

# BROMELIANA

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## HOW TO KEEP A MINI GUZMANIA TO MINI SIZE

by Herb Plever

We have been growing mini Guzmanias for about 10 years, received as tissue cultures from Deroose. They came as small, scrawny and thin-leaved, 5-6" high plants rooted in tiny peat plugs. My practice was to transfer them into 2-1/2" or 3" pots, and when they were well established I repotted them into 4" pots per Deroose information.

I should have thought about whether they needed something different from my usual cultural routines. Instead, with too many plants to grow, I treated them as I do other Guzmanias: I grew them in moderate to medium natural light or under fluorescent lights, and they were fertilized with 12-9-23 fertilizer every 7 to 10 days at 1/2 tsp. per gallon of water plus 1/4 tsp. of magnesium sulfate from epsom salts.

Most of them grew somewhat larger than mini size, especially mini *Guzmania* 'Lydia' and *G.* 'Libby'. In more recent years I started using only low nitrogen fertilizer (5-12-26) on my mini Guzmanias at the same rate and strength. The change in fertilizer did help to slightly reduce growth in the mini Guzmanias before they flowered.

In March, 2014 I bought some mini *Guzmania*

tissue cultures along with other plants, but then found that I didn't have much space to place them in my apartment. (This was just before I made a decisive reduction of my collection.) So I planted two mini

Guzmanias in one 4 inch pot to save space; I squeezed them into a spot in my south facing plant stand in a corner where they got about an hour of morning sun and good light thereafter. That pair was mini *Guzmania* 'Joyce' and mini *G.* 'Charlene'.

This past March, 2 years after they had been potted, the mini *Guzmania* 'Joyce' started to bloom. Its inflorescence is still growing and coloring up more orange-yellow. Having to share a 4" pot seems to have kept *G.* 'Joyce' and *G.* 'Charlene' to mini size (12" across) -

see photo on this page. No doubt it will be multi-tiered and quite large in proportion to the small plant.

I conclude that we should grow mini *Guzmania* tissue cultures in no larger than 3 inch pots. I'd like to try growing them to maturity in a 2-1/2 inch pots. I think they will grow more compactly in good light - even dappled sunlight - and spray fertilized with low nitrogen 5-12-26 fertilizer twice a month - and not at all in the winter months. □



mini *Guzmania* 'Joyce' and mini *G.* 'Charlene' in a 4" pot

**NEXT MEETING** - Tuesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 promptly at 7:00 P.M. at the [Ripley-Grier Studios 520 8th Ave. \(between 36th & 37th St\) Room 16M](#)

PLEASE COME EARLY SO WE CAN START ON TIME.

**THE PLANTS YOU ORDERED** plus **FERTILIZER UPDATE** (we'll have some fertilizer bags for you). We'll discuss each plant in the order, how to grow them and potential problems. Please bring in plants for sale and for Show and Tell.

***Reminder: you must pick up the plants you ordered at this meeting!***

## The President's Corner

by Robert Kopfstein

(Reprinted from the February, 2016 issue of The Bromeliad Blade, newsletter of the San Diego Bromeliad Society.)

Some years ago my father, a dyed in the wool organic gardener, came to visit me after I had finally been able to purchase a house—or, more importantly, a yard. I had begun a garden in the backyard which previously had been a dog pen for five German shepherds. The place looked like no man's land in World War I.

I had planted cactus, succulents, bromeliads, and (I now hate to admit it) roses. I thought the place was looking pretty good. But when my father took one look at it he turned to me and said that this was all well and fine but that you could not eat any of it. So why bother planting it in the first place. Chagrined, I have recounted this story many times. Recently, however, I encountered some entries in *Cornucopia—A Source Book of Plants* by Stephen Facciola. On page 53 there was an entry for the *Bromeliaceae*, a pleasant surprise.

Facciola lists the following as edible:

***Aechmea bracteata*** -- The berries are eaten from Mexico to Columbia. (This one did not surprise me too much because in Mexico I had seen Andy Siekkinen munching out on them; as we all know he is still in good health.)

***Aechmea magdalenae*** -- The fruits can be eaten raw or made into beverages. Perhaps a little gin might enhance the enjoyment. The plant is found in Central America and tropical South America.

***Ananas bracteatus*** -- The fruit is sweet and it is popular in Paraguay.

***Ananas comosus*** -- We all know the pineapple (pina), but are you aware that besides using the fruit raw or cooked in dishes, you can make wine -- and if that fails you have vinegar. The unripe fruit can be eaten with hot pepper sauce. Terminal buds can be consumed raw or cooked as a vegetable or an ingredient in soup. Inflorescences can be peeled and steamed as a vegetable or put into stew. The new growth can be eaten in salads -- They are called hijas de pina. Philipinos ferment the juice to make a gelatinous dessert called nata de pina. The rind of the fruit can be brewed into chicha de pina.

(Editors note - TAXON lists *Ananas bracteatus* as synonymous with *A. comosus*, and both of them have lost their species rank and have become the cultivar *Ananas* 'Comosus'. These plants were cultivated before Columbus; they came into widespread commercial cultivation and at present there is no way

to determine an original species.)

And the cultivars are many: *Ananas* 'Hawaiian King', *A.* 'Honey Gold' -- can weigh 15 lbs., *A.* 'Natal Queen', *A.* 'Red Spanish' -- with round fruit, *A.* 'Smooth Cayenne' -- introduced from French Guyana in 1820, *A.* 'Sugarloaf' variegated.

***Bromelia karatas*** -- The fruit is used in making a drink called atol de pinuela. Young leaf shoots can be cooked in soups, stews, and egg dishes.

***Bromelia Pinguin*** -- The fruit is used as a beverage, or it can be made into a vinegar. The inflorescence is fried in El Salvador, and young pups can be eaten both raw and cooked.

***Puya cerulea* and *Puya chilensis*** -- The young shoots of both of these are eaten in salads.

Recently Ivon Ramirez from the Autonomous University of Mexico named a newly found *Hechtia* (*Hechtia edulis*). The species name means edible, and the Raramuri people who live in Copper Canyon, Chihuahua use the base (bola) of the plant in cooking; the leaves (minus the spines) can be eaten raw. (See my article on this plant in the Oct – Dec 2014 issue of the Journal.)

And you tillandsia aficionados don't despair. On a trip to the village of San Sebastian in Jalisco I heard tell of a woman who was growing a tillandsia that she used in her cooking. More perhaps on this later... It is unfortunate that my father is no longer around so that I might point proudly to my bromeliad collection and exclaim "Bon Appetit!" (Sorry Julia Child . . .)



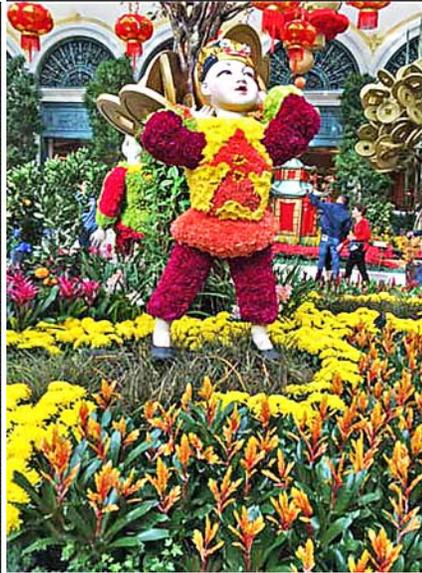
*Bromelia karatas* with berry fruit. Andy Siekkinen photo



*Bromelia pinguin* with berry fruit. Photo M. Turner fcb

**CHINESE NEW YEAR PHOTOS**

(Photos taken by our global traveling, Chicago colleague Martha Goode, of the Chinese New Year celebration - the Year of Monkey - at the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas - from the February, 2016 Newsletter of Chicago B.S.)



Masses of Guzmanias in Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> Chinese New Year Display, Hotel Bellagio, Las Vegas, Nevada

Masses of Vrieseas in Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> Chinese New Year Display

Masses of Guzmanias in Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> Chinese New Year Display

**TILLANDSIA ‘HERB PLEVER’**

Andrew Flower of Auckland, New Zealand has honored this editor by naming this recently selected cultivar from his cross of *Tillandsia peiranoi* x *T. streptocarpa* as *Tillandsia* ‘Herb Plever’. It is with great appreciation and satisfaction that I now publish photos of this beautiful plant. Of course, it is

registered with the BSI’s Bromeliad Cultivar registry.

Andrew is a very knowledgeable bromeliad nurseryman, hybridizer and *Tillandsia* expert. He has conducted useful scientific experiments on the effects of different values for pH in water, on Crassulacean Acid Metabolism (CAM) etc.



*Tillandsia* ‘Herb Plever’



*T.* ‘Herb Plever’ flowers



*Tillandsia peiranoi*. It grows on the sheer sides of rocky cliffs in Jujuy, Argentina. It is difficult to collect and hard to acquire.



*T. streptocarpa inflor.*

## BRIDE OF BROMELIAD

by Marjorie M. Klein (Reprinted from the May 18, 1984 Miani Herald)

They smile at me with tiny green teeth. They stick out enormous tongues, bright red, pebbled with mustard yellow. Some point their purple inflorescences at me, while others, in broad daylight, expose their charms. I have been seduced by their lush sensuality, but just when I think I've fallen in love with one, it turns trashy on me.

They crowd my patio, cluster on trees, fill my house and have even taken over the shower stall.

They are everywhere.

They are - The Bromeliads! "It's just an *Aechmea*" my husband Don said offhandedly - *Aechmea fasciata* I think its called." Well, it was pretty, silvery-striped foliage, a rather voluptuous pink and blue flower. But before I knew what was happening, he had moved *fasciata*'s sister in with us - *Aechmea tillandsioides*, showing off her flashy blue and white inflorescence with the red scape bracts.

That hussy let him to bring home almost her entire family: the haughty yellow and red *Aechmea chantinii*, the splashy blue and coral *Aechmea dichlamydea*, and of course, the languid, elegant *Aechmea victoriana*, her red beads dripping like rubies.

I was good about this sudden increase in our plant population, even offering to water them on occasion. "No" he said, "I'll do it myself." I should have suspected then that things had taken a strange turn. Our other plants - the ferns, palms, staghorns - had all eventually succumbed from neglect, fried in the western sun of our patio.

He began spending hours, not minutes, each week, nurturing this rapidly proliferating family of foliage. Every spare moment - early morning, after work, weekends, even after sunset - was spent pampering the plants. Walkman clamped to his head, he watered, fertilized and clipped their little brown tips, He did everything but rub their backs.

"Why," I asked finally, "this fascination with bromeliads? Why not orchids? Why not roses? Why bromeliads?"

"Because they're easy," he replied.

Aha.

There was no stopping him now. He sampled the *Vrieseas*, their red and yellow flower spikes glowing like candles, then moved on to the delights of the *Guzmanias*, whose flowers have flowers. His desire for the tall, tubular *Billbergia* gave me pause, but when saw that its pendulous red inflorescence was short-lived I could brush off his passing passion. I would catch him gazing lustfully in the rose heart of a *Neoregelia*, and he would look away, embarrassed.

Our bike rides have turned into bromeliad hunts. We ride beneath live oak trees that stretch out limbs laden

with air plants, as if they were offering furry hors-d'oeuvres.

He searches the ground, stopping to scoop up fallen *Tillandsias*. To carry them, he attaches them to each other like Velcro to create a sticky, silvery, giant *Tillandsia* ball that he separates when we get home and attaches to anything - trees, other bromeliads, the dog.

This need to attach bromeliads to something besides a pot has led him to another collection: wood. Our driftwood collection is displayed in the driveway. Stumps, branches, twigs, limbs, entire deceased trees await the moment when, with a twist of wire, a stab of a nail or globbing of glue, they will be fused to some lucky bromeliad and transformed into a living sculpture. He has also stuck bromeliads into rocks, hung them from walls and nailed them to trees.

A hurricane warning means more to us than merely taping windows and stocking up on batteries. It means bringing more than 300 plants indoors (not to mention the frogs and lizards hiding in the cups).

Most rescues are fairly easy, but there is the occasional mammoth driftwood piece that is covered by three years of growth of plants and weighs as much as a truck. This is a job for Superman.

Surrounded by this botanical harem, I have come to understand bromeliads and to acknowledge their strange beauty. We coexist happily, my rivals and I, and I have picked up on some of their language. "Isn't that a subglobose rosette?" I will say, or perhaps, "What glabrous leaves!" And, "Notice how that one is spreading stout stolons!"

I am almost one of them.

And as Don and I sit on our patio at sunset, surrounded by a pink and green rainbow of bromeliads, I no longer wonder, as he gives the sprouting pups a paternalistic pat, who the father is.

I know. □

(This could have been written by my wife. Ed.)

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