

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Jungle Love

Chris Beytes



Hawaiian grower Dave Fell finds himself surrounded by one of his many tropical plant passions, the bromeliad genus *vriesea*, and specifically, hybrids of the species *hieroglyphica*, endemic to Brazil and named for their unusual foliage patterns. These are Dave's own seedlings, a breeding project he's been working on for some 20 years. The one he's holding is called Petite Pink.

Dave, owner of Hawaiian Sunshine Nursery, with locations on the islands of Hawaii and Oahu, is mostly working with complex hybrids of *hieroglyphica* that he says are "faster, easier and prettier than the species."

GrowerTalks toured Dave's Hilo facility during a recent visit to the 50th state and we were impressed with Dave's work on this type of *vriesea*, which is appreciated for its foliage patterns, not for its flower spikes. Never before had we seen so much variety in this species.

"The size and color patterns available via breeding are unlimited," he says. "These types of plants have hit more mainstream horticulture in countries like New Zealand, Australia and Europe. There are more and more of them on the market every year."

There are varieties available for every pot size, from 4 in. to 25 gal. Dave says the primary interest comes from interiorscapers and landscapers, although we can see them appealing for anyone seeking an interesting, long-lasting, easy-care houseplant.

As for Dave's own breeding work, he has some varieties in tissue culture at a Florida lab. He plans to release the first of his *vriesea* hybrids to the trade at the Tropical Plant Industry Exhibition in Fort Lauderdale in January. In the meantime, collectors can reach him via email at david@hawaiinursery.com. **GT**