



AIR PLANTS

The Wonderful world of Tillandsia

Tillandsia is a genus of around 650 species of evergreen, perennial flowering plants in the family Bromeliaceae.

Native to the forests, mountains and deserts of northern Mexico and south-eastern United States, Mesoamerica and the Caribbean to mid Argentina.



HOW THEY GROW

- Tillandsia are also commonly known as airplants because of their natural propensity to cling wherever conditions permit: telephone wires, tree branches, barks, bare rocks, etc.
- Their light seeds and a silky parachute carries the seeds to the treetop
- Most Tillandsia species are **epiphytes** – which translates to 'upon a plant'
- Some are **aerophytes**, which have a minimal root system and grow on shifting desert soil.



HOW THEY GROW

- They do not absorb water and nutrients thru their roots like most plants.
- Their leaves, more or less silvery in color, are covered with specialized cells (trichomes) capable of rapidly absorbing water that gathers on them.
- Some of the species, like the majority of bromelia, grow as funnel bromelia, whose stem axis is compressed. The leaves are then close together in rosettes, thereby cover the lower areas of the leaves, so that a funnel for collecting water.



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- They have naturally been established in diverse environments such as equatorial tropical rain forests, high elevation Andes mountains, rock dwelling regions, and Louisiana swamps, such as Spanish moss, a species that grows atop tree limbs. But there are also species that live **lithophytic**, so on rocks (but also roofs and even telephone wires).



HOW THE CLIMATE CHANGES THE PLANT



- **The green species** with their claim to a cool-humid climate live mostly more in the shade terrestrial or in the lower levels of the forests.
- In contrast, almost all gray species live in precipitation-poor areas with high humidity. They prefer the full sun and can therefore be found in the upper floors of the woods, on rocks or (rarely) on the ground. Many of the **gray species are epiphytes**.
- **Air plants with silver dusting and stiff foliage** will require more sunlight than air plants with softer foliage. They generally need a strong light. In summer outside, however, they prefer the light shade of a tree at the hottest hours.
- The desert air plants will have more protective “scales” to help shield from the sun

HOME CULTIVATION



- For most species, the ideal growth temperature is between 20 °C and 25 °C, with a minimum of 10 °C and a maximum of 30 °C.
- Be careful of risking them dry out in the direct light of the window or outdoor space, and due to winter heaters
- Consider moving their location each season as would be most suitable.
- Avoid bright direct light in favour of bright indirect light for tropical species

MESIC VS XERIC

Air Plants Mesic vs. Xeric *Tillandsia*



SUPERMOSS®

Native to humid environments,
such as the South American
Rainforest



ORIGIN
RAINFOREST



ORIGIN
SEMI-ARID

Native to semi-arid climates,
such as Central Mexico

Found in tree canopies



FOUND IN
TREES



FOUND ON
ROCKS

Found on rocks, in higher
altitudes

Deep green color



APPEARANCE
DEEP GREEN



APPEARANCE
GREY FUZZY

Grey fuzzy appearance

Frequent watering



FREQUENT
WATERING



LOW
WATERING

Drought tolerant

Filtered sunlight



FILTERED
SUNLIGHT



BRIGHT-INDIRECT
SUNLIGHT

Bright-indirect sunlight



CARE SHEET

FERTILIZING

Tillandsia or Orchid fertilizing spray - use once annually in spring to encourage growth

LIGHT

Bright indirect light. Avoid shade, avoid bright direct light

MISTING

Misting 2-3 times - Daily to minimum 3 times weekly

WHEN TO WATER

Do all watering in the morning. Evening soaking or misting disrupts the plants ability to respire overnight, and extends drying time.

SOAK

Quick Soak - weekly for 2 minutes

Every month - Bath for 5-10 minutes. Don't oversoak!

SEASONAL WATERING

Water more in dry winter months and hot summer months

REVIVAL

- Too wet - ensure light quality is good, not on wet surface and wait until next misting
- Too dry - brown tips or entire leaf, stiff and crackly
- If any green remains, try soaking for 12 hours and then allow to dry well on airy surface.



DYING AIR PLANT



DEAD AIR PLANT

PROPAGATION VS. CLUSTERS

- Flowers only once, produces pups and then dies
- When the flowering bloom starts to die, we recommend you carefully clip out the dead flower. This sends a signal to the air plant that it is transitioning resources and putting its plant energy into having babies. They're called "pups" or air plant pups. Air plant pups are small offshoots from the base of the mother plant. When the pups get to be about a 1/3 to 1/2 the size of the mother plant, they are strong and healthy enough to be gently removed from the mother plant to start growing on their own.
- Soak and then gently pull off pup when both mother and pup are in healthy condition
- Grow a cluster for glory and prestige!



WAYS TO DISPLAY YOUR AIR PLANT

- Driftwood, mopani wood and grapevine, bark, corks
- Geodesic shapes
- Glass terrariums
- Shells - ex. Urchin
- Sculptures
- Dishes, bowls and pots
- Rocks and crystals

Mounting to objects

- Glue roots, not leaves, using hot glue or E-6000 Glue
- Avoid copper! Stainless steel is ideal!



TILLANDSIA CAPUT-MEDUSAE



TILLANDSIA FUNCKIANA



TILLANDSIA BULBOSA



TILLANDSIA CAPITATA



WHERE TO FIND

- Canadian tire
- Home Depot
- Planterra (largest selection)
- Botanix
- Evasia
- Random small plant shops and home decor store

\$3 minimum - Average \$5 - Large size \$20 - \$30