

# The Potting Shed Observer



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## Photos

Cover picture is of an imported Bolivian species, named *Tillandsia comarapaensis* by Harry Luther in 1984.

*All photos are by the Editor unless advised otherwise.*

## Wellington Tillandsia Study Group Meeting, July 2012

Held on 22 July 2012 at the home of Phyllis Purdie. The following plants were discussed:

Phyl Purdie:

*Tillandsia punctulata* in flower, had a distinctly orange tone to the floral bracts. This species normally has deep red bracts, like the picture below left.

In the case of Phyllis's plant the lighter colour may be due to the



*Tillandsia punctulata* typical bract colour.



*Tillandsia punctulata* grown by Phyl Purdie.

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relatively cool, shady conditions it was grown in, or maybe the inflorescence might colour up more when it matures. Offsets of her plant were available to members, so when they flower it will be interesting to see whether they colour up differently.

One of the members asked about her *T. punctulata* that has started an inflorescence which stopped developing and shown no movement for 4-5 months. There were two suggestions from members:

(1) Sometimes our bromeliads here will start an inflorescence during spring/summer, but the flowers are not produced before the weather cools in autumn. The inflorescence does not produce any flowers over the winter and just sits there until the following spring when it produces flowers.

Other times, the inflorescence never re-starts and eventually dies off. The general theory here is that because our summers are typically much shorter than those in the south american natural habitat of the bromeliad, the plant just does not have time here to complete flowering before the cold weather sets in.

(2) A sudden shock to a plant can halt development of an inflorescence, even one that has started flowering. This happened to one of my plants recently, a *Tillandsia/vriesea* AB93763 grown from seed imported from Peru in 1993 and flowering for the first time this year.

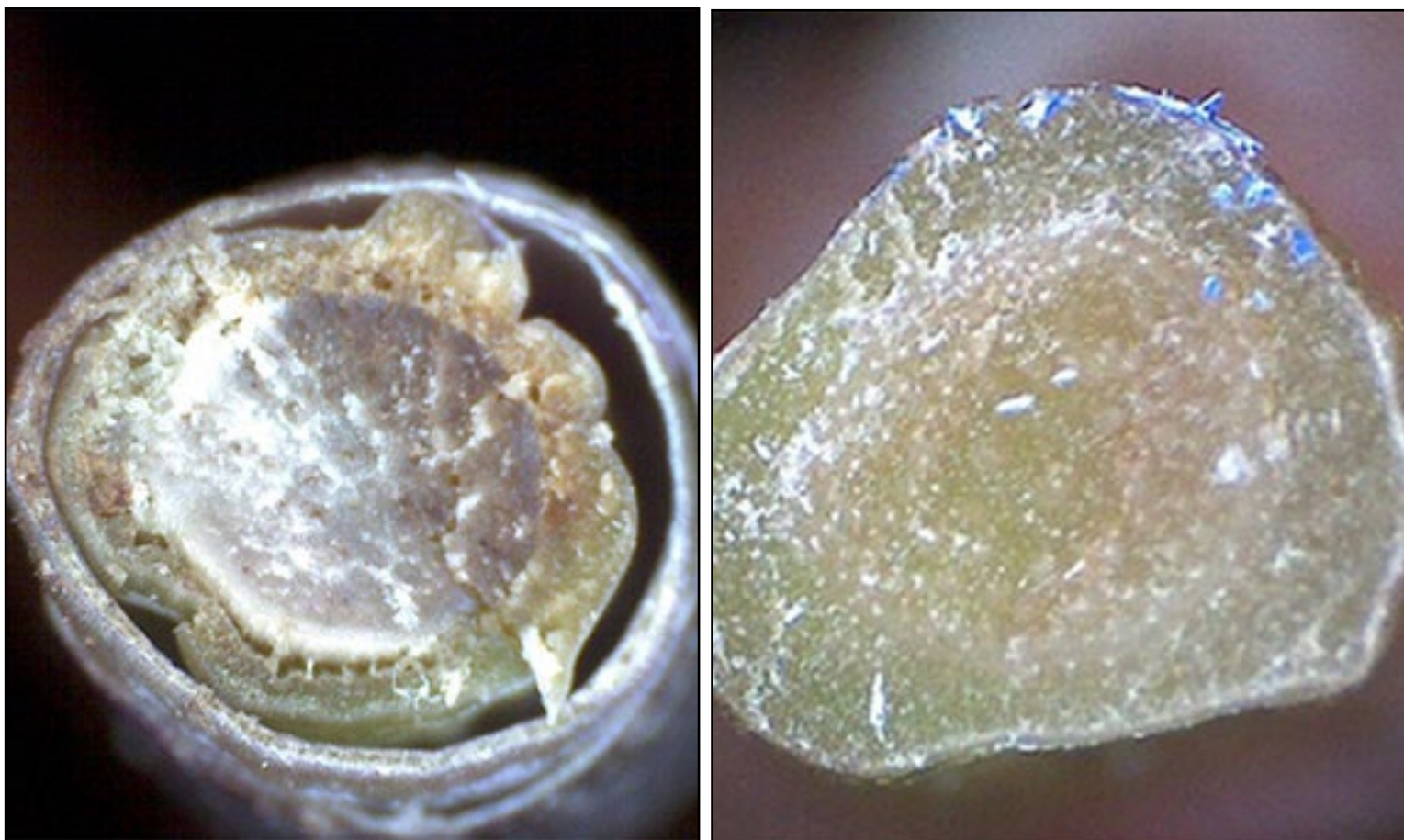
The plant is pictured right, as it was flowering in our heated growing-on house June 4, 2012. Later in the month I took it with me on a visit to the Bromeliad Group in Whakatane, stopping overnight in Taupo on the way. Next morning the car was covered in ice, and the outside air temperature was -4C. Temperature in the car was +6.



*Tillandsia/Vriesea* AB93763 - probably either *TV hitchcockiana* or *TV cereicola*.

For several weeks after my return the plant didn't produce any more flowers, which was a particular worry as I needed one to dissect for identification. A few more weeks passed and I began to notice the floral bracts losing their lustre, a sign the inflorescence was dying. When this happens you may as well cut the inflorescence off because that will hopefully lead to the production of more offsets by the plant.

Even though the inflorescence looked intact, when I cut the flower stalk the cells inside were dying off:



x40 photos of AB93763 stem (left) showing the cells dying off and shrinking inside the outer ring of floral bracts. Compare to a healthy tillandsia stem in the right-hand photo.

Thanks to Greg Aizelwood for showing me his small digital microscope at a recent tillandsia conference in Australia. I bought one, and used it to take the stem cross-section photos above.

For anyone interested in such gadgets, it is a Kaiser Baas Digital Microscope and retails for around \$70. Simple to use, you just load the software and plug the microscope into a USB port on your computer.

The model I got has a 2 megapixel image sensor, as recommended by Greg. Kaiser Baas did produce a 1 megapixel model, that one is not recommended.



*Tillandsia 'Mr Toot' (Tillandsia velickiana x macdougallii)*

Phyl also showed us a plant of 'Mr Toot' in bud. This is an Anwyl Bromeliads hybrid, from a cross made in November 2000 between *Tillandsia velickiana* and *T. macdougallii*.

The plant measures 15cm in flower.

The plant was named for our old dog George who was nicknamed Mr Toot!



**Guarding the Potting Shed**

Andrew Flower:

The plant of *Tillandsia* 'Typical Norm' that we discussed at the June meeting was still flowering (see Issue #1, page 4).



*Tillandsia macbrideana* var. *atroviolacea*

*Tillandsia ionantha* var. *maxima*  
(*T.* 'Huamelula')

*Tillandsia ionantha* var *maxima* has been in cultivation as "*T.* 'Huamelula' for many years, but is now considered to be a form of *T. ionantha* var. *maxima* - named in 2000 by Renate Ehlers (*Die Bromelieae* 1/2000 p. 8). The plant has a distinctive pink shading, unlike most other forms of *T. ionantha* in cultivation.

*Tillandsia macbrideana* var *atroviolaceae* is the most widespread in cultivation of the five named varieties of this species. It is quite a small plant, very easy to grow in our climate, and has the nice habit of producing large numbers of offsets all down the length of its stem - see picture on the right.

This form of *T. macbrideana* is home to Cajamarca in Peru growing at 2,700m.



## An Evolving Enano?

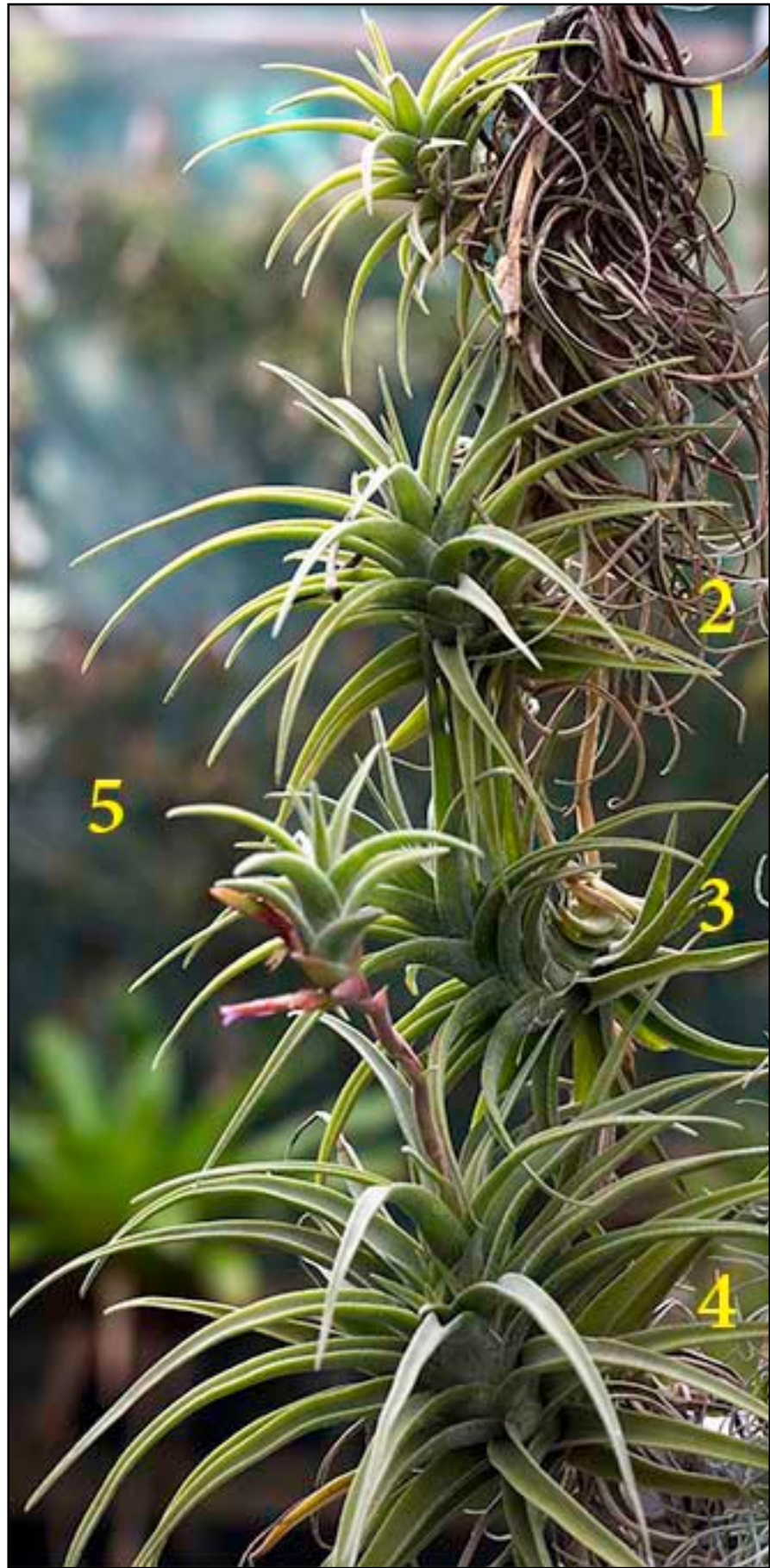
Our picture shows 5 generations of a plant imported in 1992 from a nursery in California. It was labelled *Tillandsia latifolia* 'Enano,' which is supposed to be a very small form of *T. latifolia* from Peru.

The generation 4 plant shows an early stage of the normal process of asexual reproduction in the plant: it puts up a vertical inflorescence (you can see a tiny red flower) and an offset (generation 5) grows out of the base of the flower spike. Over time the new offset grows, and eventually wears the inflorescence stalk down until the new offset is below its mother. You can see the result in the different positions of generation 2 below 1, 3 below 2 etc.

Interestingly, as the plant has grown over the past 20 years succeeding offsets are growing larger, and the habit is changing as well.

generation 1 is 9 cm. diameter  
generation 2 is 14 cm. diameter  
generation 3 is 17 cm. diameter  
generation 4 is 21 cm. diameter

The first 3 generations had only one offset, on their inflorescence. Generation 4 is continuing with the practice of having one inflorescence offset (viviparis?) but in addition has so far



produced 3 large offsets in its leaf axils as well (basitonal offsets).  
Interesting to observe all this - if you have time!

# SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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## A Guest Appearance from an Outback Potting Shed.

Bob Hudson from Cairns up in north Queensland has kindly sent us notes on some tillandsias (that he grows a lot better than we can down here!)



*Tillandsia funkiana*

Photo by Robert Hudson.



*Tillandsia andreana*

Photo by Robert Hudson.

### *Tillandsia funckiana*

This plant was collected by a man Funck in Columbia and named by Mr Baker as *T. funckiana*. In 1888 Moren named *T. andreana* for the Bromeliad researcher André - it is similar to *T. funckiana* and also comes from Columbia. For a long time L.B. Smith placed this species with *T. funckiana* but to-day it is a separate species. *T. andreana* differs from *T. funckiana* in its growth, the axis in *T. funckiana* is elongated but in *T. andreana* it is short. Both are single flowered and have a large red inflorescences. In Werner Rauhs *Lexicon* he says it would be better to list *T. funckiana* with *T. andreana*.

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The Wellington Tillandsia Study Group has no fees. Meet every second month on a Sunday afternoon (usually the 3rd one) at one of the member's homes for a friendly chat, discussion of members plants and any pets that may be present, afternoon tea and sales table. Meetings rotate around Wellington, Hutt Valley, Porirua basin and Kapiti. Hosting a meeting is not compulsory. Phone Phyl Purdie (04) 475-3281.