



Bromeliad Care

Bromeliads are native to Central and South America. They are found growing on rocks, trees, and on the ground in wooded and humid areas. They are some of our most fascinating and beautiful ornamentals.



Bromeliad foliage is colorful, ranging from silvery grey to dark green. It can be variegated with pink and off-white striping.

Bromeliad flowers appear in many shapes and colors. They are often borne on spikes extending above the plant, but, in some varieties, flowers are almost hidden in the center funnel of the plant and surrounded by brilliant inner leaves. The root system of most bromeliads serves mainly as a means of attachment to rocks, tree bark, or soil. Roots furnish very little food to the bromeliad plant, whose water supply is stored in a natural vase-like center formed by their durable foliage.

Bromeliads are ideally suited for home decoration. They can be used in pots, hanging baskets, dish gardens, or on bark or driftwood. They are relatively easy to care for, and do not need to be in large pots or containers.

WATERING BROMELIADS

Some bromeliads (i.e., many *Tillandsia* sp.) should be misted with water frequently, while others require watering only once every ten days to three weeks. Once a month, they should be fertilized lightly at the roots with a water soluble fertilizer. For indoor bromeliads, the amount of water left in the cup should be minimal. This may require the frequent

addition of small amounts of water to the cup. Try to keep the root system moist but never wet.

Salts and Bromeliads

Bromeliads are highly sensitive to salt accumulation from water standing in the cup. The plant should be inverted once every two weeks or so and flushed out to remove accumulated salts. Salts will make the leaves to turn brown at the tips and eventually die. Distilled water and rain water, which do not contain mineral salts, are best for watering bromeliads.

PROPAGATING BROMELIADS

When the original plant completes its bloom, it send out shoots or "pups," after which the mother plant slowly declines. Propagation is achieved by removing the pups and cutting as closely as possible to the mother plant with a sharp, clean knife. Pups should then be repotted in individual containers.

LIGHT AND BROMELIADS

Bromeliads with variegated foliage are more vividly colored when they receive bright light. Filtered sun is preferable; direct sunlight will usually burn bromeliad foliage.

INSECTS AND BROMELIADS

Normally, soft brown or black scales are the only insects to infest bromeliads. Scales can be sponged off with a soap or malathion solution. If mature scales cannot be wiped off easily, use a fingernail or knife blade to dislodge them.