BROMELIACEAE

Postal Address : P.O. Box 565, Fortitude Valley, Q.4006.

Registered by Australia Post
Publication No. QBH 1849.

~~OCT.~~ - NOV. 1992
VOLUME XXV NO.11

Canistrum aurantiacum

THE BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND INC.

General Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month except December at the Uniting Church Hall, 52 Merthyr Road, New Farm, commencing at 7.30 pm.

POSTAL ADDRESS: P O Box 565,
Fortitude Valley
AUSTRALIA Q 4006

-oOo-

PATRON:	*Mr. Harold Caulfield*	
PRESIDENT:	*Mr. Len Trevor*	Ph. 351 1203
SECRETARY:	*Mrs. Val Urquhart*	Ph. 824 0627
VICE-PRESIDENT:	*Mrs. Phyllis Hobbs*	Ph. 286 4156
TREASURER:	*Mr. Bob Paulsen*	Ph. 074 933677
EDITOR:	*Mr. Len Butt*	Ph. 848 3515
SHOW ORGANIZER:	*Mr. Don Hobbs*	Ph. 286 4156
COMMITTEE:	*Mr. Neville Ryan, Mr. Bob Paulsen, Mr. Bob Cross, Mr. Michael O'Dea, Mrs. Patricia O'Dea, Mr. Paul Bird, Mr. Barry Genn, Mrs. Olive Trevor.*	

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Our annual get-together and Christmas Breakup Party promises to be the best yet.

Remember the date - 19.11.92 at our usual venue in Merthyr Road.

NOT TO BE MISSED.

NOW THAT THE OFFICIAL HISTORY IS BEING DISTRIBUTED one detail needs a mention, and that is that a very early member, who left us in 1973 and has since rejoined our ranks, jogged my memory that he actually provided transport to take me to that first January meeting. This is Morris Jones, who with Barclay Binnie made all or our early hardware for display stands. This is to let the record show that Morris was also inaugural.

EDITORIAL All intending participants will have by now received the announcement of our new venue for Bromeliads 7 Easter '93. Please note the new place, Robertson Gardens Motel, Kessels Road, Robertson, which is close to the QE II Hospital approximately twenty minutes from the airport and fifteen minutes from Brisbane city.

At our September Meeting our beginners' class was very ably conducted by Len Trevor, regarding the big current spring potting program and soil testing for correct pH for our plants.

Further to this a very colourful collection of slide transparencies was presented by John and Patricia Carpenter covering their prescence at the World Conference of Bromeliads at Tampa, Florida. All efficiently snapped and well portrayed. Really something not to be missed.

Lucky Door prize at the September meeting was won by Joy Upton. The Raffle prizes went to Jo Ketelaars, Patricia O'Dea, John Higgins and Bruce McClure.

Popular Vote - Advanced Tillandsia bulbosa silver form - B. Wilson
Novice Aechmea maculata - Pat Carpenter
Judges' Choice - Aechmea maculata - Pat Carpenter

VALE Hilton Ferris. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to Olwen Ferris well known grower and owner of the Bromeliad Display Garden at Paradise Point on the death of her husband Hilton.

We last saw Hilton at the 25th Anniversary dinner, with Olwen, and he will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Len P.Butt

-o0o-

OCTOBER MEETING Lucky Door prize was won by Phyllis Hobbs. Raffle prizes went to Patricia O'Dea, Phyllis James, Mavis Paulsen and Arnold James.

Popular Vote - Advanced - Tillandsia ionantha - Roley Reilly
Novice - Tillandsia suceri - Neville Ryan

-o0o-

TILLANDSIA RAFFLE RESULTS

1.	R. Robertson Armadale ,	Western Australia	- Ticket No.0809
2.	C. Smith	Cairns, Qld.	- " " 0652
3.	D. Smith	" "	- " " 0650

-o0o-

BROMELIADS - A CULTURAL MANUAL

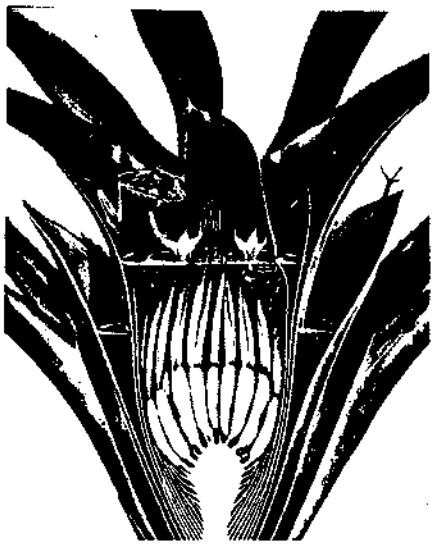
This is a booklet put out by The Bromeliad Society Inc. The book was written by Dr. Mark Dimmit, and gives details about basic culture and genera and other general facts on growing bromeliads. It is available from the Library @ $4.00 per copy.

-o0o-

A FEW NOSTALGIC JOTTINGS FROM THE FIRST FEW YEARS by Len P. Butt

As this is nearing the close of our silver anniversary year, and as much has been said, and a known history written, this is to add a few more memories as interest to those who like to know, and to those who remember.

Little things that do stick, like the friendship around that glass of fruity Masarla wine provided by Carlo Grasselli at the first meeting; the discussion over our first tabled plant and the decision to send photos of it to the Washington Institute (Lyman B. Smith,



Bromeliad cup of plenty, shown in cross section, serves spider, frog, snail, crab, and a hodgepodge of unseen inhabitants. Pockets of water flank the flooded inner chamber, where buds and blossoms strain towards the sunlight.

and to Colonel Patterson at Coffs Harbour. This is now Billbergia braziliensis); the visits a few of us made to Doud Jackson's THE NURSERY at Coopers Plains; the wonderment of seeing so many large species there, like Portia petropolitana var. extensa, Bromelia balansae, and Aechmea gigantea (which no one had flowered at that time), Then off to Hart's Nursery where Doug had his first hothouse leased, and the old Mr. Hart showing us his collection of large fierce bromels, and his usual quip if asked, "If you can get a sucker off yourself, I will sell it". Knowing it was nigh impossible without a tool.

The important visits to Nez Misso's garden at St. Lucia to see Tillandsias in many species growing epiphytically on small native trees and in quantity on many small corks. Yes, to my knowledge Nez grew also the first tillandsias from seed in our society.

Nick Kemp THAT JOVIAL ROUGH DIAMOND had a really large collection for the period, a lot being imported from a German source and many from Derek Butcher of South Australia. Nick's bushhouses at Cooper's Plains were to say the least, unusual. Each row of plant benches was reached by a separate stable like door, rather like a horse stables. He varied his light by simply removing or inserting aluminium blind slats in the roof. It was here I first saw my initial three forms of the variegated pineapple, Ananus comosus, the tricolour, the bicolour, and bracteatus. Nick it was, who first told me of the little lady at Alexandra Headland who grew many species in natural logs, was very keen on a seed raising and plant crossing program, and who was so dedicated she had plant maternity sections and plant geriatric sections.

Many will have guessed this is our Grace Goode, and to date many, many have briefly shared her wonderful garden!

Nick also it was, who stood beside me all night on a Moreton Island beach many times, sharing verbally our love for the bromeliaceae, as well as trying to kill a few tailor fish.

A few first meeting members are still around and I occasionally see Barclay Binnie of Tarragindi, although not now in our club, he was one of the original scientific appliers to growing our plants and a keen taxonomist with them. Ivan Phillips still lives in Yeronga, still grows a few of the more unusual bromeliads. Carlo Grasselli still is a good gardener, and still maintains the remnants of a very good early collection he shared with Mary. Carlo handcut and

Later that day I peer into bromeliads as big as beer kegs and others no larger than 25¢ pieces. In the pool of a lemon & brown Vriesea we find an almost full size tree frog carrying on its back more than a dozen transparent eggs, each with a visible embryo. These will become tadpoles, living in the water until they metamorphose into tiny frogs themselves. Even then they may never stray far from their home in the water hole.

Sth. American tree frog in the heart of a jungle Vriesia

painted our first plant display plaque. Little things I still remember, that stick, like the young man with the busy shutter finger that raced around at early meetings in George Street, photographing nearly all exhibited tabled plants, this was of course Roy Cockin who still produces a few unusual Neoregelias at his Anstead Nursery.

The iron mesh stands at our first R.N.A. Show displays and the hundreds of thick wire pot holder rings that graced our stands, plus the first rope holders, all were the work of two inaugural members, Morris Jones and Barclay Binnie.

Memories are still vivid of my first visits to Olwen Ferris's Display Garden at Paradise Point. The beloved jungle of bromeliads, the glasshouse of newer Tillandsias, and not to be forgotten that great collection of multi suckered Dyckias that she was always going to separate and break up. I think it never did happen. Also remembering the wild Phaius orchids we rescued from her back swampland before the developers killed them. About three years after we formed I went out to see a newly flowered Aechmea gigantea with its faciata type inflorescence and at Les Joyce's home found also my first flowering Vriesia imperialis. WHAT a sight to behold! Later when the new cemented bushhouse was central to the now, City Gardens, I found three of them and all flowering at the one time. Part of a formidable collection of the Curator, Harold Caulfield. What a pity all of these were to be destroyed in the great 1974 Brisbane flood!

All for now, till memory stirs again,

L.P.Butt

-o0o-

TREES AND BROMELIADS (very early, unpublished article) Editor

Trees are companions of bromeliads. Only the bromeliads adapted to very arid and dry conditions can live without trees, in their natural state that is.

Trees supply bromeliads with a micro climate of moist, moving air, the air rises from the moist mulch of leaves and decaying matter up the trunk of the tree, as it rises it takes not only moisture, but the beneficial gases created by the combustion of the decaying material. Bromeliads with their unique arrangement of absorbent scales on their leaves can use this moist, nutritious air flow

for the purpose of feeding their entire life cycle. They do not absolutely rely on their roots supplying food and water.

The bromeliads that have established themselves on these obliging companions also receive small particles of material from birds feeding in the trees and of course some bird droppings sometimes hit the bullseye.

Trees attract moisture, when in numbers representing forests, this mist, cloud or rain filters through the leaves and saturates the bromeliads. A large number of bromeliads have their leaves in a more or less vase arrangement, this enables them to retain water and material for creating food. The debris that falls into the vase, from the leaves, birds, dust in the air and other materials i.e. nitrogen and oxygen during rain, are mixed with the water in the vase and moisture loving bacteria start breaking the mixture into a suitable material so that the bromeliad can digest the food available.

Some bromeliads live on the ends of the branches where they receive a great deal of sun, rain and wind. Some of these trees grow to enormous heights, over 200 feet in some cases. I am told flying by aeroplane over these forests that stretch for thousands of miles, is an incredible sight, the green of the trees is brilliantly decorated with flaming colours of orchid and bromeliad flowers or bracts. Truly a garden in the air.

For a long time bromeliads were called air plants or air pines. Meaning they lived above the ground usually on trees, but sometimes on the faces of upright cliffs where the airflow rises up the cliff face and supplies them with their needs.

A very large percentage of the Tillandsia group live on the ends of the branches. Their roots are very fine and thin, but are as tough as wire. These tillandsia roots do not appear to supply any food just a very strong and tenuous system of attaching the plants to the branches. Some of the branches are mear twigs to look at, but carry large clumps of tillandsias quite easily. Tillandsias do not have vases like some of the other genera, but they do have a coating of fine silver scales for absorbing their sustenance. Usually their leaves are only 1/4 inch wide, from to 12 inches long depending on the species, but there are a great many of these delicate lightweight leaves to each plant. Not all tillandsias are like this, but the ones that grow in the tops of the branches are usually of the lightweight variety. As there are over 400 species

of Tillandsias that vary from large terrestrial plants that grow in the sand near the sea to the little lightweights in the tips of twigs many feet in the air, I will not continue with tillandsias here.

On other branches and strong twigs will be found Guzmanias, Vrieseas and Aechmeas, sometimes growing into such large clumps that they fall to the ground, there to take root in fallen branches or among the large nobby roots of their giant tree companions.

Further down the trees will be found the vase types Guzmanias, Vrieseas, Aechmeas, Hohenbergias, Neoregelias, Billbergias and so to the ground where Billbergias, Nidulariums, Neoregelias, terrestrial Tillandsias and Pitcairnias and Quesnelias are to be found.

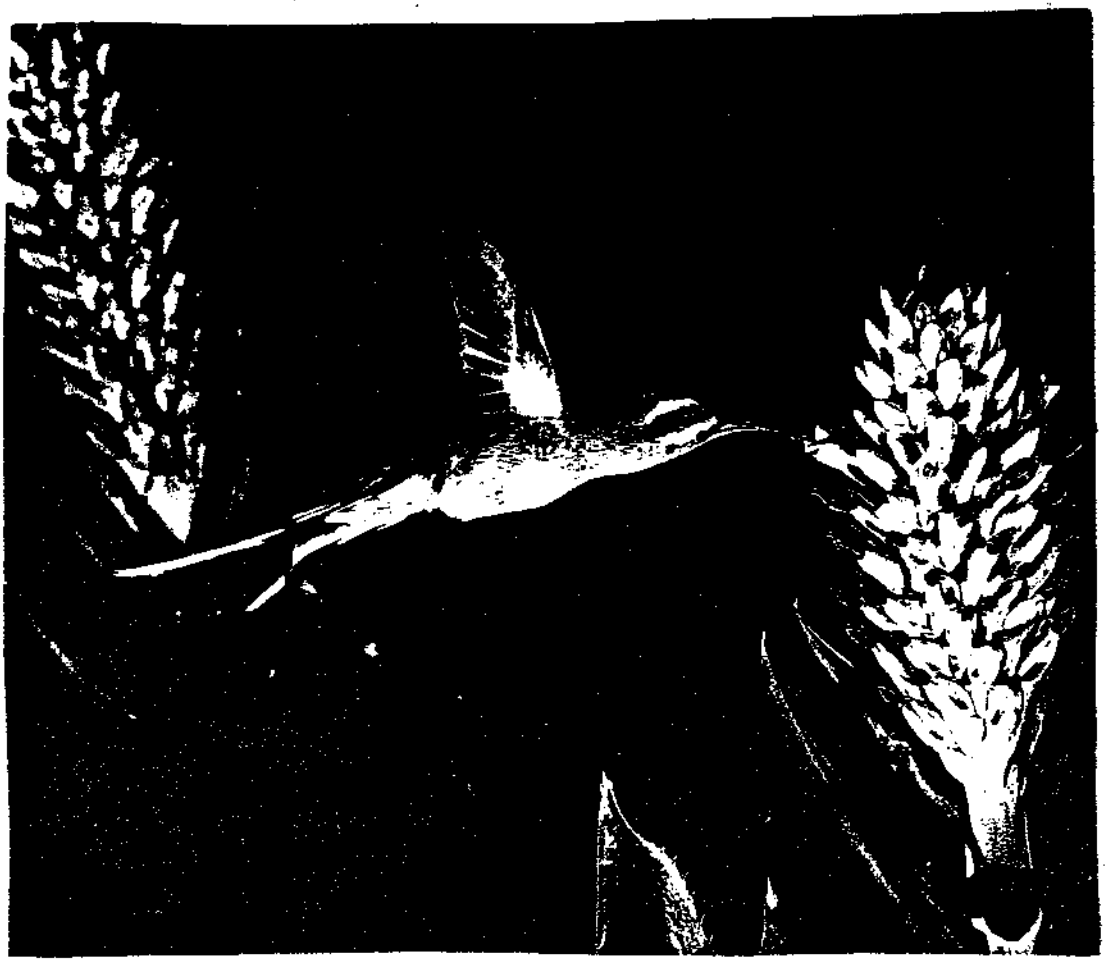
Not all these species choose the same companions, they are found among different trees, at different heights from sea level. Also temperature ranges are very wide.

The trees are not all tall majestic jungle giants. Away from the jungles across sparsely wooded forests are tough short trees. Here you will find Tillandsias and, oddly, Vriesias with some tough little Neoregelias. Very often these are rather dry areas, that have a heavy dew during the night and saturate the bromeliads helping them to combat the dry winds and hot sun of day time.

But some bromeliads have left their leafy companions and taken to the wide open spaces, these are true terrestrials growing often with tall cacti, or frequently the bromeliads will use tall cacti as companions and grow on their spiney friends in dusty deserts far from the lush jungles with which they are usually associated. But the cacti are not harmed as their friends the Tillandsias have strong wirey roots that are used purely for support to the cacti. In fact if there are no trees, shrubs or large cacti around for them, the sturdy bromeliad epiphytes will attach themselves to rocks, walls, or even telephone wires or cables above the ground.

Mary Grasselli

-oOo-



Masked Raider, a hermit hummingbird slakes its thirst with nectar from an Aechmea's bloom. Below the crowded world of the leafwell, a cast of smaller creatures plays out its complex dramas of life and death.

VRIESEA HIEROGLYPHICA AND I

By 1963 I had a collection of bromeliads and on a trip to Sydney I added a few much sought after *V. hieroglyphica* seedlings. Home in subtropical Brisbane, these tropical plants were given pride of place in a heated glasshouse. So begins my love hate relationship with this plant. The next 25 years seemed to be 'grow a leaf lose a leaf'. More *V. hieroglyphicas* were bought and added to the collection over the years, and likewise I lost a few. The problem seemed to originate at the base of the older leaves, a brown mottling effect which in the end destroyed so much tissue that the leaf collapsed.

By the 70's I knew that *V. hieroglyphica* did not need a heated glasshouse, and when moved to a fernery with 70% shade cloth cover, the plants did better but the problem was still there.

Enter *V. hieroglyphica* and another problem. Peter Cooper had a flowering *V. gigantea* and lived a few kilometres away. I went to his place on a number of occasions and set seed on this plant. The seed was germinated by Roy Cockin and then planted out into 48's. About this time on one of my collecting trips, I came across a dairy farmer who had the two most perfect *V. hieroglyphicas* I had ever seen growing on a high bench about two metres off the ground in an old wooden slat bush house shaded by bananas. It was probably darker than 80% shade cloth. To the question "What do you do to grow such beautiful plants?" came the answer "nuthin". Back home the *V. hieroglyphicas* were moved to the darkest area in the fernery and an extra piece of cloth was wired over the roof. The plants improved yet again but the problem still remained.

Enter *V. fosteriana* CV. Red Chestnut and another problem. Noel Chopping, who lived around the corner, on a trip to Sydney bought back a couple of plants, they were very good clones. By this time the problem with *V. gigantea* could be described as premature collapse of flowering plants before throwing pups, to me this was a very real problem as I was getting almost zero pups. There was also the added problem of tops breaking off good looking plants.

Noel Chopping's problem with Red Chestnut was one plant disintergrated, a flower on another aborted but threw a pup. The theme throughout the epic was one plant one pup which associated with losses means eventually you would wind up with no plants. At no stage could a pupping program give you plants to exchange.

In 1988 I moved to Jacob's Well and under far more primitive conditions I now grow large lush *V. hieroglyphicas* and all the previously mentioned plants are doing well throwing two or more pups. I now can collect the hybrids and cultivars from this group knowing they will survive and multiply.

The problem seems to result from water quality. The Brisbane Valley has a significant lime content, resulting in water from its catchment area being very hard 200-300 p.p.m. with a pH 7.5 plus. Culture conditions can then aggravate the problem. Growing under a solid roof means the water in the cups is never flushed out by soft rain water. Plants which are exposed to conditions that require constant watering (such as bright hot areas) can lead to concentrations of hardness due to evaporation, this can be limited by a weekly heavy watering. During extreme drought conditions the hardness of Brisbane Valley water may increase to 400 p.p.m. plus with a pH 8 to 9, also you lack rain to flush out the plants. When growing under these conditions liquid feeding will aggravate the problems. Compare this to the Pine River catchment area north of Brisbane which supplies water with a hardness of 80 - 85 p.p.m. which seems to remain constant come flood or drought.

You could never describe Jacob's Well as the french poodle belt of Australia, but when in comes to water supply it's quality. The underground water is at a depth of 2 to 3 metres and is filtered through layers of peat. During the wet season it has a pH 6.5 and in the dry this falls to pH 5.5. It is the colour of very weak tea with a noticeable sulphur content, the hardness is 5 p.p.m.

John & Genny Catlan
Mango Mansion 4208

-oOo-

Bromeliads epiphytic in the high jungle canopy.