

S.A. BROMELIAD GAZETTE

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The Bromeliad Society of South Australia Inc

Editor- Derek Butcher. Assist Editor – Bev Masters

Born 1977 and still offsetting!

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President: Adam Bodzioch

58 Cromer Parade Millswood 5034 Ph: 0447755022

Secretary: Bev Masters

6 Eric Street, Plympton 5038 Ph: 83514876

Vice president: Peter Hall

Treasurer: Trudy Hollinshead

Committee: Penny Seekamp

Julie Batty

Dave Batty

Sue Skrabei

Jeff Hollinshead

Kallam Sharman

Life members: Margaret Butcher, Derek Butcher,

: Len Colgan, Adam Bodzioch

: Bill Treloar



Email address:

Secretary – bev.masters@bigpond.com

Web site: <http://www.bromeliad.org.au>

Cultivar Register <http://botu07.bio.uu.nl/bcg/bcr/index.php>

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Neoregelia 'Rainbow' (Photo J. Batty)

MEETING & SALES 2018 DATES

14/1/2018 (Pricklies-any Genera), 11/2/2018 AGM (Genera name changes), 4/3/2018-1st **SUNDAY** (Summer brag), 24/3/2018 & 25/3/2018 **Show & Sales**, 08/4/2018 (Safety in the garden), 06/5/2018- 1st **SUNDAY** (Workshop- pups, soils etc), 3/6/2018-1st **SUNDAY** (Guest speaker) 8/7/2018 (Challenges growing Brom's), 12/8/2018(Winter brag) 16/9/2018-3rd **SUNDAY** (Plants from Interstate), 14/10/2018 (to be advised), 27/10/2018 & 28/10/2018 **Show & Sales**, 11/11/2018 -130PM start, pup exchange, special afternoon tea – bring a plate of finger food to share, plant auction.

Applications for membership always welcome – Subs \$15 single \$25 Dual : Due Feb 2018

Meetings Venue:

Maltese Cultural Centre,
6 Jeanes Street,
Beverley

Time: 2.00pm. Second Sunday of each month. Exceptions –1st Sunday in March, May, June & 3rd Sunday September. - or unless advised otherwise (see dates below).
No meeting in December
VISITORS & NEW MEMBERS WELCOME.

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Roving Reporter October 2017

Gosh it was great meeting. One where your brain was challenged where you sometimes got a collective answer (With Bill and Margaret!) that was in the right direction. I don’t mean the two plants with links to *Billbergia nutans* brought in from the Barossa by Malcolm Ray. One was *Billbergia* ‘Windii’ or was it ‘Theodore L Mead’. The following should make interesting reading.

***Billbergia* ‘Theodore L Mead’ revisited by Butcher in J Brom Soc 62(4): 177-180. 2012**

You may recall that I wrote extensively about the problems associated with linking *Billbergia* ‘Windii’ and *Billbergia* ‘Theodore L Mead’ in J. Brom. Soc. 48(6): 247-9. 1998

14 years later we have more data and this means we have more things to discuss. This is what happened. Paul Butler of Winter Park, Florida is writing a short biography of Theodore L. Mead (1852-1936). He pointed out that in this article I stated that “*Billbergia nutans* was one of Mead’s favourite plants for hybridising, but he did not keep records, and only bequeathed problems”.

This statement is far from the truth. In the archives of the libraries of the University of Central Florida (UCF) and Rollins College, Winter Park, where his research has taken him, are hundreds of letters Mead wrote and received and records he kept of his horticultural work. In fact, Mead was obsessive about record keeping, retained everything, and kept a meticulous and detailed notebook of all his crosses. Paul even came across lists from the 1920’s recording every single Xmas card and present that Mead and his wife Edith received! However, much of the material is in disrepair.

The horticultural notebook at UCF appears especially valuable, detailing thousands of orchid crosses as well as his other work. It appears that nobody with horticultural knowledge had bothered to go through this notebook. Paul has captured all the notes by Mead on Bromeliads from 1922 to near to his death in 1936. The 1920’s are the more interesting because these were basically primary hybrids and possibly identifiable from the quoted parentage. Later references were of hybrids crossed with hybrids. The only ones worth investigating are where the plants had actually been sent to others and therefore spread around. There is a greater chance that these would be still growing in gardens by the time The Bromeliad Society was formed in 1950.

What revelations! We now know Mead was growing *Billbergia nutans* x *B. zebrina* which we assume was his own hybrid and that he had sent at least one specimen to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden in 1925. We know that in 1923 he also sent plants to Dr. Henry Nehrling, Plant Pioneer of Florida (1853-1929), in Naples Florida so we know there are two possible sources in Florida for this hybrid to be distributed. In 1926 he sent 3 plants of *B. nutans* x *B. Leopoldi* (now *B. brasiliensis*) to Nehrling. BUT THAT IS NOT ALL. In a letter from Mulford Foster to Bill Morris in Australia, “28 Oct. 1958 - The parentage of *Billbergia* xmeadii, I believe is *B. nutans* x *B. porteana*. However, I have seen more than one hybrid that was sold under this name. (Butcher’s comment – This is feasible because of Mead’s habit of calling his hybrids by a short-hand code like nu-ze, nu-spec, nu-sau etc) The plant has never been authentically named or described.” This thought is confirmed by a B&W picture Paul found in Michael Spencer’s collection of Foster’s papers at the University of Central Florida. This shows xMeadii with the notation of *nutans* x *porteana* on the back according to Racine Foster, dated 1940. Foster does not give any reasoning why he thought *B. porteana* because one would guess that *B. Leopoldi* would also give bluish tones to the stigma/style, if this was his distinction.

From what Victoria Padilla writes about, plants called *xmeadii* and later 'Theodore L Mead' were in circulation in California in the 1950's. This suggests to me that they originated from Orpet. We now have four pollen parents from the subgenus *Helicodea* to contend with. Just what would be the differences between these crosses and that of the parents of *Billbergia* 'Windii' (*B. nutans* x *B. decora*)?

As far as I am aware, no hybridist has pointed out relationships to colour of stamens and stigma in their creating hybrids and one of the few groups of Bromeliaceae that show off these sex-parts is the *Helicodea* subgenus of *Billbergia*.

We know that Mead was not growing *Billbergia decora* so he must have used another *Helicodea* species to achieve 'Theodore L Mead'. The main contender seems to be *B. porteana*.

I did wonder if the violet stigma lobes on plants called *B. 'Windii'* could really be *B. 'Theodore L Mead'* because of the 1889 description of *B. Windii* but Morren's description of *B. decora* puts doubts on this. In other words I still do not know the differences between the two cultivars, but it was great fun looking at old records.

Further revelations in the notebook have meant that comments have been placed in the Bromeliad Cultivar Register of Mead's re-makes of *B. 'Leodiensis'* and *B. 'Hoelscheriana'*. Many of his recorded hybrids will, alas, never be traced.

And if that is not enough brain fodder we had a clump of *Billbergia* hybrid that had two distinct inflorescences one at early flowering and the other at late flowering. This shows you cannot be hasty with identification. The closest we could come up with was *Billbergia* 'Violet Beauty'. This had its origins in California some 60 years ago and its parents are in doubt. Only recently have I been in contact with a chap who wanders around Huntington Botanic Gardens checking that labels link with identity. Luckily most of the plants are species but some are hybrids just like our own Adelaide Bot Garden. To think I used to play the same game at the Adelaide Bot garden and would call it the dance of the labels! Anyway, his concept of 'Violet Beauty' seems the same as ours.

BUT my warm fuzzy feeling came from an unknown on the raffle table which had flowers almost opening. There were several on offer and one went to Malcolm Ray with a challenge. Both Margaret and I knew it had links to *Aechmea organensis* but what. On returning home to my beloved computer I knotted the loose ends. It used to be grown in Australia as *Aechmea gracilis* for many years until Harry Luther pointed out what the TRUE *A. gracilis* looked like and said ours was a depauperate *A. organensis*. I did not like putting depauperate *A. organensis* on my label so we decided to call this form *Aechmea* 'Graceful' which I hope those of you who won one will use. For the purist, check me by referring to the BCR

Before talking about the display plants Adam reminded us all that Spring is in the air and we should be starting our thoughts about Summer

Light. Think of the changes in the position of the sun and its intensity. Shift your plants if necessary. Remember the higher the plants the more light they get. Optimise fresh air/wind. Consider an extra sheet of shade cloth

Water More often in the cooler part of the day- early early morning is best. Rainwater is better than tap. Consider misters which cool rather than providing moisture. Consider saucers under pots. Consider mulch of some sort for the floor

Offsets This is a good time for removal of pups which should be about 1/3 size of mother. Allow some time for wounds to heal. To root offsets remember they like to be firm in their soil-mix – use pop-sticks/ skewers if you want.

Pots If using old pots make sure they have been washed

Repotting While Broms will grow in small pots consider larger pots and soil mix. Remember a large pot takes longer to dry out

Mounts If you want to attach your plants to wood or the like, make sure you have all the equipment!

The popular plant was *Cryptanthus* 'It' brought in by Julie Batty which proves that even with such a tricky genus to grow in Adelaide anything is possible. The name is intriguing and I wonder how it came into being. I can only imagine the conversation being, "Are you growing it?"
Interesting reading follows



Cryptanthus 'It' (Photo J. Batty)

Letter to Thelma O'Reilly in California from William Drysdale February 24, 1994

Good Ol' 'It'

Cryptanthus 'It' had a meteoric rise to prominence in the plant world of the late 1960s. For many it was the only bromeliad they knew. It is, of course, a mutation.

The all green form was brought into this country by Mulford Foster, collection number 2466, from its home on the Monte de Burro range near Bahia Brazil in 1948. Robert Wilson of Fantastic Gardens in Miami obtained a specimen; and, at his nursery around 1964, it sported so as to bear a broad band of shocking pink at the leaf edges. This reduction of the green area reduces the amount of photosynthesis taking place so that the plant is slow to reach maturity which may result in a plant of 18 inches up to nearly 2 feet across. E.C.Hummel acquired a plant from Bob Wilson with whom he did a great deal of trading. Since it was in such great demand he (as did Horace Anderson also) had it tissue cultured. This technique at that time was in its infancy and was very likely done by Dr. Murashiga at the UC Riverside campus since Murashiga was the leading practitioner of this technique. It was, in the case of *Cryptanthus* 'It' a questionable success since the fee was quite steep. Of course, if it were a complete success there was great profit to be made. In this instance the majority of the resultant plants did not resemble *Cryptanthus* 'It', but were a solid green, many were albino, a small number were carbon copies of *Cryptanthus* 'It' and some had the color patterns of 'It' reversed. It was clever of someone to invert the spelling of 'It' to 'Ti' which name this form is almost universally known; however, Hummel named the selection *Cryptanthus* 'Minnie Belle', which name for purists has priority. Subsequently, Hummel listed it as C. 'Ti' also. The tissue cultured plants that did duplicate *Cryptanthus* 'It' proved to be highly unstable so that on a single mature plant and all at the same time would bear offsets some of which were all green, others were albino, as well as those colored like C. 'It' and C. 'Ti'.

William Drysdale

If you are really interested Thelma O'Reilly did visit Adelaide in 1997 when she was intrigued that I wore tailored shorts AND long white socks!

I did notice several plants that had a formula on the label which reminded me of Herb Plever's crusade in his Newsletter all the way from New York. As he points out, it only identifies the parents and when one is a hybrid, its brothers and sisters from the same seed capsule or berry are all different. The hybridist has not even selected for the best and although your plant is unique there are perhaps 20 plants with same formula but all different. This is one way where the hybridist can sell all plants from that seedling batch. The only way this practice will be curtailed is when formula plants are not bought. If, however, you get a plant that is exceptional you can propagate offsets and give them a proper name and register it in the BCR.

The large pot of a clumping *Neoregelia* 'Zoe' is of interest because it was bred from intercrossing and back-crossing 'Fireball' with a carolinae variegata to give very faint variegations. What is of even more interest is that the name was patented in the US meaning you could not sell offsets there without formal approval.

It was great that Bill was able to solve the case of the previously unidentified *Aechmea orlandiana* ssp *belloi* which could be described as an *Aechmea orlandiana* with the minimum of leaf markings. If you refer to the BCR you will see 22 cultivar names which show how popular this species is to the nurseryman usually based on the intensity of black markings on the leaf.

Wasn't it interesting to see an old favourite *Billbergia* 'Santa Barbara' AND in flower? My experience over the years has been you needed to get a pot full of mature sized offsets before one decided to flower. Here we had just one plant and one offset. This variegate has a clouded past. Some 55 years ago it was 'found' in Madame Ganna Walska's garden in California. She was well known in the cosmetics industry after World War II. It was thought to be a sport of a hybrid of unknown parents. I can only see *Billbergia nutans* in the flower and we know how variable the plant can be in size. In other words I link it to *Billbergia nutans* var *striata* Reitz that cropped up in the wild.



Billbergia 'Santa Barbara' (Photo J. Batty)

Finally to those who were lucky enough to win an adventitious offset of *Tillandsia australis* in the Raffle. To those who speak German you would say 'grasartigen' which is more apt. You may have a minimum of 6 years to get your plant to flower but it is worth it. Some Tillandsias flower and set seed and do not produce normal offsets. But nature has a trick up her sleeve. Many of these rock growing plants produce grass-like offsets at the base before flowering starts. They are only there IF the main plant is damaged and cannot flower. The main plant dies but one of the grass offsets takes over. If the main plant does flower and dies it takes the grass offsets with it. In other words you get these offsets before they get the death wish! So the best of luck and happy growing. I hope you decided on pot culture



Tillandsia australis. (Photo & 'brag' D. Butcher)

2018 Sunday Mail Home & Outdoor living show update



A section of the display (Photo B. Masters)

The dazzling colours of bromeliads were on display at the Gardening and Outdoor Living Show at the Wayville Showgrounds and we received many compliments on the display.

This event is a good marketing opportunity, a lot of flyers for our Oct sales were distributed with many indicating they would attend. Adam, Peter, Ron & Bev provide d advice on the growing bromeliads in South Australia., and there were plants for sale. Many thanks to Wendy who took over on Sunday so we could attend our monthly meetings. *Bev*

2017 October 'Extravaganza' & sales



Vriesea display (Photo J. Batty)

A Colourful showing of the variety of Bromeliad genera on display, combined with the generous exchange of information, helpful growers, a varied range of quality bromeliads for sale, enthusiastic customers, and plenty of good humour again contributed to our very successful October weekend 'Extravaganza'

There was a long line of eager customers waiting for the door to open Saturday morning, coming prepared with boxes or picking one up on the way in then some time later with somewhat heavier boxes again waiting in the lengthy queue to pay.

Those who donated the excellent raffle plants provided a real incentive to buy tickets when any one of them would make the winner happy.

It is evident that a show and sale with a good atmosphere not only boosts the club's finances but appeared to be enjoyed by all.

Many thanks to all who gave up their time (particularly non-members) to help set up on Friday and especially on Sunday afternoon packing up and cleaning which was completed in record time, 'many hands make light work' is very appropriate & **greatly appreciated.** *Bev*

VALE - Yvonne Patricia Goldfinch (Pat) 2.7.1933 – 26.9.17

It is with great sadness that we advise members and friends about the passing of a special lady, Pat Goldfinch, on Tuesday September 26th. Pat had been ill for a very long time but still tried to attend our meetings whenever she could. Gardening was her great love.

Pat joined our Society in 2004 which means she was a member for 13 years. Pat is a great loss and will be missed by all who knew her. *Joy Stinson*

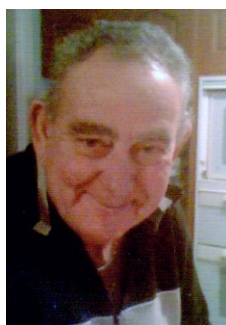
VALE – Noel Richards by Derek Butcher Oct 2017

I first knew Noel some 50 years ago when he was Secretary of the Cactus and Succulent Society of SA and I was the Editor. His wife, Marie, typed the Gestetner stencil sheets and we printed them in a ‘den’ that Noel had built at the back of his garage. The actual printing machine was manually operated and one complete turn meant one side of a sheet was printed. At one time there were 700 members so printing took a long time. But there was great camaraderie and all enjoyed the ‘work’. Noel specialised in Euphorbia of the succulent kind. These had evolved in Africa to be almost cactus-like. I was not particularly interested in them because of their toxic sap which meant you had to be careful when taking offsets. By the way there were people who were interested in Cactus who lived the other side of the street by the name of Penny and Trevor Seekamp!

We drifted apart but next I heard that Noel was into Palms and Cycads. I never went into Palms but it is interesting that Noel and I had similar plant tastes because I did have a spell at cycads that I grew from seed. These are usually the size of chicken eggs so you did not get many per packet.

The next thing I knew was that Noel was interested in Tillandsias and joined our Society in 2011. In recent years my Tillandsia collection has been on the wane and on several occasions Noel called to pick up second-hand mallee pieces on which to mount his growing collection. So it was a great shock to get a phone call from his daughter Brenda to say that Noel had passed away.

So you see, over the years, Noel and I did bump into each other because of plant interests. In others like wine tasting, oysters, dancing, and ocean liners they were Noel’s domain. But if ever you wanted a helping hand you only had to ask for Noel



A life remembered.

The celebration of Noel’s life was just that, noting his involvement in a range of interests that included ballroom dancing, parties, music, holidays, helping others, a treasured family man and a valued friend.

I will remember Noel & Rosalie arriving early to our meetings, sitting in the front row eagerly awaiting & participating in any relevant discussions especially relating to Tillandsias. He was very meticulous keeping records of the plants he grew and sold.

Even in declining health Noel was always positive and his continued support and devotion to Rosalie was inspiring. Thank you Noel! *Bev*

Festival of Flowers 2018



Planning is underway for this 2 day event which will again be at St Paul’s on 21st April & 22nd April.

This is the only one of its kind in the gathering of like minded gardening groups and is a unique South Australian enterprise.

The Committee is formulating something different in an additional display featuring plants from each group.

Bev



Another successful end of year gathering. I now have a new set of hearing aids and was even able to hear the Secretary read the minutes! I even noticed the silence when all were gathered around for the special afternoon tea.

Bill did a great job at the auction ably assisted by Adam with his paper bags that were more like Cornucopias than Pandora's boxes. Some were recent *Neoregelia* hybrids by Chester Skotak that Adam had acquired from his contacts in Queensland.

These days I do not participate in the bidding and all I can say is that some got carried away and paid higher than expected and yet others got a good bargain.

I was more interested in the plants that had a bit of history (I wonder why?) whereas others are more interested in the new hybrids that kept coming out of Adam's paper bags. It always surprises me as to the number of plants that showed up that I had thought were long lost to mankind.

Margaret took notes of these and some are worthy of mention. First up is the clump of male *Hechtia tillandsioides*, so called because its leaves are virtually spineless. It was in flower so you could tell the sex and one of these days I will get one of our members adept. One thing with *Hechtia* that still puzzles me is that we have a genus where most plants are either male or female and the one species that has separate male and female flowers on the same plant. You would think evolution would have killed off such plants years ago. We know that most flowers have both male and female parts in the same floral bed so things do not have to move far to mate.



Hechtia tillandsioides (Male) photo by Derek Butcher



Hechtia tillandsioides (Male) photo by Derek Butcher

So a *Hechtia tillandsioides* in Australia is a bit lonely because as far as I know no females are around and all plants here would have been offsets from the same clone. Anyone who has suffered from Hay-fever knows that nature produced oodles of pollen and I am forever asking the 'experts' as to whether a seed pod contains 50% males and 50% females when 10% males, 90% females could work just as well. Recently, I found out that a Californian had crossed two from the non-prickly species (there are only 3 or 4) BUT on enquiry he had not yet flowered any of the progeny to prove what sort of crossing had occurred. No doubt, no investigation will take place! The new owner of the pot full will have to split it up so they will have several plants.

Another plant to leave the Butcher home was *Fosterella spectabilis*. What a marvellous species name! To think that when this Society was founded this entire genus had small white to grey-green flowers that produced seed by the hundreds. *Fosterella* when not in flower look like *Cryptanthus* with floppy leaves but easier to grow. They go dormant in our winters so don't throw them away in despair. So there was great joy in 1997 when Harry Luther had a new *Fosterella* flower at Marie Selby Gardens that had reddish petals. Needless to say, he got oodles of seed and some got to Australia.

One person would have gone home with a growing challenge. You see they successfully bid on an *Aechmea gamosepala* that had sported variegation. A few of the centre leaves had gone almost totally yellow. Now, a yellow leaf can still do photosynthesis but less efficiently than a green one, White parts of a leaf seem incapable. It is not unusual for this species to sport because we already have 'Lucky Stripes' and 'Mardi Gras'. I am sure the new owner will have great fun watching developments

Talking about oddities we must not forget the *Tillandsia somnians* which was just getting ready to flower. What was odd was the length of the floral scape (peduncle). After flowering the plant will keep growing by an offset produced at the base of the flowering head suggesting that in nature it grows in bushes. I still don't know the significance of 'somnians' which means dreaming or sleeping other than it just lies around! It was great to see *Tillandsia esseriana* changing hands. This has a large flower – when it comes – which is more likely if you let the plant clump.

What a surprise to hear the name Billbergia 'Green Sand' called out. Both Margaret and I exclaimed 'Barclay Binney' from some 35 years ago. He was a Queenslander who probably only ever did one hybrid in his life and then was so unimpressed he didn't even name it. But beauty is in the eye of the beholder and both Margaret and I were impressed by this *B. sanderiana* hybrid. Why 'Green Sand'? Well Greensand is a mineral called glauconite which we try to link to a poor-man's Emerald!!

Finally there was an Aechmea 'Que Sera' (meaning whatever will be!) which will have a large inflorescence. This goes back to the old days when Keith Bradtberg grew seed from all over the place and we had great fun trying to link the name on the packet with what grew! In this case it was supposed to be *Aechmea serrata*.

NOVEMBER AUCTION



Thank you to all who donated the pups & plants for the swap & auction. This was again a great success & a lot of fun even tho some of us were unsuccessful in our bids! The amount raised was over \$1,100 –well done & thankyou!

2017 Reflections- From your Secretary

This has been another successful yet busy "Bromaholic" year involving several presentations to various Garden clubs, Festival of Flowers, sales extravaganzas, meetings, display of Bromeliads in Royal show which included multiple winners in the Bromeliad plants Competition sections, Sunday Mail Home and Garden show, Christmas in July but more importantly the celebration of our Society reaching 40 years, yet there was still time to nurture & appreciate our Bromeliads.

This is an appropriate time to recall those friendships we have lost in the last few years, but memories remain dear & I again acknowledge their contributions to our Society- sadly missed but never forgotten. Our thoughts are with members who have lost loved ones.

I would like to extend sincere thanks to all with special appreciation to individual members who assist with the many mundane but necessary chores. Also gratitude is given to those who continue to give me support & friendship. It is great to be part of a friendly, inclusive & informative group.

Seasons greetings, wishing everyone a safe & prosperous 2018

I look forward to January when we meet again to continue the mutually rewarding yet at times challenging pastime. Safe & rewarding gardening! *Bev*

AGM February 11th 2018

All Committee & Executive positions will become vacant at the AGM, please give consideration & nominate to join this group.

Trudy, & Jeff before her are thanked for their terrific work, but they are unavailable next year so please give serious consideration to taking on the important role of Treasurer. *Bev*



Season's greetings.

On behalf your BSSA Committee everyone is wished a happy, healthy & memorable Christmas with a safe & great 2018

Bev

