

A NEW RECORD FOR *TILLANDSIA*
(BROMELIACEAE) IN FLORIDA

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ABSTRACT

Tillandsia fasciculata var. *fasciculata* is recorded for the first time in Florida. It may be distinguished from the common *T. fasciculata* var. *densispica* by longer inflorescence branches and larger floral bracts.

Key Words: Bromeliaceae Florida Systematics *Tillandsia*

Tillandsia fasciculata Swartz is one of the most colorful and conspicuous epiphytes in peninsular Florida. While it is most numerous in the Everglades and Big Cypress regions of southern Florida, diffuse populations extend northward into Citrus and Flagler counties. Reports from Georgia (Brooks, 1968) have not been confirmed (Callison, 1992). The latest monograph of the Bromeliaceae (Smith and Downs, 1977) accepts ten varieties of *T. fasciculata*. More recently, several of these have been elevated to specific rank (Gardner, 1984), or are considered to be of hybrid origin (Luther, 1985). The remaining taxa can be conveniently divided into two groups based on the length of the fertile portion of the inflorescence branches (more than or less than 10 cm) and the length of the floral bracts (20-30 mm or 35-50 mm long) (Smith and Downs, 1977).

The majority of the *Tillandsia fasciculata* plants in Florida belong to var. *densispica* Mez (Figure 1). This variety, based on a type collected at Merritt Island in Broward county, Florida (Curtiss 2844, K, GH, US!), is characterized by a digitate or densely pinnate inflorescence of subsessile or short-stipitate branches with floral bracts 20-30 (mostly 22-25) mm long. The inflorescence is generally bright colored with red, red and yellow, or orange bracts and blue-violet petals. Rarely, a plant with green bracts and white petals (forma *alba* M. B. Foster) is encountered. Many thousands of plants of *T. fasciculata* var. *densispica* have been transplanted into gardens throughout the warmer portions of the state.

Very uncommon are individuals of *Tillandsia fasciculata* var. *clavispica* Mez. This variety, based on a Cuban type (Eggers 4730, K, P, US!), is distinguished from the very similar var. *densispica* by a generally laxer and more ample inflorescence with clavate branches, each with a long, slender, bracteate sterile base. The



Figure 1. *T. fasciculata* var. *densispica*, a somewhat etiolated specimen from coastal Sarasota County.



Figure 2. *T. fasciculata* var. *fasciculata*, from southern Dade County.

floral dimensions are essentially the same in var. *densispica*. Superficially “pure” examples are rare in southern Florida and several collections from Broward and Collier counties appear to represent the results of introgression with the abundant var. *densispica*. Occasional reintroduction of var. *clavispica* by airborne seeds

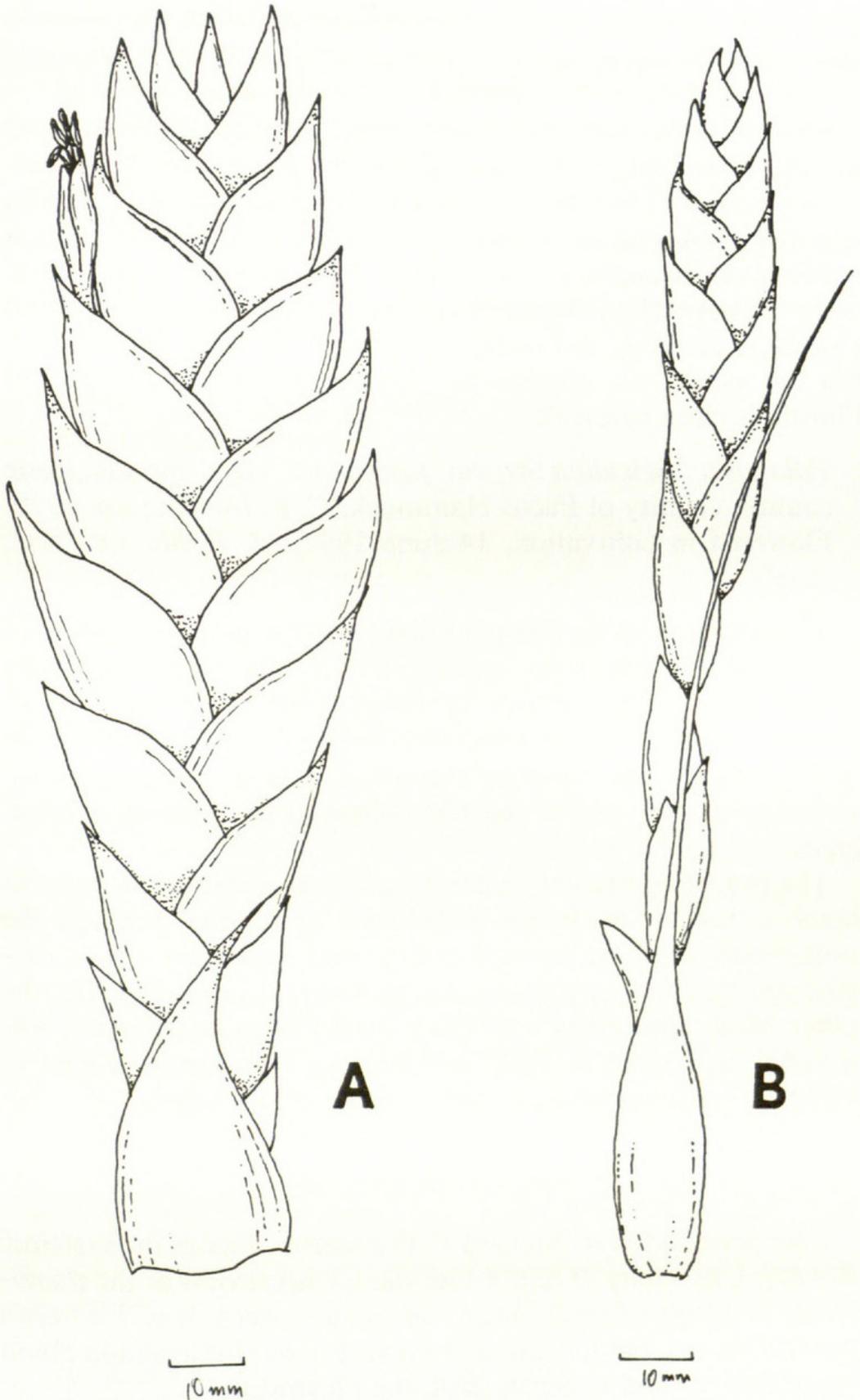


Figure 3. A. *Tillandsia fasciculata* Sw. var. *fasciculata*. U.S.A. Florida; Dade county, Dowling s.n. B. *Tillandsia fasciculata* Sw. var. *densispica* Mez. U.S.A. Florida; Sarasota county, Mickler s.n.

from Cuba appears to maintain a residual population which would otherwise be swamped through hybridization with the much more numerous plants of var. *densispica*.

Recently a cultivated specimen, originally from southern Dade county, of the larger flowered *Tillandsia fasciculata* var. *fasciculata* (Figure 2) has been brought to my attention. This variety, originally collected in Jamaica (*Swartz s.n.*, S, photo at GH!), is widespread throughout the West Indies, Mexico, and Central America to northern South America. Its occurrence in southern Florida is certainly not unexpected but, until now, not verified. For the record, the voucher for this new record for the flora of Florida is cited herewith:

Tillandsia fasciculata Sw. var. *fasciculata*. USA. Florida. Dade county: vicinity of Fuchs Hammock, *C. F. Dowling s.n.* 1970. Flowered in cultivation, 14 June 1992, *M. Prince s.n.* (SEL!, FLAS!).

This variety can be distinguished from the common plants of *Tillandsia fasciculata* var. *densispica* by a more spreading rosette of dark grey green (not grey or silver) leaves and longer (40–48 mm long not 20–30 mm long) floral bracts. The coloration of the inflorescence of the Fuchs Hammock plant is atypically subdued; yellow-green, not red or red and yellow as is common in other areas.

The lack of additional, confirming collections suggests that this taxon is rare or no longer established in Florida. Perhaps the occasionally freezing weather or extended winter dry season present too rigorous conditions for its survival or spread. On the other hand, specimens may have simply been overlooked. Additional field work in Dade and Monroe counties is needed to ascertain current status and distribution of this taxon.

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