

S.A. BROMELIAD GAZETTE



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N. lilliputiana



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**THE BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF
SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC**

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Meetings Venue:

Maltese Cultural Centre,
6 Jeanes Street,
Beverley

Time: 2.00pm.

Second Sunday of each month (unless advised
otherwise)

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Dates for 2009

Meeting dates:- Mar 8th (Summer brag), Apr - no meeting, May 3rd (**1st Sunday**), June 14th, July 12th,
Aug 2nd (**1st Sunday**), Sept 13th, Oct 11th, Nov 8th.

STOP PRESS

March Show & Sales cancelled due to extreme heat affected plants

Special Events:-

Bromadelaide 2009 conference 10th – 13th April, Nov 7th Sales day

Applications for membership always welcome.

Subscriptions \$10.00 per year Feb. to Feb.

Several reference photos courtesy of "fcb.org"



January meeting from the Secretary's desk

Wow, what a busy meeting! T'is the end of our financial year and as the Auditor was absent others were co-opted to check the Treasurer's cash for audit purposes which meant we were 10 minutes late in starting. Then there was a lot to talk regarding OUR Conference in April including the monster raffle.

Len Colgan spoke on the plants on display. As usual there were plenty of Tillandsias to see including an unknown from Bill Treloar, which he is now going to cherish because it was the rare (at least in the wild) *T. hondurensis*. This is fairly common in collections but should be spread around so it does not die out. Then we had what is thought to be *Orthophytum* 'Warren Loose' and there is a bit of a story about this because I still look at it as being the species *O. gurkenii*. Some years ago *O. gurkenii* was imported to Australia and its offsets were quickly spread around because this is an *Orthophytum* with real character.



O. gurkenii



Orthophytum 'Warren Loose'

Because they were offsets they all looked the same and growers got a narrow view of what the species looked like. Meanwhile in the US, Bob Whitman grew seed of this species – Yes you can do this without creating hybrids. He selected the plant with the densest trichomes and called it after his friend Warren Loose. So if you grow *O. gurkenii* from seed you can also look out for extra furry ones you can call 'Warren Loose'! By the way there is a variegated form, which would be a beauty if it lasted long enough. I have had claims from Brazil to name such a cultivar but when I asked for proof of longevity, all went quiet!

Puya laxa likes growing in sunny Adelaide but few try pot culture so you rarely see a plant at a meeting. Thanks to Peter Hall we had one to see AND in flower.



Neoregelia 'Predator'

George Rudolph had brought in a non-variegated *Neoregelia* 'Predatress' and seemed confused as to what to call it. Margaret Butcher said immediately 'Predatress Novar' which means NO VARIEGATION. Some hadn't heard this expression before even though it has been written about extensively.

When you start growing Bromeliads you soon learn what a variegated plant is. It has stripes on the leaves a different colour in contrast to the green. As they learn more they realise that there are some six different names to tell what sort of variegation you had. This meant that those commercially minded thought they could have up to six different names for the same plant. The problem was that the various variegations kept varying with each offset and it was assumed that growers would know which name to apply to the plant depending what stage it was at!!!! My view as Registrar in 2005 was that people had problems learning ONE name. So we had one name covers all. They could then add the type of variegation as an adjective (if they knew what the term was!) whenever it changed!

One problem remained, as Dennis Cathcart of Tropiflora pointed out. What happened when variegation disappeared to such an extent you think it has disappeared forever! So 'Novar' (no variegation) was coined. Why? If you want your plant to variegates in an offset you can wait a lifetime. So to be quicker get an offset off George called 'Predatress Novar'. There is a greater chance you will get an offset with variegations so you would have 'Predatress' back. Or would it be 'Predator' – but that is another story.

January meeting minutes continued



Aechmea gigantea

We had *Aechmea gigantea* grown and flowered by Andrew Rawlinson. He apologised for non-attendance because of flu but got his mates Sam Wade and Peter Franov to struggle to the meeting with the plant, admittedly pot-less. As the name implies it is a large plant that even under Adelaide conditions has leaves over 1m long. The clever way to grow this is in strong sunlight because it grows in a tube and although it is over 1m high it only takes 20-30cm garden space. As I said to Andrew I wanted to see a flowering specimen but alas by the time it got to the meeting it was post floral – Grumble, grumble.

Who can tell me which is the only Australian plant mentioned in Flora Neotropica by Smith & Downs? It is *Aechmea gigantea*. of course! Bill Morris had the plant and I feel fairly confident that all plants in Australia are this linked to this particular clone. How was it that Andrew had succeeded but I had failed in the outer suburbs? There is talk that we may learn of the secrets for success for those who live in the inner suburbs where the trees and houses are so close together you don't need shade cloth. Come to meetings and encourage this idea.

Bill Treloar had brought in a *Neoregelia johannis* which at 70cm diam was half the size of 'mother' and he claimed should be treated as a miniature which leads us into THE talk.

We were late starting so we apologize to those who brought in plants and did not get a mention. I did try to speak quickly!! There were 5 tables full of plants to keep us busy.

First we had problems with deciding what was miniature, small, medium, large extra large. The same sort of problems you get with women's dress sizes. We are not a club noted for plant competitions where apparently judges carry around tape measures or hoops and things, so we just guess. My view was that a miniature was best seen from the side and therefore be in a hanging basket but just because my Margaret bangs her head on all hanging objects, this is a taboo subject. Nobody in the audience agreed with my view! We will start with species because that is my main interest having given a talk to the World Bromeliad Conference in 1996.



Neoregelia lilliputiana

We did know that *N. lilliputiana* was miniature and started from there. We even had one in flower! What I like about species is that you can discuss (not argue!) identity because you have a description to refer to and even a herbarium specimen, and you can always use the term 'aff.' if you think you are close! With hybrids it is either right or mainly wrong!



Neoregelia ampullacea

N. ampullacea came next and there are so many different forms in the wild but there are probably even more forms in cultivation. 29 have been registered but how many have not been registered? Cultivar names were given to supposed forms but were never described or photographed so nobody will be able to sort out the mess. Many would have come from seed by crossing each form and each seedling would be slightly different because the forms in the wild did not have stable characteristics! But botanically speaking many are within the species description and as such are species. Let me expand a bit more on this. If you were a *Cryptanthus* grower and entered competitions run under the guidance of the *Cryptanthus* Society you would have a long list of cultivar names or codes which would be accepted in the species only sections. So, any visitor to such a show would get somewhat confused as to names! I believe that these plants should show the species name on the label because they are entered in a 'species' section but then I don't really grow *Cryptanthus* nor compete!



Neoregelia punctatissima. 'Punctate'.

And now to *N. punctatissima*. How does such a long and hard to spell name persist in horticulture? We know that the plant from the 1970's by this name is really a *N. ampullacea* and has been given the name 'Punctate'.

January meeting minute's cont:

We know that the *N. punctatissima* used by Skotak to produce N. 'Hannibal Lector' is probably an *N. ampullacea* too and is now called N. 'Rafa'. AND that's not all because we are currently discussing a plant collected in Santa Teresa in Espirito Santo provisionally and doubtfully identified as *N. punctatissima*. Next we had a representative of the subgenus Longipetalopsis which as the name implies has long petals but these are rarely seen under Adelaide conditions. They like warmer winters and wetter summers! But we can grow them and they would mostly be treated as small neoregelias. I only have a few because most were only recently described. I had several, mainly from Marj MacNamara in Sydney but many of these were put under *N. bahiana*! The one on display was called 'Pabst' which was called *N. pabstiana* but was considered to be sufficiently different to be given its cultivar name. I do know our Pres. raved about this plant a few years ago but it must have died because all is quiet!

Now *N. abendrothii* is a weird plant and in this respect is similar to *N. wilsoniana*. At first the offsets are like grass and only later turn into wide leaved tubular plants.

There were several *N. olens* brought in which is understandable because this does not need to be hybridised to show its brilliant contrasts. Needless to say it has been used in numerous hybrids but to me they have only succeeded in watering down its better points. Because of its popularity there are several forms. This leads me to its almost look alike *N. camorimiana* which years ago Bill Morris used to call 'pigmented olens' before it was formally named. It was good to see Harry Luther expanding on this problem in the last American Journal. *N. camorimiana* was the many-headed plant that Peter Huddy brought in for the November auction and went for big bikkies.

N. burle-marxii ssp. *meeana*. It is odd that the type species is so large whereas the subspecies can be described as small. Its centre colour at flowering is a delightful pale lilac and yet the hybridists seem to shy away from trying to capture this subtle colour. Perhaps they are too busy crossing hybrid with hybrid *N. smithii* is widely grown but under several guises. This small species turns various shades of blue in the centre at flowering time and is known for its hooked sepals.

N. 'Fireball' – yes, it is included in the species but taxonomists are known to be slow!

Much has been written about this plant and it has been used many times in hybrids especially in recent years. Regrettably little has been written about its description, which you would expect if a taxonomist had been involved. So identity is a touchy subject. It all started in 1960 in Florida where it refused to flower for years and but eventually this occurred. Very few hybrids were reported in these early ten years or so. We do know from Allan Ladd, here in Australia that he in the 1970's could only get 'Fireball' involved as a pollen parent and was busy backcrossing to get a variegated plant of a 'Fireball' size and shape when he moved to other areas of horticulture. From the 1980's 'Fireball' appeared as a parent of numerous hybrids in the USA as well as Australia but usually in formula with another species. If we check the Cultivar Register we see that there are 7 names where 'Fireball' size and shape seem to be involved with a variegated plant. So why do we have plants around called 'Fireball' variegated? From the information given I believe all are really hybrids not true variegated forms of 'Fireball' and I hope this answers Bill Treloar's queries about me being unwilling to treat 'Fireball' as a species but not 'Fireball' variegated.

N. chlorosticta is a very colourful plant in its own right even though it has been used in many hybrids and is probably rare in its true form in cultivation. It has blue flowers whereas 'Marble Throat', said to be a cultivar has white flowers. We know that for *Nidularium*, Elton Leme placed emphasis on petal colour to separate species. I wonder what will happen here.

On the same theme we have *N. tigrina* (not to be confused with *N. ampullacea* 'Tigrina') which has lilac petals according the description but the plant currently accepted as being *N. tigrina* has white flowers and in the 1980's was erroneously known as *N. albiflora*!

There were several other species brought in including *N. sarmentosa* which in the old days was treated as close to *N. chlorosticta* but these days closer to *N. cyanea*. Not to mention *N. leprosa*, a name which Bill queried and yet all could see the dense scaly covering to the leaves. There is method in Bill's madness because he is after an offset.

To think I would not have been able to write all this discussion type material for you to ponder over if we were just talking about hybrids. Some may even say 'Not changing names again!' and yet this is part of evolution where the only constant IS change.

Regrettably time does not stand still either so Bill did not get much time to talk about the hybrids or how people succeeded, as was our intention. They were certainly a colourful bunch.



February meeting from the Secretary's desk

A lot has been said about global warning but I think most of us have noticed the extreme weather patterns we have been having lately around the world. Extreme cold when it shouldn't be and extreme heat when it shouldn't be with a few floods thrown in for good measure. Many of us thought that the March 2008 heatwave was bad enough but what about the week just before our meeting topping 46C in the shade with several days in the 40's. No wonder many of our plants revolted, but more about that later. This was our Annual General meeting where we can get hot air but this time things went smoothly, Geoff Jarrett capably took over the job of Returning Officer and the following were elected

PRESIDENT Len Colgan
VICE PRESIDENT Adam Bodzioch
SECRETARY Derek Butcher
TREASURER Bill Treloar
COMMITTEE Margaret Butcher
Maureen Hick
Bev Masters
Lainie Stainer (New)
Colin Waterman

AUDITORS Adam Bodzioch
Lainie Stainer (New)
ASSISTANT SECRETARY Margaret Butcher
LIBRARIAN Andrew Rawlinson
AFTERNOON TEA CONVENOR Bev Masters and Sue Sckrabei (New)
DOOR TICKETS George Rudolph
RAFFLE TICKETS George Rudolph and other helpers on the day.
TRADING TABLE CONVENOR Maureen Hick
HOST/ESS Colin Waterman/ Eileen Mullins.
POTS & LABELS Ron Masters
NAME TAG MAKER Ron and Bev Masters
EDITOR Derek Butcher/ Bev Masters

We welcome Lainie and Sue to the official workers!

Yes, the main subject of conversation was the heat and how many burnt plants there were. Those hit the hardest were those with the larger collections because you could not move all plants to a more sheltered area or position. Being an optimist my view was that they were very few actual losses because Bromeliads are great survivors, producing offsets in times of adversity but this takes time. The hardest hit seemed to be tillandsias if up high and vrieseas, especially those with glyph markings on the leaves. The toughest of these seemed to be *V. fosteriana*. Then there were those with red under the leaves that nature had provided to counter low light in habitat! But the most interesting seemed to be the blackish leaved neoregelias such as 'Hannibal Lector', which looks extra, horrid.

Who would want to buy brown leaved plants? Who would want to see brown leaved champion plants? This was what made us decide to **cancel the March 28-29 Show and Sales**. The first time ever! Any plants worth selling no doubt can be made available for the Conference at Easter.

Despite many brown plants and a bare sales table, there were a few plants on the raffle table. Our special raffle was not its usual super duper plant but a selection of new pots and a pile of second hand cork – yes we are into recycling too!

February meeting minute's cont:

Adam had several plants that had been brought in for display, to talk about. Perhaps a little musing might be worth mentioning. Margaret & I get the various newsletters from around the world before bringing them to the meeting. Most are about plant competitions, how to grow plants, and members birthdays and illnesses. We seem to be unique in that we play down the competition part and members birthdays and illnesses but we do give deceased members a really good send off. That is a time when we talk about all the good things they did and will be remembered by! AND then there is plant identification, which I am forever writing about. 30 odd years ago several of us cactus growers would spend a Sunday afternoon at Ede Schaefer's place to discuss bromeliads – he was the only one who had some! Anyway he was bragging about this *Acanthostachys stobilacea* and I said you mean the spiny stemmed plant with pinecones. He looked at me like a stunned mullet. You see I try to remember names by translating them to rough English. This has always been my way and I suppose my years of talking in our Society means that some of my attributes have rubbed off on others – some good, some bad!



Tillandsia incarnata

Back to the plants which were in surprising good condition. First we had a well-grown *Tillandsia incarnata* only it had *T. incurvata* on the label. This was quickly pointed out and if we follow the Butcher mnemonic we know that carnata means flesh and refers to the red petals.

Neoregelia 'Fosterannae' was a variegated Neo which had us all puzzled because the name is unregistered. Many agreed with Adam's thoughts that it was very close to *Neo*. 'Pemento' a Skotak hybrid. We brought in a small epiphytic type *Vriesea* that we had been growing on for Mick Romanowski to see what it could be. Mick had got the plant from Queensland as *Vriesea* sp. but nobody there seemed interested in checking it out. The interesting thing is that it has the flower of *V. corcovadensis* and the leaves of *V. lubbersii*! Is it a species? I have written to Harry Luther for his views after sending as much photo data as I could. The next exciting episode -----!

Maureen Hick had brought in a plant with *Neoregelia* 'Fireball' x *Aechmea recurvata* on the label which indicates it is the bigeneric x*Neomea*. It seems to be the same with many of these bigenerics where the hybridist is disappointed with the results and doesn't name them but still sells them off to unsuspecting customers who think they have a rarity – which in reality is the case. There are rare plants and rare plants – it depends on your taste!

A *Neoregelia* 'Fireball' x *Aechmea recurvata* has been registered as x*Neomea* 'Munchkin' but bears no relationship to Maureen's plant



N. innocentii var *lineatum*

Two nidulariums were of interest because they had come from Strathalbyn where Geoff says he had a great time getting extra shadecloth at the local store! If it was that hot in Strathalbyn how hot was in Bute – Bill has yet to make a full inventory!

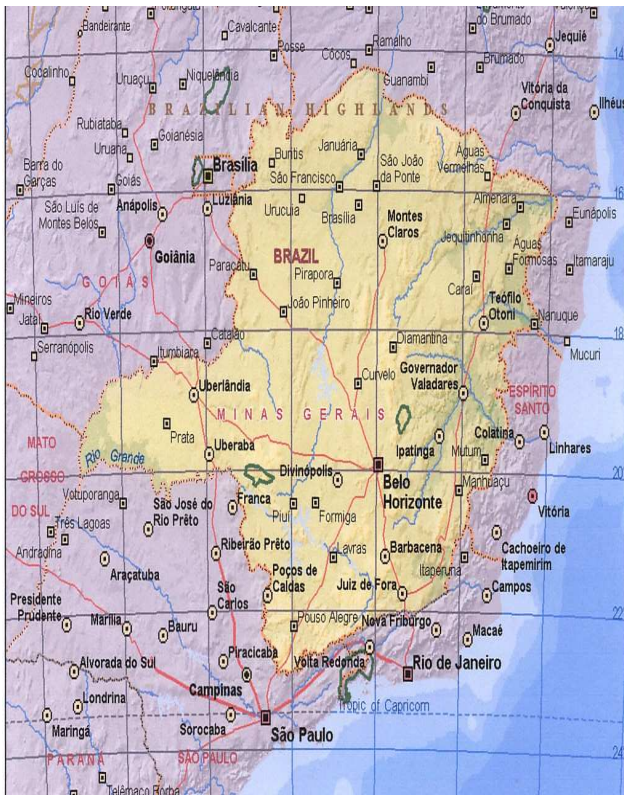
N. innocentii var *lineatum* was of especial interest because Geoff was mollycoddling it indoors when we went to visit him some 2 years ago. It looked on its last legs and we said he should see if outside would either kill it or cure it. We don't know where he put the plant but in 2 years it had fully recovered and had an inflorescence at the meeting.



A. distichantha

There were several *Aechmea* of which *A. distichantha* was the more fearsome. This seems best also grown in stronger light to restrict growth and promote flowering. You wouldn't think it was a close relative to *A. chantinii* – would you?

February meeting minute's cont:



And so to Len Colgan's talk on Minas Gerais . First I will show a map so you can get a feel for the area we are talking about. Most of us will have heard of the Brazilian Atlantic forest on the east coast of Brazil which is now about 7% of what it was. This is similar to the fate of forests on the east coast of Australia!

What is left provide a moist climate suitable for most epiphytic bromeliads

In Brazil this area is to the south and east of Minas Gerais and shows Bromeliads growing in Minas Gerais would have a wider range of conditions to survive and an increase in the number growing at ground level to survive.

You will recall the list of some 300 species that was handed out at the January meeting and we were pleased that so many plants were brought in Very few burn marks but some did have that dessicated look! For want of an order Len plumped for alphabetical because if he had gone regional, chaos would have prevailed!

First up was *Acanthostachys strobilacea* and we all know what that means. They used to grow it at the Adelaide Bot Gardens where it was kept in deep shade where the leaves were 2m long with narry a flower in sight. It is much better grown in more light. Just a word of warning my Margaret gets a rash from the scaly leaves and stems!

Billbergias are known to be the toughest regarding watering and the less water you give and more light, the tighter the tubes become and the brighter colours. Even so our hot spell was even a challenge for them.

To think that Len had 7 to talk about.



Bromelia balansae

Then to *Bromelia balansae* which was in a large pot but will need to be in a larger pot if it is to flower. This is slow to flower but fast to offset so don't plant it out in the garden! Because it is slow to flower I am forever asking growers interstate to check the colour of the petals. Harry Luther tells us that this genus is hard to identify if you don't know where it was collected in the wild. In fact he maintains that *B. balansae* is very rare in cultivation and you would expect leaves 4-7metres long! The petals should be violet tipped white



Bromelia sylvicola

A more common plant is *Bromelia sylvicola* which is a bit smaller and has petals maroon with white tip. If you are colour blind you are gone!

I do know that *B. serra* is also in Australia and years ago when I flowered a Bromelia I felt it had to be this species. If ever you grow a Bromelia in Adelaide you will need strong gloves and a great patience.

Admittedly the plant goes brilliant red to announce its flowering but I wish someone would not be blinded by this colour and would check the subtle petal colour!

Yes, we can grow *Dyckia* in Adelaide but so many have been grown from seed and are probably unknown hybrids. Even those at the Adelaide Bot Gardens are in the same boat. I am always after seed collected in the wild in Brazil or under controlled conditions in the botanical gardens in Europe and these are few and far between.

February meeting minutes cont:

Very closely allied to *Dyckia* are *Encholirium* which are flavour of the month according to Len – but you must like pricklies. Botanically speaking the only real difference is that *Dyckia* put up their flower spike off centre but *Encholirium* flower from the plant's growing centre so that particular plant never flowers again like a 'true' bromeliad! Needless to say, the small ones are the best to grow and the best of these is *E. heloisae* which is a devil to grow from seed. The best seed raisers in the country have tried but failed! Now to neoregelias where most were not here having been at our previous meeting on 'miniature' neoregelias. Another one raising its head after 20 years of trying to correct the record was a *N. hatschbachii*. This was a plant grown in Australia as 'Monstrosum' until Harry Luther was put on a spot regarding identity when over here in 1985. He linked the plant to a plant being grown at Selby Gardens at that time as *N. hatschbachii*. Following the 'Master' we dutifully changed the name on our labels. Eventually it was decided that the plant was really a fairly rare red leafed form of *N. cruenta*. The records were duly noted under either *N. cruenta* 'Rubra or Red form or the official spelling of *N. 'Monstrosum'*. Anyone with the name *N. hatschbachii* on the label had no hope in tracing its correct identity especially as this plant is now treated as a synonym of *N. bahiana*.



There are only a few *Nidularium* from the area but we did see the rare *N. linehamii* which is so rare in the wild the current view is that it must be a natural hybrid.

N. linehamii

And so to more pricklies in *Orthophytum*, again one Len's favourites, but he still wants more because there are many species not in Australia.

No *Pitcairnia*, *Portea*, or *Pseudananas* (*Ananas*) made an appearance but we did see *Quesnelia indecora*. Tillandsia were well represented as to be expected although all had that dehydrated look about them. Evolution is a hard thing to imagine purely because a human life span is but a second in the way nature keeps changing. Therefore there will always be discussions on what is a natural species and what is a natural hybrid on its tenuous way to becoming a species. *Tillandsia horstii* was on display which some consider to be a hybrid between *T. chapeuensis* and *T. stricta*. *T. chapeuensis* is close to *T. gardneri* and there are many forms of the widespread *T. stricta* to show how complicated such an argument as to a natural hybrid becomes.

Len had also brought in a *T. minasgeraisensis* which has only just been published in the American Journal. This has an interesting story, which started about 20 years ago when plants from Minas Gerais found their way to the USA. Both Rainforest Flora and Tropiflora stocked the plant. In 1990 Renate got a few plants from the USA and when they flowered she could not key them out. As is her wont, she wrote up a description for what she wanted to call *T. minasgeraisensis* I even helped her with the English translation! Because the plant was Brazilian she decided to publish in Brazil but delays over several years occurred because of the chaos in publications in Brazil. I agreed with Renate that enough was enough and that she should publish in Die Bromelie or the American Journal. Collections of the same species were made by Germans and an Austrian that linked to *T. minasgeraisensis* so now she had collection area data. Len now has plants from these later collections that he brought back from Germany. I maintain that this species is already in Australia having come in from Isley or Tropiflora and being linked to the superficially similar *T. recurvifolia* or *T. pohliana*. I know that in years past I flowered a plant from Ken Woods in Sydney that was neither *T. pohliana* nor *T. recurvifolia* but linked to what Renate had told be about. *T. minasgeraisensis*. If you have a plant called *T. recurvifolia* check to see if it only has silver trichomes at the tip of the floral bracts. If they cover the whole of the floral bract think *T. minasgeraisensis*.

Vrieseas were not well represented probably because so many had brown leaves!

By this time things were well behind schedule and we finished the meeting pretty quickly.

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