

## Neoregelia 'Yellow Devil'

*by Derek Butcher*

There is a Neoregelia being grown in Queensland under the name of 'Sun King' which has reddish stripes on the back of the leaves. Preliminary investigations have revealed that the Cultivar Register 1998 says that 'Sun King' is a form of *N. cruenta* and was used extensively by James Elmore to produce many hybrids. Regrettably we have very few photographic records of Elmore's hybrids to help in identification.

It is said that Grace Goode named Neoregelia 'Sun King' for a plant she received from a Chuck in the USA but I know that Grace only names her own hybrids. Let us now look at Shane Zaghini's Neoregelia book where he shows a photo of *N. cruenta* x *corcia* and we know that Shane pays scant attention to spelling. I believe that the Queensland 'Sun King' is the same plant. I had thought that 'corcia' was a wrong spelling of *coriacea* but I now believe it to be *kautskyi*. Why, I hear you ask! I think the plant came into Australia as Neoregelia *cruenta* 'Sun King' x *kautskyi*. Some reduced the label to read 'Sun King' while others misspelt *kautskyi*.

If we now refer to this parentage in the on-line Cultivar Register in Cultivar Corner at <http://BSI.org> we will see:

Neoregelia 'Sun King' – a cultivar of *cruenta*. Very large with broad leaves – yellow in bright light – red tips to leaves – rosette flattens out almost completely at anthesis with inflorescence rising on stalk in center – will easily take full sun in most areas.

Butcher's comment - This sounds like a cultivar of *N. johannis* to me but no photo available.

Neoregelia 'Lucky Strike'. By J Elmore. ('Sun King' x *kautskyi*) Large prolific upright rosette - yellow green in colour with distinctive peppermint red lineations and stripes on the outside of the 4 inch wide leaves - loses striping in bloom as entire plant suffuses coral-red - 12 inches tall and 25 inches across - scarlet-red rounded apiculate tips. Photo by James Elmore held on the Register and shows a flowering plant which is not as dramatic as the description!

Neoregelia 'Yellow Devil' By J Elmore. ('Sun King' x *kautskyi*) Medium upright plant resembling *cruenta* – upreaching leaves in yellow green with tiny red spots. Photo on the Register is from the 2000 WBC at San Francisco and shows a plant with stripes!

Other Cultivars with same parentage are 'Bonanza', 'Eureka', 'Gold Dust', 'Golden Nugget', and 'Yukon' none of which are described or photographs available.

To call the Queensland plant Neoregelia 'Sun King' is erroneous if only because it seems to be a hybrid rather than a cultivar of a species, and it needs another name. The only description from above that mentions the red lines is 'Lucky Strike'. I believe its overall reddening is cultural and wonder if this would happen to the Queensland plant in some collections.

This matter needs to be resolved and Rob Smythe of Townsville has suggested that the plant looks closest to *N. 'Yellow Devil'* if only for the yellow green leaves. We know that in the 1980's Pam Koide was offering 'Yellow Devil' and we know that prior to this, the Elmore collection, on James's death, had been purchased by two Californians. This could well be how the plant came to be in California for the World Conference.

I will be noting the Cultivar Register that 'Yellow Devil' can have red stripes to link with the Californian clone. This leaves it clear to call the Australian 'Sun King' by the name 'Yellow Devil' and ask you note your label accordingly .

If you know of any other information regarding this plant or our calculated guess, please let me know or perhaps they could contact: Robert S Smythe [rsmythe@austarnet.com.au](mailto:rsmythe@austarnet.com.au)