

BROMELIANA

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Barbara Lagow's *Guzmania sanguinea*

(At our Holiday Party, Barbara Lagow told me that the pup she had removed from her *Guzmania sanguinea* was now full grown and in bloom. I asked her to send me a photo, and she sent the photo shown below and the following letter: "Here's the picture of my *Guzmania sanguinea* in bloom. I potted it up in late May. I carefully followed the instructions you had written in the February, 2012 issue of Bromeliana. The year before I had ruined a previous sanguinea pup and was determined not to do that again. The plant was grown under 2 four-foot tubes. I think it would be a good for you to reprint that 2012 article for the benefit of members who may not know what to do with an upper pupper." In line with that request here is a reprint of that article with some small modifications. Editor)

Bromeliana

-1-

February, 2012

HOW TO REMOVE AN "UPPER" PUP

by Herb Plever

A few tillandsias are stingy in producing offsets and will put up only one pup after flowering, no matter how strong they are or how much they are fertilized. But most other bromeliads will produce at least two offsets and usually many more than that.

However, *Guzmania sanguinea* and *Vriesea splendens* (and most of its cultivars such as *V.* 'Hera' or *V.* 'Splendriet') if left on their own will produce only one pup after flowering, and it will come up along the side of the inflorescence in the central reservoir. Instead of emerging from a leaf axil or from the base of the parent plant, these "upper" pups come up at the top of the plant. We don't know what evolutionary benefit these plants gained from adapting to a single upper pup, but, of course, we do not know their evolutionary history eons ago. Suffice it to say that natural selection was, as always, operative during this development - even if it might have been overcome by other physical factors.

These plants are called "upper-puppers, and

they are the only two broms I know of that have this habit. You can leave the upper pup to grow on while the parent plant dies back. Eventually the upper pup will replace the parent, BUT since it is growing on top of the stem of the parent it will be somewhat out of the pot and the succeeding generation will be more so. The alternative is to remove the upper pup and repot it. An additional advantage is that stingy *Guzmania sanguinea* and *Vriesea splendens* may produce basal offsets when the upper pup is removed. Surgical removal of the pup must be done with care as its base is fragile and may snap off if outward pressure is applied. So it is important to be able to visualize the base before any cutting is done. A very sharp knife is mandatory.

STEP 1 - Since the pup came up along the side of the inflorescence it will have a definite lean to that side. Orient the pot so that the leaning side is facing you as shown in the photo at the top of Column 2.

THERE WILL BE NO MEETING IN FEBRUARY



PHOTO 1 - Facing the leaning side

(The parent's leaves had been cut short when the plant flowered to make room for more plants in the window tray. At the time I hadn't intended to do this experiment and write this article, or I would have left the leaves intact to have a more vigorous parent after the surgical removal.)

STEP 2 - Strip the parental leaves that are covering the pup by separating them in the center lengthwise. You will then be able to visualize the entire base of the pup, as shown in Photo 2 below.



PHOTO 2 - Pup base revealed

STEP 3 - Make a horizontal cut below the pup base and downward vertical cuts on each side of the base to below the base and into the parent. Then place the sharp knife between the pup and the parent with the blade slightly angled toward the parent. A smooth downward cut all the way down will free the pup from its parent. Do not apply any outward pressure on the pup while cutting down to free it. If the knife is really sharp you won't need to push or apply pressure as the blade will do the work. When this pup came free from the parent I was happy to see that the base was intact and that it was showing roots at the bottom, as shown in Photo 3 in column 2. Now that the pup is free from the parent, we must take additional steps to assure that it will remain healthy, free from infection and to prepare

for its eventual safe potting in a medium.



PHOTO 3 - Freed base showing roots

STEP 4 - The base of the pup and the cut part of the parent are now vulnerable to infection from both fungus and bacteria. If you have a fungicide powder (or Rootone which has a fungicide) dust the base of the pup and the cut side of the parent.

In the alternative, swab some alcohol on those areas and then lightly spray them with Safer's Soap solution. These areas will not be safe until the tissue there has hardened and callused, and until then the pup should not be potted. This will take 3 to 5 days.

STEP 5 - During this period I like to suspend the pup in air so the base is not touching anything that might infect it. I accomplish this by hanging the pup in a clean yogurt container with the leaves hanging over the top circumference as shown by Photo 4 below. I also occasionally lightly spray the base with Safer's Soap.



PHOTO 4 - Pup suspended in container

STEP 6 - When the base of the pup has sufficiently callused, place the pup in a medium in which it will rapidly grow roots and establish itself to grow on its own. The area around the base should be consistently moist but not wet. In that area I would place pre-soaked pieces of peat moss (or sphagnum moss) that will retain moisture for a reasonable period. You can drop some potting soil into the hole to fill up the spaces, as rooting is encouraged when the base is more tightly surrounded by the medium.

To keep the pup stabilized and immovable during this initial period, I place two strips of masking tape overlapping across the top of the pot to tightly firm up the pup. This temporary brace should be re-



PHOTO 5 - Pup potted and stabilized 5 days later moved when the pup is stabilized with its own roots. See Photo 5 above.

IN MEMORIAM - SYLVIA PLEVER 1925 - 2018

by Herb Plever

At the age of 92, my dear wife Sylvia died in her sleep in the morning of January 15, 2018, at peace with herself and without pain. She had metastatic stage 4 cancer and during the 8 months after its discovery she was a paradigm of courage, always seeking to calm the grief of her loved ones. I write to memorialize what she meant to me and our family and friends, to our NYBS club and to the BSI.

True, it was I who was well known for my 56 years spent studying bromeliads, my activities as a director and as Honorary Trustee of the BSI and my work as a founding member and as a President of NYBS and as Editor of Bromeliana since 1970 - but it was Sylvia's direct support, participation and assistance that made it all happen. She attended most World Bromeliad Conferences with me, beginning with the first one in 1972 in Houston; she proof-read Bromeliana and made suggestions to improve context and style.

For the 67 years of our loving, happy marriage, Sylvia was my love, my best friend, my constant companion and comrade, my care-giver and my fiercest, but always fair and honest critic. She came from a poor, working-class family in Brooklyn

and she never forgot those roots. She quit high school in the 10th grade to work and support her family during the Great Depression. During World War II, she worked as a machinist in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. She was an avid reader of a wide range of books; she was very smart and modest without pretensions. Sylvia had a lifelong commitment to justice and equality, a commitment I fully shared.

We met and fell in love with each other in 1950 when I was about to enter law school on the GI Bill. I had little money and it was Sylvia who worked and supported me through the 3 years of law school.

Sylvia and I shared a passion for opera, theater and cinema. On our very first date in July, 1950 we went to see "City Lights" by Charlie Chaplin. On our second date we saw an off-Broadway play, and on our third date we went to see La Boheme at the NYC

Opera. We shared a love of art, nature, growing plants, we danced international folk dances and Scottish Country dances 2 -3 a week. Our night tables were always piled with books that we read and discussed.

When I started growing bromeliads in 1961, Sylvia allowed me to replace her many houseplants



Sylvia at the WBC in Hawaii, 2014

that were in beautiful shape. She liked the architecture of the bromeliad rosettes and the weird shapes of the Tillandsias. We ultimately had many bromeliads growing in the 6 ft. south facing window of our bedroom and she enjoyed sleeping there despite the bugaboo about it being dangerous. When I became addicted to broms, out of love for me she permitted our beautiful apartment to be converted into a tropical rainforest with one large humidifier and later four humidifiers constantly working.

The NY Bromeliad Society was organized in 1962 and at that time none of the literature was applicable to indoor horticulture. So I and my equally addicted pal, Sig Sussman, bought hundreds of broms to experiment with and to learn how to grow them indoors. We killed hundreds of plants in the process, but we learned how to successful grow and bloom many species and hybrids and we kept notes and wrote about them.

In a few years I was compulsively growing about 350 plants in pots, and I had so many tillandsias mounted on cork logs that their weekly soaks took six bathtub loads and 7-8 hours to complete. Since I was busy at my law practice all week, the bromeliad activity took up an entire weekend which sharply limited our marital time together.

This was totally unacceptable to Sylvia, and she strongly but kindly confronted me and brought me back to reality. She helped me (and pushed me) to sharply reduce my collection to the point that my tillandsias took only 2 soaks in 2 hours in the early morning, and my potted plants were reduced to a manageable 75 in 5 rooms.

Later, she pushed me to end the burdensome chore of daily filling the humidifiers, and I disposed of them. She reminded me that when I started buying hundreds of broms I had told her: "The plants will have to adapt to our lifestyle". She said: "Let's see if they can adapt to lower humidity" - and most of them did.

Sylvia was a people person who was interested in people from different cultures, ethnic backgrounds, religions and gender preferences. She was a good listener and she respected views which differed from hers, and she expected that her views would be equally respected. She emanated friendship, honesty and love in all relationships which she anticipated would be and was reciprocated.

We had a storybook happy marriage for 67 years. By the time our children were of camp age, we

became global travelers with a special passion for Italy which we visited many times. At home we were culture vultures and were out of the house 5 or 6 days a week, but Sylvia also valued her many different family groups: her and my relatives, and those of our son-in-law and daughter-in-law all of whom kept close contact and met often on holidays and on happy and sad occasions.

Also there were the dear friends and neighbors of Rochdale Village community in which we have lived for 53 years. We had our Bromeliad Family with many long-time friends from our NYBS club and friends from the U.S. and abroad whom we met at WBCs. There was our "family" of friends from international folk dance and Scottish Country dance groups we had danced with over more than 50 years. Finally, there were our close friends in Italy who we regarded as members of our family.

We were surrounded with love from our 2 children and their spouses, our 4 grandchildren and great-grandson and our many neighbors and friends who have comforted me and each other in coping with the grievous loss of a remarkable human being. □

N E W S and N O T E S

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