

# ***Far North Coast Bromeliad Study Group N.S.W.***

Study Group meets the third Thursday of each month

Next meeting 15th January, 2015 at 11 a.m.

Venue: PineGrove Bromeliad Nursery

114 Pine Street Wardell 2477

Phone (02) 6683 4188

Discussion: December 2014

## **Christmas Party**

Merry  
Christmas



### **Editorial Team:**

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## Meeting 20th November 2014

The meeting was opened at approximately 11.00 am

The 24 members and two visitor present were welcomed.

A total of five apologies were received.

### General Business

Ross welcomed everyone to the meeting including a new member Margaret.

A new book, **Air Plants**, The Curious World of Tillandsias by Zenaida Sengo has been purchased for the library. This is predominately a craft book showing how to grow, mount, design with and present Tillandsias also the various tools and accessories required.

Certain issues were also raised as reminders for members. All competition plants need to be tabled by the start of the meeting at 11a.m. If arriving late please join the meeting and wait until the break for tea/coffee as talks are being interrupted. Morning tea is available before the meeting and Ross expressed his thanks to all those who bring a plate along for all to enjoy.

Please turn off mobile phones or at least turn them onto pulse/vibrate during the meeting, if it is really necessary to take a call please move away from the meeting promptly when talking.

Don't forget to sign the attendance book as this affects the Christmas draw. Don't forget popular vote entries close at 11.00am, please remember to vote in all sections at the beginning of lunch. Last month only half the members voted.

Library books need to be signed in and out and can be borrowed for a month. New members will need to show their drivers license before borrowing.

Ross again asked for more members to contribute articles as he is still left with most of the work and responsibility for articles. If you have a bromeliad in flower or it looks interesting in some way, do some research and write a short article. Doug Binns has a Pitcairnia flowering at present and has kindly written an article on this. Les suggested if each member wrote a few lines on how they grow their plants we would be able to compile an article of cultural notes for our area.

Gloria asked when do Hectias flower as she has *Hectia tillandsioides* which is thriving but has not flowered. There appears to be no known reason for this as some flowered in September/October, there was no suggestion for Gloria as to what triggers them to flower.

There was a brief discussion on seedling variation within a seed pod. We need to understand here that one grain of pollen equals one seed, therefore with many seed per pod there is the chance of multiple pollen donors. Hybridizers should make a sincere effort to keep only the best seedlings and name them.

Some people sell the whole lot under different names or parentage, allowing for the possibility of multiple pollen donors this practice is fraught with danger.

The issue of the 'Anna' numbered plants arose for discussion, these are not a series or a grex as has been suggested by some Queensland growers. They were an import consignment of Skotak hybrids imported by Peter Tristram. Later John and Genny Catlan bought pups giving them a shipment name 'Anna' after Genny's mother (Anna) and individual numbers (#1 etc.). Many have since been named, however multiple names have been given to same plants by different registrants which does cause some confusion.

### Show and Tell

Ross showed a 300mm basket of *Vriesea flammea* in flower, *Vr. flammea* can be quite variable making it well worth keeping an eye out for it's variants to add to ones collection. (photo p. 10)

Another similar plant shown and worth growing is *Vriesea* 'Snow White' which doesn't quite fit within the *corcovadensis* complex neatly with *Vr. corcovadensis* and or *Vr. lubbersii*, this had Derek Butcher asking many questions when his plants first began to flower for him eventually deciding on a cultivar naming.

Elton Leme commented to Derek "You cannot imagine how many different plants of this group I have collected, all of them with specific discrepancies, which make identification inaccurate. At this very moment, I have some of them flowering and I gave up trying to identify most of them. Apparently, few of them are new. Others look to be just variations of different populations. I agree with you that your plant looks closer to *Vriesea corcovadensis*, and I would not be much concerned with the rosette conformation at this point of the available knowledge. There is a PhD student trying to understand this group right now, so we wait to see what conclusions she makes.

This information made Derek decide to bite the bullet because it is better to identify this clone with a cultivar name than just *Vriesea* sp. Margaret came up with 'Snow-White'. Anyone who knows their Nursery stories will know that Snow-White had white skin and dressed in white (white Petals) had ruby lips (red floral bracts) and black hair (colour of the leaf sheaths). Plant 20cm diam, x 15cm high, flowering to 30cm high. We will be linking this name to both *Vr. corcovadensis* and *Vr. lubbersii* in the Cultivar Register for possible amendment in the future.

Ross also showed *Neoregelia pineleana*, a cute species plant which goes very red with a lot of light. (photo p.10)

Two *Aechmea servitensis* were shown, it was interesting to see the difference between them as they were bought at the same time. Both were the same size with similar flowers but Ross's plant had had more light and the leaves had a reddish tinge compared to the more green leaves of Kay's plant.

A selection of flowering plants from the *platyaechmea* subgenus of *Aechmea* were on show. In 1998 Ross bought a plant tagged as *Aechmea zebrina* which has given two pups, one flowering for the first time. *Aechmea manzanaresiana* and two *Ae. chantinii* hybrids were shown, also a *Ae. chantinii* x *tessmanii* which has good foliage patterning and a striking flower. *Aechmea chantinii* are very variable and well worth growing for both their inflorescence and striking foliage. (photos p.10)

Lesley showed an *Aechmea* 'Deroose' which she bought from the Olive Branch Nursery last year. It has already produced a pup which is bigger than the mother plant and has a very attractive flower. She also showed a *Tillandsia crocata* x *mallefontii* hybrid which has perfumed yellow flowers and *Till. flabellata* which was also flowering. Lesley also dragged along a *Bromelia balansae* pup which was taller than herself, these are used for fencing off cattle in Brazil. She used gloves and safety glasses when removing it but lost the glasses somewhere amongst the spines! Her last show and tell was a *Quesnelia marmorata* clump which was climbing out of its pot. It had to be hung up or perhaps put into a tree. A lovely plant with many pups. (photos p.7)

Ross showed an unknown plant which was from wild collected seed from Brazil. He is waiting for it to flower so that he can work out what it is and compare it to plants from the same seed batch that John Catlan has.

Les was thrilled to show us his latest acquisition, a *Cryptanthus warasii* which he obtained after a very enjoyable 4 hours speaking about Cryptanthus with Doug Cross. *Cryptanthus warasii* is a xerophyte, a plant that has evolved in its form or function to survive recurrent drought. It is also a Cam plant. The xenomorphic modification of *Crypt. warasii* probably concerns the regulation of osmosis and/or transpiration and the development of water-retentive tissue. Les has another xerophytic plant in his collection, a *Crypt. colnagoi* and is also keen to acquire a *Crypt. leopoldo-horstii*. Cryptanthus have a nice upright growth habit but tend to go flat after they pup. Les puts polystyrene under the leaves to keep them up and also recommends the use of B.B.Q. skewers to restrain a new planting rather than elastic bands.

Last month's Newsletter article on Cryptanthus (pp 6 and 7) shows how many variables there are in naming cryptanthus and how easily a plant can change colour under different coloured shade cloth.

There was a brief discussion on where to grow cryptanthus. Some members have had good results just growing them in the garden. Doug Cross grows his cryptanthus on gravel in a shallow tray to create humidity. Cryptanthus are gross feeders and have very fine roots, they like lots of fertilizer and a good quality potting mix that is not too loose. Regular repotting is recommended to help encourage good healthy root growth. Les encouraged everyone again to bring in plants and write a few words for an article.

## **Cryptanthus warasii — Unusual** Ervin J. Wurthmann

Whenever seen for the first time, this species attracts attention, frequently prompting remarks such as "It's an orthophytum, not a cryptanthus" or "It could be a hechtia."

*Cryptanthus warasii* (the "w" is pronounced as a "v") came into my possession in June, 1978. The stiff, silvery foliage with very prominent spines makes it a striking and attractive small plant usually less than 8 inches in diameter.

Many species of *Cryptanthus* prefer moderate light with good moisture and humidity. *Crypt. warasii* was discovered growing on rock domes, tolerates much light and it also gets along with less humidity than some of the other species and hybrids. It is considerably slower growing than other cryptanthus and is less generous with offshoots.

My growing medium consists of peat moss, shredded bark, Perlite and some builders' sand. Since it is terrestrial, a balanced fertilizer, dry or soluble, in small quantities would be beneficial.

This plant could easily fit into a cactus and succulent garden where frosts are not a problem. Growers in areas of low humidity may find this species more amenable to cultivation than some others. The accompanying illustration shows its unusual and attractive character. *Cryptanthus warasii* has flair!



Photo by Norman Pettigrew

Reprinted from:  
Journal of the Bromeliad Society, 1982, V32, No.6

The following taken in part from:  
***Cryptanthus warasii*** by Dorothy Byer  
Cryptanthus Society Journal 15(2): 50, 59, 2000.

This bromeliad has an undeserved reputation for being difficult to grow. It apparently does not do well if kept in 6-inch pots of humusy soil in the humid, warm greenhouse conditions so favored by mesophytic *Cryptanthus* species. Instead, *Crypt. warasii* thrives with warm sunny days, cool nights, and plenty of air circulation, in a 4 or 5 inch pot filled with cactus-type soil mixed with about 50 percent pumice or perlite. Frequent spring and summer fertilization with a dilute solution of a balanced fertilizer produces a plant that does credit to the grower.

This charming plant presents two challenges. The first challenge is to find one, the second is to grow it successfully.

**Turning Angst into Action with Bromeliads** by Trish Kelly 2014

Recently while editing our meeting notes and recording, I found myself gritting my teeth and muttering, "Oh! Here we go again!!" there it was another protracted discussion about the Decorative Section of our Group Competition and the standout comment "the plant must be placed in a decorative pot or mounted on timber." I thought to myself, the actual plant and its arrangement is the decorative part, not the pot, the pot may be decorative; however, the whole unit is what is decorative and left it at that, continuing my editing.

Several days later while watering my shade house, my thoughts wandered back to the subject and I found myself saying, "Do something about it, you know the answer, next meeting take a Decorative entry along that is your interpretation of what constitutes being an appropriate Decorative entry."

Armed with this new motivation, I began to collect ideas and then bits and pieces that would form the basis of my decorative arrangement. I had right beside me at the time, *Orthophytum burle-marxii* in flower, which set the colour, red and silver grey. Next was some bamboo I had recently cut that had dried out nicely, an odd assortment of pebbles I have collected over time and a bundle of *Tillandsia usneoides* that had blown out of a very tall, old

Bunya-Bunya Pine, my youngest granddaughter had very proudly collected and given to me. I now had to assemble all the bits and collected my drill, hole saw and glue along with a can of red spray paint, a red Santa tray and orange basin. Over many days, I cut holes in a piece of timber to hold the bamboo, cut the bamboo to size, glued the bamboo in the form you see it, spray painted the bamboo arrangement and the orange basin and gradually assembled the whole arrangement to see if my ideas looked acceptable. I now have a Bromeliad Christmas decoration which can be added to and hope I have inspired some of my fellow members to be creative with their bromeliads.

My best wishes to you all and I hope to see you in 2015 armed with Decorative entries.

May our 2015 New Year's Resolution be: To bring an entry for either the Novice or Open Sections and an entry for the Decorative Section each month. !!!!! Cheers, Trish Kelly.



*Orthophytum burle-marxii*  
1st Decorative Trish Kelly

**Show and Tell** by Lesley Baylis



*Aechmea 'Deroose'* unreg. ??



*Quesnelia marmorata*



*Tillandsia crocata x mallefontii*



Lesley's *Bromelia balansae* pup she promised to Les. Beware of the long stolon Les.



*Tillandsia flabellata*



*Tillandsia streptophylla*



*Guzvriesea* 'Inferno' - Trish Kelly  
1st Open and Judges Choice



*Tillandsia deppeana*  
1st Novice Lesley Baylis



*Aechmea servitensis* var. *exigua*  
grown by Kay Daniels



*Neoregelia* hybrid ??  
grown by Flo Danswan



*Neoregelia* 'Predator'  
grown by Margaret Carpenter



*Neoregelia* 'Catlinite'  
grown by Shane Weston



*Cryptanthus* 'Strawberries Flambe'  
grown by Les Higgins



*Cryptanthus warasii*  
grown by Les Higgins



*Neoregelia* 'Morado'  
grown by Dawn Dennis

Photos supplied by: Ross Little

**Show and Tell** by Ross Little



*Neoregelia pineliana*



*Vriesea flammea*



*Ae. manzanariensis*



*Aechmea servitensis*  
var. *exigua*



*Ae. chantinii* hybrid ?



*Aechmea zebrina*



*Aechmea* hybrid ?

**Pitcairnia oliva-estevae – a good plant for the garden.**

by Doug Binns 2014

*Pitcairnia oliva-estevae* was first collected in 1995 by Francisco Oliva-Esteva and described over ten years later, in 2007. It has been recorded only in Venezuela, where it is described as growing terrestrially, but it seems to have been collected very few times and almost nothing has been written about its habitat. The two specimens listed in the protologue were collected from about 400 and 1600 m altitude, so it may occur over a considerable altitudinal range. It is a distinctive species which has been compared to the more widespread *Pit. altensteinii*, also from Venezuela, but it is easily distinguished by its smaller, non-overlapping floral bracts (*Pit. altensteinii* has conspicuous, densely-overlapping bracts).



In cultivation I have found it grows fairly quickly, beginning to flower in about 3 years from seed, although it takes 5 or more years to reach its full flowering potential. Like many pitcairnia, it seems to enjoy a free root run and grows more luxuriantly in the garden than in a pot. In the garden it fairly quickly develops into a clump and the plants become relatively large, with fairly tough, almost leathery, leaves up to 1.5 m long. It is fairly hardy and tolerates substantial periods of drought. I rarely water my patch of plants and rely almost entirely on rain. They flower regularly in late spring each year and are in flower for about 3 weeks. Mine are sheltered by small but fairly open trees and experience some western sun. They may tolerate full sun but I haven't tried. In winter I get regular frost in



open areas and there was light frost a few metres from the plants during a week of unusually cold weather in winter this year. The plants did not show any sign of damage from cold, but I expect they would suffer some damage from being directly frosted.

◀ *Pitcairnia oliva-estevae* is a resilient and attractive plant which is well worth growing as seen here in Doug's own garden.

## **Bromeliad Ramble**

The group extended a warm welcome to Bob and Jamie Larnach from 'Bromeliads Australia Nursery' on the Central Coast, NSW. Bob spoke about the progression he has seen in bromeliad growing over the past 40 years. Many years ago *Neoregelia carolinae* was seen as a fantastic bromeliad along with *Neoregelia spectabilis*. *Vriesea fosteriana* was virtually unobtainable and only had one pup in its lifetime due to lack of cultural knowledge in those early days, only 6 to 10 people had it in Australia. Bromeliads were scarce at the time.

Bob had orchids before bromeliads and has seen the process of hybridization and tissue culture that orchid growers followed now done by bromeliad growers. He hasn't seen chromosome selection in bromeliads but believes it will eventually happen in this country. Many people have now imported a great number of bromeliads into Australia but back in those early days it was difficult to get plants into the country. It was hard to get them through quarantine because the rules kept changing and everything was gassed. Unfortunately if plants were brought into the country in 40 degree heat, they were gassed and put back into boxes in the heat and had 100% kill.

There has been a dramatic rise in interest in Bromeliads today. Bob went to Europe, America and Costa Rica to see them growing. Costa Rica is a small, narrow country with one major mountain range. You can stand on the peak and look out and see the Atlantic Ocean on one side with tropical and subtropical plants and then look towards the Pacific Ocean where it is a lot drier.

Bob remembers having a great learning curve with *Vriesea hieroglyphica* which he was told needed a glasshouse and had to be treated as something special to grow well. At the first bromeliad conference in Melbourne he went to the Botanic Gardens and saw the best row of *Vr. hieroglyphica* he had ever seen growing between the glasshouse and the fence out in the open. He learnt then how much air movement these plants really need.

by Robert (Bob) Larnach 2014



Bob Larnach with his creation  
*Vriesea* 'B.A. McEric' (unreg.)

He progressed through the *Vr. fosterianas*, the main ones were the European 'Red Chestnut' type. York Meredith in Sydney brought in lots of seedlings from Hans Gulz in Germany. Two of the men who worked for him went out on their own and it was at their place that Bob first saw *Vr. fosteriana* var. *seideliana* which were a huge improvement on the average *Vr. fosteriana*. Many are used now in hybridizing as they give a broader leaf, better pattern and have lots of longevity because they don't flower as readily as the old European style of *Vr. fosteriana* (Red Chestnut).

Years ago many seed companies tried to grow Bromeliad seed but were never very successful. Nowadays most people can grow from seed because of better knowledge.

Through his work with orchids Bob was able to use this knowledge to learn about Bromeliads. He learnt to put seed down and had a lot of success. The *Neoregelia* 'Aussie Dream' series which was created from seed that was imported from Hans Gulz, it was this seed which produced the green 'meyendorffii' types with the occasional striation, this was where these striated plants originated from. Also York Meredith imported variegated pups of select clones that cost around \$40.00 per pup about 40 years ago, these were the first variegated commercial *Neoregelias* in Australia. Bob had about 14 different so-called variegates and only ever came up with one plant that successfully bred variegates and that's how he got started.

At the same time Allan Ladd had Cherry Road Nursery at Warners Bay near Newcastle and he also bought seeds from York Meredith. He was responsible for many smaller variegated *Neoregelias*.

Apart from York Meredith importing plants, the Walton brothers who worked for York brought in a lot of seed from Alvim Seidel in Brazil. A lot of early attempts at seed growing was 'hit and miss' but some brilliant stock came out of it. Bill Sieverding, a German grower who had a big nursery at Kemps Creek western Sydney, NSW was responsible for many early *Vr. fosteriana*, *Vr. 'Splendriet'* and *Vr. splendens* also lots of *Vr. 'Favorite'* hybrids.

Bob feels the Hans Gulz variety of *Till. cyanea* is equal to anything produced commercially now. Many have gone for colour now, whereas a lot of the Gulz *cyaneas* had massive heads, a paler pink flower but a bigger more open plant.

The first *Till. cyaneas* that Bob obtained were from seeds put down in flasks. When put into agar an excess of cytokinin was used so that seedlings kept producing sideways instead of growing roots and growing upwards. It was nothing to get 20 plants out of a single seedling. Cytokinins are hormones used in laboratories to produce vegetative growth, it doesn't grow a complete plant.

Bob recalled the names of many of the people who have been involved with Bromeliads over the years. In Victoria Garry Thompson, Fay and Gren Sibley, Yvonne and Maurice Kellett and the Kloppenborgs worked hard to get the first bromeliad conference going, later he met Chris Larson. Back then Tillandsias could be bought by the square centimetre and cork by the square metre.

In NSW Peter Carney had very good clones of *Vr. fosteriana* which produced lots of seed. Lou Forrest, the curator at the Sydney Botanic Gardens, obtained seed from Peter which produced a couple of thousand seedlings and led to the 'Erotica' series of early foliage Vrieseas. Unfortunately there was one seed parent but several pollen parents so therefore there are some with maroon spikes and some with yellow. One plant from this series named 'Angela' has been an exceptional plant. Bob bred the *Vriesea* 'Snakeskin' series using *Vr. 'Angela' x fosteriana var. seideliana*.

Jack Bisset was a good propagator who helped expand the Australian bromeliad world. Keith and Ruby Ryde had an exceptional collection and brought lots of plants into Australia. Other people who have contributed to growing Bromeliads in Australia are Anne Boon, Doreen and Peter Johnson, John Sacks, Norm Kreshmann (an early *Cryptanthus* grower), Olwyn Ferris, Glad Lawrence, Marj McNamara, Olive and Len Trevor who have imported many plants, particularly Vrieseas, Bill Morris and of course Grace Goode who Bob considers is the mother of Bromeliads in this country.

G.J. Clarke and Bob formed the Central Coast Bromeliad Society. Bob regularly sees Bill Morris (about weekly), if Bob is travelling anywhere Bill often asks him to pick up plants for him or pollinate a couple of plants on the way. At 86 Bill still has an exceptional mind and a keen interest in Bromeliads.

As for the future Bob has noticed Billbergias becoming fashionable. Coloured foliage plants such as *Bill. 'Hallelujah'* changed things. Don Beadle has done over 4,000 crosses with Billbergias and has bred some magnificent plants, Bob is also bringing out some new Billbergia crosses he has recently done himself. Bob's breeding program is aiming mainly for colour clarity.

When Bob hybridized the 'Aussie Dream' series he had 2,000 seedlings, 500 were variegated and 1500 were green. Bob believes if you do a cross keep any exceptional green plants so you can go in another direction with hybridizing. The 500 variegated plants were culled to 20 and given names. However he did give some away and other people put names on them. Bob feels there is too much emphasis on naming every plant out of a grex, select and only name the best.

The Group thanked Bob very much for sharing his knowledge and memories of Bromeliads in Australia.

## **Christmas Message for 2014**

by Trish Kelly

Christmas wishes to everyone for 2014, like most years we seem to have packed many meetings, guest speakers, newsletters, lots of information and friendships into that time.

May 2015, be as rewarding and enlightening and that for you all, it is a year of good health and joy.

We have enjoyed the travel stories of many of our members and distant contributors, telling us of the exciting countries visited, the bromeliad sites and the adventurous exploits undertaken in pursuit of seeing these plants first hand. We would sit listening with pleasure and envy, realising how lucky we were to have shared in their experiences. These wonderful talks are quite often accompanied by a comment from the members "I want one of those", "Ross, have you got ...?"

These generous contributors have given the editorial team so much informative material on the rarer and unfamiliar and also some of the older species revisited, often accompanied by photographs affirming the variability of bromeliad species and habitats.

May we extend to all our contributors a special thank you and also to the reference team of Derek Butcher and Geoff Lawn for their regular contributions and corrections. Thank you everyone!!

Our Group Competitions have been well supported and our request is that it continue through 2015 particularly from our newer members. The advice given in the Grower's Comments is particularly valuable as we can all learn so much from others' experiences.

A special thank you, to Ross and Helen for the availability of PineGrove, as the venue for our regular meetings. To Ross, for his professional touch with the Newsletter and as leader at our monthly meetings. To Helen, for that very special touch, in having "things" so well organised, the lists, the Group's Sale goods, the competition etc., plus the necessary tea, coffee, cups, milk and the urn always full & on the boil.

And finally to our members, thank you for your attendance, your contributions of raffle plants for fund raising, for the plants you bring in for discussion and show and tell, for your questions and queries, they are such an integral part of our meetings and newsletters, keep it all coming please!

**Thank you all for your warmth and friendliness, it makes the Group and we look forward to continuing in 2015.**

## Novice Popular Vote

- 1st Lesley Baylis
- 2nd Flo Danswan
- 3rd Dawn Dennis
- 3rd Les Higgins



*Tillandsia deppeana*  
*Neoregelia* unknown ?  
*Neoregelia* 'Morado'  
*Cryptanthus* 'Strawberries Flambe'

## Open Popular Vote

- 1st Trish Kelly
- 2nd Kay Daniels
- 3rd Shane Weston

*Vriecantarea* 'Inferno'  
*Aechmea servitensis* var. *exigua*  
*Neoregelia* 'Catlinite'

## Judges Choice

- 1st Trish Kelly

*Vriecantarea* 'Inferno'

## Decorative

- 1st Trish Kelly

*Orthophytum burle-marxii*

## Comments from the Growers:

**Lesley's** *Tillandsia* was a pup from a plant bought about 7 years ago from the Olive Branch nursery. It gets afternoon sun, slow release fertiliser and sprayed every 2 days in Summer.

**Flo** bought her *Neoregelia* from Bromagic in May. She re-potted it into a bigger pot and it has done very well. She keeps it in the shade house and waters every second day.

**Trish** grew her *Vriecantarea* 'Inferno' from a pup received 3 years ago as a donation to our Christmas Draw. John Arden was the hybridiser of this stunning hybrid, it is a cross between *Vriesea ensiformis* and *Alcantarea regina*. It is kept in the shade house under 50% green shade cloth and watered twice a week. Trish also regularly uses half strength soluble fertiliser.

**Kay** bought her *Aechmea servitensis* from Peter Tristram in early 2013. This is the first pup from the original mother plant which has since had 2 more pups. It is kept in the greenhouse and has been an easy plant to grow.

Congratulations to Trish Kelly for taking out the trifecta!

