

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

Study Group meets the third Thursday of each month

Next meeting 19th February, 2015 at 11 a.m.

Venue: PineGrove Bromeliad Nursery
114 Pine Street Wardell 2477
Phone (02) 6683 4188

Discussion: January 2015
General Discussion

Editorial Team:

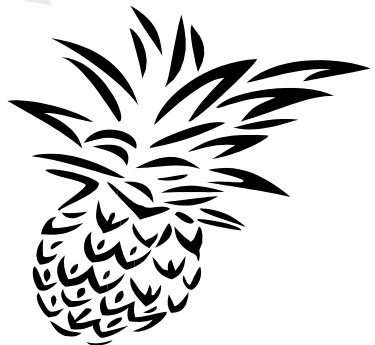
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Meeting 18th December 2014

The meeting was opened at approximately 11.00 am
The 24 members and two visitor present were welcomed.
A total of six apologies were received.

General Business

Ross opened the celebrations and meeting, welcoming and wishing everyone a very Happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year. We had 26 members and friends celebrating this festive occasion together.

To the Group's surprise and delight we were also joined by "Verde", the friendly Australian eclectus parrot, who entertained, shared food and in general added his tuppence worth in when he considered it necessary, particularly when Laurie was speaking and used the word 'castigating' and Verde squawked loudly in support. Great cheers went up from everyone, and this entertainment cost, but a few sunflower seeds!!! (photo p.8)

We began our day with a discussion on several small pieces of driftwood with mini Neoregelias mounted on them which Laurie had brought along for display. Laurie, also had a spectacular *Vriesea* 'Splendriet' with multiple inflorescences in full flower to show us, well done, Laurie, a stunning display.

Ross raised the issue of giving credit where it is due, he is always keen to receive as many articles and photographs as possible throughout the year. As photography and indeed growing excellent quality plants is recognised as an 'art', the credit should acknowledge the correct person creating the image or specimen. During 2015 we would like to see more member participation regards short articles and especially your photos. If you find it difficult to put pen to paper but are happy to supply photos that is fine as we can add text or use your photos where necessary and accredit your name to it. Everybody likes to see their name up in lights so to speak, remember this is your Newsletter so lets have your news and photos gracing these pages. Supplying photos is easy, bring your photos along and we can scan them and save them to our computer or we can save direct from your camera card. When e-mailing photos it is always best to crop unnecessary subject matter (we can do this for you if need be), select only the best two or three photos for consideration for use in an article. When taking a photo think of the subject, your Bromeliad not all the clutter in the background around it. When we print articles we include photos by the author whenever possible, additional photos by other photographers are accredited accordingly as we feel these credits are important.

So lets get your name and photos up in lights in 2015.

We have received many favourable comments on Bob Larnach's "Bromeliad Ramble" article in our December 2014 Newsletter about the history of Australian Bromeliad growing. Bob outlined the early imports and growers and how spread out the early collectors were and the difficulties they faced.

It has been put to our members, that we would like to collate their experiences with growing bromeliads in their home conditions and compile a guide for growers coming to the area or just beginning with bromeliads or just for ourselves.

As growers, when adding a new plant to our collections and we need a guide, what better than one that is relevant to our area. We are referring to your micro climates, whether you live near the rivers, the ocean or up in the hinterland ranges, whether you have a shade house or you grow them under the mango tree, or for that matter on a balcony, it does not matter. What matters is that, we would like to record your experiences with the gale force winds, torrential rain or the lack of rain and for those not connected to a pipeline, what do they do?

What did you do on those searing hot days of 40+ degrees with your bromeliads or did they burn in the shade house like mine, but it only showed up a week later. Is there anything you particularly do in winter to protect your favourite plants ? For example what happens when growing *Cryptanthus* and you get an unexpected minus 5°C frost, as one of our members commented "I don't bring my dog inside so the plants are not coming in" !! Have you had a hail storm that chops holes in your prize collection of *Alcantareas* ? tell us about it.

What potting mix or resources do you use? Some of you may only grow mounted *Tillandsias*, tell us about your experiences with them. There is an endless supply of experiences we all have and we need to record them on paper and let Ross and the sub editors have them PLEASE as soon as possible.

Many of our Members have lived in the Northern Rivers area for many years and know a lot of other Bromeliad growers who don't attend meetings. We know not everybody can attend monthly meetings, therefore it would be interesting to get some of these local Bromeliad growers history recorded. If you know one of these Bromaddicts and can collate some of their growing history I'm sure other readers would be interested also. The more information we can gather about Bromeliads in our area the wiser we become regarding the growing of these magnificent plants. The type of information we would like to see is what got them interested, where, when and from whom were their Bromeliads collected, what Bromeliads are they growing. Generally any historical information about them and their Bromeliad habit, were their plants handed down from generation to generation through their family or friends. This can give clues as to how long some Bromeliads have been in circulation in Australia. If you know of somebody but find this task difficult to do yourself check with the grower if it would be OK for someone else to have a chat with them and record their information.

Les, raised the subject of group gardens or large pots with multiple plantings of the one genus, in particular Cryptanthus, suggesting that if you intend planting mixed species of Cryptanthus together, to choose those that are all CAM synthesising plants and not mix them with C3 Cryptanthus as they have different photosynthetic requirements.

Now we come to the Festive Celebrations:

Thank you to those who contributed food for our Festive Luncheon Table, what a great selection was on offer. I am sure everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves with the various salads, savouries, nibbles and the desserts as well as the lovely morning tea and great company.

A special Thank you to Ross and Helen, especially to Helen for the ordering of the very popular choice of hot chickens and the cold meat trays, bread rolls, and drinks. Thank you Helen, again for your wonderful organisation of the food contribution list, with this list prepared months ahead it makes organising the food a much easier task for all. Also the plant swap list is colour blocked to assist the stewards and so it goes on, she is always working quietly behind the scenes.

A very special Thank You, goes to Coral and Gary McAteer, for their ongoing generosity, they so freely donate so many of the goods and trimmings that make our Group function so smoothly. Thank you so much to you both, your efforts are appreciated greatly.

Now the fun times:

The Attendance Selection in the Plant/Gift Exchange.

Thank you to all our contributors for the excellent selection of quality plants on offer for our Christmas Gift Swap exhibiting a great degree of professionalism in their presentation and your ability as growers.

The members went in groups in order of attendance during the year, the more meetings one attended the higher up the draw list one was placed to select their gift swap, hopefully all came away smiling!

This culminated in a race to the plant table between Kay and Ross who had the highest attendance record for the year to see who would get their favoured plant. Kay was able to choose a *Tillandsia streptophylla* with a beaming smile which made her day.

Owing to the generosity of some members bringing along more than one plant everyone in attendance received a Bromeliad.

Reflections on Our Past Year 2014

by Kay Daniels

When I was asked to write a few words about our year in 2014 I thought I would have a quick look through our newsletters and was impressed by a number of things. First was the number of contributions our own members have made, either in discussions, show and tell or written articles. This is what makes the meetings so interesting and enjoyable, and the newsletter the GROUP'S newsletter, rather than just re-printed articles, so please keep it up. Thanks to Trish, Lesley, Don, Marie, Wendy, Jeanette and Meg for articles, and a special thank-you to Les Higgins and Doug Binns for contributing so many original articles last year. It is appreciated and all helps to add to our knowledge of bromeliads. We have had interesting guest speakers, and would like to particularly thank Doug for telling us about his trips to Brazil and Mexico. Also a big thank-you to Bob Larnach for his recollections of 40 years of growing bromeliads in Australia. Warren Hulbert was also a welcome guest with his demonstrations of how to use bromeliads creatively.

Our 2014 'Show and Tell' sessions led to many varied topics of discussion, invaluable in some instances because it was knowledge particularly relevant to our part of the world. For example Laurie had an *Aechmea fasciata* 'Primera' identified which led to talking about the difference between quilling and ribbing. This then led to the topic of differences between tissue cultured and vegetative propagation which then led to chemically induced flowering. So it just goes to show, bring along plants for discussion, it all adds to our knowledge of bromeliads and it's good to see what others are growing. Laurie also quite often brings in flowering Tillandsias he has had for many years and have formed nice clumps, and he is happy to tell us about the growing conditions that he has found suit Tillandsias in our area.

Les is another member who often brings in Cryptanthus (my 'little obsession' he calls it). He grows them in basket/net pots for ventilation, puts polystyrene under the leaves to keep them up and uses BBQ skewers to restrain new plantings. His detailed descriptions of foliar feeding and watering regimes led to a lively discussion on where it was best to grow Cryptanthus.

John has given us many handy hints over the year, such as using diatomaceous earth in his potting mix to kill root mealybug, and using seaweed concentrates to help prevent sun damage.

Lesley has shown some beautiful and unusual plants during the year including various *Catopsis* and flowering Tillandsias. Her most memorable 'Show and Tell' was the huge *Bromelia balansae* she literally dragged into the meeting.

Lastly a big thank-you to Ross for passing on his practical knowledge. This has included showing us how to remove upper pups and how and when to collect seed from the Bromelioideae group that have a berry type seed pod.

I'm sure all members are looking forward to more friendly interaction with like-minded people every month and another year of gaining knowledge about the bromeliads we all love.

The History of *Vriesea* 'Erotica' (GREX) by Jamie Larnach 2015

In the early 1980s Lou Forrest of Cobra Creek Nursery visited his friend Peter Carney another bromeliad enthusiast living in Sydney. While on this visit Lou discovered a plant of reasonable size of *Vr. fosteriana* that had flowered and was holding seed pods. Lou being the retired head gardener from the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney had lost no passion for plants, promptly asked his friend Peter Carney may he collect this seed and see if he could grow it - yes was the reply.

About 2000 seedlings were raised at Cobra Creek Nursery from several different seed pods that Lou Forrest collected off that one *Vr. fosteriana* plant at Peter Carney's. At about the 2 year old stage Bob and Gleness Larnach of Exotica Vale Nurseries purchased half of these (1000 seedlings) from Lou Forrest who was not only a great friend but neighbour.

Then the fun began between Bob and Lou, much discussion was had as to the differences in these plants upon maturity. Overall they were GREEN patterned leaf *Vrieseas* from a burgundy *Vr. fosteriana* plant (common and understood now but perplexing back then) but the big differences started to emerge upon flowering the mature plants.

To the enquiring mind of a retired plantsman and a young up and coming commercial nurseryman, this was a Gold Mine! The flower spikes varied in many ways, from pure reds to burgundy to yellow. Within these differences of colour was also to be found multi-branching spikes in some of the red and burgundy coloured spikes only, no branching in the yellow spikes. One last anomaly from that grex were the EIGHT burgundy coloured leafed seedlings which Bob Larnach received in his 1000 seedlings, of which *Vr. 'Erotica'* variety 'ANGELA' was born (another article in itself).

A great PLANTSMAN by the name of Noel Jupp from Riverdene Nursery who still breeds to this day visited Bob and Gleness at Exotica Vale Nurseries and upon viewing the many varied coloured spikes, foliage etc. commented on the complexity of many pollen contributors (fathers) to the one seed parent (mother). Noel commented that this grex was more like a plant *orgy*!! Then he was heard to say "this place should be known as **EROTICA** Vale Nurseries", hence came the grex name.



Photos by Ross Little

Tillandsia 'Maui' a form of *Till. ionantha* by Derek Butcher 2015

The name first appeared in Bromeleetter 53(1): 13, 2015, admittedly as 'Mauii' but investigations failed to find anyone responsible for the naming even though the plant seems to be widespread in Australia especially NSW. The best option seems to be in the Pinegrove Nursery records with links to a *Tillandsia ionantha* imported from Bob Okasaki in Hawaii in 1985.

One of the Hawaiian Islands is called 'Maui'!

The plant is 7.5 – 10 cm high, 7-9 cm wide.
Registered by Derek Butcher January 2015.



Tillandsia 'Maui'
photo by Terry Davis

Tidy-up Corner (corrections) by Eagle Eyed Observers

Vriesea 'Cathy or Christiane'

In May 2014 Laurie Mountford brought a *Vriesea* in for identification, after much discussion it was thought Laurie's plant maybe *Vriesea* 'Cathy' as it matched plants in our collections, a photo was printed in our June 2014 Newsletter.

First to raise doubt was Chris Larson from Melbourne suggesting Laurie's plant is *Vriesea* 'Christiane' which has a red inflorescence NOT *Vriesea* 'Cathy' which has a purple inflorescence.

As previously stated this *Vriesea* has been around in our collections for many years as a red paddled plant not dissimilar to photos on the BCR which shows a plant with a blood red or very dark red inflorescence. *Vriesea* 'Christiane' is shown having a red or vibrant reddish/orange inflorescence. Further investigation indicated growers considered that there were two forms of *Vr. 'Cathy'*, a red form and a purple form, this only added more confusion.

Another eagle eyed observer Peter Bak from Holland also informed me of our error and came to the rescue with an explanation:

Vriesea 'Christiane' has been reproduced in the lab for many years now with a red inflorescence, however at a growers place a **purple** one showed up and was offered back for further propagation, this is the plant known as *Vr. 'Cathy'*.

During the propagation process approximately 50% turn up as *Vr. 'Christiane'* with a red inflorescence again. Thank you for this information Peter as this helps answer why we often see *Vr. 'Cathy'* red and purple forms confusing growers.



Kay



Marie Essery - 2014
Open Popular Vote Winner



Dawn



Trish Kelly - 2014
Judges Choice Winner



Gloria sharing Christmas
lunch with 'Verde'



Trish Kelly - 2014
Decorative Winner



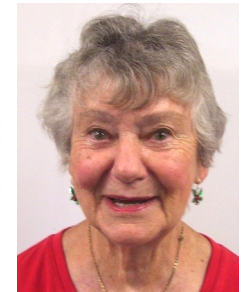
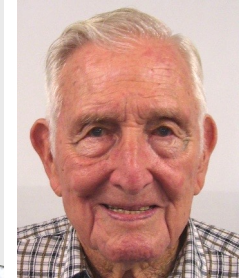
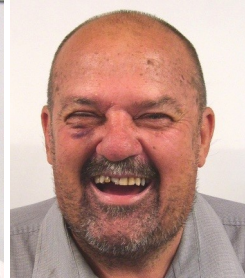
Gary



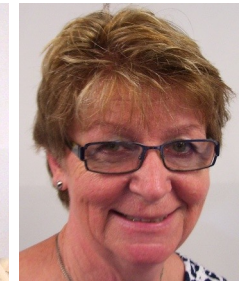
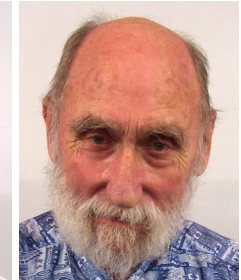
Flo Danswan - 2014
Novice Popular Vote Winner



Coral



Shane	Ted	Jennifer	Wendy
John	Jim	Ted	Tom
Debbie			Shirley
Laurie	Jeanette	Jill	Les
Ross	Julie	Helen	Vera



Neoregelia 'Wild in Oz'

by Derek Butcher 2014

In recent years there has been an upsurge in Chester Skotak's hybrids of the variegated small *Neoregelia* kind. Many have been registered by Eloise Beach in Florida but some have escaped to Australia. This is a similar scenario to what happened in the early 1990's with variegated *Neo. carcharodon* hybrids. Some were registered in the USA but many similar were registered in Australia.



We are now talking about only one such hybrid circulated by the Olive Branch under formula (carolinae x HL x Tiger Cub x punctatissima). There are immediate problems here because it only takes two to make a hybrid so where do the brackets go? The carolinae would have to be a variegated form because where does the variegation come from. The HL stands for 'Hannibal Lecter'. It has been known since the 1970's that *Neo. punctatissima* is not in cultivation and even Elton Leme has been unable to find it. The plant that is in cultivation is a form of *Neo. ampullacea* and was given the name of 'Punctate'. It is understood that the punctatissima in the formula has been changed to 'Punctate Red'.

Undoubtedly Chester would have given a grex number to his original crossing but we are unaware of this so we cannot confidently link it to the many registered hybrids. I had thought that I could get a proper name for Margaret's plant by waiting for something similar appearing in the Bromeliad Cultivar Register. First I came across 'Whirlwind' registered by Eloise Beach in 6/2012 which had a similar parentage (carolinae variegated x Hannibal Lecter) x Tiger Cub as seed parent and Punctate Red as pollen parent but our plant did not quite match. The grex could well have been the same but selecting had been done of this complicated hybrid. Then in 11/2014 'Unraveled' appeared only this time with a different variegation. Whether this was a Sport of 'Whirlwind' we do not know. In any event it still did not look like our plant which has narrower leaves.

Further investigation has revealed that we are not the only people growing this plant with its complicated formula in Australia and it does need a name, and Ross Little has suggested we use 'Wild in Oz'.

So if you are growing a plant with this formula on the label and your specimen matches the photos on the BCR you will save time by using the name 'Wild in Oz'. It is interesting that it seems some growers have become tired in writing the formula and you may encounter this plant just called 'Skotak Hybrid'. Plant is 21 cm wide, 19cm high, leaves 2 cm wide, variegated.

Tillandsia capitata 'Roja', 'Rubra' or just plain 'Red'

by Derek Butcher Jan 2015

Recently the name 'Roja' has caught the notice of the Registrar Geoff Lawn because it has been cited as a parent of a new hybrid but had not been registered.

I have been interested in the variability of plants collectively called *Till. capitata* by Botanists and in 2002 presented a paper at a biennial conference of Tillandsia enthusiasts at Albury, Australia. As an amateur I was trying to get some semblance of order basing my findings on numerous collections by Renate Ehlers. The only solution seemed to be on geographical grounds based on where the plants were found.



Tillandsia capitata 'Roja'

photo by Stephen Haines

I then tried to link these plants with plants being offered in the nursery trade. I regret I was unable to get clear links probably because of variability in growing conditions. My grumble was the lack of locality collection data from Nurseries. There are a number of reasons for this which I will not elaborate on.

Let us now look at this 'Red' *Till. capitata* where most forms of this species have a reddish tinge to the leaves at flowering and we know that the higher up the mountain the more likely you find that the redness intensifies. Sometimes this redness continues under cultivation but usually this is not the situation. The first article I found on this subject is as follows:

***Tillandsia capitata* 'Red'** by Joseph J Ramos in J. Brom. Soc. 27:63-5. 1977
After 25,000 miles of traveling throughout Mexico, I have finally come to the conclusion that the red form of *Tillandsia capitata* is indeed rare.

I first saw this beautiful bromeliad on a plant collecting trip some seven or eight years ago which was made by Bill Seaborn, George Kennerson, Ed Collins, Steve Talnadge, and me. After collecting a number of plants, I remember leaving Mazatlan for some bromeliads that Bill said he had to find. What they were, I did not know. We traveled east towards Durango, stopping from time to time gathering Tillandsias. We had traveled for an hour or so, when suddenly George and Ed in the lead truck turned off the road, followed by Bill and me in the second truck, and Steve Talnadge in the third. There was hardly room enough for one truck, let alone three, as everybody knows who has traveled in Mexico, and there is very little room anywhere along the highways of Mexico to stop, even for emergencies.

Suddenly George stopped and stepped out of his truck and very excitedly pointed towards the wall of a barranca. The mid-afternoon sun was shining directly on a mass of red plants high up on the barranca. From where we were they couldn't be identified. We looked in vain for plants that were within our

reach, but there weren't any. So George and I decided to climb up the steep cliff. The slope leading to the plants was gravelly and crumbling. It was not hard to climb the first half of the slope, but as it became steeper, we were practically crawling. It got to the point where we were clawing up three feet and sliding back two, but by helping each other, we finally made it to the top, some 800 feet high.

After our long struggle, what did we find on the top? Nothing, but rocks and a few shrubs; the bromeliads were growing just below the brim of the cliff. We lay down on our stomachs hanging over the edge and while one of us scraped the plants up against the side of the rock, the other would reach down as far as he could for them before they fell. Lacking a container in which to carry them we got as many as we dared carry, for the trip down wasn't going to be any picnic. But we finally made it, and drove onwards towards Durango. We had no idea what we had collected.

This trip was my initiation into plant collecting. On subsequent excursions to Mexico I have gathered more of this tillandsia at the same location - always a difficult job.

In January 1976, I made an extensive trip to Mexico, accompanied only by my mixed shepherd dog, Flora. This trip was planned mainly to seek out, collect, and identify bromeliads and cacti and on occasion a few orchids. I entered Mexico through El Paso, traveling south on Highway 45. I concentrated on cacti from the American border to the state of Mexico. *Tillandsia macdougallii* and a few other species of tillandsias were collected on the way to Fortin de las Flores, Vera Cruz. I believe Fortin is and has been the headquarters for collectors for many years. Posada Loma, a motel, and a charming place in a beautiful setting, is a central location, a hub from which radiate all roads leading to the different plant locations. During my stay at Posada Loma there were five different parties collecting - some searching for bromeliads, some for orchids, and others for cacti.

From Fortin de las Flores I headed south to the Monte Bello National Park in the state of Chiapas, the park bordering Guatemala. On my way back on Highway 190 I gathered *Tillandsia seleriana*, *Till. carlsoniae*, *Till. matudai*, *Till. butzii*, *Till. magnusiana*, a Tillandsia which looks like *Till. carlsoniae* except that it has a red flower spike, a Tillandsia which looks like *Till. imperialis* but is about three times larger.

When I arrived at Tuxtla Gutierrez I turned west towards Villa Flores. Here I found a number of cycads, including *Dioon edulis* var. *purpusii* and several

species of *Ceratozamia*. I also found a second location of the red capitata, a small colony which will probably be exterminated within the year for agriculture. Mexico, on the whole, is on a clearing program - clearing and burning the native plant life for agriculture. I collected two plants from this area to compare with those from Durango. Turning back to Highway 190, through Tierra y Libertad, I collected other tillandsias. Flora and I camped a short distance from Oaxaca on

Highway 125 which leads to Puerto Escondido on the west coast. This road has a wealth of Tillandsias, cacti, and other succulents. Here I found a third location of the red capitata. It was another small colony, which will also be cleared away to make for agricultural purposes very soon. I noticed that these last two locations were not on high inaccessible rocky formations as in Durango, but rather on high, tall, deciduous trees - also very dry areas on the west side of the sierra.

From Highway 190 we turned northeast at Telixtlahuaca towards Teotitlan and Tehuacan. On the way I noticed *Till. pueblensis* in plentiful supply as was *Till. concolor*. This is a very dry area. After collecting around Tehuacan, I returned to Fortin, where I rested and cleaned my plants.

Leaving Fortin de las Flores, I took Highway 150 to Highway 190 to Azucar de Matamoros and on to Azizintla near Taxco picking up *T. caput medusae* on the way. From this point I drove to Toluca, and on to Colima, collecting a few varieties of Tillandsias on the way - varieties which I did not recognize. Somewhere along Highway 110 between Tamazula and Colima, I saw another colony of *Till. capitata*, the red variety. These were on boulders, like in Durango, growing on the west side of the rocks.

From Colima, I went on to Manzanillo and at Barra de Navidad I took Highway 80 to Guadalajara. On this road I found the green form of *Till. capitata*. Here again this Tillandsia was growing on high sheer cliffs growing in the cracks of the barranca. There was also a very small Tillandsia which I collected near Autlan. It measures about 2 1/2 to 3 inches tall. Its texture and form are very much like that of *Till. capitata*, but the leaves are chartreuse; it has not flowered as yet. On this road also grow *Tillandsia baileyi*, *Till. caput medusae*, *Till. circinnata*, the proliferating variety.

From Guadalajara I followed Highway 15 to Mazatlan and the motel Flamingo where arrangements were made for the ferry to La Paz in Baja. While waiting for the ferry I decided to go north to La Cruz to collect *Till. exserta*. I camped in an area that was being readied for clearing. About eight o'clock at night four dump trucks and two dozers moved in next to me and camped. Before daybreak they started to bulldoze the whole area. Some debris was hauled away and some was piled up to dry and be burned. While all of this was going on I was jumping from one felled tree to the next collecting *Till. exserta*. I packed the last I had left and squeezed it into the camper. By two o'clock I was on my way back to the ferry and arrived just in time to board it.

From La Paz to Tijuana it's all desert traveling with the exception of a few agricultural areas along the way. The only Tillandsia I have ever seen in Baja California is *Till. recurvata*. If any of the readers know of any others I would like to know. Arriving at the Tijuana-San Ysidro border, I had completed a three-month trip through Mexico, logging 16,000 miles - a long trek in search of Tillandsias, and I was glad to be home.

Regarding the red *Till. capitata*, I made several observations, which may be of interest to those who grow this beautiful plant:

First: the elevation at all locations, a total of five, was between 3,500 and 4,000 feet.

Second: they were also between 35 to 45 miles away from the Pacific Ocean. However, there are probably other areas which I had not discovered being a novice collector.

Third: all the red capitatas were growing in full sun and in arid conditions.

Fourth: in all areas they were growing on the west side of the barrancas or sierras.

Fifth: only in three locations were they growing on rocks. The ones growing on tall deciduous trees were bigger, but not so red, the same way they grow in cultivation.

If anyone knows of other locations, please contact this writer so he may examine for comparisons."

No detail is given other than colour which is not much use to the Botanist but is of interest to the Nurseryman.

The following is the detail received from:
Paul Isley of Rainforest Flora in California

"This is from Mexico and was originally in the trade in the 1970s as a wild collected plant called *Tillandsia capitata rubra*. I have no idea from whom we got the original plants, it was undoubtedly from one of those "pot and brush" guys who appeared on the scene for a bit and then disappeared. The name rubra can't be used so I called it *Till. capitata* 'Roja' which is Spanish, not Latin so it can be used.

We have grown them from seeds over the years and all we've sold for over twenty years are either from seeds or from offsets of seed grown plants."

Checking around other US nurseries I find Tropiflora offering *Till. capitata* 'Red', Tillandsia International offering *Till. capitata* 'Rubra', and Bird Rock Tropical offering two forms of *Till. capitata* 'Rubra'. Are these similar or different botanically or horticulturally? To the keen grower I suggest you take note of the name of the supplier.

Many Dry Growers Prefer it Wet

by George H. Anderson

Many Bromeliad hobbyists find it difficult to grow nice specimens of *Dyckia*, *Hectia*, *Deuterocohnia*, *Puya* and other "dry growers". Their problems begin when they attempt to duplicate the xerophytic conditions they imagine these plants prefer. They commonly put together a coarse, highly porous permeable mix that is low in organic content. These mixtures hold little moisture and as the plants grow the leaves shield the mix and further reduce the water available to the roots. This water starvation causes a die back of the leaf tips that becomes more and more unsightly.

The solution to all of this is to grow them very wet. Use an absorbent mix and water from the bottom by setting the container in a pan of water. We use the taller geranium style pots since these plants like to put their roots straight down. Put a bit of gravel in the bottom of the pot and use a quality all purpose potting soil. Cut this mix with some coarse perlite and throw in some slow release fertilizer. Supermarkets sell a variety of cheap aluminium foil pans in various sizes from tart to pie that are ideal to set the pots in.

It is not necessary always to have water standing in the pots. The primary concern is to make certain that the mix stays quite damp. It is alarming at first to see the pot sitting in a pan of water. You will be afraid the plant will rot off in short order. Not to worry, the plant will love it. Later on if you want to enter your plant in a show, just dry it out for a few days and this will enhance the colour.

Having had considerable difficulty in growing the plants mentioned to a good standard and to avoid die back of the tips, I have been following the advice of George Anderson with great success.

I use the large 200mm black plastic pots, this gives ample room for roots and also serves the purpose of giving height off the ground, particularly with *Hectia texensis* with it's long recurving leaves. Reuse aluminium foil pie containers and make sure the dish is full of water at your regular watering times.

I have found that a good mix is standard indoor potting mix with added coarse river sand or even very fine gravel and perlite plus either slow release fertilizer or Dynamic Lifter. The mix should be rather firm and able to retain considerable moisture but not become sour. These are one group of plants with which I do not use pine bark in the mix.

Although this group of plant grow extremely well in the open garden, I find they need protection from the severe summer sun.

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follow up by Alice Williams
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The end of Year Accolades for the Section Winners for Monthly Popular Vote and Judges Choice Competitions 2014.

Novice Section Winner, Popular Vote 2014 - Flo Danswan.

Congratulations Flo, you are now eligible to enter and compete in the Open Section, keep up the great effort and quality of your plants, you, are an inspiration to aspiring bromeliad growers.

Open Section Winner, Popular Vote 2014 - Marie Essery.

Congratulations Marie, you are to be congratulated for your continuing support of the competition and the amazing quality of the plants you exhibit, well done and three cheers, this is Marie's fourth consecutive year as Open Champion.

Judges Choice 2014 - Trish Kelly.

Congratulations to Trish whose efforts of growing quality plants over the years deserves every accolade we can afford her. Hopefully we will see many more of her talented efforts of growing quality plants.

Decorative Winner, Popular Choice 2014 - Trish Kelly.

Congratulations Trish, your prize must have to be your inspiration for 2015! Hopefully Trish's article in our December 2014 Newsletter "Turning Angst into Action with Bromeliads" will encourage others to follow her example.

On that note we take the opportunity to say Thank You to Warren Hulbert for his kind and inspiring gift for the Winner of the Decorative Competition.

It was agreed by all, we have had a great year and look forward to 2015 and wish everyone the very best for the NEW YEAR, may you come inspired, full of questions, ideas and arms full of plants for the competitions and discussions.

Sadly (for the men) it was once again the women who won all sections in the competition. It is interesting to note that it was two men, Les and Doug, who were the greatest contributors to our newsletter, and the men also feature in our 'Show and Tell' section.

We hope to see more people entering plants in 2015 so come on men give the ladies some competition!