



Air Plants – *Tillandsia* spp.

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 your brighter areas, is another option to keep them thriving.
- Remember that the intensity of indoor light is much lower in winter and you may wish to supplement with plant lights.
- Air plants prefer warm temperatures of 70° - 75°. They can withstand near freezing as well as temperatures well into the nineties with enough humidity, but this is not recommended.
- *Tillandsia* thrive when placed outdoors once night-time temperatures are consistently above 50°. Place in bright, filtered light or a spot that receives either early morning or late afternoon sun, for some 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, with too much water they will be squishy, start to rot at the base and may smell bad.
- The most reliable watering method is to gently spray them in the sink or shower, first right side up, then upside down. Let them drain in an upside-down position for an hour before returning them to their display.
- Soaking in a basin of tepid water for about 30 minutes will help rehydrate your air plants if they have gone too dry. Try not to 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, regular 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.
- Fertilization is not absolutely necessary but will increase the growth and vigor of your plants. Mist about once a month with a high-nitrogen, low-copper, water-soluble fertilizer such as *Nature's Source 10-4-3* diluted to ¼ strength.