

# BROMELIACEAE

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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.

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## PROGRAMME

### SEPTEMBER

|                 |                                |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| COMMENTARY      | - Phyllis Hobbs                |
| BEGINNERS       | - Patricia O'Dea - Billbergias |
| ITEM            | - Greg Aizlewood - Photography |
| PLANT FOR MONTH | - Billbergia                   |

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### OCTOBER

|                 |                              |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| COMMENTARY      | - Olive Trevor               |
| BEGINNERS       | - Neville Ryan - Tillandsias |
| ITEM            | - Mini-show                  |
| PLANT FOR MONTH | - Neoregelia                 |

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### NEW MEMBERS

A very big welcome to all new members....

|                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| VINCE & MARIE WINKEL      | - BOWEN QLD.           |
| ALLAN JARVIS              | - BEENLEIGH QLD.       |
| MRS. P.S. MIENI           | - THORNSIDE QLD.       |
| ANNETTE MULHOLLAND        | - LEICHHART QLD.       |
| MR. & MRS. GORDON LYFIELD | - BOONAH QLD.          |
| IAN & JENNIFER KROPP      | - JINDALEE QLD.        |
| MR. & MRS. COLIN BIRKETT  | - THORNLANDS QLD.      |
| MARIA OWEN                | - REDCLIFFE QLD.       |
| JOHN & JANE WHITE-MARSH   | - BOOVAL QLD.          |
| DIANNE FEENEY             | - ALEXANDRA HILLS QLD. |

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EDITORIAL

Just a word this time to congratulate those responsible for the putting together and supplying plants for the R.N.A. Bromeliad display.

An excellent job as always and the significant feature being that little frontal feature of Ananus (pineapples).

It was a talking point, and perhaps to many an introduction to the family of plants we grow.

Guzmanias, Vriesias and the newer Aechmeas i.e. (retusa) made a colourful addition and as a few commented to me, the brightest spot in a hall of colour.  
Keep up the good work.....

EDITOR

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## JUDGES CHOICE FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE

The Judges choice for the month of June was *Billbergia vittata*. This plant was in excellent condition considering the time of year. There were very few marks, if any on the foliage. The night for the meeting provided just the right time for this plant as the inflorescence was at it's peak with the plant in full bloom. A lot has been said about the short time *Billbergias* stay in flower but to give the plant credit it blossoms for the same length of time and more in some cases as several varieties of garden plant. The flowers of *Billbergias* produce some of the most spectacular of all Bromeliad flowers.

The *Billbergia* group is native to Eastern Brazil, Mexico and Central America with some species also being found in Peru and Argentina. The plants are epiphytes which need good light. As the clumps get bigger they break up and the plants which fall to the ground adapt exceedingly well to terrestrial conditions. The best growing conditions occur in temperatures from 16 degrees C. to 30 degrees C. However they will tolerate greater cold for short periods. They do not like overwatering and tend to like being grown fairly dry, but with the leaves misted frequently.

The *Billbergias* in early days of hybridisation were often the ones chosen so that in modern day growing we find that most of the plants in collections are hybrids. The *Billbergias* were grown extensively as garden plants (in Australia) in the latter part of last century and the early part of the twentieth century. In fact, they were almost a must for a gardener to have a complete display.

My first recollection of Billbergias were in my Grandmother's garden in the very early 1930's. Although I did not know them by name in those days from memory they included *Billbergia pyramidalis* var *concolor*, *Billbergia nutans*, *Billbergia amoena*, *Billbergis chlorosticta* and possibly one or two others.

As a Society perhaps we should be fostering the growing of Billbergias as garden plants again in this later part of the twentieth century.

DES ANDERSON

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JUDGES CHOICE FOR MONTH OF JULY

July gave us quite a wide range of excellent plants, but there can only be one winner and the judges choice fell to *Tillandsia gardneri*. This was a beautiful specimen plant, well grown and in almost perfect condition, a hard feat to gain with any plant.

*Tillandsia gardneri* is found in nature in Columbia, Venezuela, Trinidad and Brazil. It was first discovered by Lindley in 1842.

DES ANDERSON

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AT ARABEEN ORCHID NURSERY



MYSTERY AECHMEA.... DO YOU KNOW IT? Height 1 metre  
Across top 45cm. Colour clear orange and creamy green.



POPULAR VOTE

JUNE

NOVICE - Neo. unknown -JO KETELAARS  
ADVANCED - Till. ionantha -NEVILLE RYAN  
JUDGES CHOICE - Bill. vittata -PATRICIA O'DEA

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JULY

NOVICE - Bill. ELEGANCE -GREG AIZLEWOOD  
ADVANCED - Till. bulbosa -BERT WILSON  
JUDGES CHOICE - Till. gardneri -BERT WILSON

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AUGUST

NOVICE - Bill. RED RAVEN -JO KETELAARS  
ADVANCED - Till. sprengeliana -ROLEY REILLY  
JUDGES CHOICE - Guz. unknown -PHYLLIS HOBBS

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## BROMELIAD SEED PROPAGATION AND GROWING ON

Having grown orchids in sphagnum moss young ones particularly I decided to experiment with bromeliads using this medium. I used the pelletized New Zealand moss and applied the same principles as for orchids. My findings are as follows.

Propagation of seeds is very easy with this method. I simply put the seed on top of the moss, mist with a mixture of fungicide and water, cover the container with a clear lid and let germinate.

Note the sphagnum moss must be soaked thoroughly before using then squeezed out of excess water and pressed very firmly in the containers. This procedure also goes for growing larger plants in sphagnum moss. If the moss is loose plants tend to die. At no stage must the moss become dry. With larger plants as with orchids a very big healthy root system develops. When the seedlings need replanting I place them still in moss in community pots and later still in moss in one inch pots. When large enough from the one inch pot I treat the plants in the normal fashion and plant in normal mix. I do not disturb the plug of moss the plant is in but simply plant it into the pot. I have found plants grow better for me in moss entirely but of course this makes a very expensive growing medium.

I have found the above successful for the genera I have tried. These are aechmea, dychia, pitcairnia, vriesea and tillandsia.

It is interesting to note that plants we usually consider to be grown under dry conditions, thrive under this system where the roots are wet at all times. It should also be noted I fertilize the young plants twice a week with the same strength fertilizer I use on all my adult plants.

DES ANDERSON

SECRETARY

Two FIELD DAYS have been arranged;-

3rd OCTOBER at the home of NANCY KICKBUSCH  
3 JIRRIMA ST.  
THE GAP. PH. 300-1704  
1.30pm. - 4.00pm. (Plant Sales available)

21st NOVEMBER at the home of NEVILLE RYAN  
88 DAWSON RD.  
UPPER MT. GRAVATT PH. 343-2267  
1.30pm - 4.00pm (Plant Sales available)

We will be participating in the ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY INC. "GARDEN SPECTACULAR" to be held at Mt. Coot-tha 16th & 17th October. Stewards will be required.

A display was presented at the Mt. Gravatt Show on the last weekend in July by a few members. We felt our location was not satisfactory as last year, as we did not have access to passing traffic. However, we managed to introduce Bromeliads to quite a few more people who were unaware of their existence and pass on some helpful information to others.

We apologize for the delay in printing the Book of Conference Proceedings. This has been caused by the non-appearance of articles from Overseas Speakers.

Video Tapes of BROMELIADS VII CONFERENCE are available.

There are 5 in all: - 1- ELTON LEME  
2&3- DENNIS CATHCART  
4- B. LARNACH, J. HIGGINS, J. CATLAN,  
P. O'DEA  
5- L. BUTT, P. TRISTRAM, PANEL DIS-  
CUSSION

Cost \$25 each tape. Please forward payment with order.

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Don't forget the MINI-SHOW at October meeting

SCHEDULE

- CLASS 1 ..... Vriesea in Flower  
CLASS 2 ..... Vriesea Foliage  
CLASS 3 ..... Any Other Tillandsioidea  
CLASS 4 ..... Aechmea in Flower  
CLASS 5 ..... Billbergia  
CLASS 6 ..... Any Other Bromeliad

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BOOKS FOR SALE

|   |                      |         |
|---|----------------------|---------|
| "COLOURFUL BROMELIADS"                    | by VICTORIA PADILLA  | \$15.00 |
| "THE BEAUTY OF BROMELIADS"                | by TONY LEA          | \$ 4.50 |
| "BROMELIADS"                              | by BILL SEABORN      | \$ 4.50 |
| "BROMELIADS"                              | by WALTER RICHTER    | \$ 3.50 |
| "BROMELIADS FOR EVERYONE"                 | by BEA HANSEN        | \$ 2.50 |
| "BROMELIADS FOR EVERYONE" 2               | by BEA HANSEN        | \$11.50 |
| "BROMELIADS IN AUSTRALIA"                 | by BROM. SOC OF NSW  | \$ 2.00 |
| "GROWING BROMELIADS"                      | by BROM. SOC OF AUST | \$11.00 |
| "GENUS TILLANDSIA"                        | by PAUL ISLEY 3rd    | \$ 3.00 |
| "INTERNATIONAL CHECKLIST OF BROM HYBRIDS" | by BSI               | \$ 3.50 |
| "A BROMELIAD GLOSSARY"                    | by BSI               | \$ 3.50 |
| "BROMELIADS - A CULTURAL MANUAL           | by BSI               | \$ 4.00 |

POSTAGE & PACKAGING AT COST

## A VISIT TO JO'S PLACE

17th July 1993

It was with much delight and enthusiasm when we went to Jo Ketelaars home on Saturday with notebook and camera in hand. Jo lives at 75 Chatswood Road, Slacks Creek and has resided at that address since February 1989 - 4½ years. Her phone No. is 208-4429. Her husband's name is Hank and together they have four children and ten grandchildren.

Jo's home is situated on a residential block of land in the Logan Shire and has a northerly aspect.

On looking at her back yard you really don't see the multitude of different trees she has growing. These include Gum trees, Wattle trees, Tree ferns, Mulberry both black and white, Peach, Nectarine, Orange, Lychee, Persimmon and Avocado.

Various birdlife abound and include Lorikeets and Leather Heads. Jo also has a pet Orpington - a small chicken - called "Peppe" who loves cheese and cake and has to be put to bed in the greenhouse at night. Jo has been a member of the Bromeliad Society for approximately six years and has been growing Bromeliads for the same length of time. Her preference of Genera would be Neoregelia and her favourite plant is Neoregelia "Proud Beauty", a plant which she acquired from Grace Goode. Whereas Jo's preference is for Neoregelias she also grows a variety of other Bromeliads and in particular has an extremely interesting collection of Billbergias.

Jo encounters problems with westerly winds and frosts during the winter months and the dreaded grasshoppers in summer. She waters with supply town water to the majority of her plants in the garden, but she does however water her Tillandsias with rain water which she collects from a run off system and stores in drums.

Jo's main interest is her garden. She prefers to be working outside, and she also has an aviary containing Budgerigars and Quails. Her husband, Hank, enjoys wood-working and playing the Organ, and although has no interest in the garden, seems to get roped into doing the labouring work.

Jo told us the story of her childhood in Holland. When she walked home from school, she would occasionally see a Bromeliad, Vrieseas mostly, on the window sills of houses. She explained that they were grown indoors - a very expensive plant that only the well to do families would have them to display in their windows. Some years back Jo saw the display of Bromeliads at the R.N.A., but had a lot of difficulty in finding a contact number or person connected with the growing of Bromeliads. A neighbour put her onto contacting Patricia O'Dea and so Jo's interest grew as did her garden.

A growing tip from Jo. If you want your trees to grow quickly - give them a dose of hormone tablets - sit back - and wait for the results. I thank Jo for her time and hospitality in letting us see her garden. We had a very pleasant afternoon at her home and time sure does fly when you're having fun.

I apologise for not having a photo of Jo ready for this publication due to a problem with the developing agency but guarantee to have it for the next issue of Bromeliaceae when we will feature Doug and Joy Upton.

Till then Your Roving Reporter.

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## MARY GRASSELLI AND A "DUCKY" TALE

All who knew the late Mary Grasselli knew she kept Muscovy ducks. These large waddling hissers had the run of her garden at Moorooka, and were treated as part of her family. Mary's mystery parcels of duck eggs were also part of our christmas swap table at Bromeliad meetings. As I was one of the few who went to see her during her long bed confinement at her home, our conversation was never boring, as she had so many well read interests.

Dwelling on her ducks which to her dying day, she insisted were actually geese, she mentioned that BOTH Carlo and she had noticed they preferred to nest off the ground, and in her garden, in the largest of her NEOREGELIAS. The species then known as Neoregelia carcoradon being favoured mostly. Toward the front of the garden a giant Aechmea mexicana also was used.

Mary, crippled as she was had plenty of time and many library books to dabble in research, and her writing hand to overseas correspondents was ever busy.

About two years before her passing, she showed me proof that her research had borne fruit. The muscovy duck long thought to be European probably Russian (muscovite), was only introduced to Europe in the 16th century by returning spanish conquistadores, and originally, and, yes, even now is South American.

I went further into this later, and found that the duck or goose which ever you prefer, ranged from the complete tail of North America right down and covering about three quarters of South America.

The domesticated bird of Europe has however not much of the beautiful symmetry and grace of it's wild South American ancestor, which still is a very outstanding tree nesting bird.

For those with an eye for research, the duck is *Cairina moschata*, and the name muscovy derives from Nicaragua where the Muysca indians live. They were originally Musco ducks but this has been corrupted to muscovy. Although my books speak of large twig branch and feather tree nests along the jungle rivers, further reading reveals that in matto grosso areas, and upper Brazil, nests are often found in lower placed rosette bromeliads. This caters for the thought that Mary's muscovies instincts placed her Neoregelias as the right nesting places.

It really is fascinating what a bit of observation will uncover!

LEN P. BUTT

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## MORE ADVENTURES IN EQUADOR WITH DENNIS CATHCART, OUR

### GUEST OF BROMELIADS VII

As any true adventurer knows, over-preparedness and planning can spoil a trip. My friend Wally and I were never ones to yield to caution, so equipped with outdated copies of a wall map, we set out for Quito.

Arriving in Quito, we were treated with courtesy at Customs, even though our strange gear (canteens, dry boots, extendible collecting pole, collecting sacks (pillow cases) and camera) must have aroused some suspicion. We made straight for a car rental agency, determined to obtain a four-wheel drive vehicle for our explorations, and ended up with a small Russian Lada, "Take it or leave it!". Deciding to get a fresh start early in the morning, we found a hotel. Although the room was tiny and cold, it was night and at 9,000 feet (2,740m) with a window that would not close and beds considerably shorter than we were, sheer anticipation of what lay ahead kept us awake all night.

### ACCIDENTAL ADVENTURES

It was hours down the road before we saw our first longed-for tillandsias. The rather flat and featureless landscape between the Andean ridges, known as the *alta plano*, or high plain, had been well populated. The change we longed for came as the road descended towards Banos. Here, *Tillandsia incarnata*, a caulescent species with short, gray leaves, formed heavy clumps in the occasional trees and on rocky outcrops.

Leaving the *alta plano* behind, we began seeing more and more interesting plants. At 5,000 feet (1,500m), we first yielded to the temptation to collect. We filled a sack with *T. recurvata*, *T. cucullata*, *T. latifolia*, *T. queroensis* and many other species we didn't know.

We continued south on the Pan American Highway, only this time surrounded by spectacular scenery-fabulous snow-capped peaks and deep canyons; soaring cliffs of pastel colours; the Quechua living in their timeless way-so we didn't mind the several days drive and seemingly endless road. Tiny Ecuador didn't seem so small from the diminutive Lada. More than once we were stuck in the mud and had to be helped out by passing truckers or construction gangs. In the months before we arrived, the country had experienced El Nino. Hundreds of inches of rain fell in areas that normally saw as little as a foot a year. Rain-softened slopes spawned massive landslides that often took out the road for miles. Finally, having to detour cross-country, it was many days before we realized where we were. Our home-made map hadn't helped a bit and, quite by accident, we had made our way to Cuenca. Nestled in a lush valley at 5,000 feet (1,500m), Cuenca is a gleaming jewel of a city. We rested and reveled in the sights both ancient and modern.

#### TILLANDSIA TREASURES

As if to El Dorado, we were drawn toward Ona and the often-spoken-of and celebrated abundance of tillandsias. However finding it in the remote south proved to be difficult. Once again crossing the endless alta plano, we droned on through monotonous scenery and mud. Certain we had taken the wrong route, our spirits were as desolate as the landscape. After many hours we descended into a deep, dry canyon carved by the Ona river. A perfect habitat for tillandsias, the sheer cliffs lining the road were festooned with fluffy *Tillandsia tectorum*. Here and there were giant *T. demissa*, their pink bracts hanging down in cascades. Magnificent 6-foot spikes of *T. secunda*, used locally as Christmas trees, decorated the slopes. Gardens of *T. latifolia divaricata* showed off their silver leaves and shiny orange spikes. Everywhere were pillow-like mounds of fragrant-flowered *T. caerulea*. No doubt about it, we were in heaven!

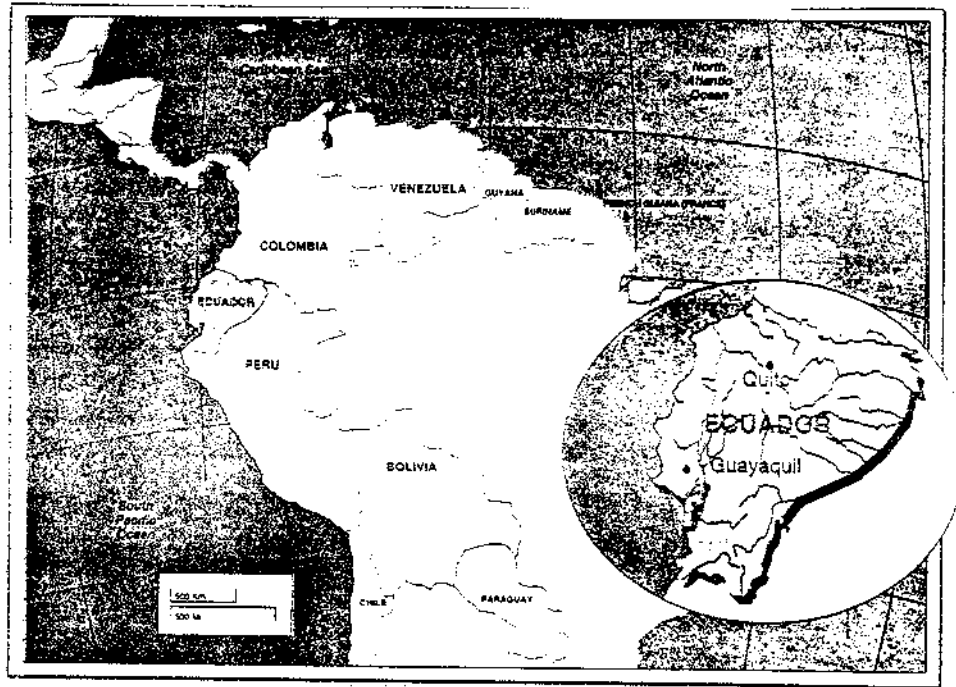
We even managed, in the footprints of many preceding botanists, to find something new. Perched on a twig among thousands of look-alike *T. recurvata* was a tiny clump of *T. capilaris*. New to Ecuador, it was the first of many such discoveries we would make in the years to come.

Wally and I spent the entire day in Ona, collecting, photographing, and just looking. We drank in the sight, knowing we might never see or experience this again. At days end, we cleaned and labeled our collections and made a never-again, foggy-mountain trip to Loja, where we stayed the night.

Deciding not to back track to Quito, we chose to head for the coast and take a more direct route back. We passed through most of Ecuador's biological zones, each with its own flora, and just out of Loja, entered a stunted, wind-swept forest where silver tillandsias shone like jewels among the upper branches. *T. straminea*, growing in clusters, their fragrant white and purple flowers borne on lavender spikes, beckoned. With a boost, I started up the cliff and struggled to reach the first one. Extending as far as I could reach, I dislodged a clump with my machete and watched as it fell to Wally's waiting arms. There were hundreds all around, but collecting proved too difficult and dangerous. Further on, we encountered *T. rubella*, a green-leaved species that produces its offset on 18 inch (45 cm) stolons. After flowering its striking red spike fades and the mother plant dies off, leaving a ring of new plants around its stump.

Descending towards the coast, as the altitude dropped, we began to notice a decline in the number of tillandsia species. By the time we reached the coastal plain, tillandsias were scarce. The trip north was fast with fairly good roads but there was little to look at. Near a river, we came across a section of recently cleared forest. Cut for crop land, not timber, the trees had been set ablaze. If only we had been there sooner, we could have collected in once a forest canopy. We somberly picked through the ruins. The entire forest was decimated, nothing was spared.

The majestic Andes rose on the eastern horizon as we continued north. Second-growth scrub thicket alternated with bananas and rice paddies all the way to Santo Domingo, the gateway back to the mountains. Bromeliads dominated the wet forest. Guzmanias, vrieseas, aechmeas and tillandsias filled the trees. These moisture-loving species are always interesting, but not always easy to grow. At dusk we emerged from the forest and into the realm of the volcanoes once again. We made our way back to Quito and straight to a hotel. The next couple of days were spent, cleaning and cataloguing our collection and packing for the trip home.



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