

# BROMELIACEAE

Postal Address: PO Box 565  
FORTITUDE VALLEY QLD 4006

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*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 p.m.

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

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Mrs Joy Upton, Mrs Olive Trevor,  
Mr Don Hobbs

## **PROGRAMMES**

May Commentary:      Phyllis Hobbs

Beginners:            Preparing plants for display, show  
                                 and/or competition - Olive Trevor

The Item:              John Catlan - Pollinating  
                                 neoregolias

  

June Commentary:    Genny Vauhkanen

Beginners:            Winter care - Len Trevor

The Item:              Slide Show

ALL 1993 SUBS. NOT YET PAID ARE OVERDUE  
\$7 SINGLE; \$10 FAMILY

LIBRARIANS:            Nesta Russell  
                                 Shirley Neville

## EDITORIAL

Now that the momentous event of Bromeliads VII is over, let me send out the usual plea for articles. Just about enough happened to fill a fair sized hard cover book and as I know for a fact that I am not the only one to work a pen, let us see some industrious action in that field. The conference gave me enough scope for several articles, so don't make me a lone ranger and contribute.

This was without doubt as good a conference as I have previously attended and I have been to great ones. There were small things I think needed slight improvement, and I will discuss these at committee later.

Our two overseas speaker guests could not have contributed more, and the pattern of their talks was outstandingly good. Personally, it does me good to see the revealing emphasis on logging, mining and farm degradation brought to the fore. As a member here in Queensland of W.W.F. and the I.U.C.N., I well know the conservation troubles South America is enduring as we have it here also, but kept in better check, fortunately.

There is obviously a great amount of people who made this conference possible and helped us in many ways. Some with physical effort, some with organising expertise, some with monetary gifts and others with just being there. So as to miss no-one, we will be publishing later a comprehensive list of all this affects.

Remember now also is that very important time to remember, the Queen's Birthday weekend in June and our combined show of Bromeliads and succulents.

Let us make an effort to load our competitive benches with quality exhibits, and also do not forget the novice section which carries the Mary Grasselli award.

Elsewhere in this newsletter is the first article on Bromeliads VII Queensland, from my pen.

The monthly meeting on Thursday, 15th April, was well attended with a well filled quality trade table, and a very adequate presentation of display plants. The plant commentary was ably done by Patricia O'Dea and quite a few fine plants were discussed. The main event was the panel drawn from our audience, visitors from New Zealand and Victoria fresh from our Bromeliad VII conference. A very interesting evening was had by all, and the questions and answers were not lacking.

## PITCAIRNIAS

by Johnno

I was never very successful with Pitcairnias, Len gave me my first plants, a small pot of P.Flammea seedlings. I potted them up in a very open cymbidium type mix and they all suffered a slow lingering death over about 10 years, never looked well and certainly never encouraged me to invest time and effort in more Pitcairnias. I did swap plants for a few more, these lingered on, some died and the remainder looked decidedly unwell.

She who must try plants that are difficult to grow, proudly returned home with P.Tabuliformis. This plant was potted in an open cymbidium type mix and eventually died after lingering on for about four months. This shrivelled bunch of leaves was still taken care of in pride of place, as maybe it was just dormant. In the end R.I.P. was written across the tag. Heat was eventually decided on as being most responsible for its demise.

During Autumn of that year another P.Tabuliformis was acquired by she who must try difficult plants, this new plant was potted up and placed in our coolest growing area. Although it went backwards, it did start to grow. Each day we would stare down hopefully at the 5cm clump of leaves and try and convince one another it would live. One morning all that remained was about four little green leaves, a gourmet field mouse had consumed the lot.

Olwen passed on a piece of information, never allow Pitcairnias to dry out, they like to be kept moist.

On a trip out to see Neville he showed us his P.Tabuliformis potted in what appeared to be a normal open potting mix, but to make sure it did not dry out,

the pot was sitting in a saucer of water. Neville has flowered *P.Tabuliformis* and it had then thrown a number of pups. His other *Pitcairnia*s were planted out in the garden under trees and doing well.

When we went to John and June's place we found they had planted their collection of *Pitcairnia*s out under trees and they were looking good. The soil they were growing in was not normal garden variety soil, but wallum sand.

Normal garden soil does not make a suitable pot plant mix, but wallum sand does. It has unique properties in that the grains of sand are a uniform size and do not pack down. When I was experimenting with native plant culture I developed a suitable potting mix to duplicate wallum sand. You start with a product called washed pit sand. It is readily available. (Under no circumstances use brickies loam/sand it is not suitable for pot plants and sets like concrete.) To this add 15% to 20% of New Zealand peat. With all other Broms I prefer to use Russian or German peat. It is much coarser and does not wash out of a very open potting mix as easily as the fine New Zealand peat moss. If you are going to use wallum sand as a start to a potting mix, add only 10% to 15% of New Zealand Peat Moss.

A lot of our *Pitcairnia*s are potted in this mix and looking good.

One of the exceptions to the rule is *P.Tabuliformis*. We decided to try live spagnum moss. We used a squat 170mm (7") pot, filled it half full of the spagnum and then planted it well down so the plant was totally surrounded with the spagnum. A saucer was clipped to the container for extra water, and hung from the roof to beat the mice. The plant hangs 1500mm (5 feet) from the ground so we can keep watch over it. The plant is perfect, we have had it all summer with not a

mark on the foliage and a pale green centre. At one stage I was interested in growing numbers of *V. Carinata*, a point of interest was that when the colour of the leaves was uniform from centre to tip, the plant was not growing. A pale centre indicated good healthy growth. I assume this may be the same for *P. Tabuliformis*, as the plant was darker green when acquired, but the colour lightened up as the growth rate increased.

*P. Atrorubens* is another exception. It is growing in an open cymbidium style mix as this plant has flowered for the last three years. We follow the golden rule, if its not broke don't fix it.

*P. Burle-Marx*. It's foliage is discoloured and has a rhizome as thick as your finger and creeps along the soil surface. We assume it lives in deep litter under heavy shade. This too is planted in cymbidium style mix and appears to be doing well.

*P. Heterophylla* is potted in our wallum sand mix, but please note it is deciduous and I am lead to believe you should reduce watering during winter and keep it drier.

**John and Genny  
Mango Mansion**



## JOTTINGS AND PEOPLE BROMELIADS VII

That same old feeling of "Hail fellow well met!" again was the order of the day on the Friday afternoon 9th of April. Conference biennial get together still is that, big friendly group it was when I joined the fray in 1983, having missed the 1981 inaugural.

The reception hall was a very well chosen venue, and the left hand corner display of very unusual and newer bromeliads a great sight to see and enjoy. The lovely variegated *Aechmea Tessmanii*, the Australian mini hybrid neoregelias and many more colourful neoregelias and *Vriesias* all went to make up a grand setting.

There always seems to be a plant launch at our conference and this time was no exception. The *Aechmea* "Gympie Gold" being the plant for this time, a selected clone from Mr and Mrs Paterson of Gympie.

There seemed to be cluster of Len's present this year, still really it is the same old namesakes of earlier get-togethers Len Trevor, Len Colgan, Len Riddle, Len Summers, Len Trotman and Len Butt.

As the Friday evening progressed the hubbly of friendly noise seemed to get louder and louder, or maybe my hearing aids were playing up.

On the outer room where plant trading prevailed, the buying and viewing became nearly hectic and I did notice offsets of "Gympie Gold" on that packed table.

Another first time conference plant Neo Aussie Dream made its colourful glossy pink presence felt, this from Bob Larnack's nursery in NSW.

Must mention there were a few flowering plants of my particular favourite *Vriesia Phillips-coburgii* in one

display. It is not a constant flowerer, but a veritable eye-stopper when it does.

Must mention that hat! Yes it was of bromeliad berries etc. and it was worn by Val Urquart, the Queensland secretary. Last time I saw it, it was being auctioned off at the Saturday night banquet! That old showman, Len Trevor presiding!

Mrs Margaret Draddy and Keith and Ruby Ryde made a prominent addition to the lecture hall and always to the fore on our grand bus trip.

Derek and Margaret Butcher, as always keen as ever, Derek as a presenter and also always trying to research his cultivar and hybrids list.

Olwen Ferris and Margery MacNamara, two old friends of mine, were there, although Margery persisted in thinking I did not remember her. I chased up Barry and Joan Williams, as, yes, you guessed it, my BS of A subs needed paying!

As I said earlier this is only jottings and personalities, not a review of those great lectures, who could forget them.

Next to remember a few highlights on the tucker of that Sunday double bus trip. The super sandwiches and scrumptious cakes served us as morning tea by the Muller family and the joy of viewing their good collection and nursery.

The well organised lunch at Maleny with more than we could eat once again.

Ending, yes its tucker again, that Pineapple Plantation experience and dinner by the light of Hawaiian torches. Again the Chinese/Mexican menu was

so filling the bus drivers threatened to weigh us before we got back on.

This, even though the first pen to paper of the event by me, does not aim to miss out, Grace Goode's Bromeliad kaleidoscope, that I am sure all enjoyed that day, but a lot more will be said later.

I will close this with some personal thanks to John Catlan and Gennie Vaukonen for the help with transport they gave to me.

Len Butt

#### RAFFLE RESULTS

The Bromeliad tapestry was won by Patricia Sweeney of New Zealand. Congratulations!

Thank you to all who supported this raffle by purchasing tickets.



Wally Berg with *T. tectorum*  
collected near Oña, El Oña,  
Ecuador.

## ECUADOR EXPLORATION

### Our Second Home

As surely as bromeliads had gotten under our skins, so had Ecuador. Since our very first "once-in-a-lifetime" trip, we have returned again and again to lovely Ecuador, where Wally and I have shared many unforgettable experiences in the wilds of this bromeliad heaven. Soon it became a family affair when my wife Linda joined us on expeditions. Together we have made friends of many country people. Our habit of taking along good, used, clothing to donate where needed has opened many doors to us. We have "adopted" some families and visit them with gifts on every trip. For what we have given over the years, we have received so much more in return. Friendly by nature, the Ecuadoreans call foreigners *extranos*, meaning "outsiders", not the derogatory *gringo*. Ready smiles are windows to the warmth and kindness inside these gentle people.

In the years since, we have systematically explored nearly every corner of Ecuador. Our collections have added over a dozen new records to the known flora of Ecuador, as well as one species new to science. Many of our collections become herbarium specimens and others are donated to botanical gardens. We retain the remaining material for propagation.

After several trips, Ecuador became increasingly familiar but never lost its lure. Every trip found us exploring new territory (although never again by Lada) by using only four-wheel drive vehicles, even if it meant a day or two wait.

### River Country

In the Amazon basin, the trackless wilderness stretches several thousand miles across Peru and Brazil to the Atlantic. Roads in the Ecuadorean

Amazon are limited to one skirting the eastern foothills of the Andes and a few reaching canoe ports on major rivers. Dugout canoes remain the conveyance of choice throughout the Amazon region. Setting out from Misahauilli on the Rio Napo, you are immediately consumed by the towering, canopied rainforest, the classic "jungle". Heliconias, with their brightly coloured and often bizarre flowers, line the river banks. Colourful macaws live among thousands of orchids, bromeliads, aroids, and gesneriads. The cathedral-like forest rings with a chorus of calls from several species of monkeys and birds, heard, but seldom seen.

Collecting in the tropical rainforest is never easy, despite the abundance of plant life. Most epiphytic plants are restricted to the well-lit forest canopy, the darker understory supporting few species. Many bromeliads thrive near the rivers where sunlight penetrates the dense growth. We have been able to collect the occasional bromeliad, one most notable, *T. adpressiflora*. A medium-sized plant about 1 foot (27cm) in diameter, it has a magnificent orange flower spike over 5 feet (135cm) tall. Other interesting bromeliads include *Aechmea zebrina*, which has silver-banded, green leaves and a striking inflorescence.



**By Dennis Cathcart** (Florida nurseryman, conservationist, and explorer)

Queensland guest at Bromeliads VII

Dennis Cathcart in the wet forest near Cuyuja, Napo, holding *T. superba* and extendible collecting pole.

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Beautiful bromeliad gardens like this are found on cliffs and the tops of huge boulders in the Jubones River Valley near El Tablon, Azuay. Many forms of Tillandsia including *T. tectorum*, *T. mima*, *T. disticha*, *T. lymanii*, *T. caerulea*, and *T. latifolia* colonize suitable surfaces.



Hundreds of millions of Tillandsias live among the branches of the *Bombax* tree in the valley outside of Celica, Loja. Pictured are *T. multiflora* (yellow ones), *T. floribunda* (the red spikes), and *Vriesea aspinosae* (clumps of smaller plants).

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## THANK YOU

Committee wish to express appreciation of work performed by John and Pat Carpenter during their tenure as Librarians.

## 1992 COMPETITION WINNERS

Advanced: Ruth Wilson  
Novice: Neville Ryan

### March

Lucky Door: Mavis Paulsen

Raffle: Phyllis James (2)  
Eric Turner  
Patricia O'Dea

Popular Vote:  
Advanced Vriesa Elata, Neville Ryan  
Novice -

Judges Choice: Vriesa Elata  
Neville Ryan

### April

Lucky Door: Ruth Wilson

Raffle: Phyllis Hobbs  
Len Summers  
Des Anderson  
Eileen Eisentrager

Popular Vote:  
Advanced T. Tectorum, Neville Ryan  
Novice Till Punctulata, Jo Ketelaars

Judges Choice: -



Show Organizer: Annie Mittendorff 209-9187

**New Members**

Noel Weir (Toombul  
John Gamlin (Townsville)  
Surachat Vuthapanich (Gatton)  
Alan Sawtel (Clayfield)  
Brad Flanders (Loganholme)  
Patricia Coutts (Townsville)

**New Librarians**

Nesta Russell  
Shirley Neville

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