

## Bromeliads



Bromeliads consist of a large family of plants native to the rain forests of Mexico, Central, and South America. These plants are quite unique in the fact that they get their nourishment from the air rather than the soil. They actually grow in the branches of trees. This amazing life process allows these plants to be mounted on decorative driftwood.

Bromeliads have no other basic characteristics. They all bloom and most are quite attractive. They come in several styles and colors and generally last up to three months depending on variety and growing conditions. During or after blooming, all Bromeliads put off new plants called pups. The pups can be left attached to the mother plant or separated and grown individually.

### Care

Bromeliads can live well inside or outside. The two main precautions for outside growing are freezing and too much direct sun. They can take only morning or filtered sunlight. Too much sun will cause brown burn spots on the leaves. Inside they can live with low light, although they generally prefer a medium to bright indirect light. Bloom color will last longer in a well-lighted area.

Since Bromeliads receive their nourishment from the air, we recommend setting your plants outside occasionally. Air conditioning and heating take all the humidity out of the air. Therefore, they enjoy and tend to perk up with fresh air. This is also a good time to flush the plants thoroughly with fresh water. This will ensure against water becoming stagnant in areas with low air circulation. The enthusiastic grower may wish to fertilize his Bromeliad. They will grow faster and be stronger. We recommend using Hasta Gro at half strength every two weeks. Spray directly in the cups and leaves.

### Watering

Watering is the most important aspect of caring for your Bromeliad. The watering process is quite unique in the fact that they take their water through the leaves rather than the roots. The large broad-leaf varieties have large cups formed by the leaves. These cups act as reservoirs of water, which the plant uses as needed. Therefore, these cups should be kept fairly full most of the time. In the rain forest environment Bromeliads use these cups for catching the rainwater. Under normal conditions, water should be added twice a week.

The smaller stiff-leaved varieties (Tillandsias) are watered a little differently. Most varieties do not have cups because they need less water. They have small silvery colored hairs on the leaves, which absorb water and moisture. Therefore, just wetting the leaves is sufficient. Normally, 2 to 3 times a week is adequate. The easiest and neatest method indoors is with a spray bottle.