



# East London Bromeliad Society

## South Africa

NEWS  
LETTER  
June  
2019

Established: 25 July 2009

*Our aim is to promote and encourage awareness and interest in Bromeliads in East London and all of South Africa!*

ELBS SA is an Affiliated Society  of Bromeliad Society International

## From the Chairman Dudley Reynolds



A big thank you to Mavis and Terence Downey for hosting our June month end meeting and for allowing us to invade their lovely home and garden.

Another big thank you to Tracy Moss for your informative presentation on 'Highlighting Neoregelia'. I always enjoy listening to Tracy's contributions; she is a very established speaker. Neoregelia are always a hit and I am sure many of you hold them as firm favourites in your gardens and collections.

The excitement is building up as we near our 10th Birthday Bash at 'Bromeliads for Africa' at the end of July. Any further suggestions would be appreciated to make this a very special bumper afternoon.

I will be bringing a few Cryptanthus at the end of this month. I really enjoy growing these little 'earth stars'. Mine seem to be very happy growing in pots on the floor of my new shadehouse under the metal shelving. Until we chat again next time, happy bromming!

## May meeting

Wow! Another exceptional meeting with 33 in attendance on a lovely sunny afternoon. Mavis and Terence had prepared a perfect place to host the meeting under a sheltered area with lots of lawn area to place the various lots of Raffle Plants, Give-away plants, Lucky Draw plants and member sales. A gazebo was set up under which were displayed the most amazing array of Neoregelia!! More about that just now.

Mavis has always been a plant person, currently there is an amazing collection of orchids in a sheltered area off the back of the house. There are loads of plantings of bromeliads, cacti and succulents, beautifully and neatly arranged all around the perimeter of the garden interspersed with vegetables growing happily as well.

Mavis has a second shadehouse where there are lots of bromeliads growing from seed amongst other plants as well. It is good to see this kind of activity taking place. Patience and total dedication required!

Mavis started collecting orchids in 1999 belonging to the Gonubie Orchid Society for many years. She met Tracy and Robert Moss through the orchid world. Slowly the odd bromeliad came her way and you know



Terence and Mavis Downey, our super meeting hosts in their immaculate front garden, broms and succulents are definitely taking over!

**Next Meeting: Sunday, 30th June at 2.00 for 2.30 pm. We meet at Little Beacons Pre-primary School at 45 Avalon Road, Beacon Bay. Don't forget your mug and chair!**

what plant people are like, it doesn't stop there once your interest is piqued. Terence and Mavis visited family in Auckland, New Zealand a while back and had the opportunity to visit Peter Coyle at Totara Waters in Auckland NZ. Their garden was declared a Garden of National Significance in 2006. He even took them to see his private bromeliad



Mavis's shadehouses, one with lots of seed growing taking place and right, a stunning collection of orchids in the shadehouse off the back of the house.



collection. Sue Pema was chatting with us and she has also visited Totara Waters when she went to NZ with her husband Prakesh recently. Trevor and Lyn Wegner, Brenda Wegner and Andre and Maureen Eybers also visited this spectacular garden in 2013 when they attended the Cool Broms Conference. This could become a pilgrimage for South African bromeliad collectors! Big thanks to Mavis and Terence for sharing their special place with all of us for the meeting!

Dudley Reynolds and Tracy Moss presented the first in a planned series of highlighting different bromeliad genera with a view to preparing plants for future shows. The information also included feedback from the show which we held in March which was a huge success, but also a big learning curve for all of us as we have never done anything like this before. All the feedback will be taken into account when planning such a venture next year.

## Highlighting Neoregelia

I have tried to capture the essence of what was discussed by Dudley and Tracy at the meeting. Dudley introduced the topic and Tracy gave us a very interesting talk on looking at Neoregelia with a critical eye, how to grow them, compare them with a critical eye and prepare them for future shows.

We are considering a member 'Popular Vote' for our next show rather than a Member's Judged Show. We have formed a Show Committee which will discuss our way forward with future shows. Input from our members is always most welcome.

Neoregelia is a genus of flowering plants in the bromeliad family Bromeliaceae, subfamily Bromelioideae, native to South American rainforests. The genus name is for Eduard August von Regel, Director of St. Petersburg Botanic Gardens in Russia (1815–1892). Due to their myriad forms and beautiful colours, they are commonly cultivated and hybridised and many people prefer Neoregelia for these very reasons, they make an unbelievable show.



This is just part of the stunning array of Neoregelia on display. Above we can see from left to right, Midi, Medium and Large size Neoregelia. Below are some Mini Neoregelia.



Tracy Moss, 'Highlighting Neoregelia!'



Dudley admits that he has more *Neoregelia* varieties than any other genus. (Like most of us I am sure!) He is very keen on the miniature varieties and the more robust, thorny carcharodon species.... plus everything in-between! There are many characteristics which attract him to this genus. One is the colouration of the foliage, which is affected by the amount of light that the plant is exposed to.

*Neoregelia* are epiphytic when growing in their natural habitat, meaning they grow attached to the branches of forest trees; they do not naturally grow in the earth, though they can be cultivated planted in soil in controlled conditions, such as a garden or shadehouse, provided they are kept in a well draining medium. Their roots serve primarily to attach to a host, eg. tree or rock. They have mostly broad, relatively flat leaves often marked brightly with red, purple or yellow pigments which serve to protect the green photosynthetic tissues from sunburn and through selective breeding and hybridization thousands of cultivars in almost all colour combinations, many also striped with white, have been produced. I think that is what attracts all of us to count these our favourite genus!

The inflorescences of these plants form in the shallow central cup of the plant, which often fills with water, through which the flowers bloom. *Neoregelias*, like most bromeliads, bloom only once in their lifetime and then begin to die, but normally not before producing several pups which are small clones of the parent plant, either around the central plant or on woody stolons. These offshoots eventually replace the mother plant. In cultivation, the offshoots can be removed and replanted when about two-thirds the size of the adult plant. The leaves immediately surrounding the inflorescence are very often brightly coloured, even in species otherwise not brightly marked - an adaptation to attract pollinating insects.

This will be a first in a series of talks highlighting different bromeliad genera which would be found on a show/display, so it is also part of the feedback from the show, highlighting gaps in terms of what we need to know about bromeliads for future shows. As the months go by different genera will be highlighted.

Why start with *Neoregelia*? These were a problem at the show. There were not enough classes for *Neoregelia*. There were just so many awesome entries and they were only split into two classes, which made it very difficult to choose the best. We are trying to learn from that process and make it better for next time. For the next show the *Neoregelia* will be split into four classes and hopefully this will even the playing fields in terms of the selection process for the different plants:

- Mini *Neoregelia* Class
  - Midi *Neoregelia* Class
  - Medium *Neoregelia* Class
  - Large *Neoregelia* Class
- A dimension template will be drawn up as a guide to help you decide which class your bromeliad would fit into.

Much discussion followed on what characteristics of a plant to bear in mind when looking at a plant: look at the overall form, are the leaves well balanced, is the plant nicely shaped, is the growth habit horizontal or more vertical. Look at the leaves, the width, are they spined. Look at the colouration and intensity of colour in the leaves. Lift the plant up to see the underneath colours and markings. The following is also important, Is the pot clean, weed free and the plant well positioned in the pot. A comparison was also done between two *Neoregelia lilliputiana*. Which one was the better grown of the two? It takes a long time to absorb all these criteria when looking at a plant and to know your bromeliads and we are far from there, but we are making a start.

Now, what happens to *Neoregelia* species plants? as the above applies to mostly hybrids, of which many beauties were on display. They were put into a Class of their very own as you cannot compare a species with a hybrid, it's not fair to either plant. An example of a *Neoregelia* mini species is: *Neoregelia lilliputiana*. A species plant is found in nature as is. Species are special in terms of the fact that their natural habitats are fast being destroyed, so they are in danger of being lost to us.

A hybrid or cultivar is a man made plant, created by cross-pollinating two plants, eg: *Neoregelia* 'Annick' is a Skotak hybrid created in 2000 with the parentage *N. carolinae* x *N. 'Fireball'*. Why do people want to create a hybrid? Some want to improve the colouration, the width of the leaves or form of one plant by crossing it with another with good characteristics and to try to improve on nature. There are some growers in South Africa who have



*Neoregelia* 'Annick' (parentage *N. carolinae* x *N. 'Fireball'*).



*Neoregelia lilliputiana*

created, and registered with the BSI, some amazing hybrids. There are limitless opportunities for embarking on the exciting journey of creating a new hybrid, once you know what you are doing. It is a very complex

process. But some prefer collecting the species plants found in nature, as they are equally exciting and worthy in their own unique way. There was lots of discussion afterwards and I overheard a few members comment that they really learnt a lot during the afternoon's presentation done by Dudley and Tracy. We are all in this together, spreading the love of these amazing plants.

## Species Talk - Lyn Wegner



**Tillandsia somnians:** This species is found in moist locations in narrow steep-sided ravines along the course of a river in Peru. I have learnt there are different clones, but mine has maroon coloured foliage. The leaves are quite soft and it doesn't resemble a typical Tillandsia. It produces a very tall and quite spindly inflorescence and produces pups along this stem once it has flowered. I grow mine as an epiphyte in the garden in dappled light. You can also remove the pup when it is a nice size and pot them if you prefer. It grows really well, pupping prolifically, forming arches interspersed with pups which then flower and more pups develop on these inflorescences until you have a riot of *T. somnians* in your garden! It's a fascinating plant!



Lyn showing her *Tillandsia somnians* with Dudley standing by.

## Show and Tell

**Dudley Reynolds:** *Neoregelia lilliputiana* is one of the smallest species of the *Neoregelia* genus. It is found growing naturally in Brazil. Growing on trees epiphytically in sunny to partially shady conditions. It produces its pups on lengthy woody stolons. The leaves are green in colour with brown flecks on the leaves. As with most *Neoregelia* it produces purple, three petaled flowers which are rather large for such a tiny plant. *N. lilliputiana* has been used extensively in hybridising.



*Neoregelia lilliputiana*



*Neoregelia kautskyi*

**Dudley Reynolds** showed his *Neoregelia kautskyi*. This is a species endemic to Brazil. It has intense leaf gloss which gets a nice yellow hue with maroon patches when grown in bright light. It is a medium size *Neoregelia* which will grow well in sunny to partial shade conditions. The three petaled flowers are white with blue tips.

**Lyn Wegner:** showed *Tillandsia novakii*. The reason for this Show and Tell is to highlight the importance of growing your plants in the correct light conditions, which applies not only to your bromeliads but also to your Tillandsia. It seems there are 2 forms of this plant. Mine has reddish foliage when it is grown in the sun. I have moved those that were in a shady spot, which was originally sunny, until the pruned trees had re-grown! Those positioned in the shade have the unattractive grey foliage as you can see in the photo. *T. novakii* is found in Mexico where it grows epiphytically on small trees. It was collected in 1979 by AJ Novak and flowered in cultivation in June 1990. I like this plant because of the colour of the foliage when it is grown in a sunny spot.



*Tillandsia novakii*

## Member news

- It is always good to welcome a new member, this month Margaret Baker from East London has joined us. We hope you have a long and fruitful association with the society!
- It is with immense sadness that we learnt of the loss of Dudley and Glenn Reynolds brother, Graeme Reynolds at the end of May. We are thinking of you both and your families at this sad time and in the months ahead as you come to terms with your loss.

## Thanks

- Mavis and Terence Downey for hosting the May meeting.
- Tracy Moss and Dudley for presenting the 'Highlighting Neoregelia' talk.
- Tracy and everyone who brought stunning Neoregelia to illustrate the talk.
- Dr Pete Pfister, Lyn Wegner and Eddie and Barbara Black for Lucky Draw plants.
- Lyn Wegner and Dr Pete Pfister for give away plants.
- Marianne Hillstead and Dr Pete Pfister for catering tea and scrumptious goodies.
- Tracy and Robert Moss and their friends, Des and Chantelle for sorting out the software so that we can view the BSI Media Library Programmes using the projector at our June meeting.

## Congratulations to the May Raffle Winners

- Lyn Odendaal chose *Neoregelia* 'Southern Girl'.
- Mavis Downey chose *Neoregelia* 'Groves Red Tiger'.
- Lorraine Parathyras chose *Neoregelia* 'Gold Medal'.
- Betty Heunis chose *Neoregelia* 'High Voltage'.
- Clint Gordon from Johannesburg chose *Aechmea* 'Sangria' albomarginated.
- Eugene Ernest from Durban chose *Tillandsia* 'Wonga'.
- Philip Visagie from Pretoria chose *Tillandsia stricta* Hard Leaf.
- Rob Hazell from Swellendam chose *Aechmea* 'Sangria' albomarginated.

If you don't see a plant that you would like to choose as your raffle win, you can choose to take a Raffle Voucher for R120.00, save them up and buy a nice plant later from one of the society members.

**Lucky Draw Winners:** There were a few lucky winners! Please note that the Lucky Draw is not a Raffle, you have to be present and wearing your name badge to claim your prize!

## From the Committee

- **To all the Country Members:** Please let us know if/when you ever plan to visit or pass through East London on your travels. Please contact one of the committee, probably best to let Lyn Wegner know, and we can organise a bromeliad garden visit or two to meet you, together with a few local members. Your visit doesn't have to coincide with our monthly meeting held on the last Sunday of every month (except December). We will arrange a day and time to fit in with your visit. We would love to meet our country members and put a face to the names!!! We would love to meet you all!
- It is not long until the **ELBSSA AGM and Annual Birthday Bash at the July meeting!** We have been growing from strength to strength over the last 10 years, can you believe that? We started with 13 local members and now have 139 members, made up of 72 local, 62 country and 5 International members! and hopefully all growing together in knowledge, friendship and passion for bromeliads! Any members in the society interested in standing on the committee? If you wish to nominate someone, please ensure you discuss it with them beforehand. The committee of the last 10 years welcomes new nominations for all the positions. Some of us have been around a loooong time. See the end of the newsletter for portfolios available. We would welcome 'new blood' and ideas. Please do not be shy, if you have anything to contribute to ensure that we remain relevant and meet the needs of our members.
- **Grace Goode** is turning 102 soon, what an amazing lady who has contributed so much to the world of bromeliads over many years. Happy birthday amazing Grace!
- **Steve Reynolds** passed away recently. He was involved with bromeliads from 2007 and was the current President of the Cryptanthus Society of which we are a member. He became a Master Gardener and gave lectures on various gardening topics. He was also an accredited Bromeliad Society International show judge and a BSI Director. Steve had moved to Round Rock, Texas from Austin, Texas and was still working at his veterinary business.



Our May Raffle winners, Lorraine Parathyras, Mavis Downey, Betty Heunis and Lyn Odendaal.



Brenda Wegner, Miriam Kennard, Prakesh and Sue Pema gathering before the meeting.

## Upcoming Society Events

**30th June** We will be meeting at 2 for 2.30pm at Little Beacons Pre-primary School in Avalon Road, Beacon Bay. Please remember to bring your chairs, mug and plants for Show and Tell. Remember you get a free Raffle ticket if you contribute to Show and Tell!

Topics: Presentation of a BSI Media Library program, Bromeliads A TO Z, Part 1, and a discussion on Cryptanthus by Dudley Reynolds. Brings yours along too!

**28th July:** ELBSSA AGM, 10th Birthday Celebrations and Fun Quiz!!! at 18 Wentworth Road in Sunnyridge, where it all started. There will be no Member Plant Sales at this meeting.

**25th August:** To be hosted by Irene Manthe in Nahoon Valley Park. Topic: Bromeliads; to divide or allow to clump? by Brenda Wegner.

**29th September:** To be hosted by Mark Bradfield at The Gift Garden, Topic: Artistic Expression with Bromeliads.

**27th October:** To be hosted by Val Nel in Vincent Heights. Topic: Bromeliads Seldom Seen.

**24th November:** End of year Bring and Braai to be hosted by Dr Pete Pfister and Marianne Hillstead in Beacon Bay.

## Upcoming International Conferences

**2019: 'Golden Broms'** 17 - 20 October 2019 Hosted by the Gold Coast Succulent and Bromeliad Society Inc. at the Sea World Resort on the Gold Coast. This will be the 20th Australasian Bromeliad Conference. For contact information go to the conference website at [www.goldenbroms.com](http://www.goldenbroms.com)

**2020:** 9 to 13 June, **70th Anniversary WBC2020** will be held in Sarasota, Florida, USA. For exciting information and pictures go to [bsi.org](http://bsi.org), Conference Corner! It would be great to have a group of South Africans at this World Conference!

**2021:** This biennial **Australasian Bromeliad Conference** will again be hosted by The New Zealand Bromeliad Society. **'Kiwi Broms'** April 8 - 11 2021, venue, Waipuna Hotel. Start saving now!

## From the Members

### Tillandsia in Italy! By Lyn Wegner

BSI Journal 68(1) has an interesting article and photos, "Tillandsia, Wonders of Nature" : An Italian exhibition event entirely dedicated to the genus, written by Andrea Oldrini. This was the second exhibition which was hosted in 2018 by the Association Antares together with Paolo Michieli of the Michieli Floricoltura, an Italian nursery which specializes in Tillandsia.

The Association was established in 1975 and it is made up of a group of volunteers in Legnano, a city in Milan, Italy. Their aim is to spread knowledge on Astrology, Mycology (scientific study of fungi) and Botany, which is where the Tillandsia come into the story!

Andrea mentions that Tillandsia and Bromeliads are not as popular in Italy as eg. orchids, succulents, cacti and other plant groups. *Wallisia* (previously Tillandsia) *cyanea* and *T. aeranthis*, to a lesser extent, are fairly common in Italy. The exhibitions which include workshops, aim to expose the public to this amazing plant family, to educate and excite them too!

The third exhibition was held on the 9th and 10th Feb this year entitled '*Tillandsia*: Elegance in the Simplicity'. I was honoured to be invited to link up with the exhibition via Skype, during their opening ceremony on Saturday the 9th February. They wanted to twin with the BSI. We had a few practice sessions to make sure the Skype session ran smoothly! Francesca, Andrea's girlfriend was our excellent interpreter! I was excited to 'see' and chat to the Antares members and Paolo Michieli. I am not a regular 'Skyper' and felt a little nervous of the procedure but we managed! It was interesting to see the public in the background as we were chatting!

I recently received a surprise package from Andrea in memory of their



Gilberto Oldrini, Andrea's father, who is also Antares' vice-president and Andrea Oldrini holding up balls of *Tillandsia aeranthis* from his collection.

event! A book on places of interest in Italy, an old botanical painting of a Tillandsia (of course!) and my Honorary Membership of the Antares Association. Wow! How special is that!

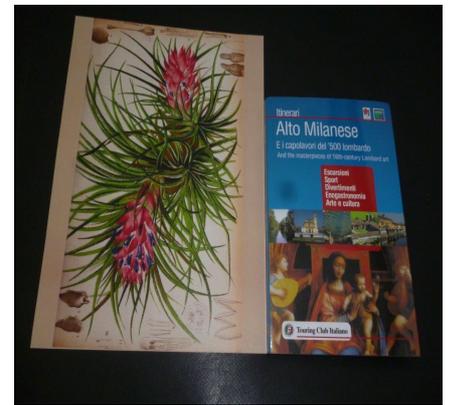
Andrea says they are planning their 2020 exhibition and he is currently looking for a sponsor as they are a non-profit association and struggle with the finances. He has some interesting ideas for next year and is thinking of possibly involving primary school children, that sounds like a very good idea to me! He has even thought of introducing Tillandsia to the patients at their city hospital as a means to alleviate pain.

The photo is of *Tillandsia aeranthos* in Andrea's collection. They have grown into huge clumps which started as single growths in 2011 and he says they are flowering really well this year. The Antares Association is keen to make contact with other Tillandsia and Bromeliad groups around the world 'to share experiences, ideas and possibly develop common projects'. If anyone would like to contact Andrea: [andrea.aldini@alice.it](mailto:andrea.aldini@alice.it)

I wish Andrea and the Association Antares every success with their endeavours to spread the love of Tillandsia, in particular, in Italy! Oh yes, I must tell you that Andrea and Francesca get married on the 5 October!



Lyn's certificate of Honorary Membership of the Antares Association and right, a lovely painting and book!



## Visitors to South Africa!

We have had numerous overseas brom people visit South Africa, from Australia and the US. They contact us asking for bromeliad gardens they could visit, depending on the area they will be touring, and for places of interest too.

Our ELBSSA members come from all corners of South Africa, so we have many gardens for them to choose from. It's a wonderful opportunity to show how we grow bromeliads in South Africa and to share our passion (or is it obsession)! Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban are popular destinations with East London unfortunately being a little off the beaten track.

We were very lucky to have Pat Mitchell, all the way from Houston USA, visit us in East London for a few very special whirlwind jam (or should I say brom?!) packed days in May 2017.

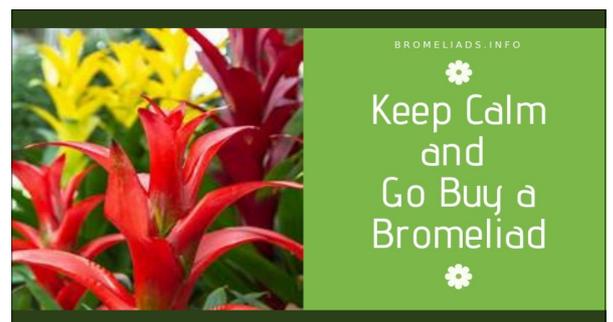
Earlier this year we had Nan Sterman from San Diego with her tour group who visited Cape Town and Johannesburg. And now we have Stan Schab and Terese Leber from the Bromeliad Society of Hawaii visiting Cape Town on the 21-24 June! A big thanks to some of our Cape Town members who will be hosting Stan and Terese. We hope to have some photos from all of you in next month's newsletter! LW.

## From the Editor



While going through the BSI affiliates list recently, I couldn't help but notice that many of the societies across the pond, both ways, hold their meetings in the evenings at far more formal venues than we do. We are so lucky to be able to meet the way we do, in the afternoon in the wonderful surroundings of members lovely gardens!! So, thank you to all the members who have offered their gardens for meetings over the many years of our existence and especially Lyn and Trevor Wegner who hosted us exclusively in the early days of the society. It is truly appreciated by all of us, I am sure of that!

Winter has come with its first few bites recently, a sober reminder that the cold dark mornings are here on our doorstep for a bit. I long for the Winter solstice in our Southern hemisphere on the 21st June every year, then we know the mornings will become ever so slightly lighter over time, giving our plants more light and growing time. I'm sure it applies to humans too! Trouble is winter seems to be coming later in the season, so hang in there! At the moment lots of Aechmea, especially the *A. orlandiana* varieties are popping their inflorescences out which is a bonus to the stunning foliage.



Removing dead leaves is an ongoing process and we have managed to treat our back garden, especially the foliage Vriesea with Koinor for the dreaded flyspeck scale.

As the society nears the 10th year of our existence, we find we continue to grow, we have learnt much about bromeliads with a long way to go, but together with good friends it is a journey worth travelling. I hope you will all join us at the end of July for a celebration to mark this awesome occasion. Little did any of us think that it would ever get to anywhere where the society is now, it is thanks to all our wonderful members, local and country!

Many of the world's centenarians share one common hobby: gardening. Look at Grace Goode in Australia who spent her life time cultivating and hybridising bromeliads with many named for her. So, try to remain always curious, active and interested in your plant/garden world and the people you share it with and hopefully you will live a long, healthy and happy life!

See you at Little Beacons Pre-primary School for what I am sure will be an interesting showing of Part 1 of a BSI Media Library program, Bromeliads A to Z and a discussion on Cryptanthus by Dudley Reynolds! See you all there!



Aechmea 'Hayward'



Aechmea 'Gold Tone'



Aechmea 'Ensign' grown in part shade and right, A. 'Ensign' grown in full sun all year round.



I don't know which one I like more as they both have their own special characteristics. But it shows you what a difference shade and sun can make to a plant.

Barbs.

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Any opinions expressed in articles are not necessarily those of the Society.

When submitting items for inclusion in this newsletter, please ensure that all facts and information, including spelling, is checked and accurate.

**ELBS SA is an affiliate of the Bromeliad Society International.**

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We meet on the last Sunday of every month at 2.00 for 2.30pm, January to November, at various venues around East London. We have a topic for each meeting and Show and Tell where members are encouraged to bring along their brag or problem plants. There are member raffles, lucky draws for those present, tea time, library and member plant sales, plus a monthly newsletter sent out via e-mail only. Visitors are always welcome and can attend three meetings before they will need to join the society in order to continue attending. Annual subs are R120.00 for individuals/families and R60 for students.

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 You will find ELBS on Facebook: type 'East London Bromeliad Society South Africa' into the fb search bar. You can request to join the group and will then be able to upload your photos and comments on the wall. The ELBS SA page and other bromeliad related sites are a useful and informative forum to share and 'meet up' with other like-minded bromeliad folks.

You can view most of all the bromeliads mentioned in meetings or in the newsletter at the following websites:

The BSI's official Bromeliad Cultivar Registry [www.registry.bsi.org](http://www.registry.bsi.org) which is maintained by Geoff Lawn, the BSI Cultivar Registrar. Plus other information regarding the Bromeliad Society International is found at [bsi.org](http://bsi.org)

Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies: [fcbs.org](http://fcbs.org) This is a very useful site to reference many bromeliads where you can clarify identification or just trawl through the site and add to your wish list!

Encyclopedia of Bromeliads - <http://bromelia.club> (Bromeliad Taxonomists and Growers Society) has photographs. It also now has keys for the genera and sub-genera. If you like to be informed what is happening, just follow on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bromeliadsencyclopedia> Just type in 'Encyclopedia of Bromeliads' into the Facebook search bar.

For internet resources you can also go to TAXON (The New Bromeliad List) for the most authoritative and right up to date list of genera and species, accepted and new names and taxonomic keys - <http://botu07.bio.uu.nl/bcg/taxonList.php> or just type in 'New Bromeliad Taxon List', it's much easier!