



East London Bromeliad Society

South Africa

NEWS LETTER

February 2021

Established: 25 July 2009

Our aim is to promote and encourage awareness and interest in Bromeliads in East London and all of South Africa!

ELBSSA is an Affiliated Society  of Bromeliad Society International

From the Chairman



My dear Bromeliad friends, for me to sit down and write an optimistic beginning of the year report is very difficult this year. The future is still looking very vague and bothering.

First of all, I would like to wish you all a good 2021. We can only pray that it will turn out for the better in comparison with last year.

One positive aspect, is our common interest in the plant family of bromeliads.

Unfortunately with the recent heat wave a lot of leaf burn has occurred in my collection.

Remember to use your sunhats and sun screen while pottering around. With the wonderful releasing rains, came a good crop of weeds which should keep me busy for many hours.

My hope is that the old "normal" arrives back soon and our society can resume its normal functions, I miss all of you guys. Stay safe and concentrate on the positive things in life. Until next time, happy bromming!

What I would have liked to have known from the start when collecting bromeliads:

- understanding that a potting mix mainly provides stability for bromeliads so using a bigger pot is OK, as long as the mix has good drainage
- learning which bromeliads don't need to be potted and will grow mounted as they are epiphytic
- learning which ones cannot be grown un-potted eg: Cryptanthus, Pitcairnia
- how big each bromeliad would eventually grow, some get huge or get very tall flower spikes
- skewers used to stabilise new pups are important and rot away by the time the plant is grown and stable
- which are the fussy bromeliads to grow
- which bromeliads will grow well in my environment in South Africa
- what kind of light do each of the different bromeliad species need to grow to their best potential?



'A Christmas Creation' by Mavis Downey, made for what would have been our final meeting of 2020, none the less a lovely festive arrangement to wish you all the very best for 2021.

Photo M Downey

Next Meeting: We will have to wait and see when Covid regulations allow us to meet and members feel safe to come to an open air meeting. Watch this space!

- why do they die after flowering only once?

Adapted from an item written by Amal Eid, from Bromletter, The Official Journal of The Bromeliad Society of Australia Inc.

Barbs: When I saw this it made me think about some of our newer members, who are fairly new to growing bromeliads and Tillandsia. Please let us know what YOU would most like to know about growing bromeliads and we will include topics to help answer your questions over the coming months.

Please send your queries to Barbs: blacket@telkomsa.net or Lyn: brommiesfa@telkomsa.net

Species of the Month



Lyn Wegner: *Tillandsia flagellata*. This species is found in Ecuador. It was previously referred to as *T. lehmanii*.

It has arching, silvery grey, narrow leaves. The striking inflorescence is upright, branched and red with purple flowers. Mine is growing in a sunny spot and receives little water, other than rain, and no fertiliser. I like it!



Tillandsia flagellata

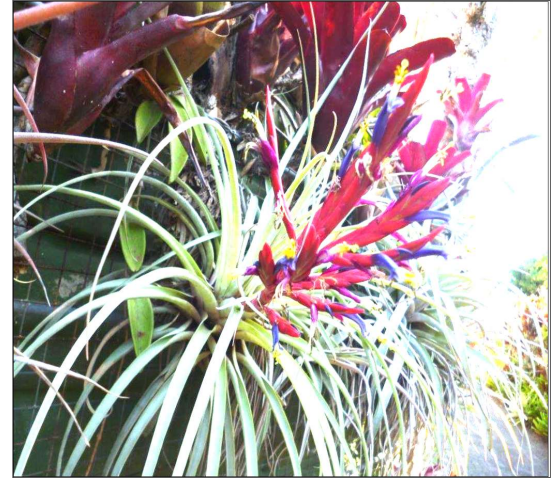


Photo: Lyn Wegner

Member News

A big welcome to returning member Denise O'Hagan from Beacon Bay.

It's great to have you back with us and also to new country members, Delene and Dave Hawkins from Port Alfred and Richard Johnstone from Port Elizabeth. We hope you all enjoy a long and rewarding association with the society.

Committee matters

BSI Lucky Annual Membership Winners for 2021 - Congratulations to Eldon Weyer, a local East London member and country member, Christo van Wijk from Pretoria.

Every January the ELBSSA sponsors two of our members, one local and one country, with one year's Bromeliad Society International electronic membership. We started this Lucky Draw in 2015 and did one draw annually for country members only, as locals had access to the Journal in our library.

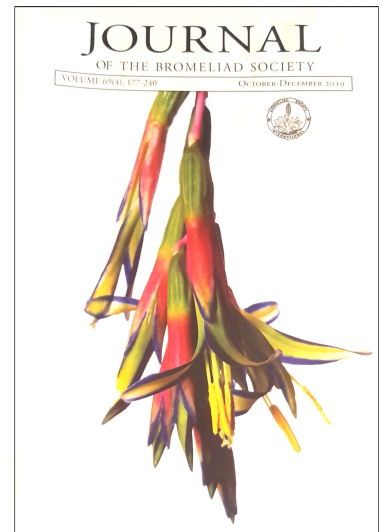
When the BSI introduced the electronic membership option we decided we should sponsor two winners which we started doing in our previous draw in January 2021.

We would like to encourage all our members to join BSI. A first time electronic membership fee is only \$15 which works out to about R240. If you were once a member and would like to rejoin BSI as an electronic member the fee is \$25, about R400.

If you wish to receive mailed copies then the membership fee is \$60. Go into bsi.org, Information, Join the BSI. Payment is done via Paypal. If you have any problems Lyn will process the registration on your behalf. (brommiesfa@telkomsa.net)

There is so much information for you to access and enjoy at bsi.org, some being available in the Members Only section. South Africa now has 21 BSI registered members. You too can join the BSI!

You will be contributing to Bromeliad Research, Education and Conservation.



Upcoming Society Events

Until National Covid 19 Government Protocols change to allow gatherings, we will not be able to hold a meeting. We will eventually meet at the Little Beacons Pre-Primary School in Beacon Bay in the back under cover open area, similar to the meeting we held in October, and that was only our second meeting last year, it seems so long ago. Watch this space!!!

Upcoming International Conferences

2021: The 70th Anniversary WBC2020 Due to the global Covid 19 pandemic this conference has been postponed. It will now take place on the 8 - 12 June 2021 in Sarasota, Florida, USA. The host hotel will still be the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Sarasota. You will have to change your reservation dates with the hotel. The registration that you paid for the conference will apply to the rescheduled conference with no changes in the rate. The bus tours will not change. We are in the process of verifying all the speakers. We hope that you still plan to attend the rescheduled conference.

The following conference has now been postponed to **7 to 10 April 2022** due to the Covid 19 Pandemic. This biennial **Australasian Bromeliad Conference** will again be hosted by The New Zealand Bromeliad Society. **'Kiwi Broms'**. To be held at, Waipuna Hotel. Exciting news! 5 of our members have already registered for this conference! Plenty time to get saving!

From Our Members

Photos supplied by members.

Dawid Botha in Port Elizabeth:

July 2019, I was sitting in my hothouse enjoying a cup of coffee that my wife Scherine had made for me, and looking at my growing bromeliad collection in the morning light. I noticed that I had a lot of plants standing on the patio, taking over and restricting sitting space, as there was no more space available on the benches. I also noticed that I had a stretch of unused lawn peppered with yellow flowering weeds that was just sitting there and doing nothing for me.

That weekend I started to mark out a circular patch of lawn to be removed. I have seen photos of ponytail palms used in newsletters, under planted with bromeliads. So I raided the ponytail palms growing in the front of my house and moved (rolled) them to the back into new positions, (while using some very colourful language). I never knew how heavy those bulbous bases were! I also planted three Leopard trees for future shading on the same spot (not realising how big these trees can get).

That week I read every bromeliad-related book and newsletter in my library, to discover what plants will be able to take some sun, which were hardier than the rest, or too big to grow in a hot house. I also made some pot stands that I saw in Lyn Wegner and David Gower's gardens to create some vertical space and interest for smaller plants. Oh! and I painted some white ornamental pots blue.

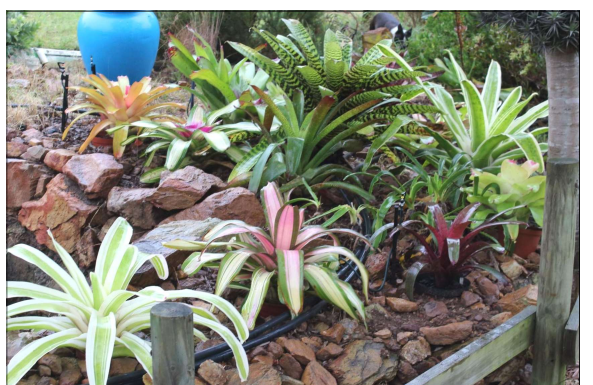
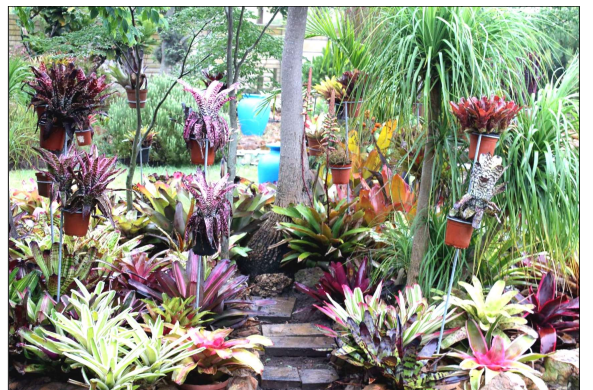
My bromeliads are planted in pots to allow me to move them around in the garden if needed, without disturbing the root system. Due to the drought, I sparingly watered the bromeliads and trees. The area really looked good and plants were responding well to outside conditions.

Last November we had record temperatures of over 40°C to 45° C for about 3 days without a breeze at all, which caught me by surprise. Since that experience took place during the week I did not even think to water, as that chore only takes place over weekends. A week later I saw that something was wrong since a lot of my bromeliads showed bad sunburn. To my surprise plants burned that I thought would never burn and others I thought more tender had no marks at all.

One of these



Part of Dawid's choc-a-block shade house.



unmarked plants was *Neoregelia* 'Dr. Jeffrey Block', previously bought from Fern Haven in Pretoria as *Neoregelia* 'Blockbuster', but I was told the name was wrong and I changed the information on the label back to the registered name. It is a cross of *N.* 'Meyendorffii' variegated x *N. macwilliamsii* by Chester Skotak. I really thought that since the plant is also marginated that the sun would have burned it, but the white margins only turned the same pink/reddish colour also found on the tips of the leaves. The plant had a width of 47cm and a nice open form with evenly spaced leaves and overall a well balanced, good looking plant, one of my favorites now. It has since given me three pups ready for removal.



Neoregelia 'Dr Jeffrey Block'. Bought as *N.* 'Blockbuster'. This photo was taken in November 2019, just before we had a heat wave.



Neoregelia 'Dr Jeffrey Block' now pushing 4 healthy pups.

November 2020, I also extended the bromeliad planting into other spaces of the garden that receives shade from around 12:00am to 14:00pm during the day. Some spots had Protea and Erica growing in shade that really preferred full sun for the whole day. I planted the Protea and Erica along my walkway and near small trees around 2014 when I started the layout of the garden. Now the trees are bigger and I have more shady areas to fill with bromeliads.



A portion of the Protea collection in the garden.

To date, my new plantings are doing well with no signs of sunburn. My favourite pastime now is walking amongst my plants and dreaming up schemes as to where I can still fit in some more bromeliads and possibly more spots to plant trees (hopefully not too big and giving dappled shade) for my developing paradise. I am continuously looking for ways to create wind breaks from the storm winds we get in Port Elizabeth, that damage my soft-leaved plants and even blow mini bromeliads from their pots on the stands. I still have about 35% of my garden undeveloped as I am saving that space for a future shade net expansion of my hot house, if my ship comes in, or I dig up a pirate's treasure in the garden!

Text and photos Dawid Botha.

Scherine also made a Christmas Creation for our end of year function, which they were going to attend and it had to be abandoned a few days beforehand.



Mike Whitten, Durban: How's this for an unusual *Neoregelia* hybrid of mine? *Neoregelia* 'Screaming Tiger' x *N. rubrovittata*.



Lyn Odendaal, East London: My *Aechmea fasciata* I think this is my favourite bromeliad. It is grown in semi shade getting morning sun only. This a pup off a mother plant I got from Lyn.



Lynn Friend, East London: After many, many months of pondering, I eventually found a way to use this metal ball I was given as a present. I added a beaded parrot that I had and some *Tillandsia usneoides*, 'Old Man's Beard' to finish it off. It is hanging on my deck.

Lyn Wegner: Ananas aka Pineapple!

I have been eating a lot of pineapple, almost daily. I buy the bags of 12 small pineapples which are delicious but ripen quickly. I find they last longer than the larger queen pine. My lunch consists of a bowl of diced pineapple (a whole small one), chopped tomato and cucumber, a spoon or 2 of grated beetroot and feta cheese. No dressing is added. Delicious! I was wondering, Is this good or bad for me?

I have listed some of the benefits I found on Google:

Firstly, regarding the sugar content, I was pleased to learn that a cup of pineapple chunks has only about 14g of sugar and has only 74 calories.

It is said to have many health benefits:

- rich in vitamins, enzymes and antioxidants
- pineapple may help boost the immune system
- they contain manganese which helps to develop strong bones and may even help in preventing osteoporosis
- pineapples contain the enzyme bromelain that breaks down protein which may help with digestion
- it adds to our dietary fibre, important for digestion
- it is a great meat tenderiser so eating too much pineapple could cause brief discomfort to your mouth, tongue, lips and cheeks
- all reasons that I will continue eating a pineapple almost every day!

Ananas Tart

A delicious and easy to make pineapple tart.

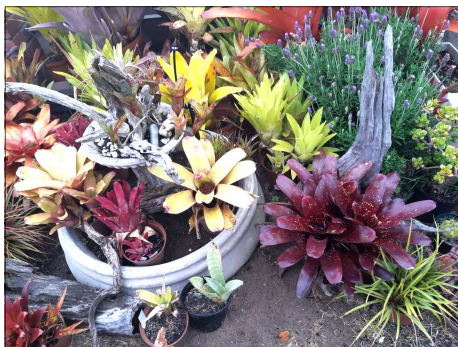
- 1 cup Cremora mixed with 1/2 cup of boiling water. Allow to cool in the fridge or freezer and once cooled beat well until it thickens
- add 1 can condensed milk, 100ml lemon juice and a can of crushed pineapple, mix together
- place a layer of tennis biscuits at the bottom of the container, I use a square Tupperware
- spoon the mixture over the base and sprinkle tennis biscuit crumbs on top
- place in the fridge until set, I usually leave it overnight. Enjoy!



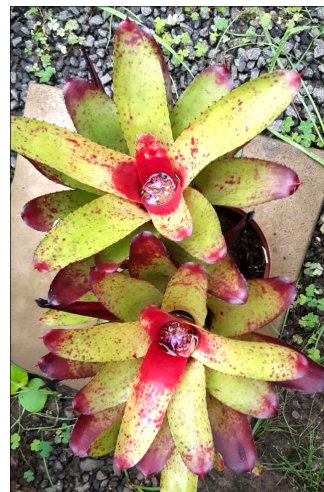
If you have a super recipe containing pineapple, please share it with us!

Mavis Downey, East London:

sent some photos of bromeliads doing well in her garden and Neoregelia 'Wild Card'. "I love the colours of this plant. Most of my Neoregelia are grown in the shade house. I do not fertilise any of my bromeliads. Just water and clean them.



Part of Mavis's lovely garden which you may remember as she has hosted a meeting.



Neoregelia 'Wild Card'



Tillandsia 'Samantha'

Tillandsia 'Samantha', When I bought this, it was a really

small plant. I think I have had it for approx 4 years. I originally planted it. I have never fertilised it. I find it to be a slow grower. About a year ago I removed it from the soil, cleaned its roots and it has been standing in the empty pot ever since. It seems very happy. Cant wait for it to flower."

Jean Martens, Kenton-on-Sea: 'My Obsession!' "Maybe 20 months ago I first dipped a tentative toe into the brom waters. Bromeliads, especially Neoregelia, have now become an addiction. They are slowly but surely taking over my garden. These photos were taken in the early morning light in which they always look their best.

I bought my first three bromeliads from Sherwood Nursery in Port Elizabeth: a Guzmania, and another, the labels are long lost. It has grown much bigger but has never flowered) and a Neoregelia tricolor, I believe.

Then I found a couple of *Aechmea fasciata* at Builders Warehouse, and a couple of *Neoregelia* at our local nursery. Then I hit pay dirt at Floradale in Port Elizabeth. And from there it has pretty much spiraled out of control. The highlight of each month is opening my box from Christo van Wijk at Brommadness!



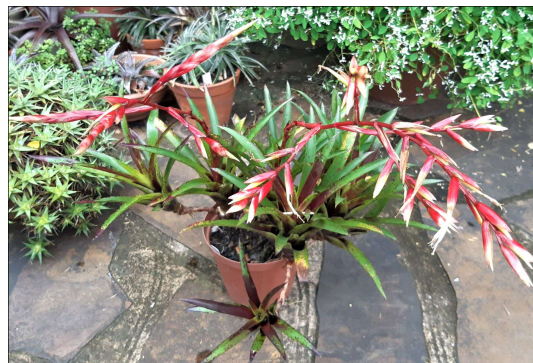
Jean's growing collection of bromeliads laid out in her garden in Kenton-on-Sea.

What has changed is that I am now utterly anal about correct naming and labeling of my bromeliads, and that I really only want *Neoregelia*! There is another member in Kenton and another in Port Alfred and I have another friend in PA who has quite a lot too. There are plenty of the more common bromeliads around in both Kenton and Port Alfred and I suspect there are lots of special ones hidden behind garden walls! I look forward to seeing everybody else's photos!"

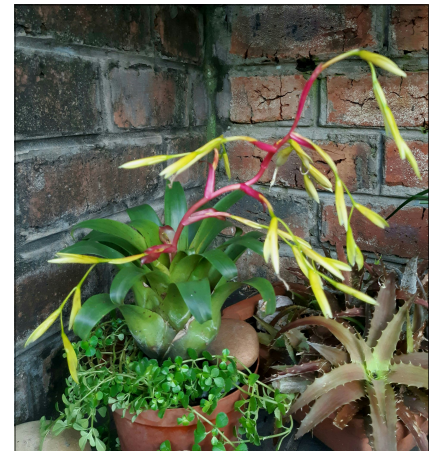
Barbs: East London is so close to Kenton-on-Sea Jean, so expect a visit from a few of us on our travels in the near future! You are welcome to visit some of us too when next you visit East London. It's great to get ideas from each other, very inspiring and we would love to meet you. Maybe you can all come to a meeting one day when we are allowed to get together again.

Barbara Black, East London:

Two small *Vriesea* have bloomed for me for the first time. *Vriesea lubbersii* is a lovely species in the *Vriesea* genus in the bromeliad family. *Vriesea* is a genus of over 350 species from Mexico, Central America, South America and the West Indies. They are mostly epiphytic, meaning they can grow on trees or in rocky places. They are also tank type bromeliads as are *Neoregelia*, *Billbergia* and others. This means they hold water in the central cup. This enables the plants to get nutrients from the water and any insects etc. that collect in the tank. *Vriesea lubbersii* is endemic to Brazil. It has lovely speckled leaves with dark leaf bases which I particularly like the look of. It seems an easy plant to grow, putting out many pups on long stolons before the most mature two sent out very colourful flower spikes. It can be mounted, but I have mine potted in free draining soil and bark.



Vriesea lubbersii



Vriesea delicatula

The second one is *Vriesea delicatula*, endemic to Espirito Santo, Brazil. A very delicate little plant as its name describes, with red branched flower stems and pretty pale cream flowers emerging from the bright yellow bracts. I like the little 'pot bellied' form of the plant, its leaves feel delicate as well. It is also potted in free draining soil and bark. I am hoping both of these will clump up nicely and one day give off a good show. They are both growing on the bench at the back of the house in bright shade most of the day.

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Member request from Allan Tait, Pretoria:

I am looking for *Tillandsia aeranthos*, in all the various forms, they grow very well in my environment. I am also looking for *Tillandsia jucunda* forms and lastly for the impressive *Tillandsia stricta* var *albiflora* and other interesting forms of this species, except the normal one we all know.

If anyone can help me, they may mail me at allan.clivia@gmail.com or contact 0824159978.

Thank you.



Tillandsia aeranthos.



Tillandsia stricta var *albiflora*



Tillandsia aeranthos, in various forms.



Tillandsia jucunda forms.

From the Editor



So here we are well into the start of another new year, but I have more than a sneaky suspicion it is going to be just more of the same, same as 2020!

All I can say is we are blessed to have homes and gardens to retreat to, amazing plants in our lives to engage our minds and give us some motivation to keep moving and interested in the world around us.

We have had many soft leaved *Guzmania* suffer from burn a few weeks ago. This occurred in one spot in the back garden, where I had trimmed back a mango tree to lift the canopy to let in more light, when we had a Saturday of scorching heat and high humidity. It makes my heart sore to see the burn marks on the leaves and flowers. I was also in trouble with the man of the house whose favourite bromeliads happen to be *Guzmania*!

We have enjoyed almost weekly rain showers so everything is lush and green, but our main supply dams are not in good shape. South Africa has generally had good rainfall in the interior, as evidenced by all the main dams overflowing, an awesome sight! I am slightly jealous! It would be so nice to be able to get the hosepipe out and not have to rely solely on tank water. Let's hope there is more rain coming before winter to bring relief to the drought in the Eastern Cape that has lasted for a few years now.

Thank you to everyone who sent in items for the newsletter this month, it is greatly appreciated by all our members. We want to encourage more member participation, keep connected in these dodgy times. We cannot get together face to face as a group and our country members never can, but it is good to share and spread the love of these amazing plants and the dedicated bromeliad-obsessed people behind the wonderful photos we see. If you haven't yet, do join our Facebook group, and post your photos of your plants there. It is a good way to share and learn something new or get ideas for your garden. If you battle with the technicalities of the exercise, call on a teenager, there are loads of them floating around, they know everything about anything digital!

Talking digital, we are so fortunate to have been invited to some of the bromeliad society meetings held in the US on Zoom. Where else would we be able to hear speakers such as Orlando Graaf and this coming Saturday Jerry Raack, sharing their interesting experiences with us. Well worth making the effort to watch and you don't have to dress up or wear a mask!

So, I hope this finds you all in good spirits, healthy and content, as you go about your daily activities. Enjoy your broms and tilly's in the height of the Summer growing season.

Barbs



Another *Vriesea* putting on a colourful display. *Vriesea* 'Oh Shucks'.

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Any opinions expressed in articles are not necessarily those of the Society.

When submitting items for inclusion in this newsletter, please ensure that all facts and information, including spelling, is checked and accurate.

ELBSSA is an affiliate of the Bromeliad Society International.

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We meet on the last Sunday of every month at 2.00 for 2.30pm, January to November, at various venues around East London. We have a topic for each meeting and Show and Tell where members are encouraged to bring along their brag or problem plants. There are member raffles, lucky draws for those present, tea time, library and member plant sales, plus a monthly newsletter sent out via e-mail only. Visitors are always welcome and can attend three meetings before they will need to join the society in order to continue attending. Annual subs are R120.00 for individuals/families and R60 for students.

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You will find ELBSSA on Facebook: type 'East London Bromeliad Society' into the fb search bar. You can request to join the group and will then be able to upload your photos and comments on the wall. The ELBS SA page and other bromeliad related sites are a useful and informative forum to share and 'meet up' with other like-minded bromeliad folks.

You can view most of all the bromeliads mentioned in meetings or in the newsletter at the following websites:

The BSI's official Bromeliad Cultivar Registry www.registry.bsi.org which is maintained by Geoff Lawn, the BSI Cultivar Registrar. Plus other information regarding the Bromeliad Society International and bromeliads is found at bsi.org

Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies: fcb.org This is another very useful site where you can also reference many bromeliads, clarify identification or just trawl through the site and add to your wish list!

Encyclopedia of Bromeliads <http://bromeliad.nl/encyclopedia/> (Bromeliad Taxonomists and Growers Society) has photographs. It also now has keys for the genera and sub-genera. If you like to be informed what is happening, just follow on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bromeliadsencyclopedia> Just type in 'Encyclopedia of Bromeliads' into the Facebook search bar.

For internet resources you can also go to TAXON (The New Bromeliad List) for the most authoritative and right up to date list of genera and species, accepted and new names and taxonomic keys - <http://botu07.bio.uu.nl/bcg/taxonList.php> or just type in 'New Bromeliad Taxon List', it's much easier!