

# BROMELIANA

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## OUR SPRING PLANT ORDER

by Herb Plever

Last year we had a nasty winter with prolonged cold weather so when spring finally came it was really appreciated. This year we've had a relatively mild winter and it would appear that spring has sprung as I write this in mid-March. So it is easier to contemplate that our annual spring order is upon us. If you have a further need for a spring awakening, order some bromeliads and be uplifted. Nursery costs and a few plant prices are higher this year but not by much.

At the April meeting you will see pictures of all of the plants in bloom. If you want to review the photos before you order, they will be available at the meeting on CD for \$8.00. Except for tillandsias, I have cut down the list to make it easier for you to choose. (This year there will be even more of the tillandsias.)

There are 4 small Aechmeas: *A. farinosa* v. *discolor*, *A.* 'Kiwi Baker', *A.* 'gamosepala' cv. 'Lucky Stripes', and the red form of *A. recurvata*. There are six really lovely *Cryptanthus*, 4 of which we haven't seen before: 'Red Eye Gravy', 'Roman Star', 'Ruby Slippers' and 'Tickled Pink'. Held over from last year is 'Ruby Star' and I have added the beautiful old favorite *Cryptanthus* 'Arlety' by special request.. They are all dramatic and beautifully marked; you should add a few to your

collection.

Last year I invited courageous members to join me in ordering the spiny, medium sized *Deuterocobnia mezziiana* for its huge, branched spray of yellow flowers on a tall scape. (It has grown an additional 1½" wider

and 1" taller in the month and a half since my last report.) My success in growing it and *Dyckia fosteriana* cv. 'Silver Queen' have encouraged me to place two *Dyckias*: *D.* 'Cherry Coke' and *D.* 'Brittle Star F2' on the list.

Two small, old *Guzmania* favorites, *Guzmania* 'Anita' and *G.* 'Carine' have been

brought back to the list along with three mini *Guzmania* tissue cultures: mini *Guzmania* 'Angel', 'Edith' and 'Mariah'. I have restricted the *Neoregelias* to tiny to small plants that can fit on a window sill. *Neoregelia* 'Caviar', 'Gespacho', *N. lilliputiana*, tiny *N. pendula* var. *brevifolia*, *N.* 'Little Jewel' and the albo-marginated *N.* 'Morado'.

Also on the list per your requests are *Orthophytum magalhaesii* at a much lower price than it has been before and *O.* 'Copper Penny'. In response to many requests, I promised at the last meeting that there would be many *Tillandsias* on the list. It now offers 50 *Tillandsias* (up from 33 last year), AND it includes many hard-to-find plants we have long lamented being



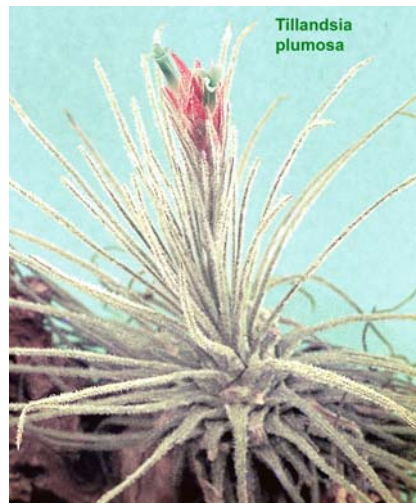
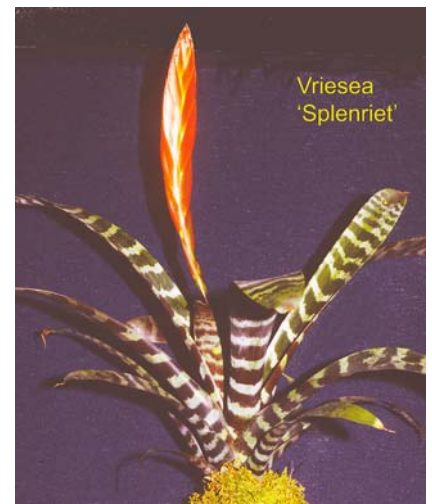
*Cryptanthus* 'Roman Candle' (Irvin)



*Neoregelia pendula*

**NEXT MEETING** - Tuesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012 **promptly at 7:00 P.M.** at the [Ripley-Grier Studios 520 8th Ave. \(between 36th & 37th St\) Room 17A](#)

**VIDEO OF PLANT ORDER** - Photos of the bromels on the spring order including many closeups of their inflorescences to help you make your choices. All of the photos will be available for you to purchase on CD. Take advantage of this chance to buy great plants at bargain prices, delivered to you in May. Please bring in plants for sale and for Show and Tell.

*Tillandsia caliginosa**Tillandsia plumosa**Vriesea 'Splendret'*

unable to procure: *T. caliginosa*, *T. caulescens*, *T. diaguaitensis*, *T. ehlersiana*, *T. graomogolenis*, *T. incarnata*, *T. neglecta*, *T. oaxacana*, *T. plumosa* and *T. sucreei*. Tillandsias are really great houseplants, really easy to grow and very rewarding. Take advantage of this opportunity to expand your collection.

Some members have complained about difficulties in growing Vrieseas indoors. I suspect the problem is that the mix has grown too dense and wet over time. Try a more aerated medium with our new chunky peat moss. *Vriesea splendens* was once popular in our collections, but now it is nowhere to be found.. However the *splendens* cultivar, *Vriesea* 'Splendret', is on the list; it has the same dramatic impact as *V. splendens* with its brilliant, orange "Flaming Sword". *V. espinosae* with its hard stiff leaves is easy to grow, and we have a

small growing form of *Vriesea phillippo copurgii* that should be quite spectacular when it puts up its multi-branched inflorescence. We also have the popular, small *V. correia aranjoi*, *V. racinae* and the gorgeous, variegated *V. 'Sunset'* on the list.

Many of our members asked that the tissue culture of *Vriesea delicatula* be included again in the order. We're all eager to confront the challenge of establishing it. It certainly has proved tricky to grow; it seems to want a constantly slightly damp medium that does not get too dry nor too wet. This indicates that it should not be ignored between waterings. I plan to check out the moisture in the medium a few times a week to the extent that I can do so.

Three additional photos of plants in the order are shown on page 3.

## A MATTER OF ENERGY

by Chris Larson

(Excerpts from the February, 2010 issue of BROMELIAD NEWSLETTER - Newsletter of the Bromeliad Society of Queensland, Australia. This is a summary of a talk by Chris Larsen given at their January meeting. Ed.)

This presentation began its formulation as a look at what I view as popular misconceptions, and was designed for beginners—which can probably be better qualified as my alternate view of the theories I have heard. To my surprise, the more experienced growers in the audience to which I gave this presentation were full of questions about these matters...

The more I look at this, the more I realize that the concepts we all think are principles are really a set of variable guidelines, which are best kept as a guide in the art of growing our plants to their fullest potential, but few of them are good enough to hang your hat on.

One thing I have learned is to always question what you hear or read – and never assume anyone is an expert—but to always listen, watch, and research. As with others, my growing conditions are unique to me—it is conditional on my local climate and how I set up my collection, so therefore will not be identical to any other grower. Even growers in your region, though they will mostly have very similar conditions, will never have the same conditions.

A prime example of a popular viewpoint that I disagree with is the often repeated statement that most bromeliads die after they flower. This statement does



*Aechmea recurvata* red form*Guzmania* 'Anita' variegated form*Tillandsia oxacana*

more to discourage interested novices than any other I know.

Another commonly misunderstood concept with growing bromeliads is the conversation about feeding bromeliads. Working as a retail nurseryman, I have long conversations with customers unable to get around the concept of using fertilizers. However with 30 years of growing bromeliads and seeing others in the bromeliad world's collections, and spending the last 10 years working with the commercial production of bromeliads (longer specifically with tillandsias), I have come to the conclusion that many amateurs underestimate the importance of food.

Once you have addressed the light issue, then it is time to assess the issue of how to feed and how much food to apply. Food should always be applied in relation to available light and the nature of the plant.

This brings me back to another of the comments I have long heard about bromeliads that like to form a clump first before flowering. In my experience in commercial growing I have come to an observation that this may not be a valid observation in many cases, as many of the same plants flower naturally as single plants when given very good conditions.

All of the concepts I have talked about may seem obvious at first, but many growers may have not considered them together. There are many books and articles which explain these concepts in greater depth, and give an analysis of feeding rates, etc., for you to experiment further. To grow our plants better, we must provide our plants with the ability to function at their best, giving them energy, primarily from light and carbon dioxide, as well as a balance of NPK (nitrogen, potash and potassium - Ed.), minerals and trace elements.

These elements work together, providing energy which is (mostly) pushed upwards. When it can't move upwards it initiates another eye and/or produces seed. If the new growth is removed it should produce another eye or multiples—to say it dies after flowering is not

looking at the functioning of the plant. Our role is to control and provide the conditions to maximize the potential of our bromeliads. To do this we must observe and react accordingly.

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Editor's Note: Chris Larson is a knowledgeable expert in bromeliad horticulture, one of the many experts growers down under in Australia and New Zealand are fortunate in having available for their education.

As Chris stated, his talk was geared to beginners, and he presented a basic philosophy for horticulture. He touched on some issues that I have stressed in these pages for a long time. Cultural recommendations by experts may not be suitable for your conditions, or for certain plants in your collection. You have to study your plants and experiment with different approaches to find what will work best for each plant, or what position in the different micro-climates in your apartment will best accommodate particular plants. I have applied this approach to the use of fertilizer.

Chris stressed the need to provide nutrients for your broms. Since my Journal article on "The Fertilizer Revolution" in 1996, I have used these pages to urge growers to adopt a frequent, high-strength fertilizer regimen. We claim outstanding results from such a program for our indoor grown plants. Yet most growers in the U.S. who can give their plants better light and moving air for their broms grown outdoors or in greenhouses are chary about fertilizing. (I sometimes feel like St. John - my voice crying out in the wilderness.)

Newsletters I receive from bromeliad societies in the south report on talks by "experts" who caution growers to minimize the strength and frequency of feeding nutrients to their plants. Yet there are many good bromeliad nurseries in the same areas that have been using frequent, high strength fertilizer on their broms for decades. Of course they use overhead wat-

ering and water frequently so the strength of each application is small. But at the end of a week it adds up to very high strength feeding.

We put the fertilizer in the water in which we soak our tillandsias in. We can't use hoses indoors, so we pour water with dilute, soluble fertilizer into the cup of each plant. We closely observe the results and if we see that a plant is not responding well to our regimen, we try to change the frequency and/or strength of the fertilizer, or use one with a different formula.

For instance, I have observed that *Quesnelia* 'Tim Plowman' grows and flowers too rapidly with my usual regimen so it does not have time to develop a deep, tall cylinder with wide leaves. I think this plant (and likely others) needs to grow slowly in order to develop a beautiful conformation. I am now experimenting with some of its pups, with reduced frequency of application and strength and with a different lower nitrogen formula of 5-11-26.

With our usual regimen we fertilize for three or four weeks a month. We use 1/2 tsp of fertilizer to a gallon of water. I have two 1/2 gallon pitchers so I drop in 1/4 tsp in each, first using a little hot water to dissolve the fertilizer. Then I add 1/8 tsp of epsom salts (magnesium sulphate) dissolved in a little water to the pitcher. It is flushed out the next day.

Members will be pleased to learn that I have mixed up a batch of new fertilizer with a formula of 25(N)-20(P)-51(K). I expect to have it ready for the April or May meeting at a bargain price. I hope you will buy some and use it on your plants so you can report back to a meeting on the results - good or bad. We need input about the responses of different species and cultivars to fertilizer. □

be as attractive as their photos. For instance the *Guzmania sanguinea* we got did not turn very red when it flowered. The red was paler than expected and only covered a small area on the inner part of the leaves. I have seen other clones of the species with better color.

I guess we should look for *var. brevipedicellata* which I have grown in the past. That plant turned bright orange-red from the leaf apex to the center and it remained in color longer than the species.

I stopped growing *Billbergia* 'Poquito Mas' some time ago because it never developed good color and markings. But at the 2010 World Conference I saw a big pot of the plant with beautiful markings at a good price, so I bought it. It was a clone developed by the talented Herb Hill, and its new pups have all come up with great color and markings. I'd always thought my problem with the plant was that it needed strong, prolonged sunlight, yet my pot of 'Poquito Mas' has been growing on a window sill in my kitchen, facing east-south-east. It does get unobstructed morning sun through not too clean window panes, so I think in this case it is the clone that is strong, as pictured below.



**N E W S and N O T E S**

**PLANT ORDER** - If you want to buy a CD of the plants listed on the order, please call Herb Plever (718-723-3783) or email at [hplever@verizon.net](mailto:hplever@verizon.net) as soon as you receive the order to allow time for the CD to be burned.

If you would like to buy a brom that is not listed on the order, there is still time for it to be included if you contact me now.

**GOOD AND BAD CLONES** - Some of the plants we have received in our orders have not turned out to

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