

# BROMELIANA

PUBLISHED BY THE NEW YORK BROMELIAD SOCIETY

(visit our website [www.nybromeliadsociety.org](http://www.nybromeliadsociety.org))

December, 2013

Vol. 50, No. 9

## IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO

by Kathy Dorr

[Kathy Dorr was a BSI officer during the 1970s. She edited a bulletin for the Long Beach-Lakewood (Calif.) Bromeliad Study Group, and I can attest to her expertise. This article (from her bulletin) is excerpted from the Bromeliad Society Journal, Dec. 1985, Vol. 35, No.6 pg 271-273. I am indebted to the knowledgeable Helga Tarver of Clearwater, Fl., a long time subscriber and correspondent who brought it to my attention. Kathy took the words out of my mouth - 28 years in advance of my saying them. I'm happy to have her confirmation. Ed.]

...one of the definitions of brainwash is "persuasion by propaganda or salesmanship"...for Mother Nature to be taken as gospel, this would apply. From time immemorial, it has been written, taught and exhorted that, basically, tillandsias are epiphytic. Apparently no one considered the various theories that bromeliads may have originated from one or a few terrestrial species...

Benzing writes: "Some bromeliads are facultative epiphytes - in other words, they can grow as terrestrials. A substantial number, like many tillandsioids are obligate epiphytes - i.e., they cannot grow in soil."

Every grower has found the "soft" leaved tillandsias, for the most part, grow much more happily as terrestrials. These would include such plants as *Tillandsia flabellata*, *T. multicaulis*, *T. lucida*, *T. viridiflora* var. *variegata*, etc. *T. cyanea* and *T. lindenii* are native to areas that make them conducive to growing terrestrially. Experimentation has shown that the list does not stop with only these.

About three years ago, I decided to test or

establish this hypothesis. I started with sixteen tillandsias acknowledged to be epiphytes. They included two varieties of *T. ionantha*, *T. araujei*, *T. didisticha*, *T. stricta*, *T. caput-medusae*, *T. bulbosa*, *T. streptophylla*, *T. argentea* (now *fuchsii* - Ed), *T. schiedeana*, *T. tectorum*, *T. albida*, *T. bergeri*, etc.

I planted all these as terrestrials in four-inch pots. I used a terrestrial mix of humus and sand (commercial azalea mix). They were watered the same as all the terrestrials. The plants were placed where they had slight protection and received strong light, but very little direct sun, perhaps only an hour a day.

They were fertilized (some of them) with Jobe's sticks. (This is an organic, low strength fertilizer with a formula of 3-5-6. It is commercially known as Jobe's Spikes. Ed.)

The results were very interesting. First they developed a terrestrial type of root and most produced an abundant supply of them. I had previously found that when some of these, such as *T. caput-medusae*, were laid in a pot with another plant, they would im-

**NEXT MEETING** - **Thursday, December 19th**, 2013 at 7:00 P.M. [at the home of Michael Riley and Francisco Correal, 101 West 104<sup>th</sup> Street nr. Columbus Avenue.](#) (Take the 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. #1 train or the Independent A, B, or C trains to 103<sup>rd</sup> St.)

**HOLIDAY PARTY!** - Once again Michael and Francisco have graciously offered to host our annual party at their beautiful home. The party is open only to members and their spouses or significant others. Michael and Francisco will provide the main courses; please rsvp them at 212-666-2395 if you plan to attend. AND let him know if you will bring a side dish, salad, fruit or dessert. If you haven't seen Michael's fabulous collection of bromeliads, orchids, aroids, gesneriads, ferns, etc. growing epiphytically on his living room walls, you are in for a treat.

mediately send down roots even though they were not actually planted.

*Tillandsia stricta* has flowered for the past two years and set offshoots. The plants are lush appearing. The inflorescences are no larger than those on plants grown epiphytically. This year there were three inflorescences and I was surprised when they appeared smaller than usual until I noticed that the mounted ones were also smaller than usual this year.

*Tillandsia ionantha* var. *ionantha* flowered last year and it was a most attractive plant. It opened out more than *T. ionantha* grown epiphytically, showing the inflorescence to better advantage - in my opinion. It has set offsets and I would venture to say it will flower again this year.

*Tillandsia caput-medusae* grew larger and definitely is more vigorous appearing. It is now on its third generation and each generation has been larger than the last! If the third generation offshoot grows into its present appearance, it is really going to be a great one. There are two offsets showing and they are large, lush and beautiful. The inflorescence also was larger than the ones on plants grown epiphytically.

*Tillandsia didisticha* is unquestionably happier in a pot in my growing area. I always had problems with this plant as an epiphyte, and it has produced a lovely plant grown in this manner. It has not flowered yet, is large enough (larger than most grown epiphytically) to flower.

*Tillandsia araujei* has been very interesting in that when the plant had been potted for about a year, approximately an inch of the tip of the plant was accidentally. I simply stuck in the soil beside the original plant, expecting it to wither and die. Surprisingly, it rooted and started growing! Sometime

later, I deliberately broke off another piece and produced a lovely plant grown in this manner. It has not flowered yet, is large enough (larger than most grown epiphytically) to flower.

*Tillandsia tectorum* delighted in being a terrestrial. It flowered last year and has produced two beautiful offshoots, which have grown much larger than the offshoots which appeared at the same time on a *T. tectorum* grown as an epiphyte.

*Tillandsia streptophylla* took to terrestrial growing like a fish to water. It has gotten nice, fat and happy. It would give one the impression that it possibly preferred growing as a terrestrial.

Both varieties of *Tillandsia schiedeana* are getting ready to flower. The plants are healthy, sturdy plants and perfectly content growing as terrestrials. Stuck it in the soil and, it too began to grow. Neither of these pieces had any sign of a base or root when planted. If the pieces had not been broken off, I believe this plant would have flowered by now.

*Tillandsia argentea (fuchsii)* is fascinating. It was a very small plant when planted and has not flowered yet, but it is a beautiful, little, fat, fuzzy plant at the present time and will probably flower this year.

Several months ago, I planted a number of different species and intend to continue the experiment. Such information as I have gleaned so far, tends to dispute some accepted hypotheses and has become the source of controversial theories. □ (Kathy Dorr's cautious conclusion is, for her, uncharacteristically modest. I think her results strongly support my preliminary, positive findings on the tillandsias I've already begun to grow in pots. See my article below. Ed.)

## I'M GROWING ATMOSPHERIC TILLANDSIAS IN POTS

by Herb Plever

In the October issue of BROMELIANA I showed a photo of a *Tillandsia kegeliana* growing in a pot. In the text I indicated that I had potted up two pieces of this plant, and they had firmly rooted in the medium. At this writing they are still doing well and are growing. I also acquired two pieces of *Vriesea poenulata* that I potted up and they are growing very well. Because it resembles a tillandsia, I had always grown this plant mounted as an epiphyte with mixed

results.

I should point out that growing tillandsias in pots will be of special interest to indoor growers, as growing tillandsias epiphytically indoors requires soaking and is generally a job and a half. Brom growers in such humid places as Florida have no special problems growing them mounted on branches, shrubs, etc.

Emboldened by my success with *T. kegeliana*

and *V. poenulata*, I obtained a batch of tillandsia atmospheric to experiment growing them in a pot. These include *Tillandsia aeranthos*, *T. albertiana*, *T. balbisiana*, *T. bulbosa*, *T. brachycaulos*, *T. capitata*, *T. caput-medusae*, *T. fuchsii forma gracillis*, *T. ionantha*, *T. ixioides*, *T. paucifolia*, *T. recurvifolia*, *T. purpurea*, *T. streptocarpa*, *T. streptophylla*, *T. stricta*, *T. tenuifolia* and *T. velutina*.

I have observed that tillandsias like company and seem to be happier grown close to other plants even if they are not of the same species. I soaked them well and then potted up 20 scurfy tillandsias, 5 plants in four 5" pots. The mix is wick watered. While the plants are trying to establish themselves in the mix, I spray them 3 or 4 times a week. After 1 month many

I also bought two *Racinaea crispa* and have seem to be firm in the pot; all are growing well potted them in one pot with the same mix, but the pot is not wicked. I have always had trouble growing this finicky plant; it definitely won't grow mounted on cork in my apartment. I spray these plants 4 or 5 times a week. The pot is sitting in a saucer and I add a little water to the saucer every 3 days. So far these *R. crispa* are looking very good.

If mounting and soaking tillandsias is too much of a chore, members should consider buying a big batch of these weird but loveable plants in our spring order. You'll find it easy to put 4 or 5 plants in a pot and treat them as you do your other broms. See photos below.



clockwise from left: *T. zecheri*, *T. ixioides*, *T. balbisiana*, *T. tenuifolia* and *T. ionantha*.



*Vriesea poenulata*



*Racinaea crispa*

## NEWS and NOTES

**NEW BROMELIAD TAXON LIST** - Derek Butcher and Eric Gouda have made an up-to-date list of all the genera and species of the *Bromeliaceae*. It is more detailed than the printed lists of Bromeliad Binomials that the late Harry Luther published biannually for many years. It lists in red all synonymous names and changed and defunct names with the currently accepted genus and species. The program also has a search engine with which you can find new names, recent changes, cite as, operation info and accepted names.

The new list can only be viewed on line at <http://botu07.bio.uu.nl/bcg/taxonList.php>. It is an excellent resource, only lacking photographs of the species. Here is some of the information I found on the list for the genus *Tillandsia* that might be of some

interest for some of our readers:

("sensu" as used in this list means "as described by".)

**Tillandsia abdita** => *T. bradeana*

**T. achyrostachys v. stenolepis** => *T. achyrostachys*

**T. achyrostachys x bourgaei** => *T. xmarceloi*

**T. acostae** => *T. rhomboidea*

**T. adressa** => *Racinaea adressa*

**T. adressa var. miniata** => *Racinaea miniata*

**T. adressa var. orthiantha** => *Racinaea adressa*  
ssp. *orthiantha*

**T. adressa var. tonduziana** => *Racinaea*  
*schumanniana*

**T. aeranthos var grisea** => *T. 'Nez Misso'* See BCR

**T. aeranthos var. major** => *T. aeranthos*

**T. aeris-incola sensu L.B.Smith** => *T. sanctae-martae*

**T. aerisicola** => *Racinaea aerisicola*

**T. albei** => *T. muhriae*

**T. aloifolia** => *T. flexuosa*

- T. andicola** sensu Wittmack => T. gilliesii  
**T. argentea** hortus ex E Morren => T. gardneri  
**T. argentea** sensu K Koch => T. tectorum  
**T. atroviridipetala** sensu L.B.Smith => **T. mauryana** sensu L.B.Smith => T. mauryana (as described by Smith in contrast to the T. atroviridipetala described by Matuda)  
**T. aureobrunnea** => T. humilis  
**T. benthamiana** => T. erubescens  
**T. benthamiana var. andrieuxii** => T. andrieuxii  
**T. brachycaulos var. multiflora** => Nat hybrid  
**T. bryoides** => T. minutiflora  
**T. circinnata** (of hort.) => T. paucifolia  
**T. compressa** (sensu Gardner) => T. fasciculata var. vernospica  
**T. compressa x fasciculata** Gardner 1117.5 SEL => Nat Hybrid  
**T. dressleri** => T. balbisiana  
**T. ehrenbergii** => T. tortilis  
**T. intumescens** => T. langlasseana  
**T. kruseana** => T. xerographica  
**T. kurt-horstii** => T. graomogolensis  
**T. meridionalis** (sensu L.B.Smith) => T. recurvifolia  
**T. sierra-juarezensis** sensu Gardner 1982, & Espejo 2004 => T. violacea  
**T. tenuifolia var. strobiliformis** See Gouda 2010 => T. tenuifolia var tenuifolia see BCR 'Strobiliform'  
**T. tenuifolia var. surinamensis** sensu Gouda => T. tenuifolia var tenuifolia. (I have questions about this change that I will raise in a future issue. HP)

**MAGNESIUM** - The article on Fertilizing in the November issue of BROMELIANA sparked some favorable comments. The noted horticultural expert, Peter Bak, of the giant Corn.Bak Bromeliad Nursery in the Netherlands wrote to reemphasize the important role that magnesium plays in the health and growth of bromeliads. He noted that tillandsias, in particular, will grow better with extra magnesium added to the fertilizer.

I had urged growers to be sure that their fertilizer contained magnesium. If magnesium in fertilizers is insufficient or is lacking, I recommended adding magnesium sulfate in the form of common Epsom Salts that is cheaply obtainable in any drug store, at a strength of ½ tsp. to one gallon of water. Although the fertilizers I use when I soak my Tillandsias do have some magnesium, I am now adding and additional 1½ tsp. of Epsom Salts to the water.

**BILLBERGIA 'STRAWBERRY'** (B. 'Fantasia x B.

'Muriel Waterman') does not really color up and get strong markings even in my south window, BUT under fluorescent lights it gets intense color and markings - go figure! I put it out on my terrace in mid-June and it kept its color (almost). I hoped that in the fall when the days get shorter it would bloom. To make sure I dropped 3 ethylene pills in the cup at the end of September. and I took it back to the light unit in mid-October. For the result, see photo below. My only complaint is that the bloom stem is too short, so the red bracts do not reach past the top of the leaves. I think this is a genetic flaw in this cross, as it leans toward the short scape in 'Muriel Waterman'.



*Billbergia 'Strawberry'*

**2014 DUES** - will be due and payable at the end of this month. Single and joint memberships are \$25.00; the domestic subscription rate for BROMELIANA is still \$8.00 and an overseas subscription is \$12.00.

Please mail your check payable to N.Y. Bromeliad Society to Barbara Lagow, 54 West 74th Street, #603, N.Y.C. 10023 or pay your dues at the Holiday Party meeting on December 19<sup>th</sup>.

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**BROMELIANA** is published 9 times a year by the New York Bromeliad Society, c/o Herb Plevier, 172-34 133<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, # 8A, Jamaica, NY 11434.  
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