

# *Bromeliaceae*



*Volume XXX Number 4 July/August 1997*



## BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND INC

P.O. Box 565,  
FORTITUDE VALLEY,  
QLD. 4006  
AUSTRALIA

General meetings held on the third Thursday of each month except December at the Uniting Church Hall,  
52 Merthyr Road, New Farm, Queensland, commencing at 7.30pm.

|  |   |   |                    |
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Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual contributors and may not reflect the opinions of the Editorial Committee of the Society.

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## Cover Photograph – Front

### *Vriesea Hieroglyphica X 'Pahoa Beauty' - SHOW CHAMPION*

This plant was a small seedling purchased at the BSI Conference in 1994 along with several other *vriesea* hybrids which I believe were made in Hawaii.

We have grown a plant of *V. 'Pahoa Beauty'* (also from Hawaii) for many years but have been unable to establish its parentage. It has interesting lines and markings with colours - greyish to lavender hues. When crossed with *V. hieroglyphica* it has even better colouring and markings. *Vriesea Hieroglyphica X 'Pahoa Beauty'* was first potted in a 115mm pot and over a period of three years progressed to a 200mm container. It receives some foliar fertilizer when the other *vrieseas* are fed, which is anything from weekly to monthly depending on the weather. This plant measures about 90cm across and I believe it to be still a very young plant, hopefully it will be quite sometime before it blooms, we do not grow this type of plant for the inflorescence. We are happy just to look at its beautiful foliage.

Plant grown by                   - Len & Olive Trevor  
 Photographed by               - Doug Upton

## Cover Photograph - Back

### *Aechmea Fredricka variegata - RESERVE CHAMPION*

This plant is a spineless cultivar of the hybrid *Fascini* which is a cross between *Aechmea fasciata* and *Aechmea chantinii*. This variegated form of *A. Fredricka* was imported in July 1996. It was potted in a very open medium of coarse bark, peat moss and polystyrene granules. Out of quarantine in October '96 the plant had grown considerably, it was necessary to repot into a larger container. A similar mix was used with a light dressing of nutricote fertilizer. It was grown under medium shade cloth and fertilized regularly with foliar fertilizer. During summer it was watered daily.

As it grew into a mature plant the variegations blushed from cream to a frosted pink and in April '97 the inflorescence began to form in the cup. It has grown to 70cm from the top of the container to the tip of the inflorescence. The inflorescence is 20cm across. *Aechmea Fredricka variegata* has been as easy to grow as the plant it originated from - which was bred by Bak.

Plant grown by                   - Len & Olive Trevor  
 Photographed by               - Doug Upton.

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## It is all in the Mix

Much has been written on potting mix, so much so we want to talk on another subject whenever it is mentioned. However, to be honest, those among us who have grown bromeliads for years, have been known to change our mix on many occasions. We are always on the lookout for that perfect mix, and most of us are prepared to experiment with something different. Therefore when it is said, 'Nobody wants to read another article on potting mix', this is not always quite true.

There is no secret formula for preparing potting mediums, with most of us it is trial and error, and as long as we provide an open mix with free drainage, our bromeliads will grow. How well they grow is another matter.

Bromeliads are very tolerant plants, their survival ability under difficult growing conditions can be remarkable, under desirable conditions, they can be outstanding. So then, how does one achieve desirable conditions? Unfortunately for many it is difficult because of climate, unless conditions approximate their natural habitat, we will not get the best from our bromeliads. It is because of their tolerance that we are able to grow most of the genera with some success, therefore, any improvement to the potting medium has to be a step in the right direction towards desirable conditions.

There is a need for a better understanding of the material we mix together and label potting mix. The importance of aeration, durability, moisture retention and to a lesser degree, nutrition, are all vital when considering various ingredients. With nutrition it is possible to prepare a satisfactory potting mixture containing few nutrients, and feed your plants via slow release fertilizer or by applications of liquid fertilizer.

The following list of potting material, plus a brief note on their value, should be helpful when making your potting mediums.

**1. Pine bark chips:** are excellent, fibrous and a reliable rooting material which contains some food value as it ages. It is available in several mill-graded sizes which does not break down too quickly. It supplies good aeration. Best when not fresh.

**2. Peatmoss:** very acid and of little food value, water retentive, use sparingly as mixes can become over sodden.

**3. Coarse river sand:** can be a good useful filler, make sure it does not contain clay or limestone. Must come from fresh water, streams and rivers.

**4. Sea sand:** salt-laden and highly alkaline. It compacts and is too fine.

5. **Charcoal:** often called a sweetener, it can help keep in check any possible sourness in the potting mix. Wood charcoal from bush fires is best, but remove any fine ash, it tends to be alkaline. Coke from coal furnaces is sometimes used. Note how roots always cling to charcoal granules which absorb minerals.

6. **Perlite:** is a form of volcanic rock expanded by heating to 1800° F. It contains no minerals and has no cation exchange. It can break down into smaller pieces but does not decay or deteriorate. Water holds on the uneven surface. It is best when the grade is 1/16 to 1/8 diameter.

7. **Vermiculite:** is a micaceous material, it has a high cation exchange capacity and can hold nutrients in reserve and release them. These are held within the structure of particles and enable the grower to use higher fertility levels, with no plant damage. It also resists rapid changes in pH. Vermiculite contains a certain amount of calcium and magnesium and a small amount of calcium. The coarse grade is usually used in the potting medium, while the fine grade is effective when used in a seed-germinating medium.

8. **Sphagnum moss:** holds too much water in pots and is not altogether satisfactory for mounting bromeliads on trees as once it dries out, it is difficult to re-constitute.

9. **Polystyrene granules:** widely used, not only as filler but as another excellent aid for aeration. Does not break down.

10. **Sawdust:** too fine, not recommended as it has a clogging effect.

### Materials that found favor some years ago but not widely used today.

1. **Pine, she-oak needles:** fibrous, acid components which do not break down too quickly, provide good aeration.

2. **Cow manure:** excellent balanced fertilizer, better in small pieces rather than pulverised. Must be aged, never use fresh animal manures.

3. **Peanut shells:** high pH when first used in a mix, starts off at about 5.4 and in a short time will be at 8.7 but will drop again to around 7.0 after several months. Peanut shells can grow fungus, if any of the nut is left in the shell it will attract ants and even mice.

4. **Rice hulls:** almost pure cellulose, they never break down completely, keep the mix light and airy. They provide small traces of potash, pH is about 6.3 but after a short time will be 8.0.

5. **Coconut fibre:** difficult to control in small containers, not widely used.

6. *Decomposed granite*: it contains a high content of sharp quartz and a good supply of minerals, particularly potash, used sparingly.

7. *Leafmould*: used when composted or broken down. It uses small amounts of nitrogen in its break down, it can be very high in food value. Depending on the type of leafmould pH will vary from 5.0 to as high as 7.8. It keeps the mix light and airy and increases its water holding.

8. *Osmunda fibre*: came from the roots of the osmunda fern, sometimes called regal fern. Difficult to obtain and very expensive. Can be used alone as the potting medium.

9. *Scoriaceous rock*: often referred to as rotten rock. Under a microscope it was found to contain a number of minerals and because it was in varying stages of decay, it was porous and retentive of moisture. Some years ago Mr. Evan Williams published an article on scoriaceous rock, the following extracts are taken from his article.

On a visit to Queensland it was suggested he publish the composition of the growing medium he was using for dyckias and cryptanthus. Reflecting on this, he thought it an objective idea to obtain some expert or scientific comment on the rotten rock component he was using. A geologist identified it as scoriaceous rock, and later a soil chemist suggested the addition of this rock to the planting mix would provide an ideal physical environment for the roots of most bromeliad genera.

It was necessary to sieve the material to remove fine dust, the end result was a crumble-like material of irregular size. Because of the irregular shape of every particle it was said to be conducive to trapping oxygen along with other components to help keep the mix well aerated. Also, because of the porosity of the decomposing rock, it was likely to be absorbent of surplus plant food.

Some zerophytic genera grow in arid habitats, where accessible nutrients from organic matters can be minor or nil. It is generally agreed that such plants use minerals from rock and shale etc, in which the plants are rooted. In view of the foregoing, it was reasonable to assume that acids exuded from the roots could be so acting on the scoriaceous rock as to convert certain minerals to assimilable plant food.

*Mr. Williams gave Olwen Ferris a sample of these rock particles that she might use in her cryptanthus mix. Olwen potted several C.fosterianus pups, four with the rock throughout the mix, four had the rock sprinkled on top, four without. Olwen said the results were easy to see, the four with the rock throughout grew quicker, were larger with better colour.*

Ed.

**BROMELIADS IX INTERNATIONAL**

The Western Bromanza

September 1997

**A Sandgroper's View on Growing Bromeliads**

by Kim Chipper

I'm going to tell you about growing conditions for bromeliads in Perth, Western Australia and some of the problems we have to overcome to successfully do so. I am also going to tell you about some of the advantages of our climate (besides it being the best in the world and the fact we have a wonderful lifestyle!)

*I apologize for the interruption Kim, but as a Queenslander I am a little touchy about 'the best climate in the world', statement. Let's keep it cordial. Ed.*

Firstly, let me tell you that the inhabitants in each State of Australia have a nickname which dates back about a hundred years. For instance, Queenslanders are known as banana-benders, South Australians are known as crow-eaters and Western Australians are known as sand-gropers. Some people think that we were named after the subterranean insect, *Cylindracheta*, which inhabits the sandy coastal plains, but we were known as sand-gropers long before it was discovered.

We are not too sure of the origins of 'sand-groper' but we think it's because our plains are hot, dry, dusty sand and most of W.A.'s early inhabitants in the 1880's were goldminers. Henry Lawson wrote in 1896, 'The curse of this country is gold... The Old Sand-gropers are the best to work for or have dealings with. The Tothersiders are cutting each others throats'.

Now miners dig holes and leave the dirt heaped around the hole. A lot of Americans came to the goldfields (in his early days, Herbert Hoover, subsequently an American president, was one of them) and they recognised these holes, and we became known as sand-gropers, probably a corruption of sand-gophers.

To understand better how to grow bromeliads, we need to know what the climate is like where they grow naturally. Bromeliads largely come from tropical and subtropical zones. In these zones, the seasons are characterised by precipitation (rain). Where we live, a temperate zone, the seasons are characterised by temperature.

Consider that bromeliads come from a climate where the summers are warm and wet and the winters are warm and dry, our biggest problem to overcome in growing bromeliads, the climate. We live in a temperate zone designated



Mediterranean climate and it is one of the unusual climates of the world. In this climate, the summers are hot and dry and the winters are cold and wet, exactly opposite the climate where bromeliads grow. As bromeliad growers, one of the first things that we have to overcome is the complete lack of co-operation by the climate. Everything happens at the wrong time. Additionally, one of the curious things about growing any plant in Perth is that we have two vigorous growing periods: autumn and spring, when most of them flower. Plants hibernate in the extremes of the weather, the mid summer and the mid winter.

In fact, the new philosophy of gardening in Perth is to let the garden 'coast' in the height of summer (January/February) and concentrate your growing efforts in autumn, winter and spring. A lot of native plants flower in winter so the seed can take advantage of the rain to germinate and get established before mid summer.

I want you to particularly note when we get our rain... in winter, just when we don't need it! This means we have to stop the rain getting to our plants because by now they have stopped growing. If they get a lot of water and they have the slightest tendency to rot, we lose them. We do however, collect as much rain as possible as it is soft, clean water very suitable for bromeliads, I'll say more on water quality later. So another of our growing problems is rain in winter.

Because of light intensity we have to put something between our plants and the sky. This can take the shape of vegetation, like trees or other large plants. Another thing is shade producing material. This is probably the most successful for growing bromeliads as it provides a number of benefits.

In summer, one thing you must be very careful of is to allow the superheated air at the top of a hothouse to escape, especially on very hot days. If you don't, you can guarantee you will lose tillandsias and sometimes other bromeliads in the heat. Ventilation in hothouses is very important for the successful growing of bromeliads, especially tillandsias. As long as we generate enough humidity by carefully controlled watering, at least once or twice a day, we can achieve a minimum of about 50-60% relative humidity, enough to successfully grow bromeliads. To cut down the wind and constant breezes blowing away all the carefully generated humidity, we have fences combined with trees to hold, in the humidity while allowing the air movement necessary to stop plants rotting. Placing bromeliads on a bed of jarrah sawdust, which retains the moisture, is another way to imitate the tropical jungle conditions with the humidity rising from under the plants. In gardens heavy mulching with compost, straw, newspapers covered with other materials like manures, and the like, help to hold the water and release it back into the atmosphere as humidity, which provides the plant with protection from drying out and keeps it cool in the heat of the day.

As most plants have their roots near the surface, the mulch holds the water where it is needed and protects the delicate roots from the sun's heat drying out the soil and burning them. By the way, mulch in Perth provides another benefit. The silvery coloured sands of Perth reflect the heat beautifully and if you don't have mulch, the underside of plant leaves get burnt as well as the roots near the surface.





The water quality from the mains leaves a lot to be desired when growing bromeliads. It is hard because of the heavy deposits of limestone the water passes through, and the use of bore water, which on occasion doesn't help. The water, if left in the bromeliad cup or on the leaves, can easily grow algae. The plant must be flushed regularly with rainwater if using mains water. For showing plants, the calcium deposits can be removed from the leaves using a weak solution of detergent, it should be rinsed off carefully so it does not affect the plant. If the plant is placed so it receives any sunlight, the hard water deposits left on leaves causes leaf damage through burning.

The general tenet of growing bromeliads in Perth is to grow them on the dry side. In Perth, too much water causes rot and once they start to rot off it's hard to bring them back. To help achieve this dry growing, we use a neutral pH potting mix which holds water, and depending on the genus being grown, add cow manure, pine needles, crushed pine bark, charcoal and chunky pine bark. To provide the good drainage: the most successful, because it is the cheapest, is adding medium crushed pine bark and coarse river sand. One of the mediums we don't use is fine-crushed pine bark. The fine contributes to rot by holding too much water and it goes like mud. Medium bark allows enough drainage, while holding some water in the mix to stop it drying out completely.

At the beginning, I said Perth has the best weather in the world and, with it, a wonderful lifestyle!! Our weather patterns allow us to have an outdoors lifestyle from September to April (eight months) with a short, sharp winter. Long evenings give us time for casual meals, blizzardly cold beer, chilled light wines and light meals of exquisite flavour.

Come and join us this September, at the IX Australian Bromeliad Conference, 'The Western Bromanza.'

# NEWSLETTER

 Forthcoming Events 
  Member's Forum 
  Show Reports' 
   
 Society News

## Monthly Meetings

17th July

Mini Show – Commentary by the Judges.

Class

1. Aechmea species, hybrids.
2. Vriesea, hybrids only.
3. Pitcairnioideae (excluding Dyckia, Hechtia, Pitcairnia but including e.g. Deuterocohnia, Brocchinia, Cottendorfia, Fosterella, Puya etc.)

- Novice growers Class – Len Trevor.

7.30pm sharp.

- Stump the Panel.

Olive Trevor – Len Trevor

Narelle Aizlewood – Greg Aizlewood

Patricia O'Dea – Mike Symmons

21st August

- Popular Vote – Commentary Bob Paulsen.

- Plant of the Month – G.

Commentary Olive Trevor.

- Guest speaker to be announced

- Novice growers Class – Len Trevor.

7.30pm sharp.

## Show Reports

Popular Vote - 15th May

Advanced

1st. *Ae.dealbata* (reb bracts)

L&O Trevor

2nd.(tied) *Ae.'Eileen'* - L&O Trevor

*T.brachycaulos multiflora X fasciculata*

– B. Genn

*T.lindenii* (pink flowers) D&J Upton

Intermediate

1st. *Ae.nudicaulis rubra* - P.O.Dea.

Novice

1st. *T.duratii* – M Symmons.

2nd. *Ae.tessmannii* (banded form)

– M Symmons.

Popular Vote – 19th June.

Advanced

1st. *T.'Wildfire'* – L&O Trevor

2nd. *V.'Splendide' variegata*

– L&O Trevor

Intermediate

No entries.

Novice

1st. *T.stricta rubra* – M Symmons

2nd. *Ae.weiibachii pendula* – R Cross

## Study Group Meeting

7.00am 26th July

7.00am 30th August

Venue – 232 Canvey Road, Ferny Grove

Ph: 3351 1203

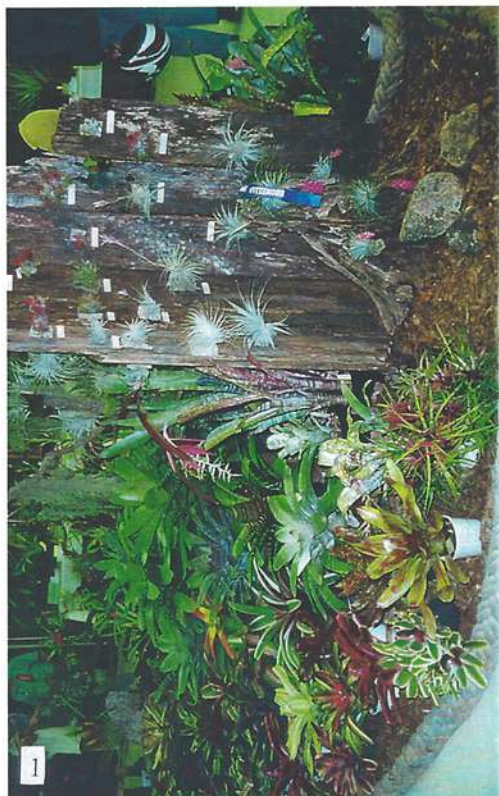
## Centrefold Photographs

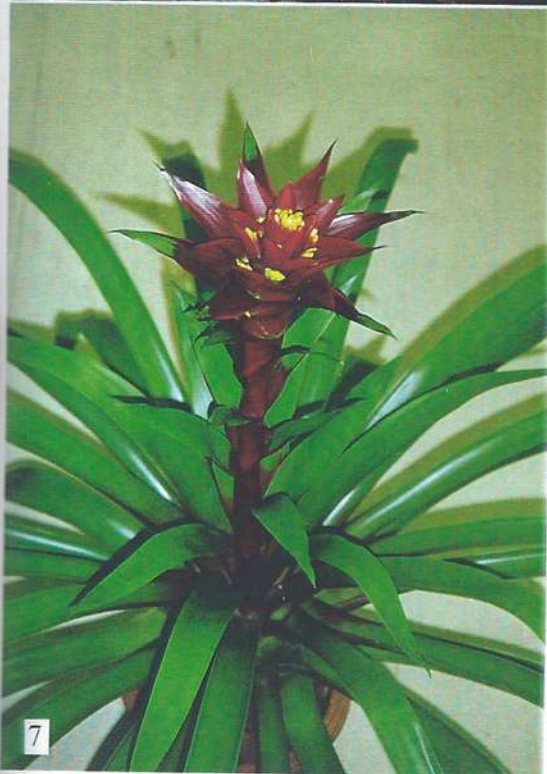
A selection of Plants from the Combined Show

1. Section of display
2. *T.duratii* var. *saxatilis* (in competition)
3. Neo. hybrid (in display)
4. Neo. *pendula* *eleutheropetala* and *T. stricta* (in display)
5. Group of *Cryptanthus* (in display)
6. Group of *Guzmania* and *Aechmea* (in display)
7. *Guz. lingulata blaussii* (in competition)
8. *Aec. mexicana variegata* (in competition)

### Combined Show Competition Results 1997.

| CLASS                           | PLANT   | ENTRANT         |
|---------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| 1. TILLANDSIA                   | (1) <i>T.duratii</i>  | P.O'Dea         |
|                                 | (2) <i>T.tricolor</i>   | N & E Weir      |
| 2. TILLANDSIA<br>IN SPIKE       | (1) <i>T.densispica</i>                                       | D & P Hobbs     |
|                                 | (2) <i>T.'Wildfire'</i>                                       | L & O Trevor    |
|                                 | (3) <i>T.lindenii</i>   | N & E Weir      |
| 3. VRIESEA                      | (1) <i>V.'Tiffany'</i>  | L & O Trevor    |
| 4. VRIESEA<br>FOLIAGE           | (1) <i>V.hieroglyphica</i> X ' <i>Pahoa Beauty</i> '          | L & O Trevor    |
|                                 | (2) <i>V.vinicolor</i>  | L & O Trevor    |
|                                 | (3) <i>V.'Nova'</i>   | M.Symmons       |
| 5. OTHER<br>TILLANDSIOIDEAE     | (1) <i>G.lingulata</i> X <i>blaussii</i>                      | L & O Trevor    |
|                                 | (2) <i>G.hybrid</i>   | L & O Trevor    |
|                                 | (3) <i>G.'Broadview'</i>                                      | L & O Trevor    |
| 6. TILLANDSIOIDEAE<br>IN FLOWER | (1) <i>T.brachycaulos multiflora</i><br>X <i>fasciculata</i>  | B.Genn          |
|                                 | (2) <i>G.'Kapoa Fire'</i>                                     | L & O Trevor    |
| 7. CRYPTANTHUS                  | (1) <i>C.'Charmain Price'</i>                                 | R.Paulsen       |
|                                 | (2) <i>C.'Silver Langdon'</i>                                 | D.Reilly        |
|                                 | (3) <i>C.'San Juan'</i>                                       | R.Paulsen       |
| 8. BILLBERGIA                   | (1) <i>B.amoena</i>   | N & E Weir      |
|                                 | (2) <i>B.'Catherine Wilson'</i>                               | N & E Weir      |
| 9. AECHMEA                      | (1) <i>A.'Fredricka'</i> variegata                            | L & O Trevor    |
|                                 | (2) <i>A.mexicana</i> variegata                               | L & O Trevor    |
|                                 | (3) <i>A.orlandiana</i> 'Rainbow'                             | M.Symmons       |
| 10. NEOREGELIA                  | (1) <i>N.carolinae</i> X <i>concentrica</i><br>albo-marginata | L & O Trevor    |
|                                 | (2) <i>N.'Princess Grace'</i>                                 | A.Freeman       |
|                                 | (3) <i>N.'Barbarian'</i>                                      | M.Symmons       |
| 11. MINATURE<br>NEOREGELIA      | (1) <i>N.'Sweetheart'</i>                                     | R.Paulsen       |
|                                 | (2) <i>N.'Mavis'</i>  | R.Paulsen       |
|                                 | (3) <i>N.'Small World'</i>                                    | L & O Trevor    |
| 12. NIDULARIUM                  | (1) <i>N.'Tapestry'</i>                                       | M.Symmons       |
|                                 | (2) <i>N.'Nat de Leon'</i>                                    | N & G Aizlewood |
| 13. INTERGENERIC                | (1) <i>Aechmea serrata</i> X <i>ananas comosus</i>            | L & O Trevor    |
|                                 | (2) <i>Neolium hybrid</i>                                     | M.Symmons       |
| 14. OTHER<br>BROMELIOIDEAE      | (1) <i>Wittrockia compos-portoi</i>                           | N & E Weir      |
|                                 | (2) <i>Orthophytum disjunctum</i>                             | R.Paulsen       |





- |     |  |  |                           |
|-----|--|--|---------------------------|
| 15. | BROMELIADAEAE<br>IN FLOWER                                       | (1) <i>A. recurvata</i> 'Little Fatso'   | L & O Trevor              |
|     |  | (2) <i>A. Eileen</i>   | L & O Trevor              |
| 16. | HECTIA/DYCKIA  | (1) <i>D. platyphylla</i>  | R. Paulsen                |
|     |  | (2) <i>D. fosteriana</i> (silver form)   | R. Paulsen                |
|     |  | (3) <i>D. hybrid</i>   | M. Symmons                |
| 17. | PITCAIRNIA   | No entries   |                           |
| 18. | OTHER<br>PITCAIRNIA  | No entries   |                           |
| 19. | SPECIMEN<br>any genus, 3 or<br>more connected,<br>mature plants. | (1) <i>T. bulbosa</i>  | D & J Upton               |
|     |  | (2) Neo. hybrid  | D. Reilly                 |
|     |  | (3) Neo. 'Fireball' x <i>ampullacea</i><br><i>H.C.V. flammea</i>   | N & E Weir<br>D. Anderson |
| 20. | NOVICE   | Mary Grasseli Award  | No entries                |
| 21. | BROMELIAD IN<br>DECORATIVE POT                                   | (1) Neo. 'Jodie'   | N & E Weir                |
|     |  | (2) Neo. <i>carolinæ</i> X <i>concentrica</i><br>X 'Fireball'  | L & O Trevor              |
|     |  | (3) G. 'Empire'  | L & O Trevor              |
| 22. | BROMELIAD ON<br>DECORATIVE<br>MOUNTING                           | (1) Neo. <i>meyendorffii</i> minor   | N & G Aizlewood           |
| 23. | MINATURE<br>DISPLAY  | (1) <i>T. ionantha</i> on wood   | N & G Aizlewood           |
|     |  | (2) Tills. on driftwood in pot   | N & E Weir                |
|     |  | (3) <i>T. fasciculata</i>  | N & G Aizlewood           |
| 24. | NOVELTY  | (1) 'Peacock from Bromelia'  | D. Upton                  |
| 25. | FLORAL DISPLAY   | No entries   |                           |
| 26. | FLORAL DISPLAY<br>ONE INFLORESCENCE                              | No entries   |                           |
| 27. | BEST<br>TILLANDSIOIDEAE  | <i>V. hieroglyphica</i> X 'Pahoa Beauty'   | L & O Trevor              |
| 28. | BEST BROMELIOIDEAE   | <i>A. 'Fredricka' variegata</i>  | L & O Trevor              |
| 29. | BEST CRYPTANTHUS   | <i>C. 'Chairman Price'</i>   | R. Paulsen                |
| 30. | BEST<br>PITCAIRNIOIDEAE  | <i>Dyckia platyphylla</i>  | R. Paulsen                |
| 31. | RESERVE CHAMPION   | <i>A. 'Fredricka' variegata</i>  | L & O Trevor              |
| 32. | CHAMPION<br>BROMELIAD  | <i>V. hieroglyphica</i> x 'Pahoa Beauty'   | L & O Trevor              |
|     | TOM SCHOFIELD AWARD  | <i>V. species</i>  | L & T Muller              |
|     | HIGHLY COMMENDED   | <i>T. didisticha</i> - R. Cross, <i>Tillandsia</i> Display - N. Ryan<br><i>Cryptanthus</i> Display - D. Reilly, <i>Dyckia</i> Display - R. Paulsen |                           |
|     | GOLD COAST SOCIETY<br>HIGHLY COMMENDED                           | <i>V. splendens</i> 'Juno' X <i>glutinosa</i> - J. Catlan<br>Neo. Skotak hybrid - J. Catlan  |                           |

## Combined Show Reports

The Combined Show is over, but the memory lingers on. My congratulations to the Show Committee, the winners of the awards and all those who entered their treasured plants.

What about the display? Smiling faces said it all, the general public loved it. This year's central display has to be one of our best. Rustic timbers and twisted aged tree limbs covered with flowering tillandsias stood above the tiered rows of the other genera. The competition tables were filled with quality plants, their bold explosion of multi-colours enthralled show visitors. My thanks to the Judges, their task made difficult by such quality. As always our Competition Steward Jeanette Henwood and helpers accepted our plants and arranged them on the appropriate tables.

The video 'Bromagic' shown continually throughout both days delighted everyone with beautifully photographed bromeliads plus a sound track straight from an Australian rainforest. The video was compiled and supplied by Keith Golinski. Thanks to all members who each year carry out the tasks to make the annual Combined Show run so smoothly – a very happy harmonious event.

Bob Cross – President.

Another year, another successful Combined Show. With a total number of one hundred entries, the Judges were called upon to choose winners from a large array of plants.

Champion plant of the show was a strikingly marked *Vriesea hieroglyphica*, X 'Pahoa Beauty' owned by Len & Olive Trevor. Reserve champion, a large *Aechmea 'Fredricka' variegata* (flowering as well) was also owned by Len & Olive.

Some beautiful cryptanthus were exhibited with Bob Paulsen's 'Charmain Price' being awarded Best Cryptanthus. Miniature neoregalias were well presented with some fine examples on show, colour and form were notable. Classes where bromeliads can be displayed to advantage on driftwood, in pots around various bits and pieces and as specimen groups, showed a marked increase in the number of entries, with some very pleasing exhibits for consideration.

Creativity was evident in Doug Upton's 'Peacock from Bromelia' – how does he think of these? My thanks to the many very patient and hard working helpers who arranged, rearranged, rearranged and finally arranged the tables and plants so that the competition tables were so effective and pleasing to the eye.

Jeanette Henwood – Chief Competition Steward.



On Saturday 3rd May the Bundaberg Bush House & Orchid Club included a visit to our Society as part of their annual coach trip. They left Bundaberg at 6.00am and called into Carseldine Garden World on their way to share lunch with us at Len & Olive Trevor's home at Ferny Hills.

Twenty three of our members were on hand to entertain our visitors. The morning had been showery but fortunately there was only a light drizzle of rain during their visit. Lunch comprised a BBQ with salad, followed by a wide selection of sweets with tea and coffee.

For those not wholly familiar with Bromeliads, Len spoke briefly about caring for the plants, then Len & Olive showed our visitors around part of their vast collection.

Before long it was back onto the coach to continue their weekend touring in southern Queensland and northern New South Wales. It was great to meet again with the Bush House & Orchid Club members we visited in Bundaberg a few years ago, and repay in a small way their kindness to us.

Liz Weir.

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The morning of the bus trip to Gympie was grey. Light rain continued to fall as members boarded the bus at the New Farm pick-up. The rain will not persist, it has to stop soon, we should have chosen another day, what does the weather-man say, who cares, he never gets it right anyway. Conversation about the weather was as grey as the sky. One optimistic member said, 'Hey!, no need to worry, it will be fine and sunny in Gympie.'

More passengers boarded at the next pick-up, good mornings and smiles and again more talk about the weather, the driver quickly closed the bus door and we were on our way.

The next stop, the Ginger Factory. Here we picked up the last of our members but there was time for morning tea, hot ginger scones with fresh cream and a cup of coffee. We all saw it, that break in the clouds. Here we were, only a short distance from our destination, the road was dry and the weather had cleared.

Among those boarding the bus at the Ginger Factory was Grace Goode. Grace, together with Margaret Paterson our Gympie host and Rhonda Symonds of Bundaberg planned a group discussion on cryptanthus later in the afternoon. But for now, every seat on the bus was taken (not one member cancelled) the next stop Gympie.

Margaret & Bill Paterson grow beautiful bromeliads, naturally everyone purchased plants. After lunch we talked about cryptanthus and later we toured their landscaped property. Small wooden bridges over fresh water creeks, trees where tillandsia seeds had been rubbed into the bark to produce tight masses of vigorous seedlings. Cryptanthus growing around the water's edge, against trees and among the leaf litter on the ground.

In the afternoon more cakes and coffee and a surprise for Grace, a large iced cake and well wishes for her eightieth year. May Grace continue with good health and happiness.

Time gets away, and with a long trip back to Brisbane it was farewell and thanks to Margaret and Bill Paterson for their hospitality. Once on the open highway we began the raffles. Olive Trevor and Margaret Paterson donated the bromeliads, Bob Cross the box of chocolates and a jar of jelly beans. The winners were all grinners – a great day.

### Letters to the Editor

May I say that I find your publication increasingly interesting. The article by R.Smythe MSc. is just one example. I would like to make a couple of comments arising from the 'All and Sundry' section.

Alas, *Andrea* is no longer with us, and we have *Nidularium selloanum* instead, we can blame Elton Leme for this change. It is still rare. Do you have access to 'An Alphabetical list of Bromeliad Binomials' compiled by Harry Luther and Edna Sieff. It makes interesting reading for those interested in names.

*Nidularium citrinum* cv. *Angellina* is not a nidularium and it isn't citrinum (alias billbergioides) It is an attractive variegated plant. When mine flowered some years ago I was greatly intrigued by the inflorescence and guessed it to be a bigeneric, namely *X Nidumea* with possible other parent being *Aechmea caudata variegata*. I sent an off-shoot to another doubting Thomas in N.S.W. and he flowered it too. He agreed on the *X. Nidumea* but had reservations on the parents being *Aec. caudata* and *Nid. billbergioides*. This plant appears in my check list under *Nidumea Angeline* and I would be intrigued to find out why this plant has not flowered (or is difficult to flower) in Queensland?

Derek Butcher – Fulham South Australia.

Thank you Derek for your interest. After receiving your letter it became obvious that we should pursue the subject further. The following refers to a members question on her plant labelled *Nidularium citrinum* cv. *Angellina*, (see *Bromeliaceae* May/June 1997 page 20.)

Upon inspection, the plant was clearly labelled *Nid.citrium cv.Angellina*, however this labelling is not correct. The plant has to be either *Nid.billbergioides* (orange bract) or *Nid.billbergioides var.citrinum* (yellow bract) but, because the word *citrinum* is visible on the label it is probably the latter. Any chance of leaf identification is not possible because of the growers heavy hand with fertilizer. Her plant is a healthy green and very strappy.

In the quest for answers some interesting facets came to the fore. I believe they will be of interest to you and our members and perhaps stimulate further comments. A Queensland grower imported *Nid.Angellina variegata* from Kent's California Nursery in 1980. When the plant was released from quarantine, our grower had some reason to query the plants identity, it looked more like an *Aechmea caudata variegata*. A phone call to Jeff Kent, he replied it did look like *Aechmea caudata variegata* but it was a *Nid.Angellina variegata*.

In 1983 while attending the Australian Conference in Sydney our grower visited the late George Clarke at Long Jetty. George had a very interesting collection of bromeliads and among these our grower found a plant labelled *Nid.Angellina variegata* on an identical Kent label, only the wording was extended with *X fasciata*. After a lot of discussion George and our grower swapped off-shoots and when their plants flowered it proved the plants were identical.

The plant labelled *Nid.Angellina variegata* can be found in some collections in the Brisbane area. The plant labelled *Nidumea Angeline* is difficult to find. However, this does not mean it cannot be found. When confronted with a plant labelled *Nid.Angellina variegata* most agreed to a possible parent *Aechmea caudata variegata*, the inflorescence although yellow, looked like an undersized *fasciata*.

It is uncertain why our members plant is reluctant to flower, she has now accepted it as a probable *Nid.billbergioides var.citrinum*. Ed.

The R.N.A.&I. Show Display – Thursday 7th to Saturday 16th August. Members are requested to assist with plants for the display. Set up commences from 4pm on Wednesday 6th. Members are also needed to Steward the display. If you can assist please contact the Roster Steward, Joy Upton at the July meeting or phone 3378 3511.

I am driven to write, to congratulate, to query and to subscribe my \$10, as I do not know if I am in your red or black books.

Bromeliaceae, the magazine is a most valuable support for far flung members such as I. It is read to a state of tatters, then stored for even later reference (not to mention its excellent dimensions for leaning against the marmalade pot).

The reason for my avidity is certainly my ignorance in being able to raise aechmeas and billbergias to my satisfaction in my seaside situation, latitude 24° 51". I waited in some hope for 'Harry' to carry out his suggestion of giving soil mixtures for each bromeliad species. Was this too basic for some? I for one must find a lifesaving recipe for my aechmeas which after 300mm of January rain fell into decline.

It seems to be ever so; great elation at bounding good health, dismal dejection as some blight of nature takes hold. I held to a recent belief that my green leaf aechmeas were afflicted by a fungus, such was the mottled effect on the leaves. Not so, a DPI scientist advised it was yet another scale, visible with good sight or microscope and able to fly in its juvenile stage. Remedy; spray Rogor at ten day intervals over 30 days. Certain I was consigning the afflicted to nirvana, I applied the spray and heigh-ho!!! the aechmeas survived, the scale did not.

However, it is soil mix recipes for aechmeas and billbergias I most desire. Keeping in mind billbergias in the wild are epiphytic, I tried a loose mix similar to that in which neoregelias thrive. It does not bind and when dried out can be penetrated quite loosely to the bottom of the pot. Billbergias don't care for it at all, multiply exponentially but do not flower. I am now trying some in a largely soil mixture.

Aechmeas such as those with woody stolons might as well be planted in breakfast cereal, they don't root or stand up firmly, and multiply reluctantly. Other types of aechmea are like as not to suddenly do the dire thing of expiring in the centre. The mixture is almost identical to one featured in Bromeliaceae but something is holding too much water, (peat constitutes only 1/8 of the whole.) Your comments would be ever so helpful.

Joni Simpson  
Tannum Sands Qld.

*At this time Joni, I would like to make just one comment, and that is, I do not believe a potting medium which is largely a soil mixture will solve your problem. I'm sure our members will comment and offer their help and guidance with a reliable potting medium. How about it fellow members, let's help Joni with our collective comments.*

Ed.

## All & Sundry

Q/. Several months ago I filled a clear glass container (an ordinary jam jar) with small stones and topped it up with water. I set an off-shoot of *Aechmea fulgens* among the stones. The plant has produced roots (white and very soft) the leaves have grown and I can find little difference between another *Aechmea fulgens* off-shoot planted in potting mix. I would like to ask has anyone grown bromeliads in water?

A/. A host of information has been written on hydroponics, but very little on bromeliad aquaculture. Your interesting letter was enough to stir my curiosity and push me into some research. Some time ago, members of the New York Bromeliad Society got together and began a project growing bromeliads in water. It was described as a modest experiment, loosely organized with few guidelines. There were sceptical members, the general feeling was that plants would rot using water as the growing medium. They began with unrooted off-shoots (as you have done) they were held firm in containers of gravel, pebbles and broken crock. In time roots began to form and extended among the pebbles etc., at this time, the sceptical members were beginning to take an interest. The project indicated there was little or no danger that aquaculture would harm their plants. After six to eight months none of the plants had rotted. Complete records of the project are not available in my library, I do not know if their plants matured and flowered. In an effort to answer your question I have written to the Editor of the New York Bromeliad Society. When I receive a reply, I shall inform you through 'All and Sundry'.

Q/. Billbergias are a very popular plant to grow, and they look terrific as indoor decoration. My question, should I fertilize them, if so, when and what do I use. I have read they grow much better when grown 'hard', but does this mean I should starve them?

A/. It could be argued, billbergias are similar to neoregelias in fertilization and light requirements, grown in bright light with a limited supply of fertilizer. Some growers use slow release granules when potting new off-shoots, and nothing else during the growing period. Others prefer not to fertilize the mix but apply weak foliar fertilizer periodically, many growers advise no fertilizer at all. If all of this is confusing, remember growing conditions vary, good growers trial different techniques to achieve better results. Feed your billbergias if you feel they are not progressing, but sparingly.

Please send all contributions for publication in Bromeliaceae to:  
The Editorial Committee  
C/- Doug Upton  
101 Jerrang Street  
Indooroopilly, Brisbane 4068

### *Publication Deadlines for 'Bromeliaceae'*

All articles, competition results, programme details and other items of interest for publication must be in the hands of the Editorial Committee by the following dates:

|                                   |                  |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| September - October, 1997 Edition | 21 August, 1997  |
| November - December, 1997 Edition | 16 October, 1997 |

### *Advertising in 'Bromeliaceae'*

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The video 'Bromagic' is now available. Running time is 95 minutes.

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