

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

Study Group meets the third Thursday of each month

Next meeting 21st January 2016 at 11 a.m.

Venue: PineGrove Bromeliad Nursery

114 Pine Street Wardell 2477

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Discussion: December 2015

Christmas Get Together



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Meeting 19th November 2015

The meeting was opened at approximately 11.00 am
The 22 members and one visitor present were welcomed.
A total of two apologies were received.

General Business

Ross opened the meeting, welcoming those present and thanking those who rang in stating they were delayed and could possibly be late, while distributing another information packed Newsletter.

We welcomed our visitor Ian Percy to the meeting, Ian has been an online recipient of our Newsletter for some time and we hope he enjoyed our meeting.

The Bromeliad Society of Queensland has asked that we distributed their 2016 Bromeliad Bonanza sale leaflet to our members. This show will be at a different venue in 2016 so please take note of the new address:
Les Hughes Sporting Complex, Baker St. (off Francis Rd.), Bray Park.
Saturday 19th 8am - 4pm and Sunday 20th 10am - 3pm March 2016.

The Gold Coast Bromeliad and Succulent Society are having a sale in early December and as many of our members are also members of the Gold Coast Society we can expect a report at our next meeting.

There was a general discussion on the choice of Bromeliad plants available at sales or on exhibition and their maturity - pups in pots without being established held in place with skewers. Pups presented for sale in pots that do **not** have **well** established roots are not acceptable, these should be presented for sale as bare rooted plants only. The repetition of the same old same old red centred or variegated Neoregelias, what happened to the striking colour banding and variation in the patterning that was available not so long ago? Such are the joys of collecting, as our collections grow we discard the old to raffle tables, in times to come our new will be old and they will grace the raffle tables and so it goes on.

Again and again poor and incorrect labelling is a subject for much discussion. Our members want and need to know that when they are building a collection and when they are buying another plant to add to their collection they are not buying something they already have, but which looks a lot different because of the growing environment or an incorrect name on the label. There are so many avenues for checking the correct name of your plants, please use them or simply bring it to your meeting for discussion. The same goes for the correct spelling of a name which may be the correct name for the plant but misleading.

An amusing but maybe not so funny label found in a recent purchase which could cause some misleading confusion was a *Tillandsia farcticullata*, probably meant to be *Tillandsia fasciculata*.

Ross apologised to the meeting for the lack of the much anticipated Ecuadorean Bromeliad Photo Roadshow, the planned viewing arrangements need a little adjustment so hopefully we will have a viewing at our Christmas party.

To gain good sharp clarity of picture we offer a huge thank you to Lesley for her generous donation of a large screen TV which we will utilise in viewing all our members' photos at future meetings as well as 'The Roadshow'.

A request from Ross, if you plan to bring in photos for viewing at a meeting, your photos need to be with Ross well before the meeting, or bring them in at one meeting to be shown the next meeting or e-mail them to the editors.

A special thank you to our members who attended the November meeting, our recording of the meeting was a lot easier to listen to, with less chatter, just a little more chatter from the Lorikeets.

Show, Tell and Ask!

Ross again had some very interesting and colourful gems to show us including:

Tillandsia streptophylla
Aechmea napoensis
Aechmea kentii
Aechmea carvalhoi

Billbergia alfonsi-joannis a magnificent large *Billbergia* that graces the upper branches of a paperbark tree (a native *Melaleuca* species) at PineGrove. Ross had potted a pup about two years ago and this was the specimen in all its floral glory. Disappointedly, he told how try as he may, this clone is self sterile and after many attempts at pollination at various times of the day and night, he and others have failed to have this reluctant *Billbergia*, sexually reproduce. If we were in its native Brazil, we would be relying on insects and birds to carry pollen from one clonal form perhaps several kilometres away to fertilise a plant of a different clonal form on another hillslope, but in Australia, it would seem we have but one clone - hence the infertility. (photo p.6)

Crosses with *Billbergia zebrina* have been made however the leaf patterning of *Bill. zebrina* or lack of the distinctive thumb indentation shows in the progeny. The flower spike form and colouring is typical to *Bill. alfonsi-joannis* in some of the progeny but typical of *Bill. zebrina* in others from the same grex.

Lesley brought in a selection of bromeliads, large in every sense of the word, from the seedling Hohenbergias taken by most members as an exercise in growing seedlings. Tillandsias, Neoregelias including a large multiple headed clump of *Neo*. 'Groucho', *Vriesea* 'RoRo' and others were shown. Lesley is a great believer in nourishing her plants well and often and the results confirm that. She regularly uses Powerfeed as her soluble fertiliser, applying it frequently, balancing it with the correct amount of light and airflow. Amongst the collection was *Vriesea* 'Narla' a new, small and delicate hybrid. She hoped to stimulate discussion regards preparing plants for show and competition which will be discussed at a future meeting. Members asked many questions, around the subject of feeding, strength, type - soluble or slow release along with her watering regime.

A question asked many times - 'Can you feed plants too much?', yes you can, is the answer if you do not match the available light and watering with your feeding you will end up with elongated, soft growth and seemingly unattractive plants. An article to refer to on this subject is **A Matter of Energy** by Chris Larson printed in two parts in FNCBSG Newsletters September and October 2013.

Ross added do not overfeed with Blood and Bone and fertilisers rich in nitrogen, making sure there is always the balance between nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus, feeding little but often, half strength is generally recommended.

Recently we have had a few very hot days with scorching all day sun and Ross spoke of how some of his collection of sun hardened Hohenbergias were badly burnt on these hot days literally leaving plants with brown paper leaves.

Marie had a beautiful collection of flowering Guzmanias to show from her garden, a delightful species *Guzmania acorifolia* (photo p.6) and *Guzmania* 'Georgia' (photo p.9) a multi headed variegated hybrid with many well developed pups filling a large pot and making a spectacular display.

Trish showed her large *Nidularium* 'Madonna,' of unknown hybrid breeding, the bright pink floral bracts and long scape make it stand alone in her *Nidularium* collection. (photo p.9)

John spoke of some of his Guzmanias burning and after trimming the burnt leaves the plants continued growing without pupping he feels as a reaction to the leaf trimming.

John also had *Vriesea* 'Ladd's Elation' (unreg.), these *Vrieseas* were a hybrid seedling batch from Alan Ladd with the seed parent being *Vriesea elata*, the other parent unknown.

He was also asking about a *Tillandsia* he had requiring an identification, thoughts were of it being a *Tillandsia flabellata* hybrid ?

Keryn had an *Aechmea* for identification, Ross suggesting that it may be *Ae. manzanaresiana*, but as the plant did not have any floral parts to assist in its identification, it was a "Wait Till it Flowers" (WTIF) answer.

Jeanette had a *Tillandsia* she wanted verification on, Ross believed it was one imported into Australia by Collectors Corner from Guatemala ex Corsa Nursery and was known as *Tillandsia fasciculata* 'Corsa'.

Again there was a discussion on the removal of pups, their size, time to remove and how to prepare them for consignment / shipping. Ross told the story of the consignment of mini Neoregelias going to Darwin and not being collected for several weeks, when finally collected they were found to be in excellent condition as they had been consigned dry in a polystyrene box. The happy customer immediately ordered another consignment. It was considered that it is safer to sit plants upside down and allow them to dry out for a day prior to packing in case of delays during shipping. Dry packing is preferred over wrapping the base of the plant in sphagnum moss or similar and wrapping this with aluminium foil or plastic wrap which could keep the plant excessively moist and cause rot if delayed.

Ross informed the meeting of the extended biosecurity and regulations that the Australian Quarantine & Inspection Service (AQIS) are applying to imported plants and plant materials being brought into Australia, making importation of Bromeliads etc. much more difficult.

Laurie gave us all a timely warning to be extremely careful when in your garden and shade houses as there are lots of wasps about and they are very active. Laurie needed to have a ring cut from his finger after being stung.

Topics for Discussion at our 2016 Meetings.

Ross has asked us all to put our thinking caps on and come up with topics for 2016 meetings, please write your requests or ideas on a sheet of paper and hand them in or e-mail the editors.

Lesley suggested a talk and demonstration on what constitutes a display plant and how to prepare a plant for exhibition, even for our monthly Competition.

Gloria will give a talk on *Alcantareas*.

Ross suggested an article be prepared and talk given on fertilising bromeliads, what to use and how and when to apply.

Also suggested was having Open Garden meetings, visiting members gardens seeing and observing how each of us grow our bromeliads, particularly those without shade houses.



Guzmania acrifolia
grown by Marie Essery



Billbergia alfonsi-joannis
grown by Ross Little



Vriesea 'Ladd's Elation' ▲
grown by John Crawford



Tillandsia utriculata 'dark stem form'
grown by Lesley Baylis ►



Billbergia 'Canvey Black'
grown by Gloria Dunbar



Tillandsia streptophylla
grown by Ross Little



Aechmea napeensis
grown by Ross Little



Aechmea kentii
grown by Ross Little



Vriesea 'Galaxy'
1st Open Jeanette Henwood



Cryptanthus warasii
Equal 1st Novice Les Higgins



Guzmania 'Georgia'
grown by Marie Essery



Guzmania 'Tricolor' novar
grown by John Crawford



Neoregelia hybrid ?
Equal 1st Novice Kevin Jones



Neoregelia 'Rosatina'
Equal 1st Novice Dave Boudier



Vriesea hybrid ???
grown by Laurie Mountford



Neoregelia 'Groucho'
grown by Lesley Baylis



Neoregelia 'Painted Delight'
Judges Choice Jennifer Laurie



'Tilly on a Pot'
1st Decorative Laurie Mountford



'Garden in Glass'
grown by Helen Clewett



Nidularium 'Madonna'
grown by Trish Kelly

Photo's on pages 6, 7, 8 and 9 supplied by: Ross Little and Lesley Baylis

Natural Variation in *Orthophytum albopictum* and Possible Natural Hybrids by Doug Binns 2015

Orthophytum albopictum is an attractive and conspicuous species which is very abundant around its type locality close to the town of Mucuge in the Brazilian state of Bahia. In their 2010 revision of the sessile orthophytums, Louzada and Wanderley state that it is easily recognized when in flower by the white lanate band around the centre of the inflorescence. They further describe the leaves as being glabrous (smooth) on the upper surface and the sepals as being green. They don't discuss any variation in these characteristics.



Orthophytum albopictum



Orthophytum ? albopictum
lepidote form

However, plants in the Mucuge area are quite variable. Many plants have grey leaves with at least a sparse covering of scales and the green sepals often appear white because they are densely covered by white scales. In some plants, the leaf scales are sufficiently dense that they obscure the normally bright red leaves of flowering plants so they appear dull. Non-flowering plants of this type look very similar to *Orth. burle-marxii*.

At the opposite extreme, there are groups of plants which are completely naked, lacking even the white-lanate band which epitomises *Orth. albopictum*. These plants are reminiscent of *Orth. hatschbachii* or *Orth. heleniceae* (both of which have green central portions in the flowering rosette) but have much broader leaves with more well-developed marginal spines than either of those species and neither of those species has been recorded in the Mucuge area. Are these plants an extreme form of *Orth. albopictum* or do they belong to a separate, currently undescribed, species? Seeing the naked green form growing immediately adjacent to the grey form it would be easy to conclude the latter, but intermediate forms also occur so this question will remain unanswered until someone can look more closely at the variation.



Orthophytum ? albopictum
naked form, past flowering

A related species, *Orthophytum ulei*, was described only recently (as part of the 2010 revision), from an area which appears to be close to the north-eastern limit of the distribution of *Orth. albopictum*. In the protologue, Louzada and Wanderley cite three specimens, but two are from a single locality and the other is non-localised and may also be from the same locality. They note that it is similar to *Orth. albopictum* but differs by being lepidote (with tiny scales) on the upper surface of the leaf (supposedly smooth in *Orth. albopictum* but note above comments on the Mucuge population) and by pink sepals (green in *Orth. albopictum* although as noted above the sepals seem to often be obscured by dense white scales). I have not visited the type locality of *Orth. ulei*, but a little to the west there are some plants which agree well with the description of this species.



Orthophytum ulei
light pink form



Possible *Orth. albopictum* - *Orth. ulei*
hybrid or intergrade

However, they grow among a large population of plants, over an extensive area, which display a bewildering variety of forms, many of which are difficult to place into either *Orth. albopictum* or *Orth. ulei*. In particular, many plants at this locality, when flowering, have bright red leaves which are mostly glabrous except for a conspicuous white lanate base (good for *Orth. albopictum*) but they consistently have pink sepals (characteristic of *Orth. ulei*). Also, they are mostly smaller plants with shorter, broader leaves than

typical *Orth. albopictum*. These can be growing within 10mtrs of *Orth. Ulei* - like plants which have leaves fully lanate above and a more-or-less evenly pink colouration with very obscure band around the inflorescence. Not far away (a few tens of metres) in the same population, there are a few plants which closely match the typical form of *Orth. albopictum* with green (or white lepidote) sepals. In any case, it is difficult to judge the full extent of variation in this and other nearby populations from a brief visit, because only a small proportion of plants are in flower at any one time.



Possible *Orth. albopictum* - *Orth. ulei*
hybrid or intergrade

Not far north of this mixed population (no more than a few kilometres) is the southern extent (at least as currently known) of the distribution of *Orth. burle-marxii*, a more widespread species growing to the north. I don't know whether



Orthophytum albopictum pink form with green sepals



Orthophytum burle-marxii from just north of where *Orth. albopictum* grows

the ranges of *Orth. albopictum* and *Orth. burle-marxii* overlap, but for the most part they are separate and there appear to be no reports of the two species growing together. The mixed population perhaps has some genetic influence from *Orth. burle-marxii* but if so, it may have been a past event which has been since obscured by back-crossing between hybrids and *Orth. albopictum*. There do not appear to be any typical *Orth. burle-marxii* growing in the near vicinity at present. It would be very interesting to explore the intervening area between the currently-known range limits of *Orth. albopictum* and *Orth. burle-marxii* to see whether the two species do occur together. The habitat is continuous and there are no obvious barriers to the distribution of either species in the intervening area.

Alternatively, the mixed population may be part of a hybrid swarm between *Orth. albopictum* and *Orth. ulei*. Louzada and Wanderley do not mention whether *Orth. albopictum* grows at the *Orth. ulei* type locality, nor do they mention the extent of variation within the latter species. Despite the recent revision and several additional new species published subsequently, I think there is still a lot to be learnt about variation in this group of Orthophytums and the distribution of the various species.



Possible *Orth. albopictum* – *Orth. ulei* hybrid or intergrade

Brain Teaser from Bromlink July / August 1984 Vol.6, No.1

1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
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7				
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9				
10				

Down 1. What we are all interested in.

Across 1. Unusual Cryptanthus.

2. Over lush growth.
3. Pup
4. One country of origin.
5. Nourished from the air.
6. Species of Edmundoa.
7. Sometimes a pest.
8. Species of Billbergia.
9. Of two colours.
10. Exhibit.



Rearrange the last letters to find a genus of Bromeliad.

Solution next Newsletter

Novice Popular Vote

1st	Les Higgins	<i>Cryptanthus warasii</i>
1st	Kevin Jones	<i>Neoregelia</i> hybrid
1st	Dave Boudier	<i>Neoregelia</i> 'Rosatina'

Open Popular Vote

1st	Jeanette Henwood	<i>Vriesea</i> 'Galaxy'
2nd	Gloria Dunbar	<i>Billbergia</i> 'Canvey Black'
2nd	Jennifer Laurie	<i>Neoregelia</i> 'Painted Delight'
2nd	John Crawford	<i>Guzmania</i> 'Tricolor' novar

Judges Choice

1st	Jennifer Laurie	<i>Neoregelia</i> 'Painted Delight'
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Decorative

1st	Laurie Mountford	'Tilly on a Pot'
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Comments from the Growers:

Les obtained his *Cryptanthus warasii* (pronounced varasii) from Doug Cross a year ago. Its habitat is the Diamantina Plateau of North Brazil which is described as a semi-arid area but no shortage of water. This plant is best grown giving it some moisture rather than treating it like a cactus if you wish it to be an exceptional pup producer. Plant nutrition is incorporated into the potting mix with the occasional foliar feeding pending growth phases. Grown in a 100mm Vanda slotted pot lined with fine netting, the small pot size helps prevent the roots from remaining excessively wet while the open sides of the pot assures adequate gaseous movement over the roots. Les feels he is struggling to attain this plants full growth potential so he would appreciate any growing hints to help aid him in better cultivation of this most unusual Cryptanthus.

Kevin obtained his *Neoregelia* from the raffle about two years ago. It is growing in a position where it receives morning sun, is potted in PineGrove Bromeliad Mix and is fertilised with Osmocote slow release fertiliser.

Dave has changed his potting mix to include polystyrene beads and pine bark to help improve drainage, Dave and Keryn are spraying their plants with Confidor for pests and beginning to get on top of the rodent problem they have encountered. As these pest and growing condition issues are being addressed and overcome a vast improvement in plant health is obvious. Dave and Keryn's persistence in improving the quality of their plants is paying off. Well done guys.

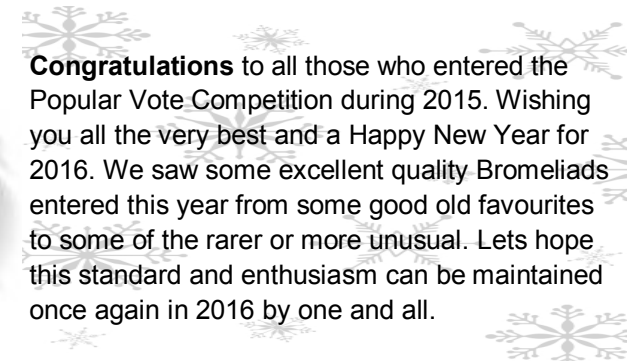
Jeanette was given her *Vriesea* 'Galaxy' about four years ago, she grows it in a large decorative pot under 70% beige shade cloth in a west facing situation where her *Vrieseas* get lots of light. Jeanette has recently begun a more regular fertilizing regime and is seeing some great results.

Gloria acquired her *Billbergia* 'Canvey Black' at the Christmas meeting of the Gold Coast Society two years ago. Gloria grows her *Billbergia*, an Olive Trevor hybrid, on a pipe plant stand with arms, made by Greg Aizelwood, which allows multiple plants to be grown together. It receives full sun most of the day, it is grown in a quality Bromeliad potting mix with a little fertiliser added and is watered regularly. Gloria removes the old mother when she becomes unsightly and takes great care not to damage it when repotting and fertilising it after which she hopes it will send up more pups. *Billbergias* are beautiful, underutilised plants, spectacular as a specimen or in group planted pots.

Jennifer grows her stunning *Neoregelia* 'Painted Delight' an American import of unknown parentage which she purchased as a pup on e-bay. Grown under 70% beige shade cloth, receiving sun most of the day and receiving only creek or rain water when watered. Jennifer initially pots her pups in small pots and then up sizes as required, spraying them when needed with organic canola oil spray for scale.

John grows his *Guzmania* 'Tricolor' novar in his shade house under 50% white shade cloth, this *Guzmania* has been very slow growing, however the depth of colour was magnificent. John stated that in the future he was considering using a longer life, slow release fertiliser that would only require one fertilising per year or longer.

Laurie grows his *Tillandsia* in his beige 70% shade cloth covered shade house on a side bench. Laurie waters and fertilises his plants regularly and does not have problems with pests and diseases.



Congratulations to all those who entered the Popular Vote Competition during 2015. Wishing you all the very best and a Happy New Year for 2016. We saw some excellent quality Bromeliads entered this year from some good old favourites to some of the rarer or more unusual. Lets hope this standard and enthusiasm can be maintained once again in 2016 by one and all.



Another year has come and gone and we take this opportunity to wish all our readers a very happy Christmas and New Year and may you all enjoy another year of friendship and gaining knowledge about Bromeliads. We would like to extend a big thank-you to all the members who contribute to our meetings by bringing in show and tell plants, entering the competitions and bringing plants for raffles. We all gain knowledge by hearing about other Members' growing experiences and would like to hear more from Members, either in a short talk or article.

Trish and Les in particular have contributed several articles this year, Trish with a comprehensive article on her experiences growing bromeliads from seed. Les is a regular contributor and also has very detailed and researched notes on his competition entries. We thank him for imparting his knowledge and his enthusiasm. We also wish to thank Derek Butcher, Geoff Lawn, Doug Binns and Bob and Jamie Larnach for sharing their extensive knowledge of bromeliads with the Group. We always welcome feedback on our original Newsletter articles and thank Lucas Bauer in particular for his comments. Lets not forget to thank Trish and Kay who help with the meeting notes for our Newsletter, also Helen and Lesley who assist in proof reading, a fantastic job done by all.

Once again to Gary and Coral McAteer we extend our greatest appreciation for all their donations during the past year to help keep our Group clean and tidy with kitchen supplies, tea and coffee etc.

Also a huge thank-you to those who donated plants for our Special Auctions to help raise funds toward the Groups running costs.

Lastly thank-you to Ross and Helen for providing a wonderful venue for our meetings. To Helen, for all the behind-the-scenes organisation that keeps the Group running so well, and Ross who is responsible for the high standard of the Newsletter and who is always ready to share his wealth of knowledge with the Group.

