



## Tillandsia/Air Plants

*Tillandsia* are epiphytes – they are found high in the branches of trees, far from any soil – and so they are commonly called Air Plants. They need a bit more than air to thrive, however, both in their native habitat and in your home. You'll be able to enjoy these fascinating plants year-round without too much trouble if you remember the following tips:

### *choosing a location*

- *Tillandsia* like bright, indirect light. Keep them from extended direct sunlight because they are easily sunburned.
- Close to an east or west window that is sunlit only part of the day is the best choice for displaying your *Tillandsia*; near a southern window with translucent curtains or filtered by nearby trees will work also.
- Light tolerances vary between species and you may find some which will manage when displayed in lower light situations. Regularly rotating your collection into brighter areas, however, will keep your plants happy without sacrificing the aesthetics of your decorative displays.
- Remember that the intensity of indoor light is much lower in winter and you may wish to supplement available light with a broad spectrum fluorescent plant light.
- Air plants prefer warm temperatures of 70° – 75°. They can withstand near freezing as well as temperatures well into the nineties with sufficient humidity, but this is not recommended.
- *Tillandsia* thrive when placed outdoors once night-time temperatures are consistently above 50°. In the bright, filtered light found on a porch or patio, underneath a large tree, or in another spot that receives only early morning or afternoon sun, your air plants will enjoy the summer warmth and fresh, moving air.

### *watering, humidity and fertilization*

- Because the light conditions and ambient humidity will vary in each situation, we recommend that you begin by watering your *Tillandsia* two to three times a week and stay on a regular watering schedule.
- Adjust to a more frequent schedule if you begin to notice signs of dryness: crisp edges, leaves curling or looseness at the base. Conversely, if your plants are getting too much water they will be squishy, start to rot at the base and may smell bad.
- The most reliable way to water your *Tillandsia* is to rinse them off, upside down, in the sink or shower. Saturate completely until water runs off the plant. Shake them off to remove excess water and return them to their display. Allow to dry completely between waterings. If they are not dry within four hours of watering, reevaluate the ventilation at their location.
- Misting can be used to supplement the overall humidity in the air but in most cases will not provide sufficient moisture.
- Soaking in a basin of tepid water for about 30 minutes will help rehydrate your air plants if they have gone too dry or as a precaution if you will be away for more than a week. Do not use this method too often, however, or your plants may rot.
- Softer, greener-leaved plants will require more frequent watering and a bit less sun than gray or silver-leaved plants.
- When your *Tillandsia* are outdoors, keep in mind that rainfall will take over some of your watering duties but not all of them.
- Keep an eye on your air plants during transitions between indoor and outdoor conditions, as well as when hotter, drier weather comes at the end of summer and adjust your watering schedule accordingly.
- Fertilize about once a month by misting with a high-nitrogen, low-copper, water-soluble fertilizer – we use Nature's Source (10-4-3) – with the suggested dosage diluted to ¼ strength. Fertilization is not absolutely necessary but will increase the growth and vigor of your plants.