

# ***Far North Coast Bromeliad Study Group N.S.W.***

Edition: November 2023

Agenda: General Discussion

Venue: PineGrove Bromeliad Nursery  
114 Pine Street Wardell 2477  
Phone (02) 6683 4188

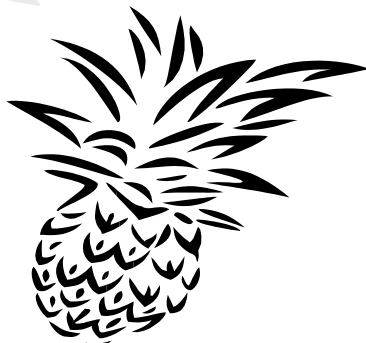
Study Group meets the third Thursday of each month  
Next meeting December 21st 2023 at 11 a.m.

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## **Meeting 19th October 2023**

The meeting was opened at approximately 11.00 am

The 10 members were welcomed.

Two apologies were received.

### **General Business**

It's getting to that time of year again, the Christmas party. Our annual 'Gift Swap' will be held with no change to the rules: member/s who have tabled a gift and have attended the most meetings for the year 2023 will get to select a swap gift first and so on until all members participating have swapped their gifts.

What to bring for a swap: gifts can be a Bromeliad or any gardening related item, something that you would be pleased to receive yourself. Plants should be free of pests, clean and presentable, gift wrapping is optional.

A discussion was had about Facebook (fb) and fb etiquette, more precisely Planet Bromeliad and it's satellite Groups. These sites can be a great place to learn about Bromeliad culture, getting identifications, buying or selling plants and offering some helpful advice occasionally. After being on Facebook for many years one works out how best to respond. When asked to identify a plant, the safest responses I've found is to suggest to "Look toward or compare to...xyz". We see far too many incorrect or very poor identification naming guesses - if you're not positive don't guess as this will only perpetuate a wrong name issue.

A few pointers before offering advice on fb:

First of all check where the person asking the question lives, this will assist in giving an accurate answer regards cultural growing hints.

Suggest that the query be posted on a more relevant site rather than a general Group site e.g: a Billbergia query would best be posted on a Billbergia site such as Planet Billbergia where there are people growing the genus that will be better able to assist. There are many other genera specific sites on fb to use.

Many plants are quite easy to recognise but not all are, so ask for more details. If you think you know the plant, before responding, if it's a hybrid check the Bromeliad Cultivar Register (BCR). Bromeliads in Australia (BinA) this is the web site of The Bromeliad Society of Australia which is helpful for both hybrids and species. For species only, refer to the Bromeliad Species Database (BSD) and to check species spelling refer to the New Bromeliad Taxon List. If you don't spell it correctly it makes it difficult for others to do their own research based on the information you have provided.

The web site addresses are on the back page of this publication.

What you should be looking for to confirm you have the correct identification: Look carefully at leaf shape, is it pointed or rounded, have the leaves got spines, how big are they? Look carefully at the leaf patterning, variegation etc.

The inflorescence, is it simple - of one piece or is it compound - branched?

What colour is the inflorescence?

What shape are the bracts, are they armed (have spines) or entire (smooth edged, no spines)?

What colour are the petals? This can be important even in Neoregelias.

If there is no inflorescence suggest to the grower to wait till it flowers (WTiF) and then repost the identification request.

Consider the growth habit - size and shape (height and diameter), does it grow as a clump or does it grow on stolons, if so how long are the stolons?

If the tendered name appears unclear ask for a photo of the label, it may be partly faded and need deciphering.

Now that you have ticked all your boxes you can confidently respond by advising the enquirer of a direction to 'Look toward or compare to... xyz'.

Be thorough, other readers need to be able to understand your response. Keep your response to the actual query. When making reference to Groups /Societies, not everybody knows the initials of all of them. Some Groups/Societies have the same set of initials so be clear as to which one you're referring to, for example we're Far North Coast Bromeliad Study Group, NSW or FNCBSG NSW not just North Coast, north coast where?

Always show respect when responding on public forums.

### **Show, Tell and Ask!**

Seed from seed banks was discussed as being a great way of expanding our collections, albeit slowly. Be aware that some seed supplied to seed banks may be garden collected, but not all, this means parentage is not guaranteed. Just because the label indicates a certain species one must assess the results at maturity/flowering.

On reviewing last month's Newsletter the addition of rice hulls to our potting mix was raised. Our own mix we use at PineGrove is what we consider a base mix, a starting point. It is good for plants that require very good drainage - Aechmea, Billbergia, Neoregelia, Tillandsia (when potted) etc and it's suitable for our high rainfall area. Some plants need a mix that retains moisture like our Alcantarea, Cryptanthus, Pitcairnia, Dyckia etc, the terrestrial growers. For these we add to the base mix 10 - 20 or 30% rice hulls to aid in water retention. In other words we adjust the mix to suit the plants requirements. Including shredded styrene into your mix and/or sieving the fines out will open the mix and improve aeration.

**Aechmea disjuncta versus atrovittata** by Derek Butcher 2010.

This all started in 1995 when John Catlan sent me a photo of a *Hohenbergia membranostrobilus* which did not link to the description in Smith & Downs nor to the meagre drawings. The herbarium specimen was originally held in Berlin but it seems this was destroyed in World War II. BUT it did link closely to *Hohenbergia disjuncta*. I put the photo on the species database in <http://fcbs.org> and asked for comment. I know that more and more taxonomists do actually look at this record and so it was gratifying (in a way!) 12 years later, to get a comment from Uwe Scharf of the German Brom Journal – Die Bromelie – that I should look towards *Aechmea atrovittata* a new species recently published by Elton Leme.

Observant readers will notice I am jumping genera but you will see in the same publication Elton also changed *Hohenbergia disjuncta* to an *Aechmea*. He saw more similarities to what he calls the *Aechmea fosteriana* complex.

As many of you already know me, a query means it has to be investigated and in this case even more investigation is needed.

These are the things to consider:

***Aechmea atrovittata*** Leme & J. A. Siqueira, sp. nov. Frag. Atl. NE Brazil, 228-230. 2007

I quote:

“When compared to *Aechmea disjuncta*, the new species is easily distinguished by the very dark purple, irregular crossbars (vs. predominately green) on the abaxial leaf surface, similar to *A. fosteriana*. Furthermore, the leaf blade margins have smaller spines (1-2 mm vs. 2-4.5 mm long). *Aechmea atrovittata* also has ovate long-acuminate floral bracts (vs. suborbicular, obtuse and apiculate), exceeding sepal length (vs. distinctly shorter than the sepals), and a mucicous sepal apex (vs. mucronulate).”

The leaf ornamentation pattern in *A. atrovittata* (irregular dark purple crossbars) is relatively common in the species complex (s. lato) where it is included. It is also seen in *A. fosteriana*, *A. orlandiana*, *Canistrum fosterianum* L. B. Sm. and *C. seidelianum* W Weber. This color pattern is revealed in the name chosen for the new species, which comes from the union of the prefix atro (= dark) and the Latin adjective vittatus (with bars).”

***Aechmea disjuncta*** (L. B. Sm.) Leme & J. A. Siqueira.  
Basionym: *Hohenbergia disjuncta* L. B. Sm., Contr. Gray Herb. 1940.  
Distribution: epiphytic, 240 m alt, southern Bahia, Brazil.

“*Aechmea disjuncta* varies to a certain extent in leaf rosette shape. It may be crateriform with wider leaves, or ellipsoid, especially at the base, with narrower leaves. In some plants the leaves may have dark cross bands (e.g. Leme 6044), but they do not have the intense colour pattern of *Ae. atrovittata*. When sterile, this species is easily confused with *Ae. fosteriana*.”

*Aechmea disjuncta* is endemic to low montane Atlantic forest in Bahia. It forms large clumps as an epiphyte in the canopy, or more rarely it is rupicolous, especially at higher elevations.”



*Aechmea disjuncta*  
Peter Franklin PAF1941



*Aechmea disjuncta*  
as *Hoh. membranostrobilus*  
John and Genny Catlan



*Aechmea disjuncta*  
Rob Smythe



*Aechmea atrovittata*  
Elton Leme 6519

**Hohenbergia membranostrobilus** Mez, 1891.

Espirito Santo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

**Or is it ?? - Hoh or Aechmea !!**



grown as *Hohenbergia membranostrobilus*

and photographed by Ross Little.

**Show, Tell and Ask!** continued

Is the centre of your *Alcantarea* looking like this, if so it's because it's *Alcantarea* flowering time! This effect is referred to as crowning, it's the beginning of the emergence of a flower spike. Over several months the spike will grow and side branches will protrude and flowers will develop.



*Alcantarea* 'Raymond Golden Brown' and a *Alcantarea* *vinicolor* (nearest to the power pole) are in spike at the bottom of Debbie's driveway this month.

"They get no attention but they seem pretty happy at the moment" Debbie.



A typical *Alcantarea* flower with long, narrow, spiralling petals. These will emerge from each of the branches of the inflorescence.



*Alcantarea imperialis*



*Alcantarea* 'Whyanbeel'  
3.50 m tall.



*Alcantarea* 'Pedra Azul'

As with any tree, shrub or Bromeliad when being relocated from a protected area into a more brightly lit position the plants hydration must be considered. Burnt or dried leaf tips can be the result of insufficient water gain by the leaves. It is important to maintain a consistent watering program until the plant/s are established and show signs of healthy new growth.



*Neoregelia 'Grey Nurse'*  
1st Open and Judges Choice  
Michelle Hartwell

*Tillandsia caput-medusa*  
1st Tillandsiadeae  
Gary McAteer



*Neoregelia 'Maria'*  
grown by Kayelene Guthrie



*Neoregelia 'Voodoo Doll'*  
grown by Michelle Hartwell



Two photos  
↔  
to show  
both the  
front  
and  
back  
of  
Coral McAteer's  
1st place  
Decorative  
entry this month.



***Billbergia alfonsi-joannis*** Reitz, Anais Herb. Barbosa Rodrigues 1952.

**Etymology:** Homage to the brothers, Priest Cônego João Reitz (n.1904) and Priest Alfonso Reitz (n.1906), eminent admirers and growers of ornamental plants, part founders of the Herbário Barbosa Rodrigues, headquartered in Itajai.



*Billbergia alfonsi-joannis*  
grown by Ross Little

Four x inflorescences measured  
750 to 850mm long.

**Distribution:** Epiphytic in forest, 700 m alt, known from the type locality only: 16 Dec. 1950, *Reitz* 4069 (HBR, US), incomplete and not altogether certain. *Billbergia alfonsi-joannis* was discovered and described by: Padre Raulino Reitz who named it to honour his brothers.

As with many of the helicoid *Billbergias* they have very large scape bracts forming an umbrella over the pendant spike. Referred to as a helicoid or watch spring *Billbergia* because of its tightly recoiled petals.

When grown in cultivation it is found to be difficult

to pollinate, rarely if ever offering fertile seed. Being an epiphyte it grows on the trunks and branches of trees and like most *Billbergias* its inflorescence is relatively short lived popping out to full bloom over night. The bracts gradually wither away in just a few short days in our scorching early summer heat, oh! but what a magical sight to behold, we are so fortunate.

### **The Watch Spring *Billbergias* in Cultivation**

by Lyman B. Smith, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

One of the easiest groups of Bromeliads to distinguish is that of the watch spring or helicoid *Billbergias*, because their tightly recoiled petals are unique in the family. In fact some botanists have favoured separating them as a genus, *Helicodea*, but intermediates with true *Billbergia*, like *Billbergia brasiliensis*, make this separation appear undesirable.

Besides their curious petals, the helicoid *billbergias* have a number of other characteristics in common. Their few leaves form a long, tubular rosette, their scape bracts are very large and a beautiful shade of rose, and their inflorescence is always simple and usually pendent. In fact there are so many similarities that we have little left to distinguish the species from each other except the shape of the sepals and the ovary. However, as a sort of compensation, these vary more than in most other bromeliad genera.

Reprinted in part from: The Journal of the Bromeliad Society, January/February 1983, Vol. XXXIII (1)



*Billbergia alfonsi-joannis*



*Billbergia porteana*

photos by Ross Little

***Billbergia Porteana*** Brongniart ex Beer, 1856, is also blooming for us now, it has smaller flowers and the apex of the petals is yellow or greenish-yellow which differ from *Bill. alfonsi-joannis* whose petal apex is coloured blue. The lower part of the flower has an hourglass figure due to its large epigynous tube between the ovary and the unusually short broad sepals. It is native to Brazil and Paraguay where it grows as an epiphyte and saxicolous at 800 -1300 m altitude.

Epigynous: epi, upon, and gynous, ovary.

***Aechmea manzanaresiana*** H. Luther, 1998. compiled by Ross Little

This stunning *Aechmea* can be found growing as an epiphyte on the eastern slopes of the Andes in the province of Napo, Ecuador at 1200-1300 m elevation. *Aechmea manzanaresiana* can tolerate very bright light here in northern NSW but not full sun, it grows to 800 mm high including the inflorescence.

This species is similar and probably closely related to *Ae. tessmannii* Harms (widespread from Colombia to Peru) on account of its very broad spike rachis and symmetrical sepals. Because the spreading flowers much exceed the floral bracts in *Ae. Manzanaresiana* the outline of a branch is conspicuously "saw-toothed," not nearly smooth as in *Aechmea tessmannii*.



Most plants of *Ae. manzanaresiana*, at least in the field if not always in cultivation, have a much more densely branched inflorescence with shorter branches than *Ae. tessmannii*.

The specific epithet (name) honors José Manuel Manzañares of Quito, Ecuador the enthusiastic collector and photographer of Ecuadorian Bromeliaceae.

*Aechmea manzanaresiana* grown by Lesley Baylis photographed by Ross Little

***Aechmea*** is a genus of flowering plants in the family Bromeliaceae - subfamily Bromelioideae. The name comes from the Greek *aichme*, meaning "spear". *Aechmea* comprises eight subgenera with 244 species and 73 infraspecific taxa (Nov. 2023) distributed from Mexico through South America and the Caribbean. Most of the species in the genus *Aechmea* are epiphytes.

The eight subgenera are:

*Aechmea* subg. *Aechmea* Baker

*Aechmea* subg. *Chevaliera* (Gaudichaud ex Beer) Baker

*Aechmea* subg. *Lamprococcus* (Beer) Baker

*Aechmea* subg. *Macrochordion* (De Vriese) Baker

*Aechmea* subg. *Ortgiesia* (Regel) Mez

*Aechmea* subg. *Platyaechmea* (Baker) Baker

*Aechmea* subg. *Podaechmea* Mez

*Aechmea* subg. *Pothuava* (Baker) Baker

*Aechmea* subg. *Streptocalyx* ined.

**Ref:** Gouda, Eric J.; Butcher, Derek; Gouda, Kees (2022). "Aechmea". Encyclopaedia of Bromeliads. Utrecht University Botanic Gardens. Retrieved 20 October 2022.

*Aechmea* includes some very discordant elements and is very likely of polyphyletic origin. Further research is likely to divide it with some parts becoming independent genera and others merging with genera at present considered distinct.

***Aechmea* subgen 1. *Podaechmea*** Mez, DC. Monogr. Phan. 9: 191. 1896. Inflorescence amply compound, lepidote, lax. Flowers pedicellate, polystichous. Sepals mostly mucronate. Petal appendages well developed.

Lectotype: *Pironneava lueddemanniana* K. Koch, 1866. (2023 now = *Aechmea lueddemanniana* (K. Koch) Mez)

***Aechmea* subgen 2. *Lamprococcus*** (Beer) Baker, Handb. Bromel. 33. 1889. Inflorescence compound or simple, lax, glabrous. Floral bracts mostly small to absent. Flowers polystichous, sessile or pedicellate. Sepals unarmed. Petals appendaged. Pollen porate.

Lectotype: *Aechmea fulgens* Brongniart, Ann. Sci. Nat. Bot. II. 15: 371. 1841.

**Aechmea** subgen 3. **Aechmea** Baker, 1889.

Inflorescence simple or compound, lax or dense but not strobilate.

Floral bracts and rachis not forming pouches around flowers.

Flowers distichous or polystichous, sessile.

Sepals free or nearly so, unarmed (when flowers are distichous and lepidote) or mucronate; petal appendages well developed.

Type: *Aechmea paniculata* Ruiz & Pavon, Fl. Peruv. 3: 37. 1802.

**Aechmea** subgen 4. **Ortgiesia** (Regel) Mez, 1892.

Inflorescence compound or simple, lax or dense, typically nidular but usually scapose.

Floral bracts not decurrent and not forming pouches.

Flowers sessile.

Sepals connate for one third to one half their length, their mucros about as long as their free lobes.

Petals distinctly appendaged.

Type: *Ortgiesia tillandsioides* Regel, Gartenflora 16: 193, pl. 547. 1867.

(2023 now = *Aechmea recurvata* (Klotzsch) L. B. Smith)

**Aechmea** subgen 5. **Platyaechmea** (Baker) Baker, 1889.

Inflorescence compound or simple, spikes dense.

Floral bracts decurrent and forming pouches.

Flowers distichous or polystichous, sessile.

Sepals free to one third connate, mucronulate or unarmed.

Petals distinctly appendaged.

Type: *Aechmea distichantha* Lemaire, Jard. Fleur. 3: pl. 269. 1853.

**Aechmea** subgen 6. **Pothuava** (Baker) Baker, 1889.

Inflorescence simple, never perennial, usually dense.

Floral bracts mostly not imbricate.

Flowers polystichous, sessile.

Sepals free or subfree, mucronate or mucronulate.

Petal appendages well developed.

Lectotype: *Bromelia nudicaulis* Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 286. 1753.

(2023 now = *Aechmea nudicaulis* var. *nudicaulis*)

**Aechmea** subgen 7. **Macrochordion** (De Vriese) Baker, 1889.

Inflorescence simple, strobilate.

Floral bracts entire, unarmed.

Flowers polystichous, sessile.

Sepals unarmed; more or less connate.

Petal appendages well developed.

Type: *Bromelia tinctoria* Martius in Spix & Martius, Reise in Brasilien 2: 554.

1828: Linnaea 5: 42. 1830.

(2023 now = *Aechmea bromeliifolia*)

**Aechmea** subgen 8. **Chevaliera** (Gaudichaud ex Beer) Baker, 1889.

Inflorescence simple and strobilate or rarely digitate from a few spikes, often perennial.

Floral bracts coriaceous or ligneous.

Flowers in many ranks.

Sepals free or connate.

Petals with appendages reduced or lacking.

Type: *Chevaliera sphaerocephala* Gaudichaud, 1843.

(2023 now = *Aechmea sphaerocephala*)

*Aechmea manzanaresiana*, in the traditional classification of Smith and Downs (1979), could be placed in subgenus *Platyaechmea*. Members of this subgenus have sessile flowers mostly distichously arranged with conspicuous, imbricate floral bracts that conceal at least the ovary and usually most of the flower at anthesis and a spike rachis that is flattened and often broad and excavated. The majority of the species have an Amazonian distribution.

**Glossary:**

**Lectotype:** A specimen chosen by a later researcher to serve as if it were the holotype. It is chosen from among the specimens available to the original publishing author (the isotypes, syntypes and/or paratypes) of a scientific name when the holotype was either lost or destroyed, or when no holotype was designated.

**Type / type form:** The originally collected plant from which a botanical description is written.

**Holotype:** The one specimen or illustration used by the author or designated by the author as the nomenclatural type.

**Nomenclature:** Naming of groups of organisms in conformity with an international code designed for precision and universal comprehension.

**Subgenus:** One of the divisions into which large genera are sometimes taxonomically divided.

Information compiled by Ross Little from: *Aechmea* genus and key to subgenera, The Butcher Files. Bromeliad Society International - A Bromeliad Glossary and the internet.



## **Open Popular Vote**

1st Michelle Hartwell

*Neoregelia* 'Grey Nurse'

2nd Kayelene Guthrie

*Neoregelia* 'Maria'

## **Tillandsioideae**

1st Gary McAteer

*Tillandsia caput medusa*

## **Decorative**

1st Coral McAteer

'Spring Fever'

## **Judges Choice**

1st Michelle Hartwell

*Neoregelia* 'Grey Nurse'

### **Web Links for Checking Correct Identification and Spelling ?**

Bromeliad Cultivar Register (BCR): <http://registry.bsi.org/>

Refer to this site for correct identification and spelling of your hybrid or cultivar.

Bromeliad Species Database (BSD): [www.bsi.org/members/?bsd](http://www.bsi.org/members/?bsd)

Refer to this site for species identification, photos, descriptions and more.

New Bromeliad Taxon List : <https://bromeliad.nl/taxonlist/>

Refer to this site for latest species name changes and correct spelling.

Bromeliads in Australia (BinA) <http://bromeliad.org.au/>

Refer to this site for its Photo Index, Club Newsletters many with Table of Contents Index and there's Detective Derek Articles.

Keep these web sites set as desktop icons for quick reference access.

### **Where do I Find the Dates ?**

[www.bromeliad.org.au](http://www.bromeliad.org.au) then click "Diary".

Check this site for regular updates of times, dates and addresses of meetings and shows in your area and around the country.