

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

Edition: July 2025

Agenda: General Discussion

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

Study Group meets the third Thursday of each month

Next meeting August 21st 2025 at 11 a.m.

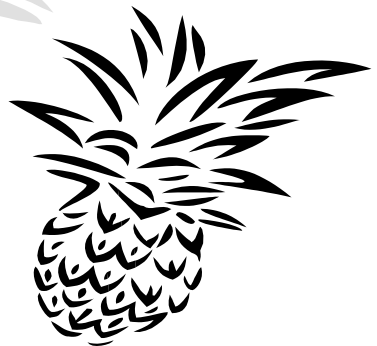
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Meeting June 19th 2025

The meeting was opened at approximately 11.00 am
The ten members were welcomed.
Four apologies were received.

General Business

Congratulations are in order to the Hunter District Bromeliad Society for their 40th anniversary. Four foundation members, Gordon Slack, Ken Page, Gleness and Bob Larnach attended the luncheon held at Cardiff RSL Club on Saturday 7th June. Peter Franklin following up with 39 years with 38 of them on committee! Hope you all had a great day and many more years to come.



Show, Tell and Ask!

Whenever a variegated plant is brought along to a meeting with a plain or non variegated offset attached, it often raises the question of what to do with them. Many growers admitted they find it difficult to remove and discard them. Yes, some 'novars' can be quite attractive, but, to many growers they are rubbish and should not be kept, they feel it is best practice to cull them.

If you're a keeper, the following information should be useful to you.

Published in FNCBSG NSW Newsletter December 2011
A question asked this month -- what does 'novar' mean.

The term 'novar' was coined in the late 1990s by Dennis Cathcart of Tropiflora Nursery in the USA for the non variegated offsets of normally variegated plants. Reasoning being, if one removes a plain green pup off a variegated plant and sells it, the buyer knows there is a chance that this plant could produce another variegated pup at sometime in the future, if it does it is not a sport (something new) it's the original variegation returning.

How to write your label:

Plant with variegation: *Neoregelia* 'Tricolor'

Plant lost variegation: *Neoregelia* 'Tricolor' 'novar'

BUT when is a 'novar' a 'novar' meaning it has NO variegation, exactly then, when it has NO variegation.

Sport: an apparent mutation which has occurred on part of a plant.
e.g. a variegated offset on a normally non variegated plant.

Leaf tip damage/browning on Guzmanias and Tillandsias, is this caused by the sudden cold snap? If so, be aware of cold symptoms, a catastrophic drop in temperature can cause leaf tissue breakdown. Give as much sunlight as possible to your plants now until September as there is insufficient radiant energy to cause problems like leaf burn. However, be aware of wind chill.

Watering during the cooler months of winter can be reduced. If watering in the afternoon be sure Tillandsias dry off early rather than being wet overnight. Wet leaves keep the trichomes closed over the stomata (the breathing pore), not allowing Tillandsias to breathe, basically suffocating them if too wet for too long.

Leaf tip browning could also be a result of soggy potting soil by keeping the roots too wet, allow pots to dry out a bit between watering. Plants may also suffer if kept too dry, low humidity can cause drying of the leaf tips.

Monitoring your plants regularly is the best way to understand their watering requirements.

Consider any adverse weather that may have been experienced several months earlier, damage doesn't always show up immediately.

Add a ½ teaspoon of Potassium nitrate into 10 litres of water to restore any carbohydrate lost in respiration which will help maintain a strong, healthy plant.

A question often asked: Why are some of my Neoregelias losing their overall pinkish tinge?

Answer: The culprit may be the weaker sun at this time of year. In the long term the gradually strengthening sunlight of spring will fix the problem, in the short term shift the plant into a sunnier position.

Also many Neoregelias centre cups only flush with colour when they are coming into flower, after the flowering period, the colour will gradually fade naturally.

A question asked: When do Tillandsias flower:

Answer: No set time of the year, however there seems to be something in flower at most times of the year, it is quite noticeable at the moment that many are coming into flower this month, June, or at least are initiating flowering.

Pet Hate

In a recent plant sales notification it appeared that the seller feels Tillandsias are different to Bromeliads because they have advertised:
"Bromeliads for sale and Tillandsias"..... (Urggggg!!!)

News Flash — Tillandsias are Bromeliads, so maybe it should read:

Bromeliads for sale — Neoregelias, Guzmanias, Vrieseas, Tillandsias etc.

Open Popular Vote

1st	Keryn Simpson	<i>Neoregelia</i> 'Lila Candy Stripes'
2nd	Helen Clewett	<i>Portea kermesina</i>
3rd	Shane Fitzgerald	<i>Lutheria</i> 'Triple Treat' unreg.

Tillandsia

1st	Deb Baker	<i>Tillandsia</i> 'Nigra'
2nd	Gary McAteer	<i>Tillandsia</i> 'Penito'
3rd	Shane Fitzgerald	<i>Tillandsia</i> 'Magnificent'
3rd	Keryn Simpson	
3rd		

Monthly Genus — Vriesea and Guzmania

1st	Helen Clewett	x <i>Guzvriesea</i> 'Freda K' unreg.
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Judges Choice

1st	Deb Baker	<i>Tillandsia</i> 'Nigra'
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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.

Lutheria Barfuss and W. Till, 2016

Lutheria is a genus of the subfamily *Tillandsioideae*, family *Bromeliaceae*. It is named in honor of American bromeliad expert Harry E. Luther (1952-2012) after the multi-locus DNA sequence phylogeny and morphology study and taxonomic revision of the *Tillandsioideae* subfamily by Michael Barfuss et al. published in *Phytotaxa* 279 (1): 001-097, 2016.

The genus *Lutheria* contains four species and five varieties which were all formerly part of the genus *Vriesea*:

bibeatricis (Morillo) Barfuss & W.Till

glutinosa (Lindl.) Barfuss & W.Till

soderstromii (L.B.Sm.) Barfuss & W.Till

splendens (Brongn.) Barfuss & W.Till

var. *chlorostachya* (Oliva-Esteve) Barfuss & W.Till

var. *formosa* (Suringar ex Witte) Barfuss & W.Till

var. *oinochroma* (Steyerm.) Barfuss & W.Till

var. *splendens*

var. *striatifolia* (M.B. Foster) Barfuss & W.Till

Over the years there have been many hybrids created both commercially and home grown. Many of these hybrids have gone unregistered making it difficult when seeking identification. Some prefer low light to show off the dark irregular cross bands at their best whereas others prefer bright light, best to experiment to gain the best or your preferred best features of your plant.

Often it is best to wait till it flowers (WTiF) before trying to identify a plant.



Lutheria 'Triple Treat' unreg.
grown by Shane Fitzgerald



Lutheria hybrid unknown
grown by Keryn Simpson

Monthly Genus for June was Vriesea and related bigenerics

John Lindley named the genus Vriesea in 1843 in honour of Willem Hendrik de Vriese, a Dutch botanist and physician.



xGuzvriesea 'Freda K' unreg
1st Monthly Genus Helen Clewett



Many Vriesea can be grown terrestrially, however they enjoy being grown epiphytically in our gardens, much like they do in their natural habitats in Eastern Brazil, north western Argentina, south eastern Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela and the Greater Antilles.



Vriesea 'Shannon' grown by Deb Baker



Vriesea 'Hunter'
grown by
Kayelene Guthrie

Vriesea 'Rosita' unreg.
grown by
Shane Fitzgerald



Vriesea unknown Dillings
hybrid grown by
Ian Pursey



Neoregelia
'Lila Candy Stripes'
1st Open
Keryn Simpson



Tillandsia 'Nigra'
1st Tillandsia and Judges Choice
Deb Baker



Tillandsia 'Penito'
grown by Gary McAteer



Vriesea hybrid unknown
grown by Ian Pursey



Guzmania 'Sir Albert'
grown by Deb Baker



Tillandsia 'Magnificent'
grown by Shane Fitzgerald



Tillandsia stricta
grown by Keryn Simpson

Aechmea subgenus **Ortgiesia**

It's *Aechmea recurvata* flowering time, this group of plants love growing in full all day sun in the Northern Rivers area of NSW where they bring much joy and colour to our winter gardens.

They belong in the *Ortgiesia* subgenus of *Aechmea*. A subgenus is a division of a large genera like *Aechmea* which has been taxonomically divided.

The name *Ortgiesia* was first used in 1867 to describe a Bromeliad called



Ortgiesia tillandsioides, which was named after the head gardener of the Zurich Botanical Gardens. This plant is now known as *Aechmea recurvata*.

The *Ortgiesia* subgenus originates in the Santa Catarina State of Brazil, which has a warm temperate to subtropical climate. Some of the group is found throughout Southern Brazil and down to Northern Argentina.

How do you tell what *Aechmea* belongs to the subgenus *Ortgiesia* ?

Refer to an ***Aechmea*** subgenus ***Ortgiesia*** key:

Inflorescence compound or simple, lax or dense, typically nidular but usually scapose.

Floral bracts not decurrent and not forming pouches.

Flowers sessile.

Sepals connate for one-third to one-half their length, their mucros about as long as their free lobes.

Petals distinctly appendaged.



Photos by Ross Little and Lesley Baylis



Aechmea **ornata**

Ian brought along another plant from his collection, this one has nasty terminal spines and needs its identity clarified.

It's *Aechmea ornata* that can be found growing in Brazil from Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Paranti and Santa Catarina states where it grows as an epiphyte or terrestrial in the Atlantic rain forest and on sandy coastal plains, at altitudes between sea level and 1950 metres.

It was first treated as *Chevaliera ornata* by Gaudichaud and later transferred to *Aechmea* (section *Chevaliera*) by Baker in 1879. However by 1889 Baker decided to place it as *Aechmea ornata* into the *Pothuava* subgenus of *Aechmea*.



Aechmea 'Nationalis Median'

Photos by Ross Little and Peter Coyle

This species has several varieties:

var ***ornata*** has an inflorescence to 4 cm in diameter without the petals; flowers stout; petals usually pale red or rose.

var ***hoehneana*** has an inflorescence about 3 cm in diameter without the petals; flowers slender; petals blue.

Being post floral, no flowers to assure us of petal colour we can't be sure which variety it is, Ian is sure it had blue petals. We await next flowering.

Another being variegated is var. ***nationalis*** which has since been given cultivar names:



Aechmea 'Nationalis Marginated'

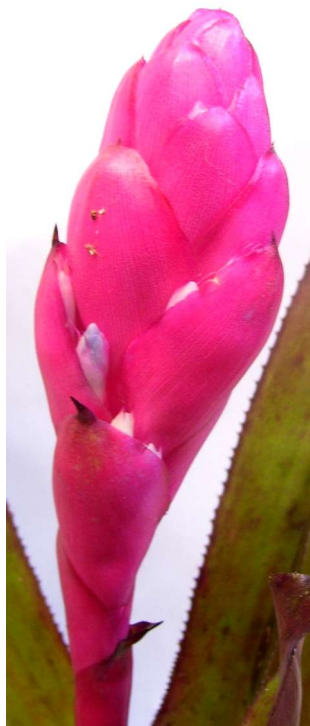
Portea kermesina Brongniart ex K. Koch, 1856.

The genus *Portea* was established by Brongniart and dedicated to Marius Porte. *Portea kermesina* was one of many Brazilian plants Porte collected and sent to Brongniart at the national history museum in Paris during his stay in Brazil from 1834 to 1859.

Portea kermesina was found growing as a terrestrial in coastal forests of Bahia, Brazil around 1826 to 1829.

It grows in the shadiest section of the shade house. According to the description the inflorescence is bright red, however *Kermesina* means - crimson, whatever colour you see the bracts as, this inflorescence is very striking.

It is a very easy and rewarding species to grow in the garden, the foliage colour speaks for itself. It's not a particularly large plant like some of its cousins as it only grows to around 800mm across by 400mm high when in flower. Very eye catching when in flower.



Portea kermesina
grown by Helen Clewett

Bromeliads - Houseplants for Today and Tomorrow Part 10

by Walter Richter (Translated by Adda Abendroth, Teresopolis, Brazil)

Continued: BSI 1970 Vol. 20 (1)

Extra Lighting

The search after ways to promote development goes on. Artificial illumination for young plants as well as for mature specimens holds a promise.

The following data are based on tests carried out in the Netherlands. Two weeks after planting the seed, the sprouting grain got 8 daily additional light hours. Source of light consisted of mercury lamps and incandescent tubes. They were installed about 80 cm above the seed-containers, later above the seedlings, with a light intensity of 150 watts per square meter. Artificial lighting was applied from the beginning of December to the middle of March. The same treatment given *Aechmea fasciata* showed subsequent improvement. The 9-months-old plant was three times the size of its untreated brethren. Incandescent tubes were found to be more effective and economically more profitable than the mercury lamps. The important factor is probably the high light intensity.

To accelerate flowering *Aechmea fasciata*, plants 2½ years old were submitted to eight hours of extra illumination from a 55-watt per sq.m. lamp at a distance of 1 m. Ten weeks later (end of December to beginning of March) most of the treated plants were in bloom. The untreated ones reached sales status three months later. Using light intensity of 20 watts per sq. m., the application may be reduced to 5 or 6 weeks. The temperature during the treatment should be at least 16-17°C. Humidity must be high enough to provide ideal conditions for the developing plants. Combined artificial illumination periods in youth and at a later age guaranteed 80 percent sales status at the end of two years of cultivation. Since then, the acceleration process has been generally adopted to make *Aechmea fasciata* bloom, and it has yielded good results. Experiments to speed up flowering in other bromeliad species are still outstanding.

Continued: BSI 1970 Vol. 20 (2)

Having dealt at length with the growth factors involved in bromeliad cultivation, I am now going to present the subject in current terms for the benefit of the beginner.

Cultivation in the home or in the office is of course less complicated than in the nursery. Incidentally and unfortunately, that makes life harder for the plants. There is no all-out substitute for the light coming from above in the glasshouse. Light coming from a window is always restricted to one side. Happily that drawback does not affect the majority of bromels too much, they can even stand an occasional change of location or a turn-about, a thing not every plant will take.

Generally though, the indoors afford very few spots that will answer the manifold needs of light of bromeliads. But bromeliads can adapt astonishingly well to light conditions that are not too good, the plants will survive but put on a different face. Precisely bromeliads are living proof of the belief that only good light produces fine leaf color or design. Nonetheless there are no exceptions. For example the banding of *Vriesea splendens* and its relatives becomes beautiful only in half or full shade, these plants can't stand full sun. The same applies to *Cryptanthus* species and hybrids, some love strong light and take it well if they can get accustomed to it gradually.

During the dreary days from October to March it is well to give bromeliads the lightest spot in the room, place them in a south, west or east window. In summer a south window may get too much sunshine, which would harm the plants if means are not provided to subdue the rays during the hottest hours of the day. In a previous chapter I mentioned putting bromeliads outside on a balcony in summer, but that requires some advance planning. As was said, only hardy species are suitable for the outdoors, and even they need a transition period in which they get used to stronger light. It will suffice if you cover them with a piece of tissue paper or a transparent cloth during the hottest hours of the day to avoid leaf burn.

On the other hand, a supply of extra artificial light by vacuum tubes is an important possibility. The benefits the plants derive from artificial light was discussed but no mention was made of the fact that plants can be quite close to vacuum tubes without getting burned. It is not yet known whether this holds for other sources of artificial light. Bromeliads, however, definitely resent too close proximity to infra-red lamps that are sometimes employed to heat a plant window. As in this case it is not the air that gets heated but the objects touched by the rays, here the leaves, and they may burn to death if they are too close to the lamp.

Warmth is one of the most important items in indoor cultivation. Sufficient warmth helps to get good results. Generally there isn't much to pick from as far as location goes, we must adjust to prevailing conditions. Luckily, it can be said that where humans live, bromeliads like to live also. A cosy clime implies temperatures around 20°C, it makes no difference whether that may be 18° or 22°. The plants will adjust easily. Rooms that primarily serve another purpose, and where temperature is less than pleasant, are not the right place for bromels. The plants will suffer and become injured, often beyond recovery. In winter it is advisable to protect all plants from direct draft, for example, a cold blast coming from a window opened for aeration. Although the leaves of a bromeliad cannot be called delicate or dainty, cooling off fast may hurt the whole plant. Young plants always need more warmth than adults. They should get the best location there is and will amply repay such consideration.

Temperatures below 12°C are prohibitive for most bromeliads if they must be endured for some time. Rooms that get heated only occasionally are unsuitable for the kind of bromeliad you buy in the trade. The only exception are those that must be kept cool and dry in winter as if they were succulents, this includes *Dyckias*, *Hechtias* and others.

Warmth and humidity are tied up with each other. Presence of water in the funnels and in the leaf sheaths illustrate this. The water thus stored cools off in cold air, and if it stays cold for long, it will cause decay of the tender inner leaves. Too much humidity in the soil in cold weather is also bad. So remember warmth and humidity should be about the same, they should balance each other. In a cool location use water sparingly, where it is warm, supply enough. I am often asked how house plants should be watered. There is no one answer, one cannot say whether the plants should be watered daily or less often. What determines the amount of water needed is the general surrounding conditions, location and the time of year. Only a general picture can be presented.

Bromeliads for the most part only have a few roots. This is one reason why they should not stand in stagnant water. The compost in which they live, or should live, holds more water than ordinary soil employed for other plants. Therefore, avoid drenching. You will soon acquire the knack of giving your plants just enough water to keep them happy. If funnel and leaf sheaths contain water, which is the natural condition, occasional dryness of the potmix is not serious, as long as it does not become a permanent drought-state. The experienced grower knows that in the growth period, with us mostly in spring and in summer, he should spray and water more lavishly than during the rest period, which coincides with our late fall and winter. I just wrote "spray" and I can see some of my readers frown. I know that you can't apply frequent sprays in the sitting-room but you can in the plant window. Expose the plants to soft warm rain as often as possible, it washes away the nasty layer of dust that in time accumulates on the leaves. A warm shower bath can replace rain to a certain extent. By the way, plants that have a coat of scales should not be rubbed with a rag, it would displace the scales and spoil their looks.

Plants kept in pots indoors often develop a crust on top of the mix especially if the water used is calcareous. Some time ago a passionate plant-friend sent me a very simple recipe to overcome this drawback. It is said to be absolutely fool proof and although I have not tried it myself, I dare to pass it on. Once a week my friend adds to each gallon of water he used a little superphosphate, as much as can go on the tip of a knife. All the pots get some of the solution, and the result is that the earth always looks fresh and sweet.

And now a final word about fertilizer. When you buy a bromeliad, you are not getting involved in an intricate feeding program. Those who have access to rain water should use that, as it contains some inherent nourishment. Also water

from an aquarium is well-suited for epiphytes. Complete fertilizers in the trade may be used in weak solution, generally once a week is sufficient. It is not advisable to pour diluted fertilizer into the funnel, more often than not it will harm the plant. On the whole, be moderate and do not attempt to promote growth or flower formation with the aid of fertilizers.

Raising and Cultivating Tillandsias

In the foregoing descriptions Tillandsias were not included. This was done intentionally because the genus Tillandsia, which includes some 500 species, differs in many ways from other bromeliads. Its range, from Argentina to eastern Virginia, is the largest in the whole family. Occurrence spreads from sea level to altitudes of 3000 m and includes a great many different locations and varying surroundings, all of which have favoured the evolution of a great wealth of different forms among the genus. No other genus includes as much contrast in size as does the Tillandsia, successive steps of the ladder begin with the minute *Tillandsia coarctata* to creatures several metres high, such as *Tillandsia grandis* in bloom. Variation covers also germination. So, despite its great affinity with the genus Vriesea, I prefer to treat Tillandsia as a group apart.

In addition, I have taken into account the increasing number of plant addicts who are interested in growing the small Tillandsias. I am convinced that these small plants will attract even more attention if sufficient material can be offered for selection, thereby broadening the basis for more extensive collections and better methods of cultivation, as was the case with cacti.

As I have said, the climate where Tillandsias live in nature varies a great deal. Being a close relative of Vriesea, many Tillandsia exhibit rainforest forms. The more extravagant forms however, are confined to the species that must live a hard life, in a land where there is a definite period of drought that is so pronounced in some areas that the trees shed their leaves. Dry country Tillandsias are all epiphytes and get an extra dose of light when the trees on which they perch are denuded of leaves. To secure moisture during the dry period however, a special arrangement is needed. Dry country Tillandsia possess it, a thick coat of scales. The scales act as an insulator from the heat and at the same time trap any bit of moisture from the air and guide it to the leaf tissue. A lavish production of dew in the long nights of the dry period, characteristic of such a countryside, provides sufficient humidity to guarantee survival of the plants. Tillandsias living in such areas are called "extreme atmospheric".

To be continued