

# *Bromeliaceae*



*VOLUME XLIV - No. 1*

-

Jan/Feb 2010



# The Bromeliad Society of Queensland Inc.

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information in their articles.

Front Cover: *Bil. 'Poquito Mas'*

Photo by Ross Stenhouse

Rear Cover : *Bil. 'Catherine Wilson'*

Photo by Ross Stenhouse

# Contents

GROWING FROM SEED.....	5
OPEN GARDEN...WOW !!!!.....	5
THE BSQ WEB SITE.....	6
<i>ALCANTAREA NOVA</i> AFF. <i>PATRIAE</i> RSS VS. <i>ALCANTAREA EXTENSA</i> .....	7
GROWING BROMS AS SEMI-AQUATICS.....	11
MORE & MORE MACAW.....	11
BROMELIACEAE COMES UNDER FIRE.....	11
<i>VRIESEA</i> 'GOLDFINGER'.....	13
THE UPPER PUPPERS.....	13
MEMBERSHIP FEE INCREASE.....	15
<i>ALCANTAREA TURGIDA</i> .....	16
TAKE NOTES.....	18
AT WAR WITH WRIGGLERS.....	18
<i>BROMELIA BALANSAE</i> IN AUSTRALIA.....	20
<i>TILLANDSIA</i> 'HAL'S NIDUS'.....	23
CATHERINE WILSON - MOTHER OF MILLIONS!.....	26
CALENDAR OF EVENTS.....	26
PLANT OF THE MONTH PROGRAMME FOR 2010.....	27

## Note from the Editor's Desk

Yes it had to happen, as editor I have decided to only accept contributions to this journal that have been emailed to me. I will no longer publish hand-written or typed contributions. I only get an extremely small number of non-electronically delivered contributions so it won't affect many members.

My reason for doing so can be traced to 'Cause and Effect', recently I received a letter from a member which in part said "I have heard personally that many of us would like to do more articles, but are reluctant due to errors. One man said the error made actually destroyed the whole point of his article". To that person my most sincerely apology. The new policy should help reduce the chance of that happening. Likewise I will only be accepting images (photos) in electronic form. No hard-copy photographs thanks and I will not be returning any that have been sent. I no longer have a scanner to scan them into electronic form so sending them serves no purpose.

On a more positive note, else where in this issue I make mention that lots and lots of you complement me on the quality and content of Bromeliaceae, on behalf of the contributors who write the articles - thanks for the kind words. It's those kinds of comments that make me want to try harder to improve.

Rob Smythe has been very busy over the Christmas period., We have a number of very interesting and diverse contributions this issue - it's a bit of a Smythe and Smythe issue. I told Rob that I may have to hold off on publishing some of his articles else it would look like no one else was writing which is not the case. Rob - Well Done!

Where would "Bromeliad Sleuthing" be in Australia with out Uncle Derek - Derek Butcher, more interesting articles from Derek. Derek Butcher helps to put that longitudinal perspective into our interest in bromeliads, He gives us the background to many types.





*Bromeliaceae*

4

Jan/Feb 2010

## Growing From Seed

Author: Rob Smythe MSc

Growing broms from seed is absurdly simple. Up to growing from seed I was mad about broms. Now growing from seed I am insane about them. I think I am now untreatable.

Before you get carried away you need to fully appreciate the following.

- 90% of your plants are going to finish up in the trash bin.
- You have 5 years of your life to devote to them.
- You hybridize to a theme not just with what is available.

It is absolutely unbelievably easy once you have collected seed. Below is as simple as it gets. This sequence is shown in the photo on the page opposite (top image).

### What you need for the seedling stage.

- Clear sandwich boxes and a pair of scissors to cut drain holes in the corners.
- Fine coir dust as a growing medium.
- Yogurt containers
- Dilute fertilizer.

The fine coir comes in compressed blocks and seems fairly sterile. Recently I have been using it without sterilization. If you have trouble a few minutes in the microwave will do. Make sure it is damp if you value your microwave.

Place seed, no need to wash, on to the medium, dampen and close lid down. This keeps ants out which would normally carry off unwashed seed and will keep rain from washing small plants out. The way sandwich boxes are designed water still makes its way inside unlike take away food boxes.

Leave to germinate, fertilize immediately and often and dilute. Medium is initially nutrient deficient but quickly absorbs

fertilizer.

When the plants are strong cut the lid off.

From time to time sprinkle the exposed areas of the surface with coir dust. This is my secret released to all. It prevents the number one killer, algae, from building up to toxic levels.

As they grow bigger form community pots. Now I will have the coarse coir for about three quarters of the pot and fines on the top. Soon they will be ready for potting out. The fastest growing seed was an *Aechmea*. It grew from seed to flower in 10 months. Neos can start to mature in two years but the concentrica types may take 5 years. They are mostly mature by 4 years but they take a year or two more to flower up here in the tropics.

The photos show from empty seed trays up to plants ready to form community pots. For community pots I use yogurt containers. I choose these containers because they are deep and rectangular and therefore pack together well on seedling trays. Photos also show plants starting to colour up then in an area where they are getting big enough to sort out the good ones. Don't forget to register the good ones.

## OPEN GARDEN... WOW !!!!

Author: Anne McBurnie.

How would you like to open your garden to the public? - What!!! Do you think I'm crazy?

Philip and I have now opened our garden three times to the public through the Australian Open Garden Scheme.

So, what is this scheme?

It is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1987. It's mission is to promote the knowledge and pleasure of gardens and



gardening across Australia. Gardens are selected by a selection panel. 65% of entry fees to each garden is returned to the community in the form of grants for garden related activities. Since 1987 \$980,000 has been given to community garden projects. Many of these include gardens at schools as well as heritage gardens.

We have also opened our garden for Field Days and Bus Tours. So many non-gardeners ask...." Why? What motivates you?" The answer is ...sharing. I have always considered my garden as my "escape". I escape into a garden wonderland of beauty where mainly pleasant sights fill my eyes and lovely thoughts and feelings envelop my spirit. It is also an escape from some of the more difficult realities of life that we all have to face at sometime or another. Whenever I feel tension it is good to get the shovel and dig, dig, dig! You may ponder on the fact that we have developed one and a half acres from scratch in 6 years!

It was in May last year that I realized that our garden is an escape for many others too. Here, they can lose themselves along the many pathways and garden rooms and concentrate only on the different plants and trees and various distractions that catch them unaware and put a smile on their faces.

I was sharing these thoughts with a lady who had returned a week after our garden opening for a special plant that she had requested. She said "Yes, I'm one of those! My husband is in the car, parked at the end of the driveway. He has Alzheimers and Parkinsons'

### **The BSQ Web Site**

Don't forget that the society has a web site. We place urgent and general information and information on the site.

The URL is:

**[www.Bromeliadsqueensland.com](http://www.Bromeliadsqueensland.com)**

Disease and I'm his carer. A couple of hours getaway in a garden is so precious!" We meet so many appreciative people.

When we open our garden we aim to provide the "total experience." Many visitors love to sit and have a cup of tea and chat for awhile. I have gathered enough mugs, tables and chairs to seat 45 at a time. The excellent urn that Bob Cross kindly allows us to borrow provides "worry free, non stop hot water". Fresh, clean, white tablecloths adorn all the tables and freshly made tasty sandwiches and Devonshire teas are readily available. Refreshments are served on the back porch which is sheltered and shaded by colourful standardized bougainvilleas which flower throughout the year and provide a convivial atmosphere.

A wonderful integral part of our open garden has been the glorious harp music and song provided by Jacqui Lamont who is a true professional in every way. Jacqui dresses in mediaeval costume which includes a long flowing satin gown with matching flowers in her hair. The music floats through the gardens.

Of course this all sounds wonderful, looks wonderful and hopefully is a wonderful experience for all who come. However, the "behind the scenes" reality encompasses months and months of preparation. This means trimming, raking, extensive garden mulching and makeovers [especially during drought] and more time watering if the drought is prolonged. Thankfully our bromeliad gardens need little water! They only need a strong hose out to "clean their faces" before visitors arrive.

Time must also be spent on promotion – leaflets printed and distributed, a history and description of the garden to be handed out on the day, contacting newspapers, radio, etc. Food and drink has to be ordered, collected and prepared.

An essential element for the success of an open garden is HELPERS!

I am eternally thankful to the 18 people who give up a half or even a full day to help. Many came from our bromeliad society, as well as friends from my school and college days, filling such positions as gate entry, selling plants, catering. Without their help it just wouldn't happen. Thankyou.

So, will we open our garden again?.... What, do you think we're crazy? - Yes, probably!!!

*Alcantarea nova*  
*aff. patriae* RSS vs.  
*Alcantarea extensa*

Author: Rob Smythe MSc

This name nova is only a temporary name for this plant until a botanist describes it. I purchased it as *Alc. edmundoi* (this name no longer exists) but after flowering I knew this name to be incorrect for other reasons. If you go back to July/ August 2009 issue of this magazine pp 116 to 120 the full story will unfold. The related pictures should appear in this edition.

In Jan/Feb 2008 there was an article on 'The Night Flowering *Alcantarea edmundoi*'. If you think you have this plant the pictures on page 14 of that issue might help a little. This name was corrected in the July/August 2008 issue. The article I am about to write, with the pictures in this issue should help you decide if you have this possible new species.

*Alc. nova aff. patriae* resembles *Alc. patriae* and *Alc. extensa*. Here I hope to help you separate nova from extensa. Extensa is a poorly described species which is currently

under review. Using data from Smith and Down's description and some additions occurring in the *Alcantarea* literature in more recent times, I have compared this data with my data for nova.

Nova has a much larger flower 14cm vs. 9-11cm. Nova has a fascinating flower being strongly orange/bronze in bud. Opens as night approaches, turning into a bright golden yellow flower which matures a couple of hours after dark, no scent, wind pollinated,

### The Book!

"Starting with Bromeliads" is 100 pages in length and contains over 200 colour photographs of bromeliads and covers such topics as plant descriptions, caring for bromeliads, and landscaping with bromeliads.



The book is available for purchase at a price of \$18 plus \$3 P&P. Discounts available for bulk purchases

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All photos are of *Alc. 'Nova' aff. patriae* RSS.

**Top left:** flower Spike.

**Centre left:** with immature inflorescence,

**Bottom Left:** Seeds

**Top right:** 3 metres high to top of inflorescence.

**Bottom right:** Showing long floral branches on the inflorescence



and going limp and white by mid morning and dripping nectar from glands which are not inside the flower. No comparison is available for *extensa*. One might say if *extensa* did this it would be reported.

The answer is a lot of the data comes from dried herbarium specimens so none of this would be recorded. *Nova* is much wider in the leaf than *extensa* with 18 cm wide leaf blades vs. 5-10 cm. *Extensa* is the wider plant with leaves 100cm vs. 85 cm and of similar height plant when in flower.

- Branches 8 to 9 with *extensa* and 13 to 14 with *nova*.
- Branches 65 cm with *extensa* and 55 cm for *nova*
- Flowers 9-11 cm for *extensa* and 14 cm for *nova*
- Petals 8 cm for *extensa* and 11 cm for *nova*.

The funnel of leaves seems to be the most obvious distinguishing feature. Both are a bluish green but *nova* has leaves twice as wide with a rounded tip appearance due to a distinctive downwardly curled tip. Looking at the sketch adjoining the description of *extensa* I can see that *extensa* has a more gradually tapering tip with no pronounced curling.

One major problem in adhering to the botanical description is that *extensa* is described as having smooth shiny leaves when every plant we believe to be *extensa* has a dull wax-coated bands. Surely they can't all be wrong! I contacted a leading *Alcantarea* taxonomist about this and he suggested that with drying and handling of herbarium specimens this wax can be worn away.

I hope that is enough to help you sort out your plant.

## **Bromeliad Society of Queensland Inc.**

### **Annual General Meeting**

Venue: The Uniting Hall, 52 Merthyr Rd., New Farm, Brisbane,

**18th March 2010  
commencing 7.30 pm.**

#### **Business to be conducted includes:**

- Receiving the Society's finance statement and audit report for the last reportable year
- Presenting the financial statement and audit report to the meeting for adoption
- Electing members of the management committee
- Appointing an auditor or accountant for the present/new financial year

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*Bromeliaceae*

10

Jan/Feb 2010



## Growing Broms as Semi-Aquatics.

Author: Rob Smythe MSc

I think this is a feature of broms not yet utilized enough in garden planning. Semi aquatic just means the root system is under water. (Ed. see image opposite page bottom)

Previously I had reported growing Orthophytum and Neophytum as semi aquatics, here I am reporting on *Quesnelia arvensis* as a perfect subject. The tag on the left hand plant says September 2008 so its lower section has been under water for 14 months.

By September this year I was not sure of the plant's name so the second plant is definitely *Quesnelia arvensis* and it has been in place 9 weeks. There is always something to learn. Now when I find one of those disasters - Neo's black with scale on the underside - I just throw them in the old back pond for a week. Works just like a thorough coat of oil but safe.



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*Bromeliaceae*

I then treat the area above the water line by my preferred method. With such badly infested plants, in the past, I knew I could never win so I concentrated on getting clean pups then put mother in the bin. Not so now.

## More & More Macaw

Author: Deb Horne

Relief! The *Neo*. 'Red Macaw' beast has finally flowered. Shown here, photographed with other larger growing neoregelias.

This wonderful plant is now a mighty 1m wide. Taking up valuable space of around 12 or more usual size plants...the beast has been moved around + round with its arms out ready to attack any innocent passer-by. The beast is now destined to hang from the roof perhaps?.

(Ed See image opposite page top)

## Bromeliaceae comes under fire

Now as editor, I thought I was doing a good job and that seems to be the opinion of a lot of the Society's members as well. I love reading those very nice little notes that people write on their membership renewals.

About half of the Society's expenditure goes into the printing and postage of this journal, I think that is fair enough because the other half can go towards running the Society. The membership fees have had to rise to cover the costs of the Society, basically we have been running at a loss and that cannot be allowed to continue.

If you want to show your support or show your disfavour, drop me an email:

*rossjanstenhouse@hotmail.com*

or send a letter to the secretary, he likes getting letters

11

Jan/Feb 2010



Rob Smythe's magnificent mother plant. 107 hair pups and still going. There are at least 10 and more popping up along the stem--minute green dots. Who needs meristem tissue culture?





## ***Vriesea* 'Goldfinger'**

by Derek Butcher 12/2009.

This all started in November when Mick Romanowski from Melbourne sent me a *Vriesea dubia* in bud and asking me to butcher it. He was dubious about the name!

The plant flowered so I was able to dissect it and take scans of the various bits. I was even able to use a new gadget which I call my computer plug in microscope that I had got through Ian Hook, the BSA webmaster, to prove it had petal appendages!

Armed with this information I referred the matter to Harry Luther asking him to confirm this was really a *Vriesea dubia* with a yellow flower. Much to my surprise Harry was very dubious about the name and wanted more information!

Subsequent investigation revealed that Peter Tristram from near Coff's Harbour in New South Wales had imported an unknown *Vriesea* from Werner Krauspe in California around 1980. When it flowered, Harry said he considered it to be a *Vriesea dubia*. This is in line with a similar species *Vr. chrysostachys* which can have either white or yellow flowers. This did not worry me but it did worry Peter because *Vriesea alborubrobracteata* was making its rounds and this was considered to be a synonym of *V. dubia*. The rest of us Aussies blithely carried on propagating this *Vr. dubia*. It grew well under many different growing conditions and its 'gold fingers' lasted for months. You rarely saw the yellow flowers poking up because they blended in with the yellow bracts! It never set seed!

Let us have a quick look at Smith & Downs Tillandsioideae 1977 where we have this group of vriesias included in the section Xiphion. Many of the species here are now treated in the genus *Werauhia*, leaving behind

a hotchpotch of species in *Vriesea*. Grant in the 1990's moved the more blatant oddbods from *Vriesea* to *Werauhia* and *Alcantarea* but left other oddbods behind! However, he did suggest that these 'Colombian' vriesias seemed better treated as 'Allardtia'! ( Pers Comm)

In the 1980's *V. dubia* and *V. chrysostachys* were known to the botanic world and then Harry Luther introduced us to *V. ospinae* in 1983. He did not know how variable this species could be because it was not until 1992 that var. *gruberi* was published.

So in the 1980's he would have had a more narrow view of what *V. ospinae* looked like.

Also in the 1980's the hybridists in Europe were busy too with these new acquisitions and we know that *V. 'Elan'* came from this era. If you refer to the article on 'Elan' in 'Uncle Derek says' <http://fcbs.org> you will see the mess made on parentage quoted. We do not know what other hybrids were attempted either in Europe or the USA.

We now are in a quandary as to the true origins of 'Goldfinger' because you can see influences of *V. ospinae* in it. Is it man made or will it be found in the wild? The best solution is to give it a cultivar name.

## **THE UPPER PUPPERS**

(by Olwen Ferris)

*Editorial comment (Bob Reilly): Most bromeliads produce their pups, or offsets, low down on the plant, near ground-level. These pups are relatively easy to remove. However, a number of bromeliads, including some very desirable ones, produce their pups high up on the parent plant. Examples of species that do this are: Vriesea elata and Guzmania sanguinea. In the article below,*

*Olwen Ferris (deceased) describes how she removed these pups. Olwen Ferris ran a retail bromeliad nursery for many years and also edited Bromeleter (the journal of the Australian Bromeliad Society [ Inc]) for over 10 years. This article is reprinted, with permission, from the September/October 1984 edition of Bromeleter.*

Many people ask me what my favourite bromeliad is: a question that is very hard to answer. One species that gives me outstanding satisfaction over a long flowering period is *Tillandsia lindenii*. It is more than 20 years since I bought a plant, past flowering, but with one nice offset growing alongside the spent, central, dry scape. At that time, I had no knowledge of how to surgically remove central offsets on plants of this type, so I left it alone. I later removed the dry leaves from the old parent plant and lowered the new plant down into the terracotta pot, taking care to use a very open mix with chunks of tree fern fibre and charcoal.

The new plant duly flowered and three suckers appeared around the spent spike. When they were about 75% grown, I decided to experiment and remove two offsets.

First step. I made myself comfortable at a table where the light was good. A sharp instrument was needed, so my serrated vegetable knife came in handy.

Second step. Look closely at the plant. Remove leaves from the side of the offset and directly below it. (Split the leaf down the centre and tear one half of it away by twisting to the right, and then the other in the opposite direction. Repeat with each leaf to be removed).

Third step. As you can see no roots descending on the outer side of the mother plant, there is only one place that you will find them i.e. inside the stem of the old plant. Have you removed enough leaves to allow for easy working on each side of the offset?

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You have to be able to see where the offset emerges from the mother's stem.

Fourth step. Make a downward cut into the mother's stem on each side of the offset to be removed. I like to do it little by little, gradually deeper and downwards, and also gradually levering the offset forward. The roots attached to the offset will hold the sucker (onto the mother plant), and I like to get 1.5 cm of root, so make a cut this distance below, and gently tear the plant away. Dust the base with fungicide, or one of the new rooting powders, and pot in an open potting mix in a small pot. When rooted, a 12 cm hanging pot will accommodate your plant of *T. lindemii*.

**WARNING:** Always start cutting on each side of any central offset, never from behind. Otherwise, one tiny slip of the knife and you can end up with a handful of leaves.

### **Membership Fee Increase**

In the year 2010 the membership fee is \$35.00 single/\$40.00 family/\$50 overseas Payment may be made by cash, cheque or money order. The Society does not have any electronic banking facility to accept credit card payments.

Fees fall due 1st January each year and the constitution allows a grace period of two months to allow people to pay their fees, making the end of February as the cut-off date.

In order to control costs, Bromeliaceae will not be posted to members who haven't paid their fees.

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## *Alcantarea turgida*

Author: Rob Smythe MSc

*Alcantarea turgida* Versieux & Wand., sp. nov. *Brittonia* 59(1): 57-64, 2007 (Ed. See image opposite page.)

This, one of the most horticulturally exciting *alcantareas*, only described in 2007, is shown above. Only this week after a bit of nagging Leonardo Versieux has sent me pictures and given me permission to publish them here. I only had a black and white sketch and nice bloke as he is he must have got tired of saying, "no" to pictures that I sent him.

Unfortunately I have not turned it up in Australia, as yet, and with the newest import regulations it may be a couple of years being cleared of possibly being a weed. Bob Reilly is looking after that end. As you can see from the photo even though there is a heap of seedlings at the base it is very sparse. There may be a couple more at the cliff base. It has been found at three protected sites but Leonardo feels its existence might be threatened in the future because of its horticultural desirability and fires from adjacent grazing areas. Future generations may only have this photo to admire. Knowing some of the Mexicans down south I'm not too worried about that happening.

Like most *alcantareas* it has a place in our garden as an architectural exhibit. Averaging 2.5 m high (in flower) and averaging 1.5 meters wide it will be statuesque. It grows at exactly the same latitude as where Townsville sits but we have no gardens at 1000 to 1200 meters up in the air so it should grow great guns in Brisbane. We seem to be doing OK with *imperialis* up here so we should do OK with this plant. The secret to growing *alcantareas* is to get them moving and don't let them stall. This way they flower in about a third of the time for neglected plants.

Keep looking. There may be one out there. Plants it might be confused with are:

*Alc. musilaginosa* leaves are very different. *Alc. musilaginosa* appears to be in Australia under the name *Alc.* 'Raymond Golden Brown' or code PF975.

I noticed this connection immediately on publication so I have sent photos of our plant (PF975) to the botanist who described the new species and was told that it looks like *Alc. musilaginosa*. That is usually nearly 100% confirmation from a botanist. I will wait till I see fresh material. Ross Little has sent me a hair pup. Fingers crossed for '2-3 years'. If you need to compare your plant with PF975 a photo is available on the Aust. Brom. Web site.

*Alc. extensa* and *vinicolor*-- this time the plant itself looks similar but the inflorescence is quite different.

*Alc. imperialis*-- the plant colouration looks similar but the bright shiny leaf surface of *turgida* is a dead give away. Flowers also are of a completely different type.

*Alc. geniculata* here the give away is the leaf colour. *Geniculata* is not red. You could be tricked here as you will have to see your suspect plant grown in full sun. A plant of *Alc. heloisae* has similar distribution of colour but not so dramatic. It stays all green unless in all day full sun, and I believe in cool conditions

*Leonardo Versieux - turgida is not always red leaved so you may have to go to the original description and use more specialized taxonomic details to separate geniculata from turgida. Leaf colour is not given much importance in botanical descriptions. Imperialis is described as green plus obscurely spotted. Odorata is said to be green and turgida is wine coloured margins with wine spotting. We have seen brilliant red forms of all of these.*

Something to look forward to.





*Bromeliaceae*

17

Jan/Feb 2010

## Take Notes

Author: Leisa Driesener

If you're very new to bromeliads, or have a small collection, you may not be too concerned about the exact names and details of each plant. But over time as your interest and collection expands, you might find it handy to have a record of what you have, and how they've grown and changed over time.

Here are some simple ideas to track your bromeliads:

- Rule up a cheap exercise book with columns for data such as genus, name, purchased date, amount, source, flowering date, number of pups, position in the garden, description etc.

- Organising your information onto separate pages or sections for each genus, eg *Neoregelia*, *Tillandsia* etc, makes it easier to locate the details for a particular plant, and to keep a growing collection organised.

- An (exercise book sized) address book with A-Z tabs can also be handy to provide organisation and separation of names alphabetically.

- Take (digital) photos of your broms to record when they're looking their best, flowering or having pups.

- If you've got an unknown plant, and want to get it identified, having a good picture of it in flower can be invaluable.

- Organise your brom photos on your PC into separate folders with one per month, eg 2010\_Sep, 2010\_Oct, etc or per year, so you can look back to see what the plant was like this time last year.

- Or keep a separate folder for each genus, and prefix the original filename of each picture with the name of the plant and the date of the picture (in year-month-day format), eg Neo\_Lila\_090702\_P2013602.JPG, Neo\_Lila\_091207\_PB084002.JPG. (Right-click

on the file and select Rename, but remember to keep the file extension, eg .JPG) Sorting the files in a folder by filename will group all pictures for a given plant together and list them in date order.

- Compare pictures over time if you're moving plants around the garden or shade house or changing your potting mix etc, to see if you're getting better or worse results.

- Keep a logbook of your watering and fertilising regimen if you're aiming for the optimal results; used together with your pictures, you can readily see the results.

- Keep a wish list of plants, but don't forget to cross them off as you acquire them!

## At WAR with Wrigglers

by Rob Smythe MSc

The picture on the page over shows the weapons for mass destruction of mossies. At the start of the wet season wrigglers become a problem in broms in the tropics. After about a month all settles down as mossie predators are then in numbers.

My artillery is shown in the picture and includes the following:

- A torch, this is important as the easiest way to find these pesky critters is at night.

- A very large flat and white observation tray.

- Skewers: used to puncture the wells of offending plants. The smaller BBQ skewer shown is used for *Neoregelias* while the child's fishing rod tipped with a nail is used for the big *Aechmeas* and the like. With large *Alcantareas* and the like of the *Ae. blanchetiana* alliance I use the very large fishing rod type skewers to penetrate the base of the leaf to let the water out. This is only used on mature leaves otherwise the hole migrates upwards and the axil as the leaf grows and



War on the Mossie weapons



The two images show descendents of a single plant (bought as *Neo. 'Marble Throat'*) grown by Leisa Driesener, showing definite cultural variation.

In Leisa's article, she emphasises the importance of keeping records, in this case photos. Leisa's two pictures allow ready comparison of her potting mix & light level experiments.

(Ed. See image right of the *Neo. Marble Throat* with which I am more familiar.)



once more fills with water. Add water gel instead for these cases. For small flowered Neoregelias I usually remove the source of food by screwing out the dead flower. Mosses usually don't bother the plant then and are visible if they infest. I sometimes want to keep plants with setting seed. I push the skewer down under the flower and release the water.

- A siphon: for plants you can't tip over. I also use a glass pipette for smaller volumes of water (not in picture).

- Kero: a couple of drops wipes out wrigglers and spares the predators. Using kero/ canola oil mix as a spray, is safer.

- A bucket to transfer water from the tray to the watering can. Watering can to transfer predators more widely through out your plant collection.

- Water Gel crystals-use mentioned above

## ***Bromelia balansae* in Australia**

by Derek Butcher Nov 2009.

This all started for me in 1982 when I had been seconded by my Employer to work in Sydney for a few months. My *Bromelia balansae* flowered and it was left to my neighbour to be so astounded at the colours produced that she took photos. The plant got too big and was removed from the front garden and I took little notice of this prickly plant which is a bit slow under Adelaide conditions. Bill Morris did tell me that when he was in Cairns in the 1970's they had these plants in the centre strip of the main street. I have been advised that these are no more and have been replaced by *Pitcairnia* of some sort.

In 1995 in the Bromeliad Society Journal page 261, Harry Luther wrote about wrongly named *Bromelia* in Florida and I felt

that the same errors could apply to Australia. Despite my asking people to take photos of their flowering *B. balansae* I got nowhere. I wasn't going to grow prickly things like that when I had tillandsias to play with!

Pricklies are best in someone else's garden and best observed from a distance. Some keen growers in Adelaide maintained that growing the plant in a large plastic pot was the answer but nobody saw a flower with this method but lots of offsets. These invariably emerged through the drainage hole and because it was Harry Bamford's plant we called it 'Harry's Problem' because nobody wanted to solve it!

What a surprise when a fellow Tillandsia nutter by the name of Gary May of Brisbane said he had seen this beautifully strikingly red *Bromelia balansae* growing in someone else's garden! AND he was prepared to get close and take photos—even to getting access to a single flower so I could check the sepal shape. He even had one in his own back yard that followed closely in flowering too. This is why you see these stunning photos here.

The key to the genus in Smith & Downs is not easy to follow and when you see two or three species names cropping up in more than one place as you wander through the key you realise there is a certain amount of overlapping in key elements! Anyway, I could not get past *B. serra* another wide spread species in the wild. Rather tentatively I wrote to Harry Luther for his view and he said, "I believe you are correct".

History has a habit of repeating itself and shows how plants that have not had their names changed because nobody read the articles, have a habit of surviving whereas those that have been corrected died. Perhaps we should treat this as Uncle Derek's Principle or UDP for short. Any way, this is what Mulford Foster wrote over 50 years ago





Top above : *Bromelia serra* photo by Gary May

Bottom above : *Bromelia serra* photo of branch by Gary May

"NOMENCLATURE CLARIFICATION -No. 6 by Mulford B. Foster in Brom Soc Bull. 5(4): 60. 1955

***Bromelia serra* versus *B. Balansae***

The most common species of the genus Bromelia in our subtropical gardens is *B. balansae*. This species was first distributed under the name of *B. serra*.

*B. Balansae* is native to Argentina, Brasil and Paraguay. It has an upright inflorescence that sometimes reaches four feet. The flowers are borne in a rather tight fitting panicle which branches out as the fruit ripens.

*B. serra* bears a much smaller and more compact semi-globular flower head and the inflorescence seldom attains more than twelve to eighteen inches in height. Both species are very showy when they are coming into flower, although *B. balansae* puts on a much more spectacular show with its crimson red bracts which surround the inflorescence.

On the Cover page of The Bromeliad Society Bulletin, Vol. 2, No. 3, May/June 1952, is shown a very good photo of *B. pinguin*. This species is common throughout the Caribbean and West Indian area, and while there have been some plants of this species in a few gardens, it has not been as popular as *B. Balansae* or the *B. serra* var. *variegata*

because of its less spectacular colour display. Unfortunately, during the past fifteen years or more, practically all of the species in the genus Bromelia to be found in our southern gardens, or in the northern botanical gardens, has been labelled *B. pinguin*.

The genus in general has been a bit confusing to both botanist and layman but the fresh material of both *B. serra* and *B. balansae* the writer collected in 1939 and 1940 helped to clear up some of this confusion. I have collected more than a dozen species of these well-armed spiny members of the genus Bromelia, two of them being new, and I can quite readily understand why so many poor and often incomplete herbarium specimens have been presented to the botanist for identification."

This raises the question as to whether the variegated Bromelia got to Australia. I feel it did not, otherwise there would be even more fanfares! So if your *B. balansae* flowers like the photos then please change its name to *B. serra*. But please look after it after changing the label – Beware UDP! If it does not agree and you are prepared to do what Gary did, then send me photos too and we will have more investigation.

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## Tillandsia 'Hal's Nidus'

by Derek Butcher 11/2009.

This plant became a "Tillnuts" discussion when Mark Supple of Newcastle showed a photo of a flowering plant of his called *T. fasciculata* 'Minor'. As you all know, I shudder at the use of this adjective because it means there are differences between this plant and the species but nobody has bothered to define what these differences are.

The advantage of Tillnuts is that we are all terrible poker players and love to show our hand so others can get involved. This was no exception where it appears this plant started its Australian life in the 1980's when Hal Ellis from Victoria was importing plants with Garry Thompson.

As is usual, offsets get exchanged and Chris Larson was not happy with the name 'minor' and started investigating. He even cornered Renate Ehlers at the Adelaide Conference in 1995. It was felt that the plant could be Rauh's *T. nidus* which was still a somewhat unknown quantity at that time. Nothing further was done other than Chris and Maurice Kellett changing their name to *T. nidus*.

For the first time we will now show what Rauh said in 1983 but in English!

*Tillandsia nidus* Rauh & Lehmann,

Trop. Subtrop. Pflanz. 41: 19-22. 1983

- Plant stemless, flowering to 20cm high. Leaves numerous, narrow, erect, occasionally secund, making a large rosette 5 – 6cm diam.

- Leaf sheath indistinct, ca 3cm long, 1.4cm wide, pale brown lepidote.

- Leaf blade erect, narrow triangular, to 20cm long, 1.4cm wide near sheath, channelled, long attenuate, green, dense grey lepidote.

- Scape very short, 2 – 3cm long, 4mm thick.

- Scape bracts 2 – 3, membranous, ca 2cm long, much shorter than the primary bract.

- Primary bract leaflike, erect, the bottom ones with its sheath as long as the spike with long filiform dense grey lepidote blade, the upper ones shorter.

- Inflorescence nestling, exceeded by the leaves, 8 – 10cm long, 5 – 8cm wide, densely bipinnate, with 10 – 14 erect, complanate, short stemmed, 4 – 5cm long, 1.5cm wide, ca. 5 flowered spikes.

- Flower bracts densely imbricate, ca. 4cm long, 1.2cm wide, keeled, with short hooked tip, membranous, carmine red, at the bottom green, laxly lepidote, smooth, (when dry strongly nerved) much exceeding the sepals.

- Sepals 25mm long, 6mm wide, acumi-

## Books For Sale

The Society has the following books for sale:

• Starting with Bromeliads	\$18
• Pitcher Plants of the Americas	\$60
• Bromeliads: A Cultural Manual	\$5
• Back Copies of Bromeliaceae (2005, 2006 Editions)	\$4
• Bromeliads for the Contemporary Garden by Andrew Steens	\$36
• Bromeliads: Next Generation by Shane Zaghini	\$33
• Bromeliads: The Connoisseurs Guide by Andrew Steens	\$36

Postage and package extra. Unfortunately we cannot supply overseas orders. Please phone the Librarian, Mrs Evelyn Rees (07) 3355 0432 to order books.

nate, keeled, membranous, free, reddish at tip, otherwise whitish.

- Petals 4cm long, 3mm wide, pale violet with white edges and a blunt weakly reflexed tip.

- Stamens and Style protruding. Filament 22mm long, anther 7mm long.

- Ovary 7mm long.

- Habitat central Mexico without exact location.

- Holotype BGH 46 409 in Heidelberg (HEID)

*T. nidus* had already been known for a long time by J. Zehnder, Kaktimex, Switzerland, without collection data and reached Dr. J. Rutschmann, Basel, as *T. diguetii* 'Mez' on the basis of the nesting, deeply inserted inflorescence in the leaf rosette, and was sent to the collection in the Botanical garden Heidelberg. As such, it was published as a colour photograph by Rauh in the Journal of The Bromeliad Society Vol. XXXI, No., 5, 1981, pages, 218-219.

Investigation has yielded however that it is not *T. diguetii*, because this plant resembles a young *T. seleriana* 'Mez' with sessile inflorescence and amongst other things the base of the leaf rosette is a pseudo-bulb. Compared to *T. nidus*, *T. plagiotropica* Rohweder, has a flat spreading rosette (fig. 9).

*T. nidus* may be one of the many natural hybrids, that have recently become known from Mexico.

Note – no mention made of reddening in the centre at anthesis

Things have moved on since then because the next reporting we got was that De Rebus I, 1994 indicated this was a natural hybrid of *fasciculata* x *ionantha*. Note that we still did not know where it could be found in the wild! We do know that by 1997 Birdrock had it in their catalogue but no location. We do know that Renate Ehlers collected the plant in 2006 near Coatepec in the State of

Vera Cruz, Mexico. We do know that with natural hybrids, back crossing occurs making it difficult to know what range this hybrid might have.

This then is what we know about the plant in the wild but can we link a plant imported in the 1980's to *T. nidus* or *T.xnidus*? The safer option is to give this clone the name of *T. 'Hal's Nidus'* and to use Mark Supple's photo as an example. The reason why I picked the name is that if your plant can be traced to Hal Ellis or has a suspect name like 'nidus' you can at least follow the threads.

There are certainly other plants that look similar to this plant and have doubtful pedigree which could be linked to 'Hal's Nidus' but that is the decision of the owners.

As for the future where someone is trying to identify a plant at least we have photos of what we consider typical *T. fasciculata*, *T. nidus* and *T. 'Hal's Nidus'*

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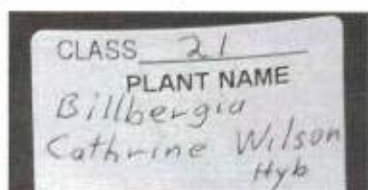
Above and below right: *Tillandsia* 'Hal's Nidus' photos by M. Supple  
Below left : *Tillandsia xnidus* in Coatepec photo by R. Ehlers



## Catherine Wilson - Mother of millions!

Author: Ross Stenhouse

When I was placing the captions for the various images that are in this journal, I came across one which was labelled *Billbergia* 'Cathrine Wilson' hybrid.



Now as I keep saying, I am really trying hard to get the names correct for the plants in the illustrations.

Being an analytical type of person, the thought process went something like this. Because it's called 'Catherine Wilson' the name structure means it's a hybrid. This plant

was entered in a plant competition, the person likely knows more than me so the fact that they put it on the label must mean something. I leave it like it is.

Down to Derek Butcher goes a proof copy for checking of the plant names, back comes the answer - Drop the hybrid off the end of the name. Best called 'Catherine Wilson'.

It's difficult to get across that seed from a hybrid is another hybrid AND does not have the same name. Seed from a true species retains that species name. We know that Grace Goode used 'Catherine Wilson' in several of her *Billbergia* hybrids and no doubt many others did the same thing.

Looking at the ones registered makes you realise how difficult it is to correctly identify them. If you did an article on this perhaps it could be called "Catherine Wilson - Mother of millions!"

The above is obvious to the experienced grower but confusing to beginners!

## Calendar of Events

**Sat 20th Feb 2010** - Field Day to Genny & John Catlan's Garden 17 Pelican Parade, Jacob's Well. Plant sales, 8am to 2 pm. Morning tea provided. Guest speakers. Please bring your own chair. For more info. contact Ruth (after 4pm) on 3208 0546 or Bev on 3208 7417

**Sat 27th & Sun 28th February 2010** - Bromeliad Extravaganza Wavell Heights Community Hall 175 Edinburgh Castle Road Wavell Hts. Free admission. 500+ varieties for sale. New releases. Refreshments & lunch by Chermside Guides. For more info. contact Nigel on 5485 3800

**Sat 6th March 2010** - Field Day to Len & Olive Trevor's Nursery 232 Canvey Rd, Ferny Grove Plant sales 9am to 3pm Guest speakers. Come along and enjoy free refreshments, displays, demonstrations and our new sales area. Enquires: 3351 1203

**Sat 3rd & Sun 4th April 2010** - BSQ Bromeliad Bonanza Mt Coot-tha Gardens Auditorium Spectacular displays. Over 700 varieties/hybrids on sale. Refreshments available for purchase. Monster Bromeliad Raffle. Wide range of bromeliad books for sale. Plenty of free parking. Admission: Adults \$3.00 Children under 14 years free.

**GENERAL MEETINGS** of the Society are held on the 3rd Thursday of each month except for December, at the Uniting Hall, 52 Merthyr Rd., New Farm, Brisbane, commencing 7.30 pm. Classes for beginners commence at 7.00 pm.



## Plant of the Month Programme for 2010

FEBRUARY:	Ananus, Intergeneric Plants, Tillandsias and Full-sun Neoregelias.
MARCH:	Cryptanthus, Tillandsias, Full-sun Aechmeas and Canistrums
APRIL:	Cryptanthus, Tillandsias
MAY:	Spotted Neoregelias, Orthophytums, Tillandsias and Variegated Bromeliads
JUNE:	Alcantareas, Foliage Vrieseas, Dyckias, Hechtias
JULY:	Billbergias, Pitcairnia, Nidulariums
AUGUST:	Billbergias, Foliage Vrieseas, Catopsis and Miniature Neoregelias.
SEPTEMBER:	Billbergias and Guzmanias.
OCTOBER:	Vrieseas, Neoregelias, Nidulariums, Guzmanias
NOVEMBER:	Not often seen Bromeliads and Succulents

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## Competition Schedule for 2010

Novice, Intermediate and Advanced in each Class of the Mini-Shows and in the Popular Vote.

### January: MINI-SHOW

- Class 1: Aechmea - species and hybrids
- Class 2: Vriesea - species and hybrids
- Class 3: Dyckia - species and hybrids
- Class 4: Any Other Mature (flowering) Bromeliad - species and hybrids.

**February :** POPULAR VOTE: Any Genus - species or hybrid, Novelty Bromeliad Display

**March:** POPULAR VOTE: Any Genus - species or hybrid, Novelty Bromeliad Display

### April: MINI-SHOW

- Class 1: Bromelioideae not listed elsewhere in the schedule - species and hybrids.
- Class 2: Guzmania - species and hybrids
- Class 3: Pitcairnia and Pepinia - species and hybrids
- Class 4: Any Other Mature (flowering) Bromeliad - species and hybrids.

**May:** POPULAR VOTE: Any Genus - species or hybrid, Novelty Bromeliad Display

**June:** POPULAR VOTE: Any Genus - species or hybrid, Novelty Bromeliad Display

### July: MINI-SHOW

- Class 1: Billbergia - species and hybrids
- Class 2: Tillandsioideae not listed elsewhere in the schedule - species and hybrids.
- Class 3: Neoregelia - species and hybrids - up to 200mm diameter when mature.
- Class 4: Any Other Mature (flowering) Bromeliad - species and hybrids.

**August:** POPULAR VOTE: Any Genus - species or hybrid, Novelty Bromeliad Display

**September:** POPULAR VOTE: Any Genus - species or hybrid, Novelty Bromeliad Display

### October: MINI-SHOW

- Class 1: Neoregelia - species and hybrids - over 200mm diameter when mature.
- Class 2: Tillandsia - species and hybrids.
- Class 3: Pitcairnioideae not listed elsewhere in the schedule - species and hybrids.
- Class 4: Any Other Mature (flowering) Bromeliad - species and hybrids.

**November:** POPULAR VOTE: Any Genus - species or hybrid, Novelty Bromeliad Display

**Note 1:** Class 4 in each Mini Show schedule provides for any flowering bromeliad that would not be in its prime for the appropriate Mini Show.

**Note 2:** Class 1 (April), Class 2 (July) and Class 3 (October) provide for plants from these subfamilies not elsewhere included in the Mini Show schedule.



*Billbergia* 'Catherine Wilson'