



# East London Bromeliad Society

South Africa

NEWS  
LETTER

March  
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



Hello to all of my bromeliad friends. At last there is light at the end of the tunnel with regards to our social activities with the announcement that we have moved to Level One. This enables us to resume our monthly gatherings as from the end of March. More details about the meeting will be revealed after our mid month committee meeting.

Our 'Bromeliad Magic' show will be full steam ahead with regards to planning with the hope of holding it in the not too distant future. I am sure all of you are bursting with enthusiasm and long stored energy to make this one the best East London has ever seen. However, common sense reminds us that every precaution will be taken to prevent the spread of the Covid Virus. Masks, social distancing and hand sanitizers will be the order of the day. So start preparing your show plants.

Please bring any interesting plant with you to the March meeting. This could earn you a free raffle entry. Looking forward to seeing all of you on the last Sunday afternoon of March. Until next time, happy bromming.

## A Country Member's Stunning Garden

**Kathy Botha in Port Elizabeth** has sent some photos of her beautiful garden for us to enjoy, plus some notes that she gives new collectors who buy plants from her. It is good to know, or be reminded of these basic facts. Many thanks Kathy for sharing with us.

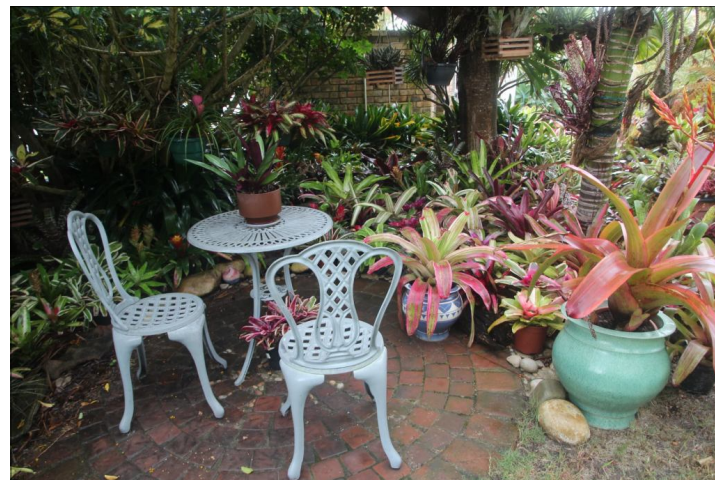
### **Bromeliads.....**

**Position** - I keep most of my bromeliads in pots so that I can easily move them around. Be conscious of the intensity of the sun during the hot months of November to March as direct sunlight can lead to burning and bleaching. Older plants will not recover, but will start



**Next Meeting: Sunday 28th March at 2 for 2.30 pm. Hosted by David and Lynda Gower at 17 Riverview Place, Beacon Bay. Don't forget your chair.**

producing off shoots (which are known as "pups") and these will be hardier than those that are produced in less harsh conditions. In the winter most of them can be placed in full sun. Bromeliads need bright light for them to colour up. Dense shade will not encourage colour and the leaves will stay green and dull, and grow long and strappy. Dappled light from plants such as tree ferns, palm trees, River Indigo trees make wonderful dappled light and add to a tropical look that goes so well with bromeliads. Bromeliads also look good with succulents. When placing the bromeliads in my garden, I am aware of putting them next to plants with contrasting colour, form and texture, eg. red next to green, yellow next to purple, white next to black, placing large ones at the back and small in front etc.. This makes a stunning arrangement. I do not keep bromeliads in my house as they will lose their colour and go dull because of lack of light. A short period of time will be fine.



Do not place bromeliads anywhere near treated pine or gum poles. The substance that is used to treat them contains copper which is poisonous for bromeliads and they will suffer.

If the plants have damaged leaves / brown tips you can trim the leaves with a pair of scissors to remove the damaged parts, rounding of the ends to look like the surrounding leaves. This will make them look much more attractive and will not harm the plants at all.



**Pups-** The off shoots of bromeliads are referred to as "pups". Pups should not be removed from their mothers until they are between third to half the size of their mother. If you take them off when smaller they will take a long time to develop and may even die. When you are ready to take them off, remove them from the pot and break the pup off (or use a serrated knife to cut them off if they are too closely joined). Let the wound dry by placing the pup upright in an empty spare pot for a day or two so that the air can seal off the cut. The pup may or may not have roots at this stage. This is of no consequence as bromeliads are epiphytes, (air plants) and absorb most of their nutrients through their leaves. This means that they can be mounted onto trees. When planting the pups in pots do not plant them too deep as this can cause them to rot. You need loose soil such as commercial potting soil that you can buy at your nursery. It must be a free draining mix. If the pup "wobbles" in the pot support it by placing about three sticks next to it in the pot. Water the plant in the centre cup and a little at the base.

**Watering and feeding-** Bromeliads need water in their cups. If there has been no rain, we water once a week. Otherwise we do not water unless we see that they are dry in the cup. Beware of watering in the heat of the day in full sun as water on the leaves can cause burn, which will make a white patch or hole (just like a mirror will burn paper). The best time to water is in the early evening or on a shady day.

When planting pups you can add a small amount of bone meal to the soil. For mature plants you can give them a little slow release 3:1:5 in the soil near the base of the plant.... BUT I must stress NO MORE THAN A THIRD



OF A TEASPOON. If you give them too much the plant will lose its colour and go green. Then you will have to wait for its pups to get colour again. Fortunately I have not had this happen in my garden, but I know of instances where this has happened.

These few steps will enable you to have good looking and healthy plants, which will give you much joy for years as you will get more plants from the mother plants.

Text and photos K. Botha.

## Species of the Month - Lyn Wegner



*Vriesea elata* - I found the following information on this species in Baensch's 'Blooming Bromeliads'. I love this book which was published in September 1994, a long time ago. "The fairly inconspicuous rosette consists of only a few leaves. The large bright red inflorescence with its small white flowers is impressive and maintains its colours for a period of six weeks. The pups grow laterally from the inflorescence. Cultivation: semi-shade, mesic, not very easy. H; Columbia; 1200-2100m; epiphytic'

The book mentions that the plant is mesic (likes water) and is a difficult grower, but mine doesn't get much extra water other than the drizzle and rain we receive and I find it to be very easy to grow. Mine is growing in dappled light, a little sunny, and is left to do it's own thing. The flower spike is attractive, I like it!

Text and Photos L. Wegner.



*Vriesea elata*

## Member News

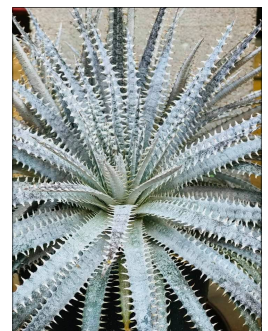
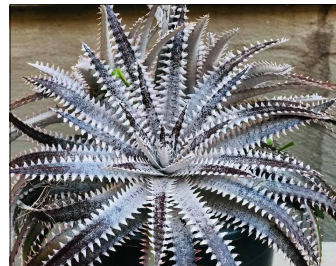
- Sincere condolences from all of us to Christo van Wijk and his family on the loss of his father last month.
- Condolences to the family and friends of country member Vinson Govender who passed away in November last year.

## Committee matters

- Richard King from Darling has offered the society some Dyckia seed that he has harvested from Dyckia 'Talbot White Chocolate' siblings shown in the photos to distribute between members. The seed was originally donated by Len Waite a member of the BS of Queensland Inc Australia and posted to us by Rob Murray in 2016. Five



A selection of the Dyckia that were naturally cross pollinated to produce the seed on offer from Richard. Photos R. King



members have responded to me as a result of his facebook post and there is enough for more members to receive some if they would like to attempt growing Dyckia. Please e-mail me at [blacket@telkomsa.net](mailto:blacket@telkomsa.net) by the end of the month so that I can sort and mail them out to you. Please send me a reliable postal address as it will be sent through the normal post (holding thumbs!).

Many thanks Richard for sending the photos of your superbly grown Dyckia and sharing the seed for other members to try their hand at the experience of growing from seed.

Thanks to Lyn Wegner who has also added some *D. platyphylla* and *D. 'Bordeaux'* seed to be distributed as well.

- We would like to thank the following US BSI affiliated bromeliad societies for inviting us to join their interesting and exciting Zoom presentations:

Houston BS, La Ballona Valley BS, Saddleback BS, San Diego BS and the San Fernando Valley BS. We encourage you to download a free copy of the Zoom app on your cell phone or your computer if you don't already have it.

- Thank you to Chris van Zyl in Somerset West for his assistance with familiarizing the ELBSSA committee with using Zoom.

## Upcoming Society Events

- **Our first meeting for 2021 will be taking place on Sunday 28th February, 2.00 for 2.30pm. To be hosted by David and Lynda Gower at 17 Riverview Place, Beacon Bay.** This will be the second visit to their lovely garden, so do come along as there have been major developments and an amazing collection of bromeliads to view in the newly erected shade houses and garden plus Lynda's charming fairy gardens too. There are also stunning bromeliads on sale as well.

Raffles and Lucky Draws will be held as usual. Don't forget to bring your chair and plants for Show and Tell.

Tea will be served after the meeting so please bring your own mug and spoon.

Please remember if you are selling items before and after the meeting, to have your 'box' clearly marked with your name so people know who to pay. We look forward to seeing many of you at the meeting after such a long break. We do understand if some of our members are not comfortable attending meetings yet.

- Would you like to host a meeting later this year? Please contact Lyn if you are keen to share your garden space with the society.
- **24th and 25th April:** We will be holding our **Bromeliad Magic Show** at Little Beacon's Pre-Primary School in Avalon Road. Lyn has sent out an appeal for vendors if they are interested in selling their plants or home made goods. This will not be a judged show. Lyn will be sending out more information regarding this exciting event in the coming weeks. We look forward to seeing you all there to help us showcase bromeliads and Tillandsia to the East London community!!!!

**East London** Established July 2001  
**Bromeliad Society**  
**South Africa**

# BROMELIAD Magic

R10 Entry Fee



**24th - 25th  
April**

Sat: 9.30 - 4.00  
Sun: 9.30 - 3.00

**at Little Beacons Pre-Primary School**  
45 Avalon Road, Beacon Bay

## Upcoming International Conferences

**2021: The 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary WBC2020** Due to the global Covid 19 pandemic this conference has been rescheduled. It will now take place on the 8 - 12 June 2022 in Sarasota, Florida, USA.

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

**From Andrea Oldrini in Italy:** Sharing photos and experiences is a very beautiful opportunity to keep in touch and to receive stimulating ideas, especially for someone who, like me, is still designing and creating his own garden. I saw photos of Lyn Wegner and Jean Martens' gardens in the newsletter and I would like to congratulate both of you for the enchanting way you have set the plants of your collection (and also for the gorgeous plants themselves!).

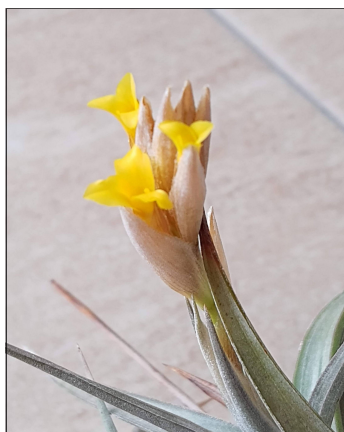
As regards me, it is now winter in Italy. I live in the Northern part of the Italy, near Milan, and the climate is characterized by hot summers and rather cold winters. Despite that we are in a plain area, at the moment the day time temperatures are low, and it also freezes during the night. Furthermore, at this time of the year, daylight is limited, though it is gradually increasing.



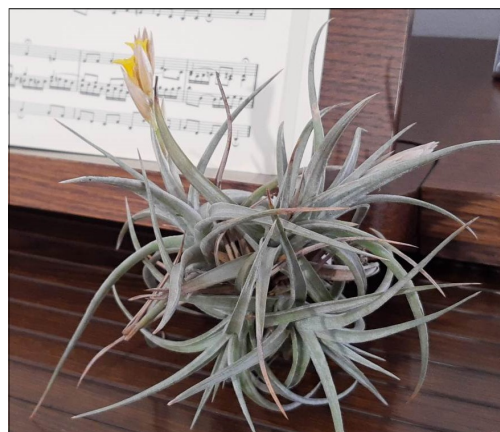
*Tillandsia aeranthos*

My plant collection is varied and comprises plants belonging to different families, with habits, needs and behaviors sometimes very different to each other.

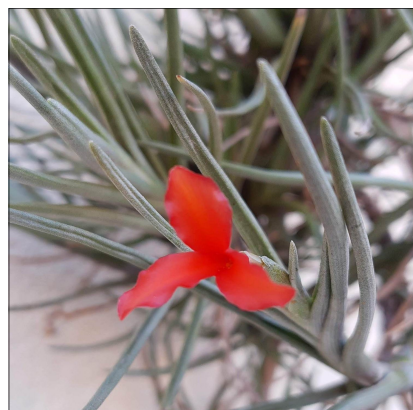
The first section consists of Tillandsia. I like the air-plants very much and, among them, I prefer epiphyte species to tank-type ones. I grow xeric Tillandsia, which are quite easy to care for in our area, thanks to their hardiness and their ability to live in a dry environment (like indoors) with a low degree of humidity. Over the years, I have collected nearly 50 plants of 33 diverse species. I recognize that it is still a small collection, but I am very satisfied with this result, either because in Italy it is still difficult to find a wide variety (the specialized nurseries are rare), or because collectors to exchange plants with, are few. Owing to our climate, plants usually stay indoors, in a bright position without heating, from late November till the beginning of March. The only species I usually keep outside is *Tillandsia usneoides* (except for days when the temperatures are constantly less than -2 or -3° C!). I noticed that if kept inside, it rapidly dehydrates, while outside it benefits a lot from our humid winters.



*Tillandsia ixiooides*



*Tillandsia ixiooides*



*Tillandsia albertiana*



*Tillandsia ionantha*

During this season, plants' growth rate is almost dormant and water needs are limited. I just have to avoid plants drying too much. It could seem to be a boring period, yet, on the contrary, there is always something amazing happening. In particular, I noticed that my *Tillandsia ixiooides* is blooming (as you can see in the photos) and *Tillandsia butzii* is going to flourish too, developing three spikes. As regards blooming in my region, I can say that the most interesting period for Tillandsia is between April and September, so I am waiting with great impatience for those months. In addition, this year is going to be rich from this point of view and I am expecting that my *Tillandsia aeranthos* will flourish with gorgeous abundance. I will keep you informed if it will actually happen.

Furthermore, in this season I usually spend a lot of time studying hard and planning new experiments. For example, I am reading a lot about *Diaphorantema* sub-genus (in my collection I have several *Tillandsia tricolepis*, *Tillandsia retorta* and so on). Moreover, I would like to try to seed some species and I would be very grateful if you could give me some suggestions to try.



*Paphiopedilum orchid*

In the other section of my collection you can also see bonsai, cactus, succulents and some orchids. Regarding the bonsai, I started being fond of them and cultivating them when I was 14 years old, that is to say 30 years ago. I like mainly indigenous species that naturally grow in my region of Italy. I also have different peculiar plants coming from Japan (several varieties of *Acer*, *Zelkova* and *Azalea*). I grow them outside since they are very hardy, as is demonstrated by the little wood of Chinese Elms (*Zelkova nire*), portrayed under the snow, just last December. I have attached two photos, the first one illustrates it as the whole, the second one, shows only a part of it, which, using some imagination, gives the illusion of seeing a "real" wood.

I also have many cacti and succulents, including rare species like *Ariocarpus*, *Copiapoa* and so on, that I like to reproduce and exchange with my friends. Finally I grow some orchids, like the *Paphiopedilum* that you can see in the photo, now in its most beautiful habit.

Each plant in my collection has its own story that makes it unique for me. For example, *Tillandsia xiphioides*

and *Tillandsia duratii* remind me of Antares first Tillandsia Exhibition. *Tillandsia edithae* was the precious gift I received from Mr. Camarda, a specialized nursery man living in Rome who introduced me to the Tillandsia world. *Tillandsia oaxacana* was given to me by my wife, Francesca, when we were engaged, some years before getting married. Greetings from Italy to all ELBSSA members  
Original Text  
and photos A. Oldrini.



One of my bonsai, a 'wood' of Chinese Elms (*Zelkova nire*).

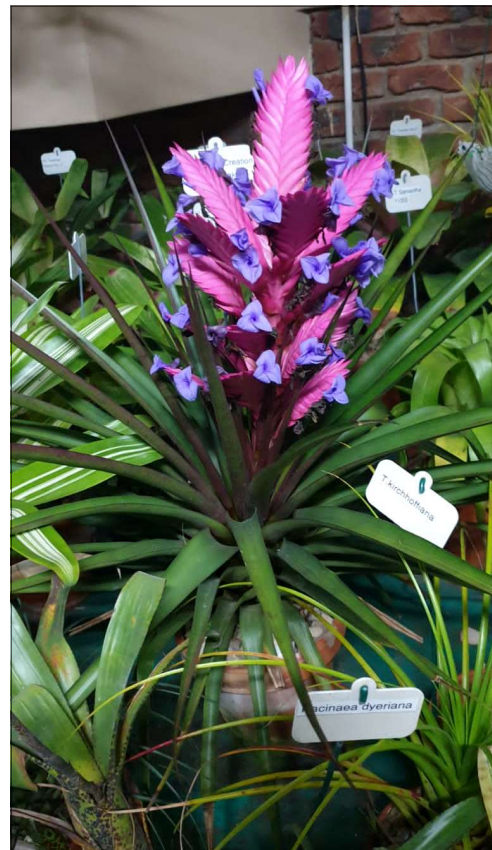
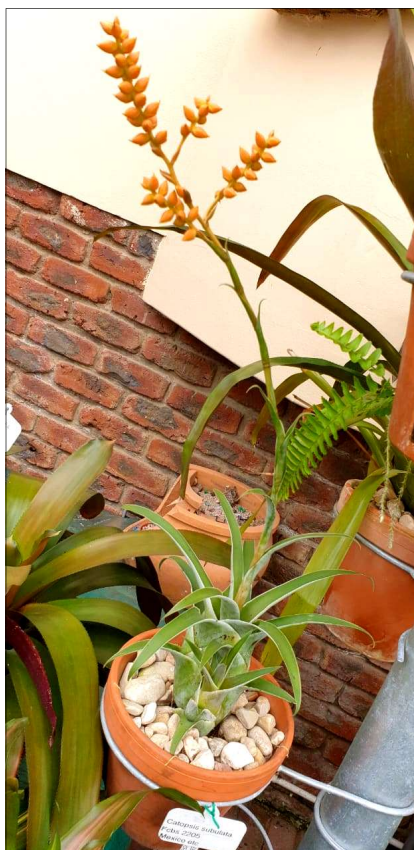


Eratum to Allan Tait's photo last month, *Tillandsia stricta* var *albifolia*

Many thanks to Eric Gouda who spotted an error in our last newsletter. If anyone spots mistakes, please do let me know. That is how we learn.



New country member from Port Elizabeth, **Richard Johnston** visited EL recently.  
Photo L. Wegner



**David Gower's** *Catopsis subulata*, an imported plant and his absolutely splendid *Walfussia* 'Creation' putting on a splendid show. Photos D. Gower.

I appeal to all our members to please consider sending photos for publication of anything that is performing well in your collection of bromeliads or Tillandsia. It is so easy today as we all have a cell phone handy. This is your newsletter! It is a place you can share growing experiences, successes and problems and requests. I have learnt it is so much easier to just ask an experienced grower as they have been through the same struggles that we all have growing these amazing plants. We are all at different levels with this hobby so 'Spread the love!!!' Looking for that specific plant? I can add it here together with your contact details.

**Barbara Black:** Another cute little species *Vriesea racinae* is busy unfolding its inflorescence for us. I love these small plants with their neat form and markings on the leaves. It is a true miniature endemic to parts of Brazil

and one of the smallest of the Vriesea. The leaves are green with red spotting which curl downwards at the tips. The flowers are white and bell shaped. It is mature at barely 10cm tall. Although it grows epiphytically in the wild, I grow it potted in free draining soil with bark in bright shade on the back bench. You have to love it and it doesn't bite! lovely smooth edged leaves.

## From the Editor



So, we survived an epic heat wave over the last weekend, I can't say as much for some of our plants in general! Shu-shu! A 1955 record was broken with it reaching 43.9 °c in East London! I wanted to cry when I went around the garden late Saturday afternoon to water all the drooping crotons and saw tell tale pale patches of burn on many bromeliads and even my *Tillandsia streptophylla* has burn.

Never the less, we are thrilled that we are able to meet at the end of this month and yes! we have re-scheduled our "Bromeliad Magic Show" for the last weekend in April at Little Beacons Pre-Primary School.

It will not be a judged show, but a wonderful display, laid out in categories, of awesome bromeliads and Tillandsia and also, don't forget your Artistic Expression. Get those creative minds buzzing.

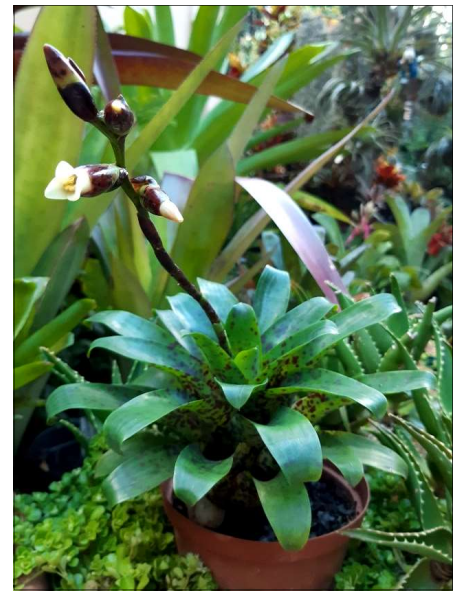
The forms that you will need to enter your plants will all be e-mailed to you together with more information. Committee members will receive your plants and forms and assist where necessary and place your plants on Friday 23rd April when you can bring them to the hall.

It is a good idea to begin looking at your plants now and plan what you could bring along to the show. It will give you time to groom them as it does take a while, depending on how many you plan on bringing, and don't be shy! We want to bowl the EL community over with a magnificent display and spread the love! There is always something you have in your collection that you are proud of and can share with others or create something fantastic.

A few quick tips that we covered last year: Tidy up your plants, remove all dead leaves, ensure they are neatly potted up in a plain, clean pot and free from any scale, pests or weeds. Trim the leaves of any marks or dead bits. Ensure the 'tank' is clean and free of any debris. Don't use anything but water to clean your plants. Flowering plants must have any dead flowers removed. If you have a name for your plant, please include the label pushed into the side of the pot. Tillandsia can be firmly mounted or potted. Remove any dead leaves and flowers from the inflorescence.

The committee look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the next meeting. It is ok if you feel it is too soon for you to venture out. All Covid Protocols will be adhered to so please remember social distancing, your mask and sanitizer in hand. We will be meeting outside. See you soon.

Barbs.



*Vriesea racinae*

Photo B Black



This what burn looks like on a giant *Neoregelia* 'Gee Whizz'. Photo B. Black

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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.

### Committee Members

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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](http://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](http://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!