

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

Edition: August 2026

Agenda: General Discussion

Venue: PineGrove Bromeliad Nursery
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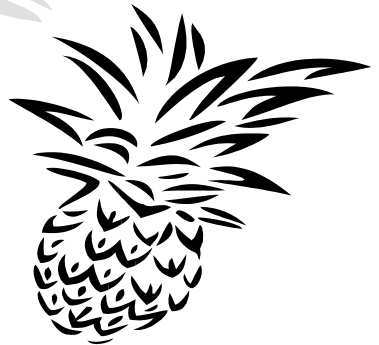
Study Group meets the 3rd Thursday of each month
Next meeting September 17th 2026 at 11 a.m.

Editorial Team:

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Debbie Smith, Shirley Smith
Ross Little, Keryn Simpson



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Meeting July 16th 2026

The meeting was opened at approximately 11.00 am
Eleven members were welcomed.
Three apologies were received.

General Business

A warm welcome was given to our visitors, one being Bianca Van Leeuwen who we met at the Queensland Tillandsia Day in June. Bianca lives in northern NSW so we invited her to come to our meetings and to join our Group. We hope she had a wonderful day not only at the Tillandsia Day but also at our meeting and we hope to see her as a regular attending member.

Brad Pestwich came along for a visit bringing with him some of his treasures to show us and explain how he grows them. He also spoke about his hybridizing projects. Brad has created quite a few interesting hybrids some of which are shown on pages 10 and 11.

Doug Binns was our third visitor/member, he attends when he can get away from his work commitments. Doug always has some amazing tales to tell. This year his travels have taken him on trips to Brazil and to the top of a tepui in Venezuela. Tepui are immense, flat-topped mountains characterized by sheer, vertical cliffs that rise abruptly from the surrounding rainforest and are often shrouded in mist. At 2,800 metres at the top, temperatures range from 15° into the 20s. On this trip he was most pleased to have found some *Connellia*, a new genus for him to have seen for the first time in habitat which has six species only in the genus. They are small to medium sized, acaulescent to short caulescent terrestrials or lithophytes (they grow on rocks). These were just one of the many wonders Doug spoke of, we hope we can get him back in the near future for a more in-depth discussion about his recent travels.

A final agreement to our voting dilemma, **one vote** per member **per section**.

Open section, two plants may be tabled per entrant and cast one vote only.

Tillandsia section, one plant may be tabled per entrant and cast one vote only.

All voting to be done at lunch break, as this gives everybody time to table their entries before votes are cast keeping it fair and equal to all.

Note to the entrants, be sure to write your name and your plant names in their respective columns and section, Open or Tillandsia, take the number token relevant to each entry and place it with each entry accordingly. Voting is by the number on the entry, no number, nobody knows if the plant is in for competition or for discussion only.

Tillandsia Day Report by Kayelene Guthrie and Ross Little

Five members of our Group - Gary, Coral, Kayelene, Lesley and Ross attended the June 2026 Till Day in Brisbane and found the day to be a great learning experience as always.

The presentations from overseas:

Jerry Raack - Bromeliads and Taxonomy - although plant biology basics is not unfamiliar to everyone, the taxonomy presentation would have been very "heavy" for some. It was, however, very interesting and informative. He also covered the *Tillandsia* subgenera *pseudovriesea* of Ecuador.

Pamela Koide-Hyatt's presentation of the *Tillandsia mooreana* complex was very much enjoyed by all. The photos of the various plants in habitat was excellent, seeing how such massive plants are supported on rock faces in such barren environments is fascinating and helps us growers understand how best to present our own plants.

There were many interesting local presentations also:

Chris Larson: The Future of Tillandsias in Australia, importing has got difficult so where to now - grow plants from seed and hybridizing programs.

Peter Tristram covered the revision of the *Tillandsia edithae* complex.

Melindie Hunt explained her methods of growing Tillandsias in south east Queensland and building shade houses to suit.

John Olsen spoke of his methods of growing Tillandsias, he has the advantage of being high on a hillside gaining good air flow for his plants to enjoy.

Aaron Handley presented his journey into the Tillandsia world. He not only spoke passionately, but it was presented by way of a practical approach. Photos of how he had attached and placed his plants, plus having props on the day was great to see. Aaron was a delight to watch, he was really a breath of fresh air.

The **Show and Tell** session was well supported as always and we were shown some Tillandsias that are not often seen in collections.

The **Rare Plant Auction** conducted by Rob Murray is always fun with lots of cajoling to get some of us to bid let alone to get top dollar out of the real bidders.

We all loved the room full of Tillandsias for sale - like a "fat boy in a chocolate shop"!!!! This part of the day perhaps could have commenced a little earlier and been longer to give more time to look and choose then proceed home, which for some of us was quite a distance.

Thank you to the Queensland Society and all the presenters for a great day.

Show, Tell and Ask!

Shane brought along a *Tillandsia* 'Eric The Red' for discussion which is a hybrid of *Tillandsia ionantha* as the seed parent and the pollen parent being unknown, it was created by Rolly Reilly and named by Neville Ryan*. The asterisk (*) after a persons name on the Bromeliad Cultivar Registry (BCR) registrations indicates the person who named the plant but is not the hybridizer.

This *Tillandsia* has a semi-bulbous base and is similar in appearance to an *ionantha*, hence it was originally called "ionantha giant hybrid".

Shane has been growing this plant in a pot hanging high in his shade house close to the 70% black shade cloth. It offsets around its base and has multiple flowers in a cluster in the centre of the plant. He has offered his growing tips in the hope that the receiver of this plant from our raffle can improve on its growth as he feels it was struggling in his growing conditions.

I believe Debbie was the lucky winner, hopefully we'll see it come back one day in its full glory, flowering.

Kayelene brought along some *Tillandsias* wanting some advice on how best to present them, to pot or to mount them and what best to mount them on?

Mounting: some suggestions of materials suitable to mount your *Tillandsias* or other Bromeliads onto are: natural cork, wine bottle corks, untreated old fence palings or callistemon branches. Although all are excellent materials to mount plants onto, one of their downfalls is a wood grub, possibly Sod Webworm or a related species, it can be treated with a pyrethroid insecticide called Bifenthrin.

Gary turned to composites because of the wood grub problems he was having, so far he has been very pleased with the results, no wood grub, no rotting or deterioration of the material, its longevity appears good.

Composites are sawdust mixed with recycled plastics forming 'timber' decking boards e.g. Ekodeck and Ekologix. These materials are easy to cut and drill for mounting *Tillandsias* on. Gary is using cable ties as additional support to help hold the plants in place until the glue dries.

A demonstration was given on attaching one of Kayelene's *Tillandsias* to a large piece of cork. Firstly set the plant onto the cork to establish its best fit/seating position and where to drill holes to pass the plastic coated tie wire through. Tuck the tie wire behind the leaves to help hide it and thread it through the drilled holes and twist it firmly at the back of the mount. A second 'loose' tie can be applied higher up the plant to help keep it stable until roots attach the plant firmly to the mount or until the glue sets if using glue plus ties. Do not use copper wire unless it is plastic coated.

If gluing *Tillandsias* to a mount gel grip glues work well, "Liquid Nails", Selleys "All Clear", E6000 have all been recommended over the years as safe to use. Hold plants in place with tie wire, cable ties, elastic bands, skewers, dress making pins, whatever helps until the glue dries. The glue can be disguised using the fine drill shavings from the mounts being used or even some fine potting soil pressed into the glue before it sets.

Do not use silicon or water based glues.

Tillandsias can be hung by wires only which are loosely spiralled around the plant itself. These wires can be attached according to personal choice to trees, walls, wire fences etc.

Pots - many *Tillandsias* are terrestrial so do well in pots especially net-pots.



A good way to grow roots on *Tillandsias* is by using large chunks of bark or polystyrene to help secure the plant into the net-pot, then put the net-pot into a standard pot. Placing wet substances such as paper, rag, rockwool etc. in the bottom of the standard pot will, as they dry, increase the humidity around the plant and stimulate root production.

Some bulbous base *Tillandsias* like *streptophylla*, *ehlersiana* and 'Lucille' that Kayelene had brought along can be successfully mounted or potted. If potting use a very coarse, free draining potting mix and just lightly nestle the base of the plant onto the mix and hold it in place with skewers or a pot hanger. Many 'silver' *Tillandsias* cannot survive prolonged wet conditions. An early indication of over wet condition is the leaf tips start to turn brown (die).

Potted *Tillandsias* can develop extensive roots in a porous potting mix maintained between pH5.6 to pH7. The most ideal pH is suggested to be pH6.4. Water pH can have a considerable effect upon growth. Rain water (pH+5.0) can make an ideal environment. Tap water is usually above pH7.0 and may go beyond pH8. Both high and low pH can reduce nutrient up-take.

Many *Tillandsias* are saxicolous, meaning they grow on rocks like these *Tillandsia mitlaensis* in this photo, so do consider rocks as another mounting alternative.



The silver *Tillandsias* stomates are closed during daylight, therefore there is no water movement during the day. They must dry out between misting, constantly wet trichomes can flop over stomates and limit their function causing gaseous exchange and photosynthesis to be inhibited by over watering.

Photo of *Tillandsia mitlaensis* taken in habitat in Mexico 2018 by Ross Little

Androlepis skinneri Brongniart ex Houliet by Rauh 1983

Androlepis is a genus made up of three species:

Androlepis skinneri - is dioecious, meaning it has male and female flowers on different individual plants.

Androlepis fragrans - the flowers of this species are strongly fragrant and are monoecious, meaning the male and female parts are in the same flower.

Androlepis najarroii - is described as being unisexual (dioecious). Named after Francisco Hernández-Najarro, botanist and collector.

An = Anther (pollen part)

F = Floral Bract

Fi = Filament

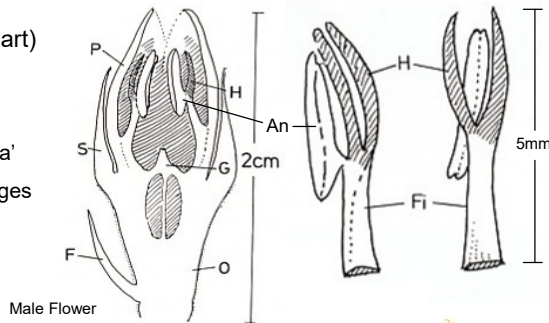
G = Rudimentary 'stigma'

H = Blade-like appendages

O = Ovary

P = Petal

S = Sepal



Androlepis is an epiphytic genus established in 1870, it can be found growing from sea level up to 2000 metres altitude. Its distribution is from southern Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica to Peru.

The name is derived from the Greek words "andros" (man, male) and "lepis" (scale), as a reference to the striking characteristic of the anthers, which are ornamented with two well developed blade-like appendages.

These appendages are the result of the filaments continuous development, which split near the point of the connection with the anthers in a blade like extension.



Androlepis skinneri grown by Ross Little



This beautiful species of Bromeliaceae was grown in the trade by Jean Jules Linden from Brussels in about 1850 who had got it from Guatemala where it had been found by George Ure Skinner.

The plant was new, Linden decided to call it *Billbergia skinneri*. Much later when it flowered in the greenhouse, Adolphe-Théodore Brongniart realised it was not in the genus *Billbergia* and gave it the name of *Androlepis skinneri*.

Androlepis are similar vegetatively to a large *Aechmea* except it differs in two essential characteristics. The flowers are mostly unisexual (dioecious), this also occurs in *Aechmea mariae-reginae* and several other genus.

It also differs by the blade-like appendages on the anthers that is not found in any other Bromeliad genus.

Some other Bromeliads that are dioecious e.g. *Hechtia* (except *Hec. gayorum*), *Catopsis* species, *Lymania languida*, *Hohenbergia ramageana*, *Hohenbergiopsis guatemalensis*.

However this feature, is not shared by all species of each of those genus.



Curiosity got the best of me, did I have a male or female plant, only way to be sure is to cut a flower apart and check its bits. It's a boy, no stigma, it only has anthers - the pollen bearing (male) parts.



Androlepis skinneri in habitat near the Maya archaeological site of Caracol in Belize. Photo by Ross Little





Neoregelia 'Pinstripe'
1st Open Kayelene Guthrie



Dyckia 'Yellow Glow'
grown by Brad Prestwich



Neoregelia
'Miss Marina'
1st Open
Shane Fitzgerald

Aechmea
'Snowflake'
grown by
Shane Fitzgerald



Tillandsia 'Carmen Gem'
1st Tillandsia
and
Judges Choice
Ross Little



Tillandsia bulbosa
grown by
Kayelene Guthrie

Tillandsia 'Zic Zac'
shown by
Shane Fitzgerald



Tillandsia pseudobaileyi
grown by
Gary McAteer





Brad brought some of his own hybrid creations to show the Group plus a few other interesting plants to show us.



One of Brad's creations:
Goudaea 'Tiger Tim'
 x
Vriesea 'Red Chestnut'
 I'm keen to see this one flower.



Tillandsia flagellata hybrid
 grown by Brad Pestwich



Dyckia brevifolia grown from seed with albomargination on the leaves. It clumps quite readily as can be seen in this photo.



A natural hybrid *Tillandsia streptophylla* x *ehlersiana*



An interesting hybrid of Brad's, *Deuterocohnia longipetala* as one of the parents.



Tillandsia hammeri
Tillandsia pardoii (far left)
 and on the right is:
Tillandsia tenuifolia var. *vaginata*

Aechmea 'Rambo'

Aechmea 'Rambo' has been in our collections for many years under formula:

Aechmea distichantha x *Aechmea phanerophlebia*

Described on the BCR as being:

Mature bulbous, bottle-shaped rosette to approx. 40-50cm. wide x 50-60cm. high. Lime-green, heavily spined, outspreading leaves turning golden-yellow in high light with a sharp spine at the tip. Erect inflorescence of clustered, spiny, coral red and pink bracts forming a cylinder shaped head approx. 15-20cm. long with small, purple-petalled flowers. An early Florida hybrid of unknown origin, possibly bred by Mulford Foster? Originally circulated under formula and then sold via Tropiflora Nursery, Sarasota under the cultivar name 'Rambo'.



Aechmea 'Rambo'
photo Graeme Barclay



Aechmea 'Rambo'
inflorescence photo Ross Little

From PineGrove this plant had been sold both under formula and as *Aechmea distichantha*. It was acquired by Pinegrove Nursery in 1985 under formula and eventually planted out in the expansive gardens, as we all know tags then get lost. If you have this heavily nasty spined bulbous plant you acquired from PineGrove you may actually have *Ae.* 'Rambo'.

Why the confusion, because nobody looked at it close enough for many years, tags lost and simply identified as a *distichantha* or hybrid of.

Geoff Lawn queried it back in 2013 but with no flowering plants at the time to examine, it had been forgotten again until Graeme Barclay queried his acquisition from PineGrove.

Out came the descriptions, flowers dissected, details sent to Graeme, we agreed on 'Rambo'.



A little more about the chequered history of 'Rambo', as we can see in the following article by Olwen Ferris it was misidentified as *Aechmea tessmannii* way back in the 1970s. At least Smith recognized it as a *Aechmea distichantha* hybrid, later to be identified by Luther as *Aechmea phanerophlebia*.

How things have changed and how much we've learnt over the years.

Thank you Graeme for finally putting this one to bed, 'Rambo' registered 5/2026.

The Backbone of a Collection by Olwen Ferris, Bromeleetter 16(3): 6, 1979

While many of our exotic bromeliads need suitable housing to substitute for their homeland tropical forest with overhead canopy of green leaves, there are many bromels that come from harsher climates that can be accommodated in various places around the garden. Some can take full sun, but others need a little protection in raised rockery pockets, under or near tall shrubs or trees. If planted in pots they can be moved around easily if the position proves unsuitable.

Aechmea distichantha is a very hardy plant that grows in full sun for most of the day in S.E. Qld. It is a tall, stiff, upright rosette of grey-green leaves that turn pinkish-tan in bright light. The tall stiff inflorescence is branched and has blue flowers and rose pink bracts and overlapping floral bracts. Flowering here at the end of winter, it gives a welcome splash of colour for several months. This plant has been used for several hybrids in many of our collections. One is a small stiff plant that may have *Ae. recurvata* as the other parent. This is good for planting in rockery borders or grown as a clump in squat pots. The blue flower head nestles in the leaves and you need to be able to look down into the plant to see the inflorescence.

The other hybrid came into the country as *Ae. tessmannii* and I had it identified overseas by Dr. L. B. Smith as an *Ae. distichantha* hybrid. At that time a number of us thought it was possibly *Ae. phanerophlebia* but this proved to be incorrect. The other side of the cross is not known. This tall, nicely banded, *Ae. distichantha* hybrid, has the same colouring as the known parent, but the inflorescence is longer and the branches more tightly packed together. The two when planted near each other give a nice contrast and are tall enough for back-ground plants.

In 1989 Derek Butcher was intrigued with the identification and sent a specimen to Marie Selby Gardens. This was the reply I got from Harry Luther, "Your specimen BIC 328 is exactly what you thought it was – *A. phanerophlebia* Baker".

BIC = Bromeliad Identification Centre at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, Sarasota Florida, USA.

On page 5, last paragraph of this issue:

“gaseous exchange and photosynthesis to be inhibited by over watering” lead me to thinking about CAM plants, hence the following article to help explain.

CAM, Non-CAM, Genotypes and Phenotypes by Les Higgins 2016

I recently had a rare CAM plant - *Cryptanthus warasii* - on our show table and it prompted me to discuss CAM and Non-CAM plants. CAM is an acronym for **C**rassulacean **A**cid **M**etabolism a phenomena not restricted to Crassulaceae but found in my angiosperms. For example Dyckias are 100% CAM. Unique types of CAM have evolved to enable plants to survive in extremely harsh conditions such as high heat and/or drought or periods of excess water. CAM enables plants to grow where “it never grows”. Survival depends on nightly “Freezing Fogs”. Extreme water efficiency is achieved by the stomates held closed until well into the dark and cold night thus preventing gaseous exchange.

In cultivation fogging after dark is a desirable method of providing moisture to CAM plants.

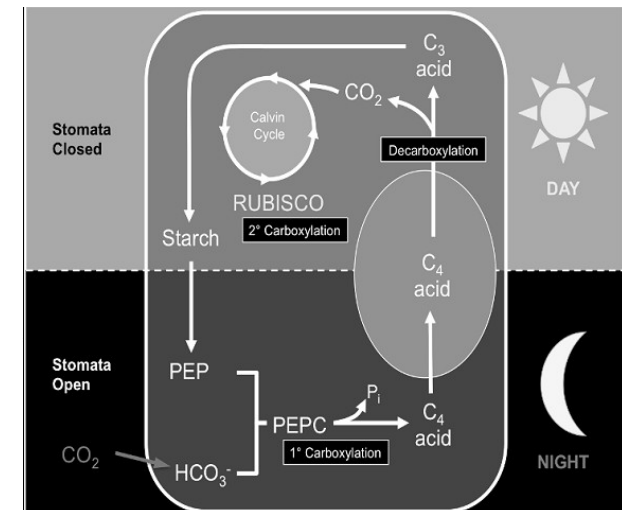
CAM plants are xerophytes. Almost every CAM plant has thick and rigid leaves to contain vacuoles. Big cell size facilitates the accumulation of malic acid to a useful concentration that doesn't damage the plant.

During daylight while CAM stomates are closed CO_2 (respiration waste) accumulates within the cells. The CAM photosynthetic pathway activates in darkness using the accumulated CO_2 to manufacture the products of photosynthesis. When CO_2 remains in the guard cells the stomates open and photosynthesis continues by using atmospheric CO_2 . During daylight there is active chemical action moving the product of the night into growth points and therefore CAM grow diurnally.

An Obligate (or Constitutive) CAM plant's growth depends entirely upon the photo-synthetic pathway. Simply explained CAM plants are like a car. The acid battery is charged by an engine driven generator. When the car engine has stopped and the electrical circuit remains connected the battery “flattens”. In CAM plants the acid within the leaf cells is charged by light, either natural or artificial and facilitates photosynthesis after dark. A Facultative (or inducible) CAM plant has an ingenious growth technique - it's Non-CAM when water is plentiful and switches to CAM in times of drought. Many plants are able to adjust their degree of “CAMness” according to prevailing conditions. *Cryptanthus colnagoi* is a Facultative CAM plant. Two identical pups were planted into the same potting mix. The CAM grown is far smaller than the identical twin grown as a Non-CAM.

Non-CAM plants are mesophytes whose optimum growth depends upon a benign temperature and adequate moisture. Non-CAM's become easily stressed and heat damaged. Non-CAM photosynthesis is in light and only with open stomates. It was once believed that when stomates closed the plant went to sleep. An innocuous thought ! Products of photosynthesis transfer to growth areas during darkness, consequently Non-CAM's grow at night. In darkness once the stomates close the Non-CAM plant is unable to take up water. Slow growth is a CAM penalty. Whenever possible grow a Facultative CAM plant as a Non-CAM. To grow an Obligate CAM as a Non-CAM is inviting disease. A Non-CAM when grown in CAM conditions may quickly show a changed pheno-type and respond with leaf edge curl, additional pupping and finally death.

Jeanette gave me a beautiful *Cryptanthus beuckeri*, a Non-CAM specie with green Genotype (Genotype = the genetic constitution). My environment is too hot for Non-CAM's, *Crypt. beuckeri* now shows a pink Phenotype, small leaves and increased pupping (Phenotype = a Genotype modified by the environment). Other Non-CAM *Cryptanthus* that I trustingly purchased are 'Pale Jade' and 'Marble Green', same parents (*beuckeri* x 'Florence'), same breeder ! Same heat problems and no improvements on the parents. Then there are phenotypes mistaken as genotypes and registered as different plants.



Les was asked how we can identify a CAM plant from a non-CAM plant ? *Cryptanthus beuckeri* is an example of a non-cam plant. It has thin leaves and bigger than normal cells so it can hold more water.

If the plant has thick leaves it is a cam plant.

Open Popular Vote

1st	Kayelene Guthrie	<i>Neoregelia</i> 'Pinstripe'
1st	Shane Fitzgerald	<i>Neoregelia</i> 'Miss Marina'
2nd	Ross Little	<i>Androlepis skinneri</i>
2nd	Shane Fitzgerald	<i>Aechmea</i> 'Snowflakes'

Tillandsia

1st	Ross Little	<i>Tillandsia</i> 'Carmen Gem'
2nd	Shane Fitzgerald	<i>Tillandsia</i> 'Zic Zac'
2nd	Gary McAteer	<i>Tillandsia pseudobaileyi</i>
2nd	Brad Prestwich	<i>Tillandsia flagellata</i> hybrid

Judges Choice

1st	Ross Little	<i>Tillandsia</i> 'Carmen Gem'
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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.