

**ILLAWARRA BROMELIAD SOCIETY
INCORPORATED**

NEWSLINK

October 2021



Tillandsia ionantha wreaths

At a roadside nursery in Nicaragua

Photograph by Scott Sandel of the San Diego Bromeliad Society

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- The Society is, by the holding of meetings, displays and competitions, to provide a forum for the people of the Illawarra region who are interested in the culture and collection of bromeliads.
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BANK DETAILS FOR FEE PAYMENT, ETC: **GREAT SOUTHERN BANK; BSB No. 814 282; Account No. 50997160**

MEETINGS - The Society meets from 12.00 noon to 4.00 pm on the first Saturday of each month (February to November) at the Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre, Winnima Way, Berkeley* See April 2021 Newslink

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS - Due 30th June each year: \$15 single/\$25 family.

NEWSLINK ISSUED QUARTERLY - January, April, July, and October and at <http://www.bromeliad.org.au>

VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

NEW MEMBER: A very warm welcome to our new member, Dawn Harvey, who signed up at our June meeting. We wish you a long and happy association with our Society.

MONTHLY RAFFLE PRIZE ROSTER: Each rostered member is asked to bring up to five bromeliad plants-- or goods related to the cultivation of bromeliads--for the raffle. The quality of plants should comply with the requirements of 'Plants for Sale' and should you be unable to provide items for the raffle on your rostered day please contact the Program Officer (Bob Stephens 04 1283 4985) so that appropriate re-arrangements can be made.

2022

February - Graham Bevan, June Casey, Jim Clague, Sharyn Baraldi
March - Noel Kennon, Monica De Clouett, Anne Mobbs, Pam Townsend
April - Michael Drury, Christine Stephens, Sandra Carnie, Barbara Jones-Beverstock
May - John Toolan, Eunice Spark, Carole Taylor, Les Thain
June - Bob Stephens, Steve Wain, Eileen Killingley,. Suzanne Burrows

CHANGES TO OUR BANKING DETAILS: Due to the closure of several branches of the Illawarra Credit Union we have transferred our banking operations to: **GREAT SOUTHERN BANK - BSB: 814 282 - ACCOUNT NO. 50997160**

MARCH 2022 SALES DAY AT WARILLA: Following on from our short November 6th meeting and get-together at John and Rita Toolan's lovely home, but still with the uncertainty of many things, we are looking into booking space at the Warilla Neighbourhood Centre for the weekend of March 19/20. The matter will be taken to the committee and also given discussion among our members to see whether we should make it a one or two day event and so we will be able let you have more details later via email/Facebook posting/and at our February and March meetings.

LINK TO OUR SOCIETY'S FACEBOOK PAGE: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/448297386598187>

We hope that you will feel free to join the group which Romina has set up for us. When someone searches "Illawarra Bromeliads" under groups on Facebook, the Illawarra Broms group should be the first to be listed. Also, if you have bromeliad photographs/photos of your garden, etc. that you might like to share on our new Facebook page, Rowina has volunteered to handle this for you. To do this, just use the email address: <illawarrabroms@gmail.com> that she has set up for this purpose.

KIWI BROMS CONFERENCE – POSTPONED UNTIL LATE MARCH, 2023: We have learned from the New Zealand Society that their *Kiwi Broms* Conference, scheduled for April 2022, has once again had to be postponed, with the dates now March 22—26, 2023. This is something beyond their control but these new dates mean that it will be two weeks before Easter and will now be within daylight savings hours—a great positive.

MEMBERSHIP FEES: Membership fees are due and payable as at June 30th each year and we still have quite a few membership fees outstanding. While we recognise that getting the money to us is not as easy when there have been no meetings to attend, this is just a gentle reminder that you must be a financial member to be eligible to vote, to be elected to the committee, enter plants into competition, and receive our quarterly newsletter, etc.

VALE – BETTY ELLIS

It is with sadness that I report the passing of Betty, who died at the wonderful age of 90 years, in July. Betty was associated with our Society for 10 years, having initially joined in 2011, and she very much enjoyed our meetings and the friends she made within our group, and especially our garden visits.

TILLANDSIA IONANTHA – ONE OR MANY

Andrew Wilson, (Reprinted from San Diego Bromeliad Society's *The Bromeliad Blade*, August 2018)

At our July meeting, Juan Pablo Pinzon Esquivel from the University of the Yucatan, gave us an interesting discussion on what is probably the favorite *Tillandsia* species, *ionantha*..

Using several maps he showed where it is found in Mexico as well as further south in Guatemala and Costa Rica.

It is unusual for any *Tillandsia* species to have such a wide range of occurrence, with climate conditions ranging from seasonally cool and dry to hot and mesic. It is excluded from the central high plateau of Mexico as well as from the densely forested region between Oaxaca and Chiapas.

In spite of those areas of exclusion, it occurs on both eastern and western sides of the plateau and on each side of the forested region that transects the country from the Gulf of Tehuantepec to the Gulf of Mexico. Is it the same species throughout?

Juan Pablo described the many forms in which it appears ('Fuego', 'Druid', *van-hyningii*, etc.) and the many species that do seem to be similar (*kolbii*, *scaposa*, etc.). He described the scientific methods being used to see if those forms and similar species are indeed all *ionantha* or share most of its important DNA components.



The jury is still out but it may not be surprising to see one day some renaming within one of the most popular *Tillandsia* species.

THE DIVERSE *IONANTHA*

By Morlane O'Donnell

(Reprinted from The Bromeliad Society of San Diego's *The Bromeliad Blade*, October 2019)

Last month, after the meeting, I began to reflect upon what it would be like in the beginning stages of starting a collection.

Bromeliads are such a diverse group of plants. The beginning collector will find there are many genera within three subfamilies of bromeliads. Once a genus is narrowed down to a species, it can become overwhelming to find that a single species has so many variations. The challenge is what to collect of that species. Take *Tillandsia ionantha* for an example.



An *ionantha* is an *ionantha*, right? Guess again. There are so many different varieties and cultivars that it boggles the mind,. There are those that can be super-sized (cv. 'Sumo Size White' and cv. 'Snowball'), big (cv. 'Big Boy'), fat (cv. 'Fat Boy'), tall (cv. 'Totem Pole' and cv. 'Monkey Tail'). Short, tight-leaved (forma *fastigiata*), triangular (cv. 'Pyramid'), and cylindrical (cv. 'Monstrose').



Most of them will turn a bright or deep red upon flowering (cv. 'Fuego', var *stricta*, and cv. 'Fire Up'), but there are some such as the albinos (cv. 'Druid') which remains greenish white and blushes a peach color and (cv. 'Sumo Size White') which remains a chartreuse color even while blooming. Both 'Druid' and 'Sumo' have white flowers instead of the usual purple. Some

ionanthas have patterned leaves such as red and green (cv. 'Two Tone'), variegated, albomarginated, and banded (cv. 'Zebrina'). *Ionanthas* can be thick-leaved (var. *van-hyningii*, cv. 'Gigante'), succulent-like (cv. 'Apretado), stiff-leaves, compact, soft leaves (cv. 'Tall Velvet), straight-leaves, and curly-leaves (cv. 'Curly Giant'). There is one that has no centre but has an apical stem (cv. 'Monstrose'). *Ionanthas* can be named for the country to which they originate (*ionantha* 'Guatemala' and *ionantha* 'Mexico'). There is even an *ionantha* var. *ionantha* – AKA *ionantha* 'Guatemala'. There are so many, yet each is different. Some differences are obvious, but some are very subtle. Most will form clumps and balls over time. These are only some of many cultivars and characteristics used to illustrate the diversity of species *ionantha*.

Fortunately, there are several resources such as the BSI, the Internet, Facebook, several bromeliad nurseries, and the SDBS growers where information on the abovenamed *ionanthas* can be found. Yes, there are many kinds of *ionantha*, but many are easy to grow. Collecting *Tillandsia ionantha* can be very rewarding with all its sizes, shapes, and colors. There is something for everyone and a great species with which to start and sustain a collection.

TILLANDSIA IONANTHA - A DELIGHTFUL MINIATURE

[From Dave Anderson's talk at the Bromeliad Society of New Zealand's monthly meeting in April 2005 and appearing in their May 2005 Journal, Vol. 45(5)]

The word *ionantha* means violet-flowered which refers to the intense violet colour of the flowers.

Growing as an epiphyte in the Central American countries from Mexico to Costa Rica at an elevation of 450 to 1700 metres, it forms dense masses growing both in the moist forests as well as in exposed deciduous trees where it is well adapted to the xeric conditions. In cultivation the plant should be allowed to dry out after becoming wet.

It is one of the most delightful miniatures with 20-40 succulent leaves that are rarely more than 50 mm long, growing in vertical rows. The different varieties of *ionantha* form plants 40-100 mm in height and their lettuce-green coloured leaves are covered with silvery-grey trichomes that are sometimes tinged crimson. Approaching flowering the entire plant turns rosy red. The narrow tubular flowers emerge from deep in the centre of the plant, topping the leaves by 30-40 mm. The flowers are vivid purple as mentioned above.



It is a durable species with the recognised varieties that are seen in many collections in New Zealand, being:

- **var. *ionantha***, the most common variety being a stemless plant, with no scape.
- **var. *van-hyningii*** a true dwarf growing in colonies on the vertical limestone cliffs at Chiapas. This small variety has distinct stems with the same flowers and no scape.
- **var. *stricta*** with fine leaves that are red throughout its life. This variety has a special clone known as
- **forma *fastigiata***. Very small with tight leaves, and commonly known as 'Peanut'.
- **'Druid'**, a cultivar of var. *ionantha* that turns an unusual yellow colour with flowers that have white petals when it blooms.

(The article was originally included in our January 2008 *Newslink* and below an update

The cultivar *T. 'Huamelula'* is a variety of *T. ionantha* from Mexico which was later changed to become *T. ionantha* var. *maxima*. This plant is commonly in collections in Australia under the name *T. 'Huamelula'* or [less commonly] *T. ionantha 'Monster'*. Those of you that have it should change the label.

Another large form of *T. ionantha* from Guatemala goes under the name *T. ionantha 'Penito'* (this is common in Australia), or as Derek would call it, *T. 'Penito'*.

INTRODUCING *TILLANDSIA IONANTHA* 'DRUID'

By Eloise Beach, Apopka, FL (Photo by Martin Robertson)

(Reprinted from JBS January-February 1984, Vol. XXXIV(1))



About fourteen years ago [~1970] Drew Schultz of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, collected a large quantity of *Tillandsia ionantha* near the city of Vera Cruz, Mexico. Nothing unusual appeared until 1971 when Drew was surprised to find a plant that turned bright yellow in the centre and produced flowers with white petals in contrast with the plant that blushes red and has violet flowers (the name *ionantha* refers to the color violet). One by one, more of the unusual yellow plants appeared in that original group until six were found. These six were given lots of tender loving care. The cultivar name, 'Druid', was selected to give an aura of mystery, while incorporating the collector's name.

When not in bloom, *T. ionantha* 'Druid' looks like the common *ionantha*: it is a miniature rosette, only two-three inches tall, and the leaves are covered with silvery scales. It should be mounted, not potted, and can be grown in shady to nearly full sun locations. Spring is the usual blooming time.

While *Tillandsia ionantha* has many different sizes and shapes, few tillandsias in bloom command more admiration. Now *T. ionantha* 'Druid' "joins this variety-filled group and introduces a strikingly different color. Nature is full of surprises.

NEW NEUTROG PRODUCT: STRIKE BACK FOR ORCHIDS ADVANCED BIOLOGICAL FORMULA

I found the following article in the October, 2021 edition of *Neutrog's* newsletter, *The Pooh Bah News*, and as I was quite amazed by the growth pattern in the two plantings of *Goudaea ospinae* var. *gruberi* I thought that it might be worthwhile for me to pass on this information to you. When I sought permission from *Neutrog* to reprint this item they kindly sent on the two photographs for me to use and I am very grateful to them for that.

R&D / Adelaide Botanic Garden Update.

In the Adelaide Botanic Garden there is a magnificent Amazon Garden, fully enclosed within a glass conservatory, heated to maintain a tropical temperature. The feature plant here is the gorgeous giant waterlily – *Victoria amazonica*.

Outside the conservatory is a partially covered walkway where more tropical plants are grown, including a wide range of bromeliads and tillandsias. As part of the ongoing research and development, Dr Uwe Stroehler and the horticultural team of the Adelaide Botanic Garden have collaborated to undertake a trial in the bromeliad and tillandsia garden.

The garden consists of two garden beds which are a mirror image of each other with the exact same plantings, making it an ideal situation to trial product. Half of the garden was fertilised using our original *Strike Back for Orchids* and the other half with *Strike Back for Orchids Advanced Biological Formula*. The two sets of photographs show an improvement where the *Strike Back for Orchids* has been applied, but a dramatic biological change is clearly evident in the bed that has had the extra benefit of the Advanced Biological Formula with its potent combination of growth enhancing and disease inhibiting bacteria and fungi.





SOMETHING A BIT DIFFERENT!

BEES NEED A DRINK TOO!

(Reprinted from FNCBSG September, 2021 newsletter) – Photograph by Drew Maywald)

Summer is drawing nearer and this week, mid-September, saw our hottest day since last January which prompted Drew to send us this photo of honey bees drinking from an *Aechmea blanchetiana* cup. This was an event he had not seen before and thought it was worth sharing.

Should You Leave Water Out for Bees?

In the height of summer, when temperatures are soaring, it's important to remember that bees (and all wildlife) need access to safe drinking water. Honey bees need water but may drown while trying to collect it. Just keep the water line shallower than the container edges, place a stone or similar so the bees have a place to land. It's equally important to make sure the dish of water you're putting out for thirsty bees hasn't been contaminated with pesticides. Be sure to clean the dish and filler rocks before adding water and leaving it out.



SOMETHING A BIT DIFFERENT (cont.)



Part of The Poble Espanyol [Pueblo Espanol in Spanish] in Barcelona, Spain, a village constructed for a 1929 exposition, giving styles one can see travelling through Spain. Existing chains hanging on a wall were used to create a vertical tillandsia garden. Photo by Robert Kopfstein, President of the San Diego Bromeliad Society, and reprinted from *The Bromeliad Blade*, September 2016.

One of the volunteers on the project was a young man named Oscar Llovera Lopez, who, coincidentally was made known to Robert through other members of the San Diego Bromeliad Society who in turn had been introduced to him (via the Internet) by Lynn Hudson of Cairns.

Oscar is in his mid-twenties and waxes enthusiastic when he talks of bromeliads, and especially tillandsias. He lives with his parents in a top floor apartment in central Barcelona. That the apartment is on the upper floor is important because that gives them access to the roof, where most of Oscar's collection of bromeliads makes up a bromeliad garden on the top of a multi-storey building in the heart of the city.

HOW I BECAME A GARDENER WHILE PAINTING WITH BROMELIADS

By Juliana Raposo (A confessional account of an artist turned brom nut)

(Reprinted from the February 2016 edition of *The Bromeliad Blade*, newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of San Diego)

I've been experimenting with bromeliads and other epiphytites in my coastal San Diego garden since 2013. Before that, I had never fussed with plants. I'm a rookie gardener, although one with a passion.

As much as I can appreciate the California sage scrub, my Brazilian pupils were longing for a tropical kind of green, one which takes me reminiscing and, like Proust and madeleines, I found my green in bromeliads.

The visual artist in me finds an endless source of inspiration in bromeliads: their sculptural shapes, and palette of colors. Individually, bromeliads are living works of art. Collectively, they can be used as color in compositions, just like painting. They can be grouped vertically or horizontally like sculpture. It helps a lot that soil is optional.

Frankly, I cannot understand why bromeliads don't have widespread landscape use around the Southern California coast. Which other plant family combines the look of the tropics and xeriscape water needs? Yes, bromeliads might be too expensive to use outdoors where it's survival of the fittest. Here at home, hazards include trampling by children, scorching by leaf blower, poisoning by dog urine, and mysterious critters that eat spiny plants. There are nightmare scenarios: the unlikely threat of a winter frost haunts my dreams. God forbid we have the hot dry Santa Anna winds ... Plus, I find there's a lack of literature in growing bromeliads outdoors in Southern California. Whenever I add a new brom to the garden there is some anxiety. You end up finding your Zen and practicing the art of detachment.

I like to Google habitat photos for help with species plants. Seeing the harsh conditions bromeliads endure in their natural environment can be very inspiring for a gardener. There is a great article by Oscar Ribeiro on the restinga habitat of Brazil, probably the cradle of the toughest tank bromeliads in existence, in the FCBS site: fcb.org/articles/restinga/htm

Unlike plants in pots, broms in the landscape cannot be moved. My bromeliads are mounted on trees and walls while others are growing on the ground or in the rock garden. Some plants rot in the winter. You will never have a show-quality plant. Naturally, I've killed scores of broms but I have also learned a few lessons:

You Can't Go Wrong With Mounted Plants - the epiphytic bromeliads, not the terrestrial types.

Mounted broms grow extremely well for me. I attach a plant to the mount without any substrate or moss. I don't fertilize. These are the ones that never rot. They may grow slower than the potted ones, but with excellent form and color.

My biggest surprise was the *Vriesea* genus, especially the big, leafy, thirsty ones. I have mounted fully grown *Vriesea hieroglyphica*, *Vriesea fenestralis* and other large vrieseas this way; removing them from their original pots, stripping them from all attached substrate, and using cable staples to attach plants. My mounted vrieseas don't lose any leaves during the winter months as the potted ones often do. They don't suffer from crown rot either. The mounted vrieseas actually have more leaves than they used to. I have observed (even in specialized nurseries) that vrieseas will suffer from mid-section leaf loss due to winter yuckiness. Mounting seems to eliminate the problem.

There is also an aesthetical point to be made. Mounted bromeliads behave more naturally without the confines of the pot. I like to see how the stoloniferous ones hug their host, how orchid roots seek the bromeliads.

Many Bromeliads Can Take More Sun Than “They” Say.

Last year I went to a beach resort in Rio de Janeiro and saw landscape use of *Vriesea ospinae* var. *gruberi* in full sun, grouped with *Alcantarea imperialis* next to a swimming pool. I couldn't believe it. Back home, I moved mine to a less sheltered location where it gets mostly full sun, and the colors became much better. I also transplanted my formerly potted (and ugly) *Vriesea philippo-coburgii* to a palm trunk in full sun after [seeing] these guys in their natural range.

In Brazil, they will grow on rooftops, fence posts. At first the poor plant got sunburn. Now into the third year my plant has a tighter rosette, better fingernails and more leaves.

Some plants change so much with added light they look completely different. Neoregelias are among the most variable. For example, *Neoregelia* 'Zoe' is dark green with yellow striations in the shade but quickly turns into a rich burgundy in the sun.

Patience is Key. Sometimes a Good Plant Only Comes in the Second or Third Generation.

There were several occasions when I bought a pup only to see it develop into something that wasn't as pretty as the pictures of the plant on the Internet. The plants we buy from professional growers are usually rushed into maturity with a lot of fertilizer. Dark green floppy leaves are common. Well, sometimes it takes more than a generation for a plant to adapt to your garden conditions and thrive. I have a clump of *Hohenbergia castellanosi* that didn't grow a leaf for two years, and now [it has the stunning foliage that it is known for].

Finally, I would like to share with you my favorite bromeliads for landscape growing. In my experience, these need less water than succulents:

Aechmea blanchetiana
Hohenbergia correia-araujo
Neoregelia carcharodon
Neoregelia compacta
Neoregelia correia-araujo
Neoregelia cruenta 'Sun King'
Neoregelia 'Fireball'

Neoregelia marmorata
Neoregelia 'Petra'
Neoregelia 'Pimiento'
Neoregelia 'Royal Burgundy'
Neoregelia 'Zoe'
xVriecantarea 'Julietta'

