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

Edition: February 2025

Agenda: General Discussion

Venue: PineGrove Bromeliad Nursery
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Study Group meets the third Thursday of each month

Next meeting March 20th 2025 at 11 a.m.

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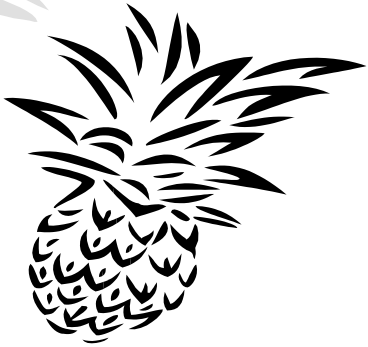


Meeting January 19th 2025

The meeting was opened at approximately 11.00 am
The seven members were welcomed.
Seven apologies were received.

General Business

Helen has had two stays in hospital since our December Christmas get together, no no, nothing to do with Christmas catering, all's well there. However she has indicated that she can no longer perform all the duties she has been doing for the Group since its inception in Nov. 2008. She hopes to be able to do some minor duties like the clerical e.g. 'Popular Vote' sheets etc. but can't continue with the heavy lifting. She is grateful to Coral and Kayelene who have taken over some roles but it can't all be dropped onto their shoulders either, we all need to do a bit to keep our Group functioning and running smoothly. A thank you is also offered to Mitch for his early morning set-up help and errand running 'the milk run', unfortunately his work commitments have caught up with him for a while. Hope we see you back at meetings soon. I'm sure there are many more words of thanks to be offered to all our members, so thank you all.

Everybody seems to clearly understand the change to our **Tillandsia** - Popular Vote section as could be seen by the entries in this month's competition.

A short discussion was had to clarify our other sections being:
Open - enter any genus into this section.

Monthly Genus - to be decided upon each month with notification sent out via e-mail prior to the meeting. (until we get organized)

A reminder about size of Popular Vote entries, we only have limited space on our show tables available so, one plant per entrant in each section, oversized entries are frowned upon, be considerate to others. BUT this doesn't mean you can't bring that 'special' oversized plant along to show off / brag about and get a photo into our Newsletter for all to see.

Our Group attendance numbers are at their lowest at the moment, partly due to natural attrition plus some members having to return to work duties. Here lies the problem that we've always known, our meetings are daytime on a week day which doesn't suit everybody. Our Group needs promoting to try and boost our numbers, therefore Shane has offered to design an advert to be posted on local Community Groups and Garden Clubs, facebook sites.

Your Newsletter needs your articles, this is a plea to help the editors keep as much original content, yours, in your Newsletter, please write us a short article.

Following on from our discussion on changing our Pop Vote competition from Tillandsioideae to Tillandsia raised the question as to why were some Tillandsia changed to Wallisia? It was all based on various diagnostic characters, DNA, giving the name Wallisia precedence.

Note: Four species, one hybrid. Morren (Apr – Dec 1870), when elevating *Tillandsia* sect. *Wallisia* to generic rank, cited the legitimate genus *Phytarrhiza* Vis. (type *T. duratii* Vis.) in synonymy and therefore made the genus *Wallisia* nomenclaturally superfluous at that time, but not illegitimate a later homonym.

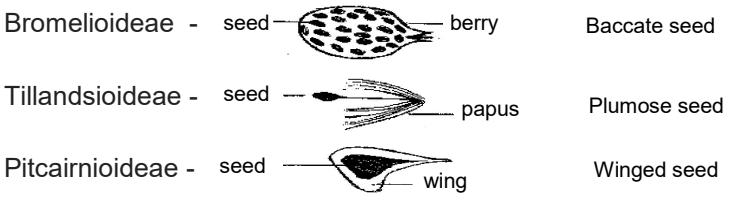
"Homonyms by Derek Butcher January 2015 (in part)
You are never too old to learn and the word homonym may be understandable to the botanist but it makes me think. Let us look at the definition:

homonym: A name spelled exactly like another name published for a taxon of the same rank based on a different type.
Note: Names of subdivisions of genera or infraspecific taxa with the same epithet even if of different rank are treated as homonyms disregarding the connecting term. Not considered valid.

To me this means that you cannot have two binomials (genus plus species name) that are exactly the same. I did think this only applied to botanists but apparently it includes palaeobotanists too!**"**

The **Bromeliaceae** (the bromeliads) are a family of monocots (contain only one embryonic leaf), flowering plants of 80 genera and around 3729 known species, native to southern North America, Central America and South America.

Bromeliaceae were originally split into three subfamilies based on morphological characters and easily distinguished by their seed type:



However, molecular evidence has revealed that while the Bromelioideae and Tillandsioideae are monophyletic (belonging to the same taxon and sharing a common ancestor), Pitcairnioideae is, in fact, paraphyletic (belonging to the same taxon and sharing a most recent common ancestor, however, it does not include all descendants of that ancestor) and should be split into six subfamilies: Brocchinioideae, Lindmanioideae, Hechtioideae, Navioideae, Pitcairnioideae, and Puyoideae.

Brocchinioideae is defined as the most basal branch of Bromeliaceae based on both morphological and molecular evidence, namely genes in chloroplast DNA.

Lindmanioideae is the next most basal branch distinguished from the other subfamilies by convolute sepals and chloroplast DNA.

Hechtioideae is also defined based on analyses of chloroplast DNA; similar morphological adaptations to arid environments also found in other groups are attributed to convergent evolution.

Navioideae is split from Pitcairnioideae based on its cochlear sepals and chloroplast DNA.

Puyoideae has been re-classified multiple times and its monophyly remains controversial according to analyses of chloroplast DNA.

The Bromeliaceae group of plants eight subfamilies are:

1 - **Bromelioideae**
2 - **Tillandsioideae**
3 - **Hectioideae**
4 - **Puyoideae**
5 - **Pitcairnioideae**
6 - **Lindmanioideae**
7 - **Brochinioideae**
8 - **Navioideae**

Information gleaned from: Bromeliaceae – A Layman's Guide Part 1 – The Eight Subfamilies. The Butcher Files.

Watering - How much water do you give any one Bromeliad?

It's a learning process, it depends on the species, the size of the plant, the substrate/potting mix it is growing in, the climate, the aspect and environment. Is it being grown in shade or lack of and whether there is protection for the plant or not. You need to take into consideration whether the bromeliad is epiphytic or terrestrial/saxicolous etc, then you adjust your watering regime to suit each plant, generally grouping or planting like needing bromeliads with those of similar requirements. When to water, day or night, early morning, late afternoon or middle of the day? Understanding plant photosynthesis and the time of day monocotyledons synthesise their food will help you plan a watering regime. Misting or fogging has been suggested as this gives the necessary moisture for night time metabalization. The theory of little but often, if your climate is on the drier side or your plants are up trees, works well. If you have them in or on the ground with relative humidity and protection the same theory also works well.

Keeping the humidity up as much as possible is important, keep the floor of your growing area damp. If you have a misting system set the timer to come on every hour or so for just a couple of minutes works wonders.

Beware, in drought conditions over-night temperatures can plummet and free water may instigate root-rot. Non-cam plants photosynthesize during daylight necessitating miserly watering in the early morning. Cam plants photosynthesize by chemical reduction during darkness. Fogging could be more advantageous than judicious evening watering.

Fertilizing - the gist of an article Bill Morris wrote in 1986 plus he added some recent improvements when giving this presentation in to FNCBSG in July 2013**:**

One must remember that growers grow their plants differently to each other as well as, in all likelihood, growing their own different plants in different manners. Thus any fertilizing regime would depend on this primary tenet. Also, most mature bromeliads don't need fertilizing.

Fertilizer is only needed when**:**
1) Rapid growth is required e.g. seedlings. This would be in addition to whatever nutrition the potting mix provides.

2) Large growth is required e.g. specimen plants or to develop more offsets.

3) Plants have small or no root systems e.g. Tillandsia's.

4) Plants which are grown in an improved environment, such that the growing season is lengthened. Feeding must occur under the right conditions, there is no point in feeding heavily if the plant is in a poor environment.

5) Large green plants, those that don't colour in a high light, are grown for their flower spikes e.g. *Vriesea* and some *Aechmea.* Usually the bigger the plant, the bigger the flower spike or inflorescence. For this sort of growth feeding is necessary.

Do not fertilise plants that are grown for high colour, which is generally produced by high light, heat or dryness. Two of the most colourful genera are *Neoregelia* and *Billbergia* should not be fertilised. They are grown for colour, shape and general appearance and when fertilized are likely to lose all three characters. Many of the plants will go strappy, Neoregelias may even flatten out.

Bill mentioned that many barred, banded and coloured plants will not lose colour or barring when fertilized e.g. a lot of *Aechmea, Vriesea* and *Tillandsia*. However some variegated bromeliads such as *Edmundoa* 'Alvim Seidel' may reduce or totally lose variegations. It appears to depend on the number of functioning chloroplasts within the cells within the leaves, as to whether or not the variegation will disappear. Those plants with clean clear white variegation (no chloroplasts and hence no chlorophyll) may well be fertilized with no degradation of the variegation.

Show, Tell and Ask! Ross showed a couple of his Neoregelia hybrid creations from an, as yet, unnamed grex that were flowering for the first time.

The seed was collected in 2020 from a *Neoregelia* 'PineGrove Gem' (left) x pollen donor unknown.

"In my opinion the seed parent is more attractive before flowering, the colour flush is a messy, dirty, reddish pink, not a crisp clean colour". Ross

There are about 40 plants from this grex nearing maturity with several showing promise as keepers, more culling will be done in the future.

Much cleaner lines and colour in this seedling than those of the seed parent.

I feel the offsets of this one need to be grown in brighter light to help improve its conformation.

This one may produce some albomarginated offsets in the next generation, maybe worth keeping.

This is my pick of the bunch so far, I'm happy with its clean lines, the pinkish purple flush in the central cup that is lightly flushing out to more intense colour at the leaf tips.

This is a much bolder plant than others of the grex, just hope it's stable into the next generation.

All the mature seedlings within this grex are 500 to 600mm across.

Aechmea fasciata (Lindley) Baker.

This species has been in demand since it was first named in 1828 and was of great interest to botanists in the 1800s as shown by the number of synonyms and cultivars. To this day it is still of great horticultural value.

Aechmea fasciata var ***fasciata*** (Lindley) Baker.

Its leaves are green, it grows as an epiphyte in forest, 700-1300 m alt, Rio de Janeiro and (Guanabara), Brazil.

Aechmea fasciata var ***purpurea*** (Guillon) Mez, 1934.

Leaves red-purple, it was found growing in Rio de Janeiro State, Brazil.

Aechmea fasciata var. ***pruinosa*** Reitz, 1981.
Leaves, scape bracts and flowers white farinose; densely covered in scales forming a white skin. Found growing in Santa Catarina, Brazil. Also collected and grown in cultivation by Adda Abendroth in the State of Rio de Janeiro, 14 February 1981.

Each of the *Ae. fasciata* species and cultivars are relatively easy to grow in Northern Rivers (NSW) gardens and as an epiphyte in our trees.

It's a plant well worth growing in any collection, look for many of the variants e.g. bract and petal colour, foliage variegation and margination, silver or banded leaves, with spines (armed/armate) or without spines (entire - spineless).

Infraspecific (taxon below the rank of species) list of *Aechmea fasciata* cultivars:

'Aton'	'DeLeon'	'Mackerel'	'Smoothie'
'Auslese'	'Frost'	'Morgana'	'Snaakse Ding'
'Big Mama Fasciata'	'Ghost'	'Primera'	'Stalker'
'Canvey Pink Surprise'	'Ivory'	'Sangria'	'Supernova'
'Checkers'	'Leucadia'	'Silver King'	'White Head'

Aechmea fasciata grown by Kayelene Guthrie, photos by Ross Little

Aechmea zebrina hybrid
1st Open Helen Clewett

Tillandsia ‘Bevie Bee’
1st Tillandsia and Judges Choice
Shane Fitzgerald

Neoregelia ‘Moondust’ 1st Mini Neoregelia Shane Fitzgerald

Guzmania sanguinea
grown by Keryn Simpson

x*Neohylaeaicum* ‘Pulp Fiction’
grown by Shane Fitzgerald

Neoregelia ‘Satsuma Gem’
grown by Helen Clewett

Neoregelia ‘Burning Embers’
grown by Keryn Simpson

Photo by Kayelene Guthrie

Neoregelia ‘Super Fireball’
grown by Kayelene Guthrie

A question often asked:
My plant is getting too big for its pot, should I divide it or leave it ?

Many Vrieseas, Billbergias some Aechmeas, Canistrums, Catopsis and more, certainly look better grown into a colony, such as this ’mini’ Neoregelia of Kayelene’s.

So dividing isn’t always best.

Tillandsia mallemontii
grown by Gary McAteer

Tillandsia gardneri
grown by Helen Clewett

Tillandsia 'Magnificent'
grown by Keryn Simpson

Tillandsia 'Nellie Rose'
grown by Kayelene Guthrie

Kayelene's *Tillandsia* 'Magnificent' offset was showing signs of 'rot' early in its life. Concerned she was going to lose it, she made enquiries of how best to treat it. Suggested treatment was to sprinkle it with cinnamon powder and hang it in a well ventilated/ breezy area and allow it to dry. Having done this and given it lots of TLC the plant has responded rewarding her with lots of new growth.

Moral here is if you're not sure on what to do ask a member of your Bromeliad Group or Society for help and reap the rewards.

Signs of centre rot that Kayelene noticed.

For information on Phytophthora refer: FNCBSG NSW Newsletter February 2018, page 13.

A soggy Tillandsia brought along for **Show, Tell and Ask!** by Keryn. Yes it has been very wet here in the Northern Rivers (NSW) lately. Unfortunately this plant was not getting sufficient air circulation to help it dry out quickly enough between showers. It was suffocating, when the trichomes are wet and closed over the stomata (the breathing pores) for an extended period the plant can't breathe. Clean the rotting foliage away, allow the plant to dry, ts central leaves are firm, so with extra care and some foliar fertilizer it may survive.

Bromeliads - Houseplants for Today and Tomorrow Part 5

by Walter Richter (Translated by Adda Abendroth, Teresopolis, Brazil)
From: BSI 1967 V18 (1)

Descriptions of travels to the native habitats of bromeliads will perhaps serve to give the reader a rapid appreciation of the growing conditions of the Bromeliaceae.

The famous French landscape architect Edouard Andre, who travelled in South America in the middle of last century and brought home many tropical plants, wrote a charming account of bromeliads. According to him, epiphytic bromels, thanks to their great number, their large leaf rosettes, and often colorful inflorescences, make a much deeper impression on the spectator than do orchids, which generally have but a single flower and that hidden by foliage. Several species of Tillandsias often come in thick clusters on large trees together with Aechmeas, Vrieseas, Billbergias, and other epiphytes. Pitcairnias droop in great masses from ledges, their grassy leaves interspersed with red, pink, or white flower spikes. Some species discard their leaves during the dry period of the year and dress the rock on which they live in a garment of blackish or brownish spines. *Tillandsia incarnata* weaves a greyish-red carpet over the ledges in the dry regions of Colombia. Ule tells of perpendicular, naked, and inaccessible cliffs near Rio de Janeiro that are sprinkled with sprays of *Tillandsia araujei, T. brachyphylla* and Vriesea species. The different colors give the whole a look of marble.

Werdermann, in his book *Brazil and its Columnar Cacti*, describes the catinga that was mentioned several times in the preceding pages. The name catinga is of Indian origin and means more or less "shadeless forest," describing the nature of the thorn-scrub landscape where leaves are practically non-existent. Werdermann writes about a collecting trip to the Interior of Pernambuco.

"Now we are well within the thornscrub (catinga). Roads have shrunk to paths fit only for mules or perhaps a small cart. Sharp-edged stones bit into the tires. Up we go, then down again. It is extraordinary what the car can stand and how the driver succeeds in edging around obstructions and climbing over rocks. Ours is the pace of a snail; again and again we get off to relieve the car, to spy out the way ahead, to look for a flowering plant or a cactus in the scrub. The catinga is an incredible mass of low trees and bushes, only a few meters high, full of dry, thorny branches through which the long bush knife must cut a passage. The ground is often densely covered with bromels whose long, spiny leaves form impenetrable barriers. The only entries into the mass are paths trodden by half-wild cattle in search of the "hearts" of the bromels. During daylight hours smoldering heat lingers over the thicket. Any attempt to advance must be paid for in droplets of sweat and also of blood.

The silence is ominous. Very rarely a little monkey or bird may skip through the branches. There is no sign whatever of larger animals. Snakes, of which it is said that a great many poisonous ones inhabit bromeliad thickets, apparently have become extinct. This is a true desert; only a few landmarks rise about the flatness. It is as if man and beast shunned these God-forsaken regions where tremendous drought prevails for years on end.

Yet how the picture changes when a spring or summer shower refreshes the land! Within a few days green leaves adorn the seemingly dead branches, many trees put out quantities of blossoms. The catinga presents then a colorful picture, but it is of short duration. Dusty, grey, and dead the countryside remains for years. As a compensation, though, spring may come several times in one year; it all depends on the very irregular rainfall. Periodicity in plant life is here tied up with the rain, not the temperature as in our latitudes. Temperature in the area varies little. Thunderstorms traveling in streaks over the countryside can be easily spotted. They leave behind a green wake in sharp contrast with the arid section that was left untouched.**"** So much for the catinga.

As an example to show under what contrary conditions bromeliads can survive, let me cite a comment by L. Cutak (Missouri Botanical Garden) about the rain forest in Chiapas. The area visited was the southern most tip of Mexico, close to Guatemala. To a height of 3,000 meters rises the Sierra Madre Occidental, only a small coastal strip separating it from the Pacific Ocean. Between two ranges of this chain is the deep, broad valley of the Chiapas River.

Mr. Cutak writes**: "**The rain forest lies in a little-known mountain region, where new plants will doubtless be discovered in the future. Here we found a new begonia, several epiphytic cacti, aroids, and bromeliads. On the farm Rancho Recuerdo, a few miles north of the Indian settlement Ocozocoautla we saw young trees loaded down with bromels, such as Tillandsia and several Catopsis, of which the most remarkable was *T. streptophylla.* This latter is a beautiful plant, having a dense pseudobulb made up of the leaf sheaths. The sword shaped leaves are broad at the base and taper to a fine tip and have a curious habit of twisting and curling. A much smaller plant with an inflated, attractively spotted pseudobulb is *T. butzii*, also abounding in the thicket along the brook that runs through Rancho Recuerdo. The most common was the grass-like *T. tenuifolia* growing mingled with at least ten different species of orchids. The bromels, especially the Catopsis, looked like birds' nests in the branches.

From Rancho Recuerdo we took the road leading to the rain forest, and after several hours of march we were in virgin wilds. In some places the thick green canopy above our heads obscured the sun. Here we found *Begonia imperialis*, one of the most gorgeous of foliage plants. Fallen trees, covered with epiphytes,

retarded our march to Pico Carrizal. One trunk was covered with an unidentified Pitcairnia that has long leaves above a thorny basic structure. I thought Pitcairnias were all terrestrials, but could now convince myself that certain species do very well on trunks of high trees. A variety of other bromels was abundant in the area. They were mostly Tillandsias, but Vrieseas, Aechmeas, Billbergias, and Catopsis were also there.

Pico Carrizal is a high promontory rising from the forest. It is also covered with luscious plants. The climb over rolling stones and through deep cuts filled with decaying leaves was most difficult. We didn't get to the top. We examined plants and collected as much as we could on the lower third of the slope. We found an epiphytic cactus with a fish-bone-like stem. It had been described just the year before as a new species, *Cryptocereus anthonyanus*, and is considered to be a link between Cereus and Epiphyllum. Again Tillandsias predominated in number of species, but there were also Vrieseas with flat, elliptic spikes, and an occasional *Billbergia pallidiflora.*

Nizanda in the State of Oaxaca is another plant lovers' paradise. It is situated a few miles north of Tehuantepec and can be reached on foot if you get off the train in Chivela or in Nizanda. Bromeliads, orchids, aroids, and cacti thrive here in close communion. Tillandsias stand out in number, growing on ledges and in trees, some even clinging to high torch-cacti. The dwarf-like *T. ionantha* covered the weaker branches where it lived together with *T. caput-medusae*, while *T. juncea* preferred fissures in the rock. A stiff leaved, grey-scaled Tillandsia struck my attention as being perhaps a new species. Its elliptic flower spikes are 20 cm long and are made up of red-tipped and red margined apple-green bracts from which peep deep purple red tubular flowers. This bromeliad should become a fine ornamental.**"**

Another comment about Mexico, an area one half degree to the north of the one just described, depicts plant life on the Atlantic side. The descriptions of the author, A. Purpus, are interesting because they describe successive steps in the various zones. After having crossed the wet and swampy coastal area, Purpus came into a dry, savanna-like country.

He writes**: "**The countryside is in part flat, in part uneven, crossed by a number of barrancas. It is mainly grassland with a few lone trees and extensive scrub growth. Several species of tree-like cacti grow here. From October to May it rains rarely, the lower savannas hardly at all. Brooks are then totally dry, and the deep barrancas through which enormous masses of water push in powerful gushes during the rainy season are almost dry. In winter the days are very hot, the nights cool. In February the thermometer was up to 30°C, at midday in the shade; at night it was 12° to 15°C. In summer the heat is almost unbearable; the

savanna is then an uncongenial place. In summer thunderstorms practically make a swamp of the landscape. Humidity is high even at night, it is an ideal place for epiphytes, and we find them in great abundance. Bromeliads dominate, also in number of species; orchids are fewer and there were single specimens of cacti and peperomia. One of the commonest bromels is the little *Tillandsia recurvata*, which looks almost like a lichen. Masses of it grow in the low trees and in the scrubs. It skips the rain forest entirely to show up again in the xerophytic altitudes. Very common is also the pretty little *T. ionantha*, often found in large colonies. Its succulent leaves turn a vivid scarlet during the flowering period, making a wonderful contrast with the violet-blue flowers. The graceful, whitish-grey *T. vestita*, with red flower spikes is also very common, forming great clusters sometimes 50 cm in diameter. The grey *Tillandsia balbisiana* stands out on account of its curious shape, while beautiful *T. brachycaulos*, blushing through flowering time, calls our attention by its gay coloration. One Tillandsia (I do not know its name) has very stiff leaves and shiny red and yellow flat flower spikes; it, as well as the peculiar *Tillandsia circinnata* and others are plentiful in the savanna but are absent higher up. *Tillandsia tricolor, T. juncea, T. filifolia* are often found in the upper savanna growing in thick cushions on branches.

A rare sight was that presented by huge clusters of *T. usneoides* on a stony plateau flanked by two barrancas. Long strands hanging from the trees touched the ground, shutting off the plateau like a curtain. Possibly their exuberance was due to abundant nightly fog rising along the perpendicular rocky slopes. *Tillandsia usneoides* is the most extraordinary member of its tribe. It looks like a beard lichen, and like beard lichen it hangs from trees. It has roots only in its infancy. Dissemination takes place less by seed than by fractions of strand carried off by birds or born away in the wind. Its fine curly leaves entwine it in crowns of trees. Minute, grey-white scale-hairs closely cover its stalks and leaves, sucking moisture from the air and passing it on into the plant's body. To name all the bromels that grow in these savannas would require several columns; even the steep walls of the barrancas are dotted with Tillandsias and their kin.

At about 700 to 800 meters altitude the savanna gives way almost abruptly to a region chiefly covered with sparse oak forest, semi-xerophile, up to about 900 meters Bromels and orchids simply cram the place. The oak crowns become visible in winter because they shed part of their leaves, permitting the epiphytes to profit from increased light. I have often seen 15 to 20 different species of orchids in a single tree settling among numerous bromels, ferns, and peperomia. The bromels are in part identical with those of the savanna, but there are some new ones among them, as, for example, the odd *Tillandsia streptophylla.*

To be continued ……...

Open Popular Vote

1st	Helen Clewett	*Aechmea zebrina* hybrid
2nd	Shane Fitzgerald	x*Neohylaeaicum* 'Pulp Fiction'
3rd	Keryn Simpson	*Guzmania sanguinea*

Tillandsia

1st	Shane Fitzgerald	*Tillandsia* 'Bevie Bee'
2nd	Gary McAteer	*Tillandsia mallemonti*
3rd	Keryn Simpson	*Tillandsia* 'Nellie Rose'

Monthly Genus - Mini Neoregelia

1st	Shane Fitzgerald	*Neoregelia* 'Moondust'
2nd	Helen Clewett	*Neoregelia* 'Satsuma Gem'
3rd	Keryn Simpson	*Neoregelia* 'Burning Embers'

Judges Choice

1st	Shane Fitzgerald	*Tillindsia* 'Bevie Bee'

Web Links for Checking Correct Identification and Spelling ?

Bromeliad Cultivar Register (BCR): http://registry.bsi.org/
Refer to this site for correct identification and spelling of your hybrid or cultivar.

Bromeliad Species Database (BSD): www.bsi.org/members/?bsd
Refer to this site for species identification, photos, descriptions and more.

New Bromeliad Taxon List : https://bromeliad.nl/taxonlist/
Refer to this site for latest species name changes and correct spelling.

Bromeliads in Australia (BinA) http://bromeliad.org.au/
Refer to this site for its Photo Index, Club Newsletters many with Table of Contents Index and there's Detective Derek Articles.

Keep these web sites set as desktop icons for quick reference access.

Where do I Find the Dates ?

www.bromeliad.org.au then click "Diary".
Check this site for regular updates of times, dates and addresses of meetings and shows in your area and around the country.