is still a good looking plant, provided you can give it an appropriate and minimum care. Even *Billbergia nutans*, the most common of all, has charm in its upright posture of narrow, hard leaves. The crown comes with the spike of pink bracts surrounding the dainty flowers. Billbergias require but little care. A number of them are highly decorative even when not in flower and far surpass

commoner foliage plants in hardiness. As long as water is present in the leaf axils, watering is not important; the earth in the pot may get dry occasionally without any harm to the plant. However, such neglect should not be constant and permanent. There are some Billbergias that have colorful leaves. They need a little more attention, but are very beautiful and suitable for keeping in a room. Theirs is the future; they are still rare these days but greatly worthwhile.

The many advantages of the Billbergias fully make up for the short life of the flower spike. The colors are surprising. Counting the span from the first appearance of bud to ultimate fading of the inflorescence, the plants offer several weeks of pleasure which compares favorably with other plants.

Perhaps the best of bromeliads is *Aechmea fasciata*, nowadays offered for sale nearly everywhere. It is fascinating to watch the development of the spike of this plant from its very beginning. Usually plants are bought when the spike is in progress, which is missing part of the show. It is better to select a specimen in which the spike barely issues from the leaves. The growth is slow, but it is a source of daily pleasure. Enthusiasm grows as the head rises, spreading its powder-pink spiny bracts disclosing the pale blue flowers that turn red the following day. The entire torch, pink, blue, and red, is most exotic. As individual corollas become unsightly, pull them out or cut them off with a pair of scissors. The torch remains in color for months. Neoregelia species announce their readiness to flower by producing bright color on their inner leaves. Like the rising sun it starts with a pale red hue getting stronger all the time. When the flowers are ready to open, the heart-leaves take on an intense red glow. It is the plant's way to attract insects and birds to carry out pollination.

Bromeliads possess an extraordinary capacity to win in the battle for life. Certain species of the genus *Tillandsia* arouse our admiration as we come to understand the ingenuity with which they manage to adapt to difficult conditions in their homeland. If we wish to cultivate such plants, we must understand their normal functioning in order to be able, to give them what they need. Some species have very few roots, or no roots at all, which means they depend entirely on the moisture in the air to be absorbed by their scales. To grow these plants in our home requires a terrarium or a window-case. Reproduction of the epiphytic way of life is possible in a room if you select the right kind of plants. A certain amount of study, however, is necessary. A plant cannot talk to a human and say what it needs. To learn merely from observation is a hard task for a beginner. Disappointments may cause disillusion. Because of the great number of species it is not easy to select the kind best suited for what you can offer. This book is intended to help and advise.

Home and Distance

In perpetual change lies the continuity of living Nature — in her nothing is more constant than change. Immense is the sequence of generations of humans, of animals, and of plants. If we look at a plant and do not limit our contemplation to its physical aspect, we perform not only a review that loses itself in what has been, but also make an inquiry into its future development. The formation of a new species is not a settled thing. Incessantly, in perfect constancy, generation follows generation, apparently stable and permanent in the picture of its characteristics. But that is an appearance that misleads. Each species produces mutations, spontaneous deviations from its standard pattern, but this happens over long periods. We humans generally consider our own life-span as a measure of time, but that term is far too small to permit proper evaluation of the evolution of species. Changes take place over a much longer period, depending on the way of life of the plant under consideration. Thus we cannot know much as we look into the future; we know nothing of the eventual end of all evolution. Such a look is like a glance into the immensity of the universe.

The plants in our homeland are known: they have been studied and classified. Plants that come from far away are a different matter. They confront us with a picture that is hazy; time and again we realize that our knowledge concerning them contains many gaps. This is natural because some regions of our earth have not yet been completely explored botanically so that surprises in the way of new finds cannot be excluded. Also simultaneous discovery and denomination by more than one scientist in different places have sometimes caused confusion in nomenclature.

Therefore it seems risky to write about plants, such as the Bromeliaceae, the global picture of which is not yet totally clarified. The wealth of forms in the bromeliad family is so great that it almost confounds even the specialist. It contains giants and dwarfs, definite contrasts, and again others are so much alike that only a well-trained eye can tell one from the other when it is not in bloom.

Dominant is, of course, the effect of color and shape of the flowers. Also here is much to choose from, enough to satisfy almost any taste. The flower arrangement in the bromeliaceae is extraordinary. In them we do not find the orthodox flower pattern, mostly it is a combination of many flowers into an inflorescence, the whole of which produces the color effect.

I am writing this introduction while on vacation on the Isle of Ruegen. As I lay on the beach yesterday, casually watching the play of the clouds overhead. I suddenly noticed the color scale of the spectrum on the rim of a cloud crossing the sun, filtered through my sun glasses. It was a continuous transition of colors,

reminding me of the colors of bromeliads. Bromels have all the colors of the spectrum, but they are distributed in a peculiar way. While individual corollas are generally white, greenish white, or yellow with only a slight difference in a shade, the full color effect is due to the stalk or to large bracts or to a special short leaves in the heart of the rosette. The species that have a colorful heart often display a wonderful transition in the area where the tint blends with the natural green of the leaf blades. The color may be further enhanced in species where the blades are striped and on blades that get bronzed by the sun. This latter exhibit a noble patina, green or gray undertones veiled by red, brown, or black, depending on the aptitude of the tissues to respond to stronger or lesser caresses by the sun. There is no fixed rule. Some species cannot stand sunlight at all, getting burned instead of changing their color. More about this later.

What so fascinates people living in temperate zones is the lure of the tropics, a view of the tropical landscape arising in the imagination of those who occupy themselves with these plants. The tropics mean to us a world full of color, everlasting blue sky and sunshine, people having a southerly trend of mind, strange animals, wonderful plants, flowers, fruit. This is the picture that rises in our mind. But where there is light, there is also shadow. The fierce battle of survival rages everywhere. Far be it from me to indulge in lyric enchantment. Nevertheless, bromels, like other tropical plants, bear a halo of sunshine, or a touch of sombre virgin forest. They tell of the wuthering heights of the Chilean Andes, of the Argentine's rocky plains, of endless sandy deserts in Peru. Let us look at Brazil: the barren sertao is a bromeliad home like the rain forest along the coast. Majestic is the show. Above it all, is the fire of the sun, intense or subdued, whatever site or altitude may dictate. Some bromeliads get sprays of Atlantic foam, others far out in the interior of the country thirst for the night's scarce dew. Colombia and Venezuela call to mind the hot breath of the lowlands along the Magdalena River, but also the cold winds in the "Tierra Fria," the cold zone. The land bridge connecting South and North America shelters uncounted bromeliads; wondrous and colorful is the picture of its plants, its fauna, and its people. Steep "barrancas" in Mexico hold large patches of Tillandsias, many feet wide. In other spots, in the forests of Chiapas, grow wonderful bromeliads reflecting their extraordinary surroundings. We derive a certain amount of solace from this knowledge; it helps us to live through long days of gray and cold in our northern climate, the opposite of warmth and light of which bromeliads are a symbol. Most people like to have around them at least a glimpse of the sunny paradise they can't enjoy first hand.

I hope this book will enable my readers to visualize the plants described as much as the far away colorful distance that is their home.

To be continued