

The Potting Shed Observer



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Photos

Cover picture is of a plant grown from seed supplied by the Bromeliad Society International seedbank in 1995 labelled "*Tillandsia streptocarpa* large." Not an easy species to identify, this one flowered in January 2012. Plant 40cm tall.

All photos are by the Editor unless advised otherwise.

Wellington Tillandsia Study Group Meeting, May 2012

Held on May 27, 2012, at Andy Falshaw's home in Eastbourne. The following plants were discussed:

Phyl Purdie:

Tillandsia setiformis (imported from BirdRock Tropicals, CA) had a rather dried-up inflorescence. It seems to do this down here, with the bracts starting to brown off before the flowers are produced. Others in flower *T. simulata* (originally grown from seed ex Florida), a large-leaf form of *T. incarnata* and the small Guatemalan form of *T. concolor*.



Tillandsia setiformis

Andy Falshaw:

Samples of *Tillandsia edithiae* and *T. incarnata* post-flowering, question where to cut off the old flower spikes. General answer is to cut them off as far down the stem (peduncle, rachis) as you can get without damaging the rest of the plant. If you are not wanting to wait and see if the tillandsia is going to set seed, then the sooner you cut off the inflorescence the sooner the plant can divert more resources into producing offsets.



Tillandsia concolor Guatemala

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Tillandsia 'Luther Burbank'



Tillandsia xerographica

Andrew Flower:

A plant I have named 'Luther Burbank' was found in a shipment of *Tillandsia xerographica* seedlings that my nursery (Anwyl Bromeliads) imported from RainForest Flora, California, in 2001. As you can see from the photos above, the inflorescence on this plant is significantly different. It is a nice plant, and rather solid weighing in at 50cm diameter and 40cm. high so it has been registered as a cultivar. I'd guess it is *T. xerographica* x *capitata*, but ?

Why 'Luther Burbank'? He was a childhood hero of mine, one of the pioneers of modern plant breeding in the US: fruit (Burbank plums) and as my Uncle Derek reminded me, thornless Opuntias unfortunately not appreciated by the domestic cattle. Apparently Mr Burbank would stride about acres of seedlings and pause every now and then to point out a seedling destined for greatness - apparently his "hit rate" was extremely high. He would be accompanied by minions who would rush over and label the selected infants.

With this vision of Burbank in mind, I adopted a similar practice in the nursery: putting a red dot on the label of any seedlings we raise or import that appear different to their siblings. 'Luther Burbank' had a red dot!

{Since the meeting, Uncle Derek has pointed out a close similarity to a large tillandsia imported from Guatemala by Tropiflora nursery (USA) in 1992. They suspect their plant is a natural hybrid of *T. xerographica* and *T. capitata*, and it is the same as Selby Gardens SEL 199200-0266. It may be that 'Luther Burbank' also originated in Guatemala... who knows!



Tillandsia 'Typical Norm' popped up in a batch of seedlings I purchased as "*Tillandsia streptocarpa*" from a local grower, who probably wishes to remain anonymous. Most of the plants did turn out to be *T. streptocarpa*, but a few had this different inflorescence shown here on the left.

Members really liked this plant - it is very pretty in flower, and has a nice low-key scent. The foliage is very similar to *T. streptocarpa*, and there is no reason to doubt that was indeed the mother. The inflorescence, on the other hand, is dramatically taller than the foliage with the vegetative portion being 10cm. high whilst the inflorescences rises 55cm. above it. Add to this the fact that a clump is almost continuously in flower all year round with new inflorescences starting as soon as old ones die off.

It is quite likely that Anonymous transferred some foreign pollen onto their *T. streptocarpa*, and they are notorious for making crosses, putting pencil to neither paper nor plant tag, and subsequently forgetting what they had done.

Difficult to speculate on a possible pollen parent for this one - most likely candidate is *T. caerulea*, which is common in local collections (*T. caerulea* does not have a branched inflorescence but *T. streptocarpa* does).

Because we have three identical seedlings it is most likely an F1 hybrid; it is a very ornamental little population, some of which my nursery almost certainly sold inadvertently as "*Tillandsia streptocarpa* AB640." So we need to have this anomaly on record, to enable identification in collections and to honour the misdeeds of Anonymous.

The name "Norm" could of course refer eg., to a Norma or a Norman, hence identification of Anonymous is protected...



A nice miniature "orphan" (picture left) from the nursery appeared to be *Tillandsia humilis* (syn. *T. aureobrunnea*).

Orphans are normally seedlings that have fallen off their mounts in the growing on house when 1-4 years old. This one may be a hybrid.



I call this lot the “three bad sisters” (actually there are four flowering, but I only brought three to the meeting). The wickedness involved here lies in the fact that they are all from the same batch of seed which was supposed to be the same species... alas, not!

This is a perfect illustration of what happens when hybrids get involved in pollination: you get a disparate lot of seedlings with a whole mix of characters inherited willy-nilly. Plant breeders will often do this on purpose, but it is a disaster if you sell the seedlings off as a species. Here the seed was from the Bromeliad Society of Australia seed fund in 1996, labelled “*Tillandsia guatemalensis*.” (don’t blame the guy running the seed bank!)



This little clump of *Tillandsia velutina* was flowering a bit later than the usual February-March down here. It is named for the velvety nature of its leaves, and is native to Guatemala and Mexico around their common border.



From a batch of seed sent by the Bromeliad Society of Australia in November 1996, labelled "*Tillandsia flavobracteata*." This was the only seedling that survived. 45 cm. tall.

It looks like photos taken by Renate Ehlers of *T. flavobracteata* and matches quite closely the original description (Matuda 1975, *Cact. Suc. Mex.* 20(4): 9799, figs 49-50).

However, the taxonomic status of this taxon is controversial and it may well be considered a variety of *T. fasciculata*.



Tillandsia AB862175



Tillandsia AB871943

A couple of my hybrids were discussed, with members preferring the lighter orange colour of the one on the left above.

AB862175 is *Tillandsia capitata* (Guatemala, ex BirdRock Tropicals BT029) x *T. scaposa* - note the interesting leaf arrangement shown in the photo.

AB871943 is *Tillandsia circinnatoides* x *T. ionantha*. A bit scruffy.

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There have been a lot of small native snails (10-12mm. shells) about recently, and they have inflicted a lot of damage like that to an emerging inflorescence on a *Tillandsia macdougallii* plant shown above.



The Wellington Tillandsia Study Group has no fees. Meet every second month on a Sunday afternoon (usually the 3rd one) at one of the member's homes for a friendly chat, discussion of members plants and any pets that may be present, afternoon tea and sales table. Meetings rotate around Wellington, Hutt Valley, Porirua basin and Kapiti. Hosting a meeting is not compulsory. Phone Phyl Purdie (04) 475-3281.