

# BROMELIACEAE

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*Conistrum 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.*

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Fortitude Valley,  
AUSTRALIA Q 4006

-oOo-

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PROGRAMMES: November - the Christmas Breakup, a Gala event of our year. A barbeque at our usual place of meeting with displays of Bromeliads and the usual high quality selection of Bromeliads for raffles.

Come one, come all!!  
Bromelian friends welcome.

REMINDER - SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE JANUARY 1ST, 1992.

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EDITORIAL Our September meeting was to say the least very eventful and some of the debating not all desirable. However, the programme was well organised and cleverly carried out.

Mrs. Phyllis Hobbs' talk on Neoregelias at a beginner's level was very well received and plainly put in a good understandable way.

Mr. Don Hobbs followed suit with an array of fine quality colour slides mainly taken in their garden as plants came into flower. Don is modest about his camera work but as I have handled a camera some 55 years myself, it is easy to see his efforts are worthwhile.

Mr. Des Anderson gave us an interesting commentary, and spoke at length on certain of the tabled bromeliads. Botanical names on line drawings are engravings from a copyright free book by Jim Harter.

Our October meeting was a very interesting one. Our President's beginner's talk involved his early associations with Bromeliads and getting the enthusiastic collecting bug in the early years. Added to this the practice of working your Bromeliads by removing offsets regularly and allowing more to form and better mature shape in the removed offsets.

Highlight of the evening was the Mini Show which produced some rather outstanding plants, as was the *Tillandsia alata* in full shape and bloom.

On the advanced section bench a lovely flowering *Tillandsia utriculata* was the subject of all eyes.

Our Guest Speaker Olwen Ferris, now newly made Life Member of the Gold Coast Bromeliad & Succulent Society gave us a very interesting talk which is enclosed in this issue.

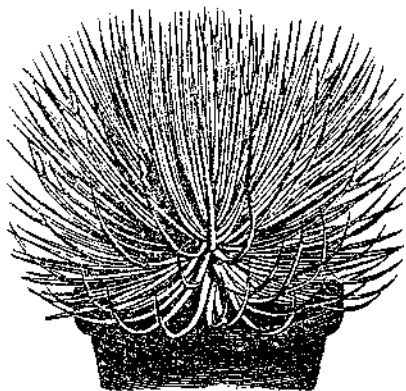
Len P. Butt

OLWEN FERRIS - OCTOBER TALK May I start by saying how nice it is to be with you tonight to talk to you about my introduction to the Bromeliaceae.

My earliest memories go back to when I was five or six. I used to help prepare the hay boxes that kept my mother's collection of pot plants alive during the severe winters at Crookwell on the Southern Tablelands of N.S.W. The elevation was over 3,000 feet and the southern side of buildings stayed frozen for about three months. I was taught how to judge the temperature of the hay, by placing my elbow in it and to open it up if it was too hot or to pack in more hay if it was cold. There were fuchsias, geraniums, begonias and others, and amongst the others were what I later discovered to be bromeliads. *Aechmea weilbachii* and *Billbergia pyramidalis* v. *pyramidalis* were two that grew with the pot plants in a glassed in corner of the verandah facing N. East.

On the south side of the house, a bricked in garden bed on one side of the front steps was massed with English violets, Easter daisies and *Billbergia nutans*. The daisies and billbergias were cut to ground level by winter frosts while the violets insulated their roots. Each Spring saw new growth and Autumn saw all in flower in the bed. It's interesting to see in *Hazelwood's Plant Catalogue* *B. nutans* listed as a bulb and we thought this was so as the plants died down for the Winter and grew up again in the Spring.

Prior to the Bromeliad Society of Australia Inc. starting, I had about 50 bromeliads, scattered around through my Azalea and Camellia nursery. A number of these were picked up in orchid nurseries and these had found their way to Australia from Europe when the hot houses were closed down due to fuel shortages during World War II.



*Bonaparteia* sp.

Two plants brought in tonight were amongst these - *Billbergia Collevii*, a Belgian hybrid made in 1882 between *B. vittata* and *B. amoena*; and a bigeneric X *Nidumea Loeseneri* between *Nidularium billbergroides* and *Aec. calyculata* made in 1911 by Hummel.

By 1963 when the Bromeliad Society of Australia started, I had bromeliads growing under camellias and azaleas in the garden.

It got around on the 'grape vine' that Mrs. Ferris had bromeliads and I had to find names for some of my plants.

I wrote to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington U.S.A. and was sent some books that put me on the right track.

Mr. Jack Martin, the first President of B.S. of Australia had many different species grown from seed imported from Europe and he helped in sorting some of my names for me.

Clair and Andy Phillips also grew numerous seedlings, but most of their seed came from Sidel in Brazil and sometimes even the genera of these seedlings turned out to be incorrect. One lovely plant, still in my collection was supposed to be *Neoregelia carolinae*, but turned out to be a larger stiffer rosette of a peachy-red hue with a deeper coloured nest at flowering. This we gave the name Neo. Clair Phillips.

Wolf Megher of Mona Vale, grew hundreds of Vriesias labelled Vr. Belgin Hybrids. There were three large bushhouses where the flowers were sorted out and similar types benched together. These were shipped in their hundreds through Coles stores in Victoria, N.S.W. and Queensland. Most were labelled Vr. Belgin Hybrid but some were named after similar plants in *Exotica*. Is it any wonder the vriesias' names are so mixed up today.

In the early 1960's I also got interested in growing bromeliads from seed. Beryl Allen from Tampa, Florida ran the Seed Bank for Gesneriads and I mentioned I was growing Billbergia seedlings and thought the same method could be suitable for the gesneriads. Back came a list of bromeliad seeds she had to spare. This was how I first came in contact with bromeliad seeds and nowhere could I find information on how to grow them. I did find something in *Graf's Exotica*. Place the seed on moistened paper towels.

I divided each packet of seeds into four, put one away and tried the other parts - one on towel, two on shredded tree fern and three on cymbidium orchid mix. Whichever type was most successful, then the spare seed was planted that way.

I had most success with the shredded tree fern and the orchid mix. The moistened paper towel gave good germination but the seedlings were hard to handle as the roots got into the paper towel and were easily damaged.

About this time I started corresponding with Adda Abendroth and Dr. Richard Oeser and started the Round Robins here in Australia. These Round Robins were a great success - we passed on what information we gathered to each other and it was a great learning experience for us all. Len Butt, Peter Paroz and Mary Grasselli participated.

About this time Grace Goode asked me how I had absorbed so much knowledge on bromeliads and my answer was "By growing from seed". Grace said "Well, I'm going to start and grow my own seedlings." We all know how she entered into the hybridising and what wonderful achievements she has made with the venture!

Looking back over the years I'd say the nicest thing I've discovered about bromeliads is that you meet the nicest people - there is the odd one that falls a little bit below par, but on the whole, you're a pretty swell bunch and I get a lot of pleasure out of knowing you all.

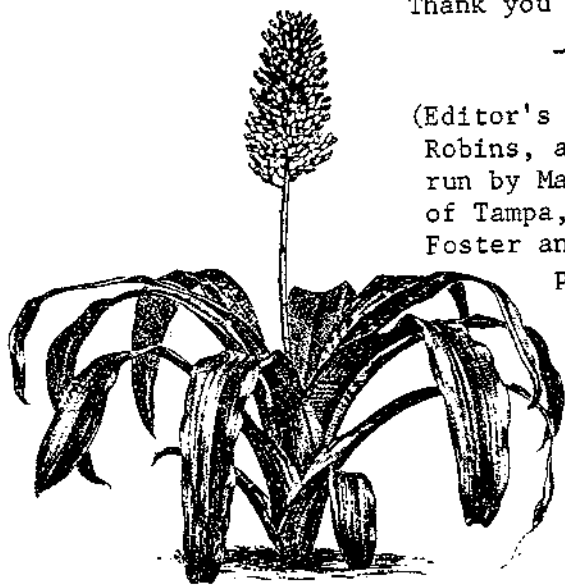
Thank you once again for asking me here tonight.

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(Editor's Note) Nostalgic memories of Round Robins, and the early Queensland versions run by Mary Grasselli involving Beryl Allen of Tampa, Victoria Padilla, and even Mulford Foster and Charles Hodgson, I was also a participant.

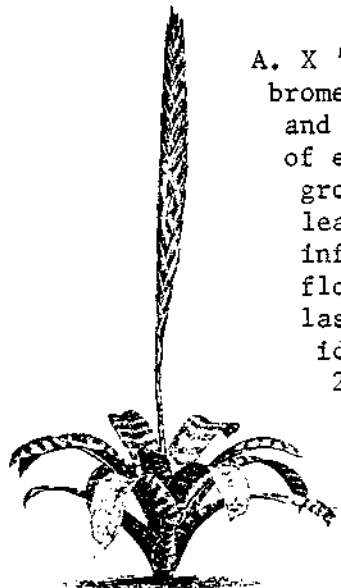
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With conservation of the older species the only way to go to preserve bromeliads for the future, the following article may be of interest to members:-



*Aechmea fulgens*

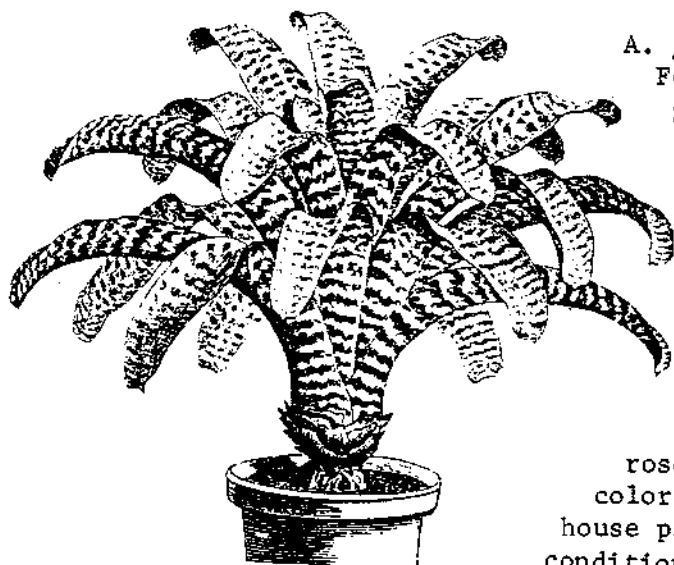
SELECTION OF CULTIVATED AECHMEAS - from the pen of  
Victoria Padilla



*Vriesea*

A. X '*Foster's Favorite*' (1949) The first patented bromeliad, this *Aechmea* is a cross between *A. racinae* and *A. victoriana* var. *discolor*. It is the favorite of everyone who grows it, for it is amenable to most growing conditions. Its highly polished, wine-red leaves make it at all times a beautiful plant. The inflorescence is semipendant, the deep purple-blue flower-petals giving way to dark red berries which last in color for months. A winter bloomer, it is an ideal size for a house plant, leaves seldom exceeding 20 inches in length.

*A. fulgens* var. *fulgens* (1841) Found growing on the trees or ground in Brazil. A small to medium-sized plant, this is a tubular-formed *Aechmea* with pale green leaves. Its inflorescence is a panicle of red berries topped with blue petals. Long lasting, fairly hardy, it will withstand any planting mixture so long as it is well drained, and will even take some neglect.



*Vriesea*

*A. fulgens* var. *discolor* (1889) Found growing in the trees or ground in Brazil. This is a medium-sized plant with out-spreading fairly stiff, leathery leaves, dusty green on the upper side and a glossy purple covered with a whitish powder on the under side. The dark purple flowers make a stunning head on the top of a foot long carmine stalk. The rose-colored berries last in color for many months. A perfect house plant, it will take adverse conditions and is attractive whether in flower or not. It does best when

given considerable light and can be well grown in a loose soil. A sporadic bloomer, but generally flowers in spring.

*A. lamarehei* (1889) Found on ground and the light forests of Brazil. Also known as *A. lagenaria*. This plant is quite variable in form. It has a pinecone-type flowerhead, the yellow petals turning black a day or two after blooming. Often the flower head is yellow, white, and black all at the same time. Scape bracts are a brilliant red. A hardy plant, it is an interesting item for any collector.

*A. lasseri* (1951) Found on trees in the high forests of Venezuela. An attractive, smallish plant, it is chiefly notable for its pendant inflorescence, which may hang two to three feet. The inflorescence consists of rose-red bracts, the flowers are greenish-white, and the berries are bluish. The soft gray-green leaves turn reddish if given sufficient light. Will grow in loose, moist soil. Hardy.

*A. luddemanniana* (1866) Found growing on the ground and on the trees of Central America. A beautiful dignified plant which when well grown will have a spread of three feet. The arching leaves are a blend of green and bronze, turning more brilliant when the plant is grown outdoors. The flower spike rises erect above the plant, the rose and green flowers turning into a dense head of blue and white berries which finally become a startling purple that lasts for months. Not particular as to growing medium. Makes an attractive house plant.

*A. mexicana* (1886) Epiphytic and terrestrial in forests, often exposed to full sun, from Mexico to Ecuador. This large, handsome plant should be grown outdoors in considerable light to attain its maximum beauty.



*Tillandsia regina*



Indoors the leaves are a pale mottled green; outdoors they become tinged with vivid red. The flower spike at the end of a bold, erect stem is bright crimson which turns to pearl-like berries. an adaptable plant, this *Aechmea* will grow under almost any kind of condition. However, it cannot be considered a house plant unless ample room is provided, as the leaves sometimes measure three feet. Hardy.

*A. miniata* var. *discolor* (1857) Epiphytic in Bahia, Brazil. An outstanding, medium-sized plant, with outspreading leaves of rich olive-green on top and glossy maroon underneath. The inflorescence is an erect spike of berry-like fruit with blue flowers, the berries turning red and lasting many months. This is a highly decorative plant which does very well in the home. Does best in a well-drained potting mixture and needs good light. Hardy. *A. miniata* var. *miniata* is also a very fine subject. It grows somewhat larger and the leaves are a lovely delicate green.

*A. miniata* var. *discolor* X *A. calyculata*. This is one of the first hybrids using *A. miniata* var. *discolor* as one of the parents. Its background is not known, but it has been grown in southern California for a number of years. A stunning plant with its tall orange-yellow flower head, it is larger than either of its parents, the dark maroon and green leather-like leaves measuring a good two feet. A hardy plant, it will take considerable light, cold, and neglect. This is a highly decorative *Aechmea* and does well under average home conditions.



*Karatas scheremkiewi*

*A. miniata* var. *discolor* X *A. fulgens* var. *discolor* (1954) This hybrid of unknown origin was introduced into the trade as *A. X maginalii*. It is a fine cross combining the best qualities of both parents. Leaves are apple-green on upper side, soft maroon beneath. The bracts are salmon red, the flowers a bright blue which turn into orange berries lasting for several months. Like *A. miniata* var. *discolor*, it is a dependable bloomer.

*A. nudicaulis* (1753) Found growing on trees and rocks, sometimes in full sun, from Mexico and the West Indies into Venezuela. The stiff, spined, grey-green leaves form a tubular rosette from which emerges the brilliant inflorescence of bright red bracts and yellow flowers. The flowers do not last so long in color as do those of other Aechmeas, but no other Aechmea puts on a brighter display. The variety *A. nudicaulis* var. *septentrionalis*, confined to South America, is similar except that the plant tends to be heavier with broader leaves which also show slight horizontal silver markings. It was first introduced in 1879. A third variety, *A. nudicaulis* var. *aureo-rosea*, was found in Brazil in 1881. It differs from the others in that it is smaller, its leaves are more obviously cross-banded, and the inflorescence is stiffer, the frosty-white berries turning a pinkish color. All three varieties are hardy and will take almost any kind of treatment.

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INTRODUCTION INTO CULTIVATION Excerpt from Walter Richter's  
*Bromeliad Handbook "Anzucht und Kultur der Bromeliaceen"* (1950)  
Translated by Joseph Schneider  
with permission Victoria Padilla, 1967

European growers showed interest in bromeliads at a comparatively early date. Their beauty, their oddity and mainly, the tenacity with which they cling to life, are probably the chief reasons for their early appearance into cultivation. They endured the long sea voyages of that time which other plant material could not survive. That two of the toughest-leaved species were the first to arrive in Europe seems to prove this assertion. These were, according to Altons in "Hortus Kewensis" the species *Bromelia ananas* (synonym for *Ananas comosus*) and *Bromelia pinguin*, the year of introduction being 1690. In 1776 they were followed by *Caraguata lingulata* (genus now known as *Guzmania*). In 1811 the famous Kew Gardens had already sixteen species; in 1864 that number had mounted to one hundred, and after acquisition of the very large collection of the Morrens in 1887 the total rose to 252 species.

The Botanical Garden of the Dutch University at Leyden, under the direction of Inspector Wittes, who had a considerable knowledge of bromeliads, listed in 1894, the large number of 334 species.

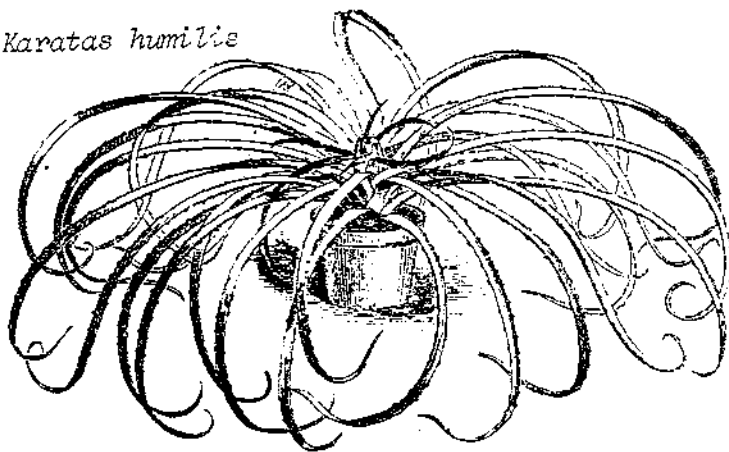
The widely known and well liked *Vriesia splendens* was introduced from the Guianas in 1842 and 1844 by Melinon and Leperieur. At about the same time *Aechmea fulgens* came from Brazil; a little later, September 1846, *Aechmea fasciata* flowered for the first time at the establishment of Van Houtte in Ghent.

The magnificent winter-flowering *Guzmania musaica* was discovered in December, 1867. The collector, G. Wallis, found it in a dense forest near Teoroma, near Ocana, New Granada (Colombia) in the drainage basin of the Magdalena River, and sent it to Europe.

In 1872 J. Linden, of Belgium, received *Vriesia tessellata* from Brazil and it flowered for the first time ten years later. *Vriesia hieroglyphica* proved very difficult to bring to flower; it was successfully accomplished in 1880. During the first half of the nineteenth century many *Billbergia* species were brought in. Their durability and toleration of adverse conditions probably favored their introduction.

The history of the introduction of bromeliads is interesting; the few dates mentioned show it to have concurred with that gala period which brought so many orchids and other beautiful tropicals in great quantities to Europe. Not only nurseries, but many private collectors and plant-friends took a great interest in them. Through their efforts expeditions were financed and organized and

*Karatas humilis*



collectors sent out who, at times, risked their lives in the search for new, rare and precious plant material.

The Belgians played a main role, and many of their names are forever remembered in scientific annals and garden literature. Jean Linden, himself, travelled through middle and South America from 1835 to 1845, and after establishing his own firm in Brussels, sent out collectors. His new introductions made his name famous; thanks to his initiative, about 1100 orchid species and 1500 other plants, among them many bromeliads, came to Europe; Roezl, Schliem, Libon, Wallis, Giesbrecht (probably means A.B. Ghiesbreght, Belgian collector) and others, collected for him. Many plants, well known horticulturally, bear their names.

Belgian gardeners, like DeJonghe-Brussel, Louis van Houtte, of Ghent, Alexander Verschaffelt, Charles van Eckhoutte, and others too, contributed materially to the introduction of bromeliads. Thus, naturally, the greatest collections were established in Belgium, notably the one of Jacob-Makoy in Liege. The Botanical Garden in Liege had the largest collection in the eighties of the past century; at that time it was under the directorship of one of the foremost authorities on bromeliads, i.e. Professor Charles Morren.

The French garden architect, Edouard Andre, maintained a large collection; he collected himself, and later, sent out other collectors. The Frenchman, C. Pinel, formerly a merchant in Brazil, and Morel at St. Mandé, near Paris, were great enthusiasts; plants bearing their names give testimony, and honor their efforts. Marius Porte, mainly active in the Philippines, introduced some bromeliads, such as *Billbergia porteana*, and others.

In Germany, little of consequence was done, neither in discovering new species nor in their introduction, but botanical gardens and private estates started and kept large collections; this helped much to create and spread interest in bromeliads.

At about the turn of the century, the interest in these beautiful and fascinating plants slackened considerably, other matters gained preponderance. World War I flamed across Europe and destroyed nearly all that was still left. After the effect of the inflation period wore off, the changing tasks gradually reawakened the interest in special plants and revived the interest in bromeliads in the mid-

thirties. It had barely begun when the second World War broke off the budding development. I am convinced the future is bright for bromeliads. The enrichment of the present assortment, will further the interest and re-establish their growing and sale. These plants surely merit it.

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SWAP & SALE CORNER

<i>Aechmea caesia</i>	<i>Hechtea stenopetala</i>
<i>Abrometiella brevifolia</i>	<i>Ochogavia lindleyana</i>
<i>Bromelia antiacantha</i>	<i>Hechtea glomerata</i>
<i>Bromelia serra</i>	<i>Hechtea argentea</i>
<i>Bromelia balanse</i>	<i>Hechtea podamcha</i>

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<i>A Bromeliad Glossary</i> by Brom. Society Inc.	3.50
<i>Bromeliads - A Cultural Handbook</i> by Brom. Society Inc.	3.50
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<i>Bromeliads in Australia</i> by Brom. Society N.S.W.	2.00
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<i>Hybridist's Handbook &amp; Check List</i> by D. Butcher	6.00

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