

# BROMELIANA

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(visit our website [www.nybromeliadsociety.org](http://www.nybromeliadsociety.org))

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## LOTS OF BLOOMS

by Herb Plever

My *Aechmea farinosa* (discolor form) bloomed late last year. It put up two pups and I placed it out on my terrace in May. Now each pup (still on the parent) has an inflorescence in flower. Come to think about it, I've had a lot of plants go into bloom this summer, likely in response to the increased light and my weekly, high strength fertilizer regimen. Here is a list of them:

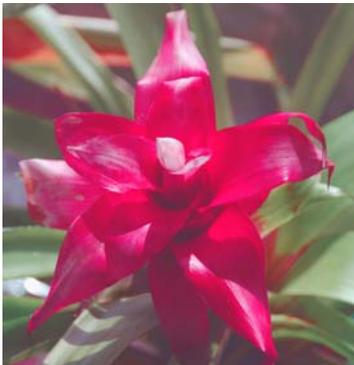
1. *Aechmea farinosa* discolor form.
2. *Aechmea* 'Blue Tango' - full sized (which means very large) and starting to bloom on my terrace.
3. *Cryptanthus* 'Arrogance' - growing under lights.
4. *Guzmania* 'Diane' - I got it from Deroose a number of years ago. It has since been dropped from his catalog. It has a deep red inflorescence, much different from Deroose's *G.* 'Diana' with its bright yellow-bracted bloom.
5. *Guzmania* mini 'Elien' - small plant with a rose-bracted inflorescence, white tips in the center.

6. *Guzmania* 'Empire' (?) - a spreading plant with a star-shaped, orangish red/redish orange inflorescence. Beadle's Cultivar Register says it's a small, 12" cultivar of *G. lingulata v. minor* by Bak, but the plant I bought as 'Empire' is larger - more than double the spread.

7. *Guzmania* mini 'Libby' - not quite a mini as it spreads to 13 inches, but the bloom is big and beautiful. The bract shape and color was different from the plant shown in the Deroose catalog. My plant had stiffer, more spreading bracts and the color was not as deep as the fuschia shown in the catalog.

8. *Guzmania* mini 'Lydia' - also not a mini, but still a small plant with bright yellow bracts with red tips and many-tiered orange scape bracts. A lovely combination.

9. *Guzmania* 'Saffron' - A big plant with a strikingly beautiful inflorescence. Its spreading bracts have gorgeous color combinations: the lower ones are orange, changing to red with dark, purple-black tips. Then the



*Guzmania* mini 'Elien'



*Guzmania* 'Empire' (?)



*Guzmania* mini 'Lydia'



*Guzmania* 'Saffron'

**NEXT MEETING** - Tuesday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011 **promptly at 7:00 P.M.** at the [Ripley-Grier Studios 520 8th Ave. \(between 36th & 37th St\) Room 16 A](#)

**HOW YOUR PLANTS GREW OVER THE SUMMER** - Did you grow any outdoors? Benefits over plants you grow indoors. Did you have problems with bugs, squirrels etc. Did you resolve them? Bring a plant to show as an example. **PLUS: \$2.00 PUP AND/OR PLANT SALE.** Bring in as many pups and plants as you can to sell for \$2.00, all proceeds to the seller. We expect to have lots of \$2 plants including some that were expensive so you can expand your collections at little cost.

mid to upper bracts change subtly to bright yellow with red tips. The scape bracts are bright orange with dark, purple-black tips. The colors of the inflorescence lasts for many months as do other *Guzmanias*.

10. *Guzmania sanguinea* - The inner center of the upper leaves turn orange-red, and down in the cup there is a continuous display of many bright-yellow flowers for 2-3 weeks. The flowers turn dark and mushy, and I found that some white mold was developing after flowering was finished. I removed the mold with several sprays of Safer's soap.

This plant is an "upper-pupper"; it will make only one offset that comes up in the center at the side of the inflorescence. When the pup comes up and grows large enough to be removed, I'll bring the plant to a meeting and demonstrate the tricky, careful surgery that is necessary to remove the pup with an intact base.

11. *Guzmania mini* 'Theresa' - A true tiny, mini with a yellow and orange inflorescence.

12. *Guzmania* #254 - A Herb Hill cross with a nice red-purple inflorescence that never became commercial. It is a very fast grower and seems to flower almost every year.

13. *Neoregelia* 'Spot On' - Many lime spots on dark maroon leaves. This is a very easy grower that has a fairly small diameter.

14. *Tillandsia andreana* - I have four clumps of this plant, all of which flowered in July with tall brilliant orange flowers. After blooming each plant puts up 2 or 3 pups, so you wind up with bigger and bigger clumps.

15. *Tillandsia argentina* - I grow many clumps of this plant with stiff, dark green leaves. They appear to be glabrous, but the leaves are fully covered with flat



*Neoregelia* 'Spot On'

trichomes. I'm growing the large form with many flowered spikes with pink flowers.

16. *Tillandsia cacticola* - My plant has many velvety, scurfy leaves making about a 10" diameter. The inflorescence rises on a 12" scape topped with 5 small, lilac spikes that are about 7-flowered. The flowers are pale yellow with purple tips. Unlike the similar *T. straminea*, *T. cacticola's* flowers are not fragrant.

17. *Tillandsia caput medusae* - This is the large form; it puts up 5-6 distichous spikes on a 5" scape, but the bracts don't turn as red as the spikes on the small form of *caput medusae*. The flowers are tubular purple.

18. *Tillandsia inonantha* - I grow multiple clumps of seven or eight different forms of *T. inonantha*. About half of them have come into bloom this spring and summer, turning various shades of bright red, each plant putting up about 4 tubular purple flowers.

19. *Tillandsia mallefontii* - I'm growing two large clumps of this species. Each plant is about 5" long and has thin, silvery, lepidote leaves that put up a few distichous flowers with lavender-pink petals that are very fragrant. The clumps always seem to have some plants in bloom.

20. *Vriesea* 'Carly' - A neat, really small plant with a pretty inflorescence with a large main spike and 2 or 3 smaller ones. Bract color moves from orange-red below to yellow toward the apex.

21. *Vriesea* 'Enjoy' - Also a small plant. It was in poor shape so I forced bloom with ethylene pills. In this plant the inflorescence has so short a scape the spikes appear to come out of the axils. The lower bracts of each spike are orange-yellow and become red near and at the apex.



*Tillandsia andreana*



*Tillandsia mallefontii*



*Vriesea* 'Carly'

## To Feed Or Not To Feed

by Victoria Padilla

(This article is reprinted from The Bromeliad Society Bulletin, V. 12, No. 2, 1962.)

When this writer first started to grow bromeliads about twenty years ago, fertilizing these plants was not considered necessary. It was believed that because bromeliads were epiphytes, they did not need feeding as did regular plants that had their roots in the ground. Little by little, however, the fallacy of this way of thinking became apparent, until today about ninety percent of those who grow bromeliads feed them at regular intervals.

In their need for minerals vital to their existence, bromeliads are no different than other plants. Marsten Bates in his interesting book *The Forest and the Sea* brings out this point and makes some interesting comments on the air plants which grow in the tropical rain forests of South America. As these plants have no direct access to the ground, they are faced with the great problem of obtaining enough food and water to keep them alive. Bromeliads, Mr. Bates tells us, are fortunate in having solved this problem by the formation of their leaves into water-tight tanks, which make first-rate containers of water and rotting organic matter. In fact, bromeliads can hold so much water that they have been referred to as "marshes in the treetops".

It is the common belief that the roots of epiphytes serve only as a means of supporting the plant to the host tree. According to Mr. Bates, the roots of bromeliads and other air plants are also a means of absorbing food. This food may be from the fungi which are found living in close relationship with the roots of many plants. As many plant explorers well know, the roots of epiphytes serve as nesting sites for ants, which Mr. Bates says benefit the plant in two ways. First, the material which the ants collect to build their nests acts as food for the plant, and second, the ants provide a means of defense for the plant against those avid human beings who desire to bring the plant home to their greenhouse.

If our bromeliads need food in their native habitat, it would most certainly seem that they need fertilizing when brought under cultivation. For those who grow their plants outdoors on trees or in the

ground, feeding is probably not necessary; but for those who must raise their plants in pots under artificial conditions, fertilizing must be resorted to if the plant is to reach its optimum beauty. Practically all the members who feed their bromeliads use a liquid form, weakly diluted. What kinds of fertilizers are used? The answers most frequently submitted were as follows: "Anything I have around the house," "the same as feed my orchids," "fish emulsion, Orthogrow, Rapid-grow, and Hyponex. It would seem from the wide diversity of answers that "anything goes" so far as feeding is concerned, as long as the fertilizer is a well-balanced one and is applied at regular intervals. □

### \*Editors Comments -

1. This 1962 article was one of regular reports by the Editor Padilla under the heading OFFSHOOTS. They contained responses of members to surveys and comments by the Editor on various cultural issues. Ms. Padilla's statement that ninety percent of BSI members regularly fertilized their plants shows how far our current members have retrogressed since then. My impression from discussions at World Conferences and from Society bulletins is that about 50% or fewer bromel growers regularly fertilize their plants. And most growers who do feed, do so once a month only in the late spring and summer in weak solutions of 25% to 50% of the small amount recommended by the manufacturer.

2. As a report on attitudes about fertilizing, the conclusions were necessarily general and limited in scope to "anything goes", "balanced" and "regular intervals". But the devil is in the details. Commercial growers (and many members of the NY Bromeliad Society) have come a long way from those perceptions about the frequency and strength of the applications and the correct proportions in the formula between nitrogen(N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K).

We believe in the efficacy of frequent, high-strength fertilizing. Commercial growers who can

water overhead every day or every few days can use a weak solution that adds up in a week to high-strength feeding. Those of us who have to water with a pitcher, water weekly the year round (except during mid-winter freezes) with ½ teaspoon of fertilizer to 1 gallon of water. The plant will absorb what fertilizer it needs within about one hour. We flush out the fertilizer with water later in the day or the next day.

3. Scientific studies have shown that bromels need an unbalanced low nitrogen formula in which potassium should be 2 to 2½ times greater than the nitrogen, and the phosphorus about 50%-70% of the

nitrogen. And we use chemicals in the formula that contain trace elements (micro-nutrients) such as manganese, boron, iron. We make our own fertilizer as we haven't found any commercial products close to the right proportions. However, we have recently found and have started to use slow-release Nutricote pellets with a formula of 10-10-17. They can be found on line, distributed under the name of 'Dynamite'.

4. Growers should experiment with frequent, high strength fertilizer with different formulas and on different genera. Find the right fertilizer to produce better growth and blooming for each one. □

## WATER AND NUTRIENT UPTAKE IN BROMELIADS

by Peter Temple

(Reprinted from the Bromeliad Society Bulletin, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1963)

(From studies carried out by Mr. J. Sieber, biologist in the Botanical Institution in Munich, West Germany.)

Water and nutrient uptake was studied in *Aechmea fasciata*, *Nidularium innocentii*, *Guzmania tricolor* (an old, invalid name for *Guzmania monostachia* - Ed.) and *Vriesea splendens* at all stages from germination to mature flowering plants. Absorption through the roots or through the leaves was equally effective and occurred in plants from the youngest plants onwards. In an absorptive humus substrate, root nutrition produced better growth than leaf nutrition; in a less absorptive medium leaf nutrition gave better results. Combined leaf and root nutrition was particularly effect except in young plants.

At the youngest stages, root nutrition was more important than leaf nutrition, but the position was reversed with increasing age. Root growth was stimulated more by root nutrition than by leaf nutrition. Growth of unpotted plants receiving leaf nutrients was increased by high relative humidities.

Plants of *Aechmea fasciata* fed through the leaves developed loose, pendulous growth with long leaves and a relatively long inflorescence. With root nutrition, growth was more compact, with broader, upright leaves of a clear green; the inflorescence was relatively short. In *Nidularium innocentii* nitrogen was most readily absorbed through the leaves and PO (phosphorus - Ed.) and KO (Potassium - Ed.) through the roots. Nutrient solutions were absorbed more quickly than water by *Aechmea fasciata*. (Holly Park, London, England) □

Editor's Comment - The formula in the fertilizer that produced "loose, long, pendulous" leaves on *A. fasciata* was obviously overweighted with nitrogen. My frequent, high-strength, low nitrogen regimen on *A. fasciata* (especially on cultivars like 'Morgana') produces very compact plants with stiff, non-pendulous leaves that are 4 inches wide. The inflorescence head is 6 inches in diameter, and the scape is relatively short. We know a lot more about fertilizers now than they did in 1963; the point is to use that knowledge to grow better plants. □

## CONGRATULATIONS!

We are pleased to report the news that Michael Riley and his long time partner, Francisco Correal, officially tied the knot at the City Clerk's office in July. We wish them continued happiness.

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