

# BROMELIANA

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## WHERE HAVE ALL THE RARE TILLANDSIAS GONE?

by Herb Plever

An old song written by the late folksinger, Pete Seeger, asked: "Where Have All The Flowers Gone"; it was a metaphor and a plea for peace. In the past I have used variations of that question with respect to our loss of the many bromeliad nurseries we once had, and our loss of the many rare tillandsias we used to be able to buy and grow that now seem to be unavailable.



fragrant flowering  
*Tillandsia peiranoi*



*Tillandsia pedicellata*



*Tillandsia biflora*  
photo by H. Takazawa

reasonable collection, and there is the possibility that tissue cultures might be made of these rare plants to increase their availability.

Around 1970, I began a correspondence with Dorothea Muhr who lived up in the Andes, in the province of Jujuy, Argentina. From time to time she would send me a shoe box full of collected tillandsias from that area, including such rare plants as *Tillandsia peiranoi* and *T. pedicellata*. When a flower on *T. pedicellata* becomes fertile and develops a pod, only then does the pod rise on on a pedicel.

Based on the dried specimens of the plant available to him, Dr. Lyman B. Smith had placed it in synonymy with *T. bryoides* (recently redescribed as *T. minutifolia*). When it flowered for me with dark purple petals, and developed a long pedicel, I sent Dr. Smith photos and then discussed the issue with him. He ultimately did elevate *T. pedicellata* to species status.

There was little inspection of plants then, and

**NEXT MEETING** - Tuesday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014 promptly at 7:00 P.M. at the  
[Ripley-Grier Studios 520 8th Ave. \(between 36th & 37th St\) Room 16M](#)

**THE PLANTS YOU ORDERED** - We'll display each plant that was ordered and will discuss with members who have grown them before where and how to grow them and potential problems. Please bring in plants for sale and for Show and Tell. You should have pups to bring in and swap.

***Reminder: you must pick up the plants you ordered at this meeting!***



*Tillandsia atroviridipetala*



fragrant flowering *Tillandsia hamaleana*



fragrant flowering *Tillandsia humilis*

the cost to me per plant was an incredible 60¢ to \$1.25. *T. peiranoi* was rare because it grew only in one, small locality - on the side of vertical cliff face in Jujuy that was dangerous to climb down to. Dorothea was probably able to get a few pieces from the very top of that cliff, and they were 3 to 4 inches high - more than twice the size of the *T. perianoi* once sold by Rainforest Flora.

I was fortunate in being able to get many rare tillandsias from the knowledgeable Pamela Koide Hyatt of Bird Rock Tropicals, then in Carlsbad, CA. Pam had perfected the art of growing tillandsias from seed and acclimatizing them to grow well out of their indigenous habitats.

I also imported plants from Sud-Pflanzen Import in Frankfurt, Germany, (they were selling plants collected by Dr. Werner Rauh) and I bought plants directly from the Tropiflora and Rainforest Flora nurseries.

Here is a list of the many great tillies I recollect I was able buy and to grow and bloom that are no longer available: *Tillandsia atroviridipetala*, *T. biflora*, *T. brachyphylla*, *T. carminea*, *T. friesii*, *T.*

*humilis*, *T. ignesia*, *T. kautskyi*, *T. lepidosepala*, *T. macdougallii*, *T. matudae*, *T. mauryana*, *T. gardneri* var. *rupicola*, *T. hamleana*, *T. heubergeri*, *T. mitlaensis*, *T. moscosoi*, *T. oaxacana*, *T. plumosa*, *T. roseiflora*, *T. sprengeliana*, *T. sucrei*, *T. turquinensis*, *T. velickiana* and *T. venusta*.



*Tillandsia mauryana*

Collecting in Mexico can be difficult, sometimes dangerous, still it is hard to understand why reasonable numbers of *Tillandsia atroviridipetala*, *T. macdougallii*, *T. ignesia*, *T. lepidosepala*, *T. mauryana*, *T. matudae*, *T. mitlaensis*, *T. oaxacana* and *T. plumosa*, all native to Mexico, have not been collected and grown on into larger quantities by nurseries.

I have seen recent photographs of these plants in habitat and there are large populations of them. (I got *T. oaxacana* and *T. macdougallii* in 1972 in Oaxaca when I visited Curtis MacDougall and he took me up to where they were growing.)

The similar *T. ignesia* and *T. plumosa* can be distinguished by their inflorescence. In *T. ignesia* it is simple, complanate (flat) and distichous flowered;



*Tillandsia heubergeri*



*Tillandsia kautskyi* ph by S. Matsuse

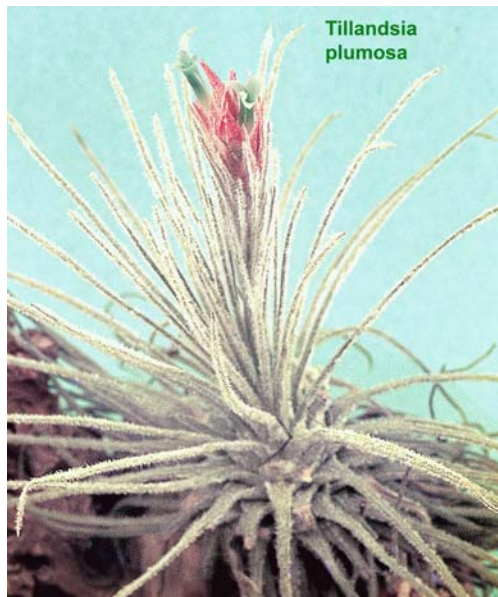


*Tillandsia sprengeliana*





*Tillandsia ignesiae*



*Tillandsia plumosa*



*Tillandsia sucrei*

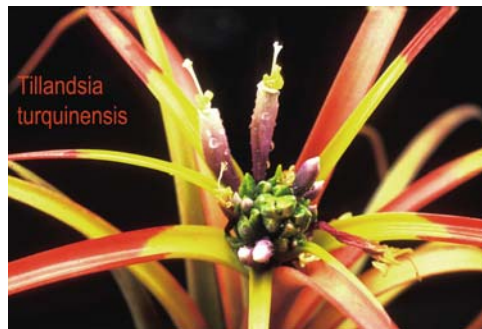
in *T. plumosa* compound and polystichous flowered.

*T. biflora* and *T. hamaleana* are available via import from Ecuador at reasonable prices, but the cost shipping and the damage from chemical or gas treatments at U.S. Department of Agriculture stations that makes this procedure perhaps less than worthwhile.

*Tillandsia brachyphylla*, *T. carminea*, *T. gardneri* v. *rupicola*, *T. heubergeri*, *T. kautskyi*, *T. roseiflora*, *T. sprengliana* and *T. sucrei* are all native to Brazil and there have been many restrictions and prohibitions to collecting plants there. Besides these plants there are many other Brazilian tillandsias I have not been able to obtain in the past, such as *T. paraensis*, *T. grazielae*, *T. reclinata* and *T. organensis*. (Believe me, I have tried to find them.) Some of them grow on the rocky cliffs around Rio de Janeiro, and many of them fall off and they can be picked up if you

happen to be around.

The gorgeous *T. turquinensis* grows only in Cuba, so it's understandable that this species is rarely available. I fished out a piece from Tropiflora's sales bin at a World Conference many years ago; I didn't know anything about the plant, but I bought it as the price was reasonable. When it flowered, *T. turquinensis* simply blew me away with its striking beauty, and I'll bet neither Dennis Cathcart or his staff were familiar with the plant when it was put in their sales bin.



*Tillandsia turquinensis*

A few of these hard to get plants have on rare occasions been listed on Tropiflora's V.I.P. mailings, but they are at prices that only a few tilly nuts like me are willing to pay. Mention should be made of *T. stellifera*, a small, fuzzy tillandsia related to *T. tectorum*, that was described by Lieselotte Hromadnik a few years ago.



*Tillandsia matudae* ph Pam Koide



*Tillandsia macdougallii*



*Tillandsia grazielae* ph J. Maruska





*Tillandsia carminea*  
photo courtesy Hortipedia



*Tillandsia reclinata*  
ph commons.wikimedia



*Tillandsia carminea*  
ph 'Tillandsiasraras'



*Racinaea crispa*  
ph Peter Waters, N.Z.



*Tillandsia gardneri* v. *rupicola*



*Vriesea poenulata* ph A. Thompson



*Vriesea poenulata* flower

It was on Tropiflora's V.I.P. list last month. Mention should also be made of some hard-to-find tillandsia look-alikes that I've been able to find from time to time. I'm referring to *Racinaea crispa* and *Vriesea poenulata*.

In the past I had tried to grow *Racinaea crispa* both mounted epiphytically and in a pot, and I only managed to kill more than a dozen of them. Now I'm growing two in pot using Elton Leme's tip that I learned from BROMELIAD, Journal of the New Zealand Bromeliad Society: you have to keep the pot constantly moist by sitting it in a saucer full of water.

of The Olive Branch, the leading bromeliad nursery down under. Olive is one of the most knowledgeable bromeliad growers; she has made and still makes important educational contributions to bromeliad horticulture and is an important activist in the Queensland Bromeliad Society.

I received a query from California about the omission from the article of the late **Joyce Brehm**. Joyce was, for better or worse, President of the BSI for many years, and as such I should have included her in the article.

**NEWS and NOTES**

**WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO BROMS**

This is yet another necessary update to my March article on the subject. I apologize for the inadvertent omission of **Olive Trevor** of Queensland, Australia. For years Olive has been the co-proprietor

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