

# **Bromeliaceae**





## BROMELIAD SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND INC

P.O. Box 565, FORTITUDE VALLEY,  
QLD. 4006 AUSTRALIA

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

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*Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual contributors and may not  
reflect the opinions of the Editorial Committee of the Society. ♣*

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### Cover Photograph - Front

#### *Tillandsia dyeriana*

This species grows as an epiphyte in forests in Ecuador, up to one hundred metres above sea level. It has a vase shaped tank rosette, green in colour with dark reddish brown spotting around the leaf base.

Like some tillandsias the roots are minimal. This plant is potted in a coarse orchid bark which seems to have encouraged a better root system, enabling the plant to produce sturdy upright growth with no leaf damage. Some growers report difficulties in preventing leaf damage, others had fewer problems if plants were grown in baskets with little or no growing medium. However, any difficulties in growing *T.dyeriana* is compensated by the magnificent inflorescence. The inflorescence, a pendular spike often multiple, of brilliant orange-red which intensifies in colour as a new pair of white flowers emerge every couple of days. The photographed plant is grown in a warm area under 70% beige saron. The area is water misted for ten minutes, three mornings a week in summer, down to four minutes, twice a week in winter. I fertilize weekly with a foliar spray. As summer gets hotter, the plant is lowered to lower light.

Plant grown by: Bob Cross

Photographed by: Doug Upton

### Cover Photograph - Back

#### *Tillandsia rothii*

*Tillandsia rothii*, a species which grows along the coast of Mexico up to four hundred meters. It grows epiphytically in woods where it is very hot in summertime and receives little rainfall, therefore in habitat, it is difficult to find a plant without blemished leaves. The pictured plant grows under alcinite, on the north eastern side of the house, it is well protected from the elements while receiving the maximum amount of bright light, warmth and air-flow available summer or winter.

In summer my plants are watered every second day, or every day when the weather is very hot, this is reduced during winter, depending on the temperatures. As a result I was able to grow *T.rothii* without any appreciable marks on its leaves while attaining good colour on the slightly inflated spikes of the inflorescence. It is a slow growing plant, so it took a few years to reach maturity, but its beauty is long lasting. I was able to enter it in three competitions winning a first in all three. It has produced one pup now almost half grown. I do not have a regular fertilizing programme.

Plant grown by: Patricia O'Dea

Photographed by: Don Hobbs

# Contents

Office Member Listing		1
Cover Photographs		2
Editorial		4
Aechmea recurvata var. recurvata 'Sunrise'		5,6
	Geoff Lawn	
A Word from Me and A Traveling Friend		7,8,9
	James L. Giddings	
Thoughts to Ponder		9
Nidularium billbergioides	Derek Butcher	10,11
Newsletter		12
	Forthcoming Events	12
	Monthly Meetings	12
	Study Group Meetings	12
	Combined Show Meetings	12
	Competition Winners 1997	12
	Annual General Meeting	12
	Slide Show Evening	13
	Roster for Raffles	13
	Evening with Len Colgan	13
	Publication Deadlines	13
	Advertising in 'Bromeliaceae'	13
Letters to the Editor		14,15,16
My Good Deed for the Day	Liz Rowland	17
All and Sundry		*18,19,20,21
Advertising in the Bromeliaceae		22,23
Greeting Cards, Video 'Bromagic', Society Badges and Books for Sale		24

## Editorial

It is that time of year again, subscriptions are now due and members are asked to please renew their membership fees before our AGM on the 19th of February. Have you noticed there is an increase? Fees are now \$15.00 single \$20.00 family. To the newer member, if your application was accepted in October of last year, you are financial for 1998. Others who joined the Society before October will need to renew their membership.

The February meeting is our Annual General meeting, a time for members to come forward and obtain a position in the management and workings of our Society. Take on a position, you will never regret your involvement.

On occasions during 1998, Bromeliaceae would like to feature a 'Guest Writer' on the Editorial page. Interested members should submit their written material to approximate the number of words of this page. Their work should be a responsible opinion or comment pertaining to the Bromeliad Society of Queensland Inc., its undertakings of general meetings and business, social activities, study group, and our Journal Bromeliaceae.

Ever since the Editorial Committee allowed Harry to answer his mail, he is constantly under my feet or looking over my shoulder. To be rid of his upsetting mannerisms, I reluctantly offered him the remaining section of this page, on condition he complies with the rules set out for a 'Guest Writer'.

"Happy New Year fellow members, in the mega space offered to me, perhaps one or two paragraphs, I shall endeavour to captivate your interest and pass on to you a golden opportunity that is available only to Society members, and then, only once a year.

There are exciting times ahead fellow members and over generous editors, I refer to the February meeting, our AGM. I've been waiting all year for this evening to come around, now I can nominate for the job I want. There will be plenty of jobs on offer, but to avoid the rush, nominations will be accepted by our Secretary anytime before the AGM, as long as they are signed by the member (that's you or me) and the proposer and seconder.

I have been told if there is an insufficient number of candidates nominated, nominations will be taken from the floor of the meeting. What a joke - an insufficient number of candidates, our Society is full of potential candidates, and the wise ones will have their nominations signed and in our Secretary's hot little hands well before the AGM.

Members should not remain silent and let this golden opportunity pass."

"Let's keep the Bromeliad Society of Queensland great - in 1998."

***Aechmea recurvata* var. *recurvata* 'Sunrise'**

Geoff Lawn

Western Bromanza Conference delegates in Perth recently expressed interest in my clone of *Aechmea recurvata* I had called 'Sunset'. It confirmed my belief that this cultivar is not yet in general circulation, at least not among Australian growers. This plant I bought unlabelled from a local fete's plant stall in Perth about twelve years ago, so its history and origin are obscure. The only listing and photo I have found of 'Sunset' is in Grande Magazine Vol.1, No.2, pages 29-30, where a similar looking clone won Best-in-Show at the New Orleans 1978 Morris Henry Hobbs Bromeliad Show. Whether this cultivar is exactly the same as mine is debatable for this U.S.A. 'Sunset' does not seem to be grown under this name any more and is not listed in Beadle's 1991 book of all known cultivars and grexes for the Bromeliaceae. However to avoid possible confusion later, I urge all collectors with 'Sunset' from me to change now their labels to 'Sunrise' before further release.

There are a number of distinct cultivars of *Aec. recurvata* - 'Aztec Gold', 'Bandit', 'Big Mama', 'Cardinalis', 'Flame', 'Lotus', 'Orange Aid', 'Suave' and 'Tokeri', not all of which I have seen to compare with my 'Sunrise'. However, if grown side by side uniformly with the common unnamed form of *Aec. recurvata* var. *recurvata*, the subtle differences of 'Sunrise' become obvious. 'Sunrise' generally is a larger rosette with more open growth of thinner, finer toothed leaves tapering to narrow points.

The same characteristic pleated V-fold on mature outer leaves is still there but when grown hard and in bright light, the rosette's bulbous base is not so pronounced. Distinctive are the lengthier stolons to 15cm long which makes a clump less congested and easier to divide than the normally crowded variety *recurvata*. 'Sunrise's' upright, slender inflorescence extends further with a more spear like spike of blood red scape bracts and candy-pink flowers.

At its blooming peak in Perth's Spring Mediterranean Climate (mid. September to mid October), the combination of cool or cold nights and warm sunny days turns the foliage scarlet all over, not just the inner leaves, if grown in several hours full sun.

The thistle-shaped spike of 'Sunrise' ages to a dark crimson for several months, not the burnt orange of the common *recurvata*.

Post flowering, 'Sunrise's' leaves revert to light bronze green over the summer and autumn. Tough and adaptable, it thrives usually well in garden beds, pots and hanging baskets. 'Sunrise's' woody stolons suggest it is ideal also for mounting on wood and rocks. Radiating spokes of glowing colour around its red orb do indeed resemble a hot summer dawn.

Como, Western Australia.

*A member of the West Australian Bromeliad Society Geoff Lawn has been a bromeliad person for many years, his articles on bromeliad culture have appeared in various Society Journals. The above article is his first for Bromeliaceae since becoming a member of our Queensland Society last October. In the following Geoff talks about the climate in Perth.*

*Ed.*

Since an inaugural meeting of Perth bromeliad growers in April, 1979, and formation of the Bromeliad Society of West Australia the following month, this small group has achieved respectable progress.

A larger variety and quality of bromeliads than once estimated have come to light around Perth since the Society was formed. This has raised hopes that perhaps our Mediterranean climate, is not as adverse to bromeliads as formerly thought. There are problems with our hot dry summers with low humidity and alkaline tap water, but dyckias, hechtias and puyas revel in these conditions, which are similar to Southern California, so these genera surely deserve more attention in future.

Our winters, when most of the annual rainfall occurs, tend to be temperate to cold, but sometimes mild during the infrequent drier years. So the cold-sensitive types in particular genera, probably fare no worse here than in other southern states.

Not a great deal of systematic research was done with bromeliads in West Australia in the early years regarding culture, so, much trial and error determined the best methods on the home front. Perth can rightly claim to be the sunshine capital of Australia, but unfortunately during heat-waves this intensity of light can have a laser-beam effect on bromeliad foliage if the grower is not careful with position.

Should you contemplate a trip to 'Sandgroper Country', late September to early November is undoubtedly the best time to tour the South-West during the wild flower season, or, if heading further north where the native flora is more advanced, May to late August is ideal weather-wise. Being isolated over here, Eastern States bromeliad growers seldom seem to venture this way, but if you make yourself known in advance, arrangements can be made to ensure your stay, however brief, is enjoyable. Welcome.

Como, Western Australia.

## A Word from Me and a Traveling Friend - James L. Giddings

Congratulations to the Editorial Committee, you put out a worthwhile Journal. I found the Sept/Oct, 1997 issue very good reading. While reading the Editorial I continually smiled, surely you must be aware this problem is world wide and I'm not talking about mail delays, we are of course referring to the need of material, contributions to fill the pages of our Journal.

I myself, have never really been comfortable writing, I have never been able to write well, perhaps this is because when only a young man at university I was told by one of my tutors, by writing we expose our thoughts to contradiction or discussion by a wider range of people. I don't mind the contradiction, but discussions can often lead to heated arguments, we say things we later regret. Unfortunately it has happened to me.

Never-the-less your Editorial was **clever** and because you asked, in a circuitous fashion for member participation, I thought I might help with a few words from myself and a story I collected many years ago.

I am pleased the lady members contribute. Their combined article about cryptanthus was pleasurable to read, even though I cannot grow them I was interested. The ladies, Rhonda Symonds, Olwen Ferris and Grace Goode, I have met Grace and wandered through her beautiful bromeliads, that also was many years ago.

I hope you can understand my scribble to correct my mistakes, I am sorry but there will be many more before I finish writing this piece. Every time you accept an article it should carry the title and the author's name, I notice you do not do this from time to time, you should correct this fault. If the author does not want his name on the article he should use a pen-name, this is the correct thing to do when writing anything for publication. For this article I have given you a title and my pen-name. I have said I have never been able to write well, but with your Editors help it shouldn't turn out incoherent. This then is my friends story.....

Odd, how people get hooked on bromeliads, innocently at first, and lasting for life. This is how it happened to me. One of my specialities has been the mass production of insect species for research. Knowing the ins and outs in such a job attracts other hobbyists who use insects to feed frogs, lizards and birds. At a talk I gave about the rearing of crawlies, someone asked me if I would like to try and keep some of his hypochondriac looking frogs myself. I answered by saying I could feed them but I needed to know what kind of environment they liked.

'Oh, that's easy' came the answer. 'They like hiding and climbing over

bromeliads, the ones that are filled with water'. Easy indeed, we were in Holland in about 1960 and every self respecting Dutchman (woman) kept and still keeps at least a dozen indoor plants including bromeliads. So we visited friends and simply did some collecting. The frogs actually bred in the home made terrarium which soon filled up with the bromeliad species.

Then off to Melbourne, you could not really take frogs or plants over, so we were out of bromeliads for at least six months. But, instant euphoria, a visit to the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne. They were in the throes of making a bit of space in their greenhouses and bromeliad bits and pieces were lying all over the place. Luckily the foreman could understand my Dutch pronunciation of the Latin names (we got on like a house on fire) I ended up with more plants and off-shoots that I could carry.

A new terrarium was built and this time the frogs, tadpoles and lizards were collected locally. Despite the geographical mixes of American plants and Aussie beasts, all were happy. Although I still bred some insects for food, Australia proved to be a better climate for things like flies - there were usually a few too many of them.

A job offer in Wellington, I asked if I could bring my pineapple related plants. Somewhat puzzled, the answer was yes. No trouble in 1967, the plants had to be pest and disease free and should not have any soil around their roots. For someone who had worked with plant pests and diseases for some time, a health certificate was quickly obtained. I think I managed to make friends with one of the local quarantine inspectors by giving him some bromeliads to try in his home garden. All bromeliads were neatly packed in a suitcase and aboard ship. The trip took a few days and we installed the plants in the cabin bathroom. Great consternation when the Italian steward came into the cabin. 'Mama Mia', and 'Serpents' was all I managed to understand, Oh yes and. 'Outa'. I cleaned the bathroom and repacked my bromeliads in the suitcase. I had carefully inspected each plant before shipping, there was no disease, so I was somewhat puzzled by displays of bromeliads (*Aechmea fasciata*) aboard ship in the lobby, they were positively infested with both scale and mealy bug.

Within one week of arrival, the collection was enriched with plants from the Wellington Botanic Gardens and vice versa. For a while we had a small but thriving Bromeliad Interchange.

Local lizards and frogs were added, locally collected and introduced to my bromeliads they were soon at home. Also some Australian whistling frogs made themselves at home, I am not sure where they came from, I did not import them. I really believe that the natural fertilization did the plants a of lot good.

A five year spell in Western Samoa. On arrival the only bromeliads were pineapples in planters. So we grew pineapples in big terrariums since we had to keep some large snakes also. The smaller lizards (geckos) lived free in and

around the house. The pineapple industry had to be protected against pests and diseases so no other bromeliads were allowed into the country. I missed my bromeliads, five years was and still is a long time.

Back to New Zealand. I had left my collection with friends, but the atrocious Wellington wind blew glasshouses, plants and their labels up and around and, only one plant *Vriesea glutinosa* was recognizable as one of the original plants I brought with me from Australia, all those years ago. I am certain it died at least three times since, but is now flourishing in a collection in Rotorua. I am rather attached to this plant.

It was not long before my Wellington friends supplied me with a starter collection and of course the lizards and frogs moved in. For the future, I must find a New Zealand species of ant that likes bulbous tillandsias, like their American cousins do. I wonder if they will bite people and how human visitors will react. Much time has passed and I have failed to find the ant species. Perhaps had the days been longer I would have had more time, there is always tomorrow....

Tomorrow I shall put these few pages of scribble with all the mistakes into an envelope, I hope the Editor is understanding and can find some merit in my effort. To my travelling friend, I wonder where he might be, certainly among lizards, frogs and bromeliads.

---

## Thoughts to Ponder

Bromeliad hybrids are being made in Australia and have been in increasing numbers over the last twenty years. Some are spectacular and some an improvement on the true species. Improvement is a difficult criterion to judge, because in nature improvement means survival, whereas in cultivation improvement can mean money, prestige or just something different.

*Derek Butcher.*

The Objects of the Society are at the very heart of our constitution and they are, in effect, a compact blueprint for the development and continued existence of the Society. One of these objects is concerned with the development and promotion of bromeliads at large. This can be seen in action when we conduct public displays which provide a showcase of our plants to the public.

*John Higgins.*

## *Nidularium billbergioides*

Derek Butcher

Plants with this name have been popular for many years and come in various colours. They grow and flower at their best in Northern N.S.W. and most places north. They are not particularly keen growing further south, but are hardy enough to grow and flower. So all Australians should be able to grow this species.

The name *billbergioides* means like a *billbergia* which seems strange when we envisage what we consider a *billbergia* should look like. However, it first made its appearance in the botanical world in 1830 under the name *Hohenbergia billbergioides*. At that time, known bromeliads would have only numbered a few hundred which puts things in a different perspective.

We know there are many forms of this plant and the keen ones will know that in Smith & Downes, page 1611, it was decided not to use the varietal names because it does not seem possible to distinguish the colour variations in this species and to apply them to all the names involved. Therefore names like var. *citrinum* or var. *purpureum* are incorrect unless you want to resurrect their status with good argument or write up a description in your best Latin with herbarium specimen!

This does not stop us trying to do the impossible from a horticultural point of view. With the aid of Diana Hughes and Robert and Melissa Dilling of the Northern N.S.W. coastal area, we have come up with a solution.

We will call each of the cultivars by the name of a fruit that is roughly or even suggests the colour of the primary bracts. For more precise colours we have referred to numbers in the colour chart in Isley's book, 'Tillandsia', or Graf's 'Exotica'. That way we would be consistent. Problems occur in nature where colour is not 'solid' colour, but seems flushed with another colour. Therefore, whenever 'flushed' appears in the description you'll know what to expect.

Another problem lies in leaf colour so you could have a plant with the same primary bract colour but different leaf colours. This is covered by a different fruit name! Some plants are variegated and in these cases a match can be made and then 'variegated' added to the fruit name, eg. *citron variegated*.

To start the ball rolling we have come up with eight names which are as follows;

Note - PB = Primary Bract. L = Leaf.

Apricot	- PB deep yellow orange	#2;	L green.
Blood orange	- PB redish orange	#24;	L green.
Citron			
(was citrinum)	- PB yellow	#3;	L green.
Lemon	- PB light yellow	#2;	L green.
Mulberry	- PB dark orange/mulberry	#19;	L redish both sides #28
Persimmon	- PB orange	#18;	L green.
Tamarillo	- PB orange flushed mulberry	#12	L rusty both sides #21
Tutti Frutti	- PB orange flushed mulberry	#12;	L green.

I feel sure I have seen *Nidularium billbergoides* with very dark primary bracts and sometimes very dark leaves where the colour is in the purple range eg. #47, so there must be others to add to the list and we have lots of fruit left!!

If you have any suggestions or plants to add to the list please contact the writer or Diana Hughes P.O.Box 814 Mullumbimby N.S.W. 2482.

25 Grace Road, Fulham S.A. 5024





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## About the Pineapple

In early American history, pineapples were exported from the West Indies to England and the Continent, and were at times used as table decorations at dinners given by the nobility of these countries. Sometimes the same pineapples were used by others for this purpose and consequently would grace the dinner tables of several people before finally being served as dessert. The pineapple gradually became a symbol of hospitality, in this role the fruit itself gave place to an image or likeness of the pineapple wrought in metal, usually silver, clay or wood. Pineapples carved from wood were used over entrance doors and fireplace mantels, perpetuating the symbolism of hospitality. Carved pineapples were also used on bed posts and other pieces of furniture.

Historians reported the pineapple was used for stomach disorders, its juice helped the recovery of squeamish stomachs if taken before a meal. Modern studies show the fruit contains an enzyme which has the property of digesting protein, this chemical component is named 'bromelain'. It was also used to arouse the appetite. Many people who could not eat because of an illness, regained a healthy appetite after taking the 'pineapple cure', it was said to stimulate them to endeavor to eat, restoring enjoyment.

**NEWSLETTER**

 Forthcoming Events 
  Member's Forum 
  Show Reports  
 Society News

**Monthly Meetings:**

15th January 1998

**Mini Show**

*Advanced - Intermediate - Novice*  
 Class 1. Aechmea species & hybrids.  
 Class 2. Vriesea species only.  
 Class 3. Dyckia species and hybrids.

Plant commentary by the Judges.

No plant of the Month because of Mini Show.

- Members choice display table (non competitive)
- Novice growers class - Len Trevor. 7.30pm sharp.

19th February 1998.

**Popular Vote***Advanced - Intermediate - Novice*

Any genus, any species.

Plant commentary - Neville Ryan.

- Display table - Plant of the Month. (Each month, excepting those months when Mini Shows are conducted, members are invited to table plants from genera starting with consecutive letters of the alphabet for display and commentary.)
- Plant of the Month - 'N'
- Novice growers class - Len Trevor 7.30pm sharp.
- Annual General Meeting.
- Colour slide programme.

**Study Group Meetings:**

24th January 1998 - 7.00a.m

28th February 1998 - 7.00a.m

Venue - 232 Canvey Road,  
Ferry Grove.**Combined Show Meetings**

Members representing the Society on the Combined Show Committee meet at the residence of;

John &amp; Marie D'Alton (CSSQ)

39 Agnes Street, Torwood.

Ph: (07) 3371 3707.

The next meeting will be held at 7.30pm on the 24th February 1998.

**Competition Winners - 1997.**

Congratulations are extended to the following members for their success in the Mini Shows and Popular Vote during 1997.

**Mini Shows***Advanced.*

First - Len &amp; Olive Trevor.

Second - Bob &amp; Mavis Paulsen.

*Intermediate*

First - Liz &amp; Noel Weir.

Second - Perry Crawford.

*Novice*

First - Bob Cross.

Second - Mike Symmons.

**Popular Vote***Advanced* - Len & Olive Trevor.*Intermediate* - Patricia O'Dea.*Novice* - Bob Cross.**Notice of Annual General Meeting.**

Members are hereby notified that the AGM of the Society will be held on the 19th February. The election of officers and the appointment of Stewards will be held during the AGM. With the exception of the Combined Show Committee and the Judges panel, all positions will become vacant and members are invited to nominate for the positions.

The colour slide programme on the 19th February is an evening not to be missed. The evening was suggested to the Management Committee after a parcel of colour slides were found among our Society's older records. There are over two hundred and fifty slides dating back to 1973, some are probably older. Olympus Pen, Gaf Anscochrome, Ferreniaco, Hanimex and Hanimount, all of these are undated, Kodachrome transparencies begin with 1973. Others have the name Grasselli hand written on each slide, but not dated.

Without giving too much away, they are in good condition, the slides are of bromeliad collections, the Combined Show, cacti and succulent displays and people I have not met. Members have been asked to bring along a number of their own slides to add to the evenings entertainment. A must for your diary.

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Congratulations to Nola Tucker, a very proud new mother; Nola, our society's treasurer, gave birth to Maddison, a beautiful baby girl, on December 14.

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### Roster for Raffle Plants

January	- Barry Genn - Viv & Jan Duncan
February	- Michael & Patricia O'Dea - Bob Cross
March	- Bob & Mavis Paulsen - Len & Olive Trevor

---

Thanks to Len Colgan, President of the South Australian Bromeliad Society for an interesting evening. His talk on collecting bromeliads in Bolivia was indeed enhanced by his coloured slides of the area. Thanks to Len and Olive Trevor for the use of their home on this occasion. Eighteen members attended the evening which was followed by a light supper.

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### Publication deadlines for Bromeliaceae

March - April Edition	19th February
May - June Edition	15th April

Please send all contributions for publications to :

The Editorial Committee

C/- Doug Upton

101 Jerrang Street, Indooroopilly, 4068

### Advertising in 'Bromeliaceae'

Available to members and interested persons at the following rates:

Annual Rate: \$30.00 (for six issues of Bromeliaceae)

Casual Rates: \$15.00 (for two issues of Bromeliaceae)

Size of advertisements is restricted to one third of a page of Bromeliaceae.

The first advertisement will appear in the next available issue of 'Bromeliaceae' after payment is received.

The Society reserves the right to refuse publication of any advertisement.

## Letters to the Editor

*Thank you for the correspondence received concerning the method of increasing pups on Vriesea splendens and Guzmania sanguinea, I apologize for not presenting all the replies, it was difficult to choose from the numbers. However, the following few should give the reader a general idea of the related contents of all the letters. Thank you again.*

*Ed.*

I hope you get many, many letters for the 'All and Sundry' pages, your answers are always well thought out and pleasing to read. I would like to be one of the 'LOTS OF MAIL' you asked for in the last issue of Bromeliaceae page twenty. My contribution comes from 'Question Box' from one of our Journals. I do not know who sent the question, but it was answered by our very dear Mulford Foster. I shall write to you again.

The question: Is *V.splendens* propagated only by seed because it does not produce suckers? Can you tell me if there are others like this, and if so, could you please publish a list of them?

The answer *V.splendens* can also be propagated by off-shoots, but the manner of removing the off-shoots is a bit more delicate and difficult than with most bromeliad species. After the inflorescence of a plant has reached its maturity, the new shoot will appear near the axis next to the inflorescence instead of at, or near, the base of the plant as is usual with most bromeliads. When this new shoot has reached a height of five to six inches, it may be removed with a sharp knife. The operation is a delicate one as it is necessary to cut through the live tissue of the old plant which will separate nearly half of the plant. The cut must not injure the tissue of the new off-shoot, and the old basal leaves should be removed before the cut is made.

If this operation is carefully done and the cut tissue treated with Captan, it is possible that the old plant will produce one or more off-shoots from the uninjured side. These later plants may be generally more easily removed than the first one. It takes some courage as well as a surgeon's skill to attempt this operation, especially if you have only one plant in your possession. Many, if not most bromeliad plants may be deliberately injured in the axis just be careful to antiseptically treat it with Captan, so that rot or decay will not set in, off-shoots one or more will soon appear. The main plant of course, will not continue its growth. This procedure of injuring the centre may be carried out even with seedlings two or more inches in height. I hope your readers found it interesting.

*Mrs P. Reeves*  
Orlando Florida.

To increase ones stock of *V.splendens* is nothing new (Vol.XXX No.6 Nov/13ec. '97, page 20). I tried it out myself after reading an article in the Bromeliad Society Bulletin many years ago. The article was written by an Australian, Charles Webb of Sydney. He planted some seeds of *V.splendens*, they germinated and grew, but some rotted out in the centre, they didn't die but developed three pups. Mr. Webb wrote that it was then that the idea occurred to him, and that was to deliberately destroy the plants centre inner leaves to try and increase more pups. He realized it would set back their growth, but if successful it should pay good dividends, as at that time these vrieseas were not plentiful.

I decided to try his method myself. With two *V.splendens* I took out their centres. One plant never did a thing for over a year, it later produced four new leaves, but they were all malformed. The other, after about three month grew two pups, one on the top leaf axil, another on a leaf axil underneath the first. These two pups grew, I potted them in separate containers and both produced a good sized inflorescence in about eighteen months. The plant that malformed lived for another year and then produced a pup, it never grew into a sizable plant and never produced an inflorescence. I believe the method is worth trying, my successes over some years, have been better than the failures.

*Peter Carrol*  
North Queensland.

The method used to increase stock of *V.splendens* and *G.sanguinea* has been known and tried for years. It does not always work with these two bromeliads but with others that form their pups lower down the base of the plant, and under the potting mix, it can work very well. It would seem to stimulate the plant into producing more than its usual number of pups.

*Martin Elder*  
Rockhampton Qld.

Regarding the potentially extra pupper-inducing technique on *G.sanguinea* and *V.splendens* in the last issue, you do not need to remove central leaves. Destroying the growing point is the crucial factor, and this can be effected by skewering the tip with a shank-ended knife or metal prong, vertically through the caudex.

*Geoff Lawn*  
Como, West Australia.

I wondered how many letters you received regarding the method of increasing pups? Nov/Dec., issue '97. I cannot help with the guzmania but I thought you might like to hear of my experiences with *V.splendens*.

Some years ago I received a phone call from a grower who had moved house to a hillside location. He said his plants were effected by cold and he wanted to sell all but the most hardy bromeliads in his collection. I purchased a selection of his plants that did look to be affected by the cold. It wasn't until I had taken the plants from their pots to wash and remove unsightly leaves that I realized the damage was not caused by cold conditions. These bromeliads shared a sarlon covered house with orchids and had been given dressings of granular fertilizer into the cups as well as the surface of all potting mixes. The fertilizer grains built up inside the cups and caused the burn-like marks to the leaves.

The most affected were the *V.splendens* (there were no *guzmania*) with most leaves rotting in the cups. The damaged parts were cut away carefully, with a razor blade, the remaining stubs were washed and dried before dusting with a sulphur powder - later they produced a couple of off-sets from the sides. A mature flowering plant would produce the off-set from the centre, alongside the spent inflorescence. Occasionally some growers have also had a side off-set or two from their plant, but it is still rather unusual.

*Olwen Ferris*  
Gold Coast Qld.

First let me say how much I enjoy 'Bromeliaceae', also the colour photographs are beautiful.

You had a question about the Handbook of the Bromeliaceae by J.G.Baker. It was reprinted in 1972 by J.Cramer . 33001 Lehre, Wheldon & Wesley Ltd. Stechert - Hafner Service Agency Inc. and then, Codicote, Herts New York, N.Y. Also titled 'Plant Monograph Reprints' Ed. by J.Cramer & H.K.Swann. Printed in Germany by Strauss & Cramer G m b H, 6901 Leutershausen, I S B N 3 7682 0752 8. I bought my copy from a mail-order second hand book company specialising in botanical books. It certainly is dated but belongs on a shelf of anyone having a complete bromeliad library.

*Moyna Prince*  
Miami, Florida.

Much has been written on cryptanthus culture, I would like to offer some advice in the form of a helpful hint. You can salvage cryptanthus pups that break away from the parent and then become quite a trial to keep upright in their new container. I used to lose a lot of the pups because I had to plan them far to deep in an effort to keep them upright. Simply glue the base of the pup to a flat piece of wood charcoal. I don't believe it matters what type of glue is used and apart from supplying the rigidity the pup requires, the charcoal makes a good sterile medium which when planted just under a thin layer of potting mix, induces new roots to form. I allow the glue to dry overnight before I handle and plant my work of salvage.

*George Watson*  
Gold Coast, Qld.

## My Good Deed for the Day - Liz Rowland.

In the last few issues of Bromeliaceae, each has made reference to frogs, lizards and insects. This is not unusual because these creatures live in our bromeliads, in their natural habitat and our shade house areas.

After a lot of thought I decided to write and tell our readers about a small green frog living in my bromeliads. The reason I was hesitant, my article does not contain any cultural notes and it does not deal with any problems I may or may not have with my bromeliads. It does however centre within my bromeliad shade house, where *Neoregelia* 'Aussie Dream' is home to a very brave small green frog.

I was tidying my plants, just a general check up, when I noticed a large grasshopper on the *Neo*. 'Aussie Dream'. I reached out to catch it (I was wearing gloves) but it was too quick for me, it flew to the side wall and held on to the shade cloth. I immediately began to move towards it when I noticed what I first thought to be a small green leaf caught on one of its back legs.

As I moved closer I saw the leaf was in fact a small green frog. Its tiny legs were pushing against one of the grasshopper's back legs trying to free itself, its mouth was caught on the spines of the grasshopper's rear leg.

What I believe happened is this - the hopper landed on the neoregelia, the home of the green frog. The frog objected to this intrusion, and in an effort to be rid of this intruder, the frog tried to bite the hopper on the leg. His open mouth closed over the leg spines and they punctured the fine tissue around the frogs mouth, he was held fast. The grasshopper was not able to dislodge his attacker and the frog was unable to adjust its mouth to be rid of the leg spines.

I had no idea how long these two endured this predicament, it was certainly no love match, and I'm sure each would be glad to be rid of the other.

Not waiting to loose sight of the pair, I called my husband for help. After a couple of attempts I managed to catch this unusual quarry, but in no time the grasshopper managed to push out of my hand and flew to another wall, however, minus one rear leg. In my open hand I had its leg with the tiny green frog still attached.

We were unable to comfortably force the discarded leg out of the frog's mouth, there was already torn tissue around its mouth. With a pair of small nail scissors we were able to go inside the tiny mouth and cut a section of the discarded leg. The tension released, we were able to remove the remaining pieces.

A little worse for wear, we placed the frog on a leaf of 'Aussie Dream', it quickly disappeared among the leaves. I hope it has learned a lesson.

## All and Sundry

**Q/.** In almost every issue of Bromeliaceae you recommend the use of some fertilizer, either in the potting mix or a foliar spray. We are told plants flourish in their natural habitat and collectors talk and show slides of beautiful bromeliads in the jungles. They grow in trees with no nutrition from the soil. Why then, under T.L.C. plus careful cultivation and protection in our shade-house, do we need to fertilize? Plants in the wild do not get fertilized once a week.

**A/.** Bromeliads in their lofty sites in trees depend on what wind and rain have to offer. Along with water, solvent nutrients are also absorbed, rain rinses out mineral particles floating in the air. Dust from the ground can be blown by the wind, it settles on bromeliad leaves and with the first drops, it is washed into their cups. Heavy rain can dislodge any decaying vegetable matter among the branches of trees, leaves, dead insects, excreta from small animals and birds, this debris is washed into the bromeliads to form a steady stream of food. Bromeliad scales absorb and pass these nutrients to the plant body.

Of the bromeliads that grow close to the ground, their cups and funnels shelter a menagerie of small insects, frogs and lizards. Their droppings help to feed the plant. The French scientist, C.Picado, reported all groups of animals usually living in ponds and swamps have representatives living in bromeliads. They depend on the plants, finding in them what they need. By way of the scales, the plant absorbs most organic waste, water in the funnels can remain fairly clean, however, in the wild when the funnels are overloaded with decaying matter the bromeliads themselves will rot, and before they become putrid, the animal life will move to a new home.

If we could duplicate all of this in our shade house or wherever we enclose our bromeliads, there would be no need to fertilize, nature would do it for us.

**Q/.** In the Sept/Oct, '97 issue of our Journal the article on Pitcairnia has tempted me to try again, try again that is to grow this genus. I don't know what I do wrong but they will not grow for me. I would like to try the two mentioned in the article, I need some growing hints please.

**A/.** An article by Peter Paroz in the Jan/Feb. 1997 issue will help you. Pitcairnia are usually not difficult to cultivate, maybe you are killing them with too much attention. Try growing your plants in a shady part of your greenhouse, as the young plants mature they will appreciate a larger container. Most pitcairnia have

an extensive root system, and like a moist well drained potting medium.

Q/. I am certain I have followed all the rules to ensure my plants don't get brown dry leaf tips. It has been a problem ever since I began collecting bromeliads. I have sought information from members who should be able to solve this problem, but all advice has failed. I know I am not alone with this problem other members speak of it, is there anyone who doesn't have this problem? I am not sure, but, a few weeks after rain the problem seems to be worse. I have heard of acid rain, I really know nothing about it, but could this be a cause? I have seen tests on water taken from bromeliads, it was on the acid side.

A/. There are a number of reasons for dry leaf tips, most of which have been discussed, at some length in past issues of Bromeliaceae. If you go back over these issues it is possible you will associate one or two of the suggestions with your problem. The pH of the water in a typical bromeliad is always on the acid side. The water becomes acidic by the action of bacteria, the decomposing of organic material that has fallen into the plant. Should the water become too acidic, bacterial action is then slowed, many nutrients become less available, water in the plant will become putrid and with an overload of organic matter the plant will suffer.

My knowledge of acid rain is very limited, what I know has come from various books. It is an interesting subject, one that is worrying our world environmentalists and of course, bromeliad growers. Rain water, as with all things, can become polluted, in Australia we are told it is not a problem. Scientists world wide tell us the culprit would seem to be spewed from industrial plants. Their exhaust stacks are said to release the pollution after the burning of coal and oil. Chemicals released into the air are oxidized in the atmosphere into sulfuric and nitric acids.

Many aspects of acid rain are not fully understood. What is known is that sulfuric and nitric acids make up a fair percentage of air pollution. What is not known at what levels these acids inflict damage on various element of the environment, or more to the point, what the extent of the damage is likely to be. \*

Numerous studies include forests, wildlife, crops and of course human life. Also, for instance, some evidence suggests that the extra lime conferred on soil by acid rain could be beneficial to vegetation. However, there is no way it can be made to fall where it will be useful and not where it will do harm. It is highly unlikely acid rain is causing your problem. If you are concerned by the pH levels in the water, isolate a few of your plants and water these plants alone with water

treated with a few drops of vinegar, it will lower the pH. Select clean plants without dry leaf tips. After a period of time, you might give us a progress report.

**Q/.** Several weeks before a show when one repots potential entries, the procedure seems to cause one or more lower leaves to yellow and die effecting their removal which spoils the plant's conformation. Is there a way to prevent this happening and what is the cause? One resorts to delay this repotting until just a few days before the show. I refer to simple repotting with the root ball intact, not propagation or division. Does the addition of fresh medium and or bark top dressing with subsequent extra nutrients cause the plant's metabolism to go into more pup and/or leaf production, thereby shedding older leaves in the progress ?

**A/.** To repot a plant several weeks before competition should be carried out with some care. Quite often there is a tendency to set the plant too deeply in the potting medium to attain stability. Consequently in the following weeks, one or more lower leaves will yellow necessitating their removal. There are other views, however planting too deeply is usually the main offender.

Simple repotting with the root ball intact can be carried out up to a few minutes before placing your plant on the competition table. However it should only be deemed necessary because the pot or container is considered unsuitable or in poor condition.

Additional fresh potting medium at this time will not cause the plant's metabolism to go into a pupping production, the reason for this can be more complex. Again, there are other views, but each only serves to unify some apparently unconnected observations. For example, the plant-hormone auxin, formed in the growing parts of plants, plays a number of roles; among them are the diverse ones of both stimulating and inhibiting growth. The auxin, which in minute amounts regulates or modifies the growth of plants, and the direction from which the larger amounts come determines which effect predominates; auxin from above inhibits, from below stimulates. After deep planting the lower leaves yellow and are usually taken from the plant. When the leaves are gone their auxin no longer holds the buds at their bases dormant, and the off-shoots can start.

**Q/.** Just how much light is enough for growing bromeliads. I realise some require more light than others. So I arrange these plants in the brightest area in my shadehouse. Still, I consider most of my plants are too dull, they do not achieve the colourful brilliance I have seen in other collections. My shadehouse is close

to my neighbours fence and is shaded by one of his trees, the shadehouse does get some direct sunlight but it could be better. If I were to change the shadecloth from 75% to 50% do I risk plant damage ?

A/. The amount of light that a plant receives depends upon the duration as well as the intensity of the light. You say your shadehouse does get some sunlight, does some mean three, four or five hours? It is difficult to advise from the information you have given. Light intensity controls the shape, leaf size and colour of our bromeliads. Within the range of adaptability of the plant, a high light intensity will produce a compact symmetrical growth with well shaped leaves and good colour. Low light intensity will result in larger leaves that are of strappy growth and poor colour. You complain your plants are too dull, this does indicate a light problem.

Light performs two functions, first it supplies the energy for photosynthesis, the process whereby plants produce sugar which is necessary for life and growth. Second, it controls many of the plants growth and flowering habits. As a rule, our bromeliads will benefit from as much bright light as possible whether their foliage is plain green, variegated or coloured. Many bromeliads will not tolerate direct sunlight, the most common form of leaf damage is burn, others will endure direct sunlight after they have been acclimatized, however, be mindful of our hot Queensland sun.

You say your shadehouse gets some direct sunlight, perhaps if you have a word with your neighbour, he might remove a section of the tree. The added sunlight could be enough for your plants.

Q/. Do you have any information about a wax that is manufactured in South America under the name of Moss Wax. It is a smooth liquid wax in a squeeze bottle and can be applied to almost any surface. It is soluble in various organic solvents, easily purified and produces a hard glossy finish to wood work. Do you know if it is available in Australia ?

A/. An article published in 'Science' May 29, 1953, Vol.117, Seldon D.Feurt and Laurretta E.Fox of the College of Pharmacy, University of Florida, Gainesville, stated: 'In view of the recent endeavors to procure a suitable substitute for carnauba wax from natural plant sources or by synthesis of low molecular weight waxes, attention is called to the wax present in commercial quantities in Spanish Moss.....The freshly gathered moss contains approximately 5% wax....' Sorry, this is the only information I have. You have not mentioned where you obtained your information, I am interested, please write again.

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