

# Bromeliads

Bromeliads make great indoor plants. They have few needs and very few problem pests. With the right care, you can enjoy bromeliads in your home or office year round.

## Water

Bromeliads are adapted to withstand drought, but are much less tolerant of being over-watered which can cause root rot. It is important that your bromeliad is planted in a medium that allows for fast drainage. Soak well when you water, and don't water the bromeliad again until at least the top two inches of potting media are dry. Don't let the bromeliad sit in a saucer full of water.

Bromeliads also take in water through their leaf cup, the center where the leaves come together. Fill the cup with water, preferably rainwater. Empty and refill the cup regularly to avoid water stagnation.

Note: It is important to **never use a metal container** to water a bromeliad. Bromeliads are very sensitive to metal and the results could be devastating to your plant.

## Humidity

Indoor bromeliads prefer 60% humidity, much higher than most homes, particularly in winter. You have a few options to increase humidity.

- Run a humidifier near your plant.
- Create a humidity tray.
- Place a few more plants in the vicinity.
- Mist the plant regularly.

## Potting Media

If you repot your bromeliad, don't use plain potting soil. It is too dense and will not allow for the quick drainage that bromeliads require. Instead, use potting mixes specially formulated for bromeliads or supplement regular potting soil with porous materials.

## Light

For the most part, bromeliads thrive in bright, sunny spaces. However, exposure to direct sunlight for an extended period of time can cause damage to the leaves. In the winter, a south facing window is ideal.

## Fertilizing

Bromeliads require little fertilizing. Occasionally you will want to use a water soluble fertilizer. Never place fertilizer in a bromeliad's leaf cup. Instead, fertilize around the bromeliad's base. *(continued)*



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# Bromeliads (cont.)

Many people try to encourage faster growth with the use of fertilizer. But because bromeliads are slow growing plants, too much fertilizer can cause the leaves to become leggy and vibrant colors to diminish.

## Flowering

Most bromeliads flower only once in their lifetime. The brightly colored leaves that are often mistaken for flowers are actually called bracts, a leaf-like structure from which an inflorescence may grow. A bromeliad grows by adding new leaves to the center of the plant. At some point, the center will become crowded and new leaves will no longer have room to form. At this point, the bromeliad will focus its energy on producing pups, also known as offsets. The bloom on a bromeliad can last several months and the colorful bracts even longer. You can cut back the flower once it becomes unsightly. Use a sharp, sterilized instrument and cut the spike back as far as possible without injuring the remaining portion of the plant. Sadly, the mother plant will eventually die. But hopefully not before producing offspring to continue its legacy.

Following a few simple steps can keep you enjoying bromeliads, both indoors and out, for several seasons.

- Provide bright light without direct sun exposure
- Maintain optimal humidity
- Keep air flowing around the plants
- Make sure the plants stay moist but not soggy
- Provide adequate drainage
- Fertilize sparingly

It is always important to read the specifications for your particular type of bromeliad. Bromeliad care requirements can vary and you may find that you will need to tweak a few things such as light exposure or watering techniques for optimal growth.

