

# Tillandsia

*Tillandsia are commonly known as air plants. They are found from jungle to rain forest to arid desert environments, and from sea level to high mountains. Most tillandsia species use their root systems to attach themselves to trees or rocks, absorbing moisture and nutrients through their leaves (thus classifying them as epiphytes). Since tillandsia's are epiphytes, the mounting medium you choose is limited only by your imagination.*

## LIGHT

For indoor living, provide enough light and correct moisture to maintain a healthy plant. Bright filtered sunlight is recommended. An east or west facing window would be perfect, but a protected southern exposure would also work. A broad spectrum "grow" light can provide short term light requirements for your plants, if needed. During warm summer months air plants do well in outdoor environments. A screened porch or pool patio is best. Just be careful to limit their full sun exposure or they will sunburn.

## WATER

The best practice is to water three to five times a week; however, they will tolerate it if you forget now and then. Saturate the plant completely in room temperature water or mist thoroughly.

## BLOOM

These unique plants often undergo a dramatic colour change as they prepare to bloom. Some have a very luscious and unequalled fragrance. Some blooms last a few days, while other can stick around for a full year.

## FERTILIZATION

Fertilizing is not absolutely necessary for survival, but will increase the growth and vigour of your plants and their blooms. It is highly recommended that you only use a fertilizer formulated specifically for tillandsias as it must be absorbed directly via the leaves. Also be careful not apply too much fertilizer as this may burn the leaves.

## TEMPERATURE

Surprisingly tillandsia is tolerant of a wide range of temperatures, most species can withstand near freezing temperatures. Although preferring temperatures in the range of 20°C. But with increased water, air circulation and shade, they can do quite well in temperatures up into the range of 30°C.

## REPRODUCTION

Tillandsias reproduce by offsets (pups) or by seed. Many send out pups from the base or between the leaves of the mother plant. Young plants can be separated from the mother when they are about ½ of the parent's size, and will mature in about one year.

## MOUNTING

The possibilities of mounting media are almost endless. Some suggestions include driftwood, tree limbs, cork, clay pottery, manzanita burls, rocks or stones of any kind, or glass hanging vessels that are designed for just such a purpose.

As tillandsias tend to grow in colonies or clusters of plants, many look very nice just hanging with no mounting at all. The media you select should not hold water. Driftwood MUST be 100% salt free. Do not use treated wood as most have a copper solution treatment that is toxic to tillandsia. An odorless adhesive may be used to affix the plant to your media (avoid covering the area where the roots form). If you do not wish to use adhesives, the plant will eventually attach roots to anchor it to the mount. Remember that air plants grow wild on rocks and trees. Placing them in soil or covering their bases with moss will lead to excess moisture and may cause rot.