

# OUT OF THIN AIR-PLANTS

A GUIDE TO THE  
WONDERFUL WORLD OF  
TILLANDSIAS

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Tillandsias, commonly known as air plants, have been captivating plant nerds for many years with their unique shapes and dazzling colors. Their easy-care nature also makes them the perfect house companion for both budding plant enthusiasts and experts, who may wonder why they need another plant in their ever growing collection. Trust me, you do!

## WHAT ARE TILLANDSIAS?

Like orchids, most tillandsias are epiphytes - meaning they grow on the

surfaces of other plants and obtain moisture and nutrients from the air, rainfall, and moist accumulated debris around them. Tillandsias are a member of the bromeliad family, Bromeliaceae, and account for over 650 of approximately 2500 species of bromeliads. They are native to the forests, mountains, and deserts of Central and South America, the southern US, and the West Indies.

## HOW DO I CARE FOR MY TILLANDSIAS?

Because tillandsias are epiphytes, they do not need soil to survive. In fact, putting your tillandsias in soil can potentially kill them. Because of this, you can get very creative in displaying your air plants in your home. You can glue the base of a plant to a frame, place them inside an open terrarium, or even hang them in various places. Provide bright, indirect light for your air plants. Some direct light is tolerable, but keep the amount of direct light under 2-3 hours per day. In general, keep your air plants in warm conditions, optimally between 50-90 degrees. (continued on next page)







### WHAT ABOUT WATERING?

A common issue with caring for tillandsias is establishing a healthy watering schedule. Just because our air plant friends are epiphytic, does not mean that they can go long periods of time without water. Rinse your air plants under running water or soak them for 20-30 minutes once per week. You can also give them an additional misting one to two times per week. Plants in drier, sunnier areas may need more water. If your plant is in bloom, a gentle rinse is recommended to uphold flowers.

### MAINTENANCE?

It is common for the lower leaves of tillandsias to dry out, especially when they are adjusting to a new home. Gently pull these leaves right off the plant. Any damaged leaves, or leaves with dried tips, can be trimmed at an angle. To encourage blooming and reproduction, it is suggested to fertilize with a bromeliad or orchid mix once per month.

### WHEN WILL THEY BLOOM?

Your tillandsias may live for several years before they bloom. While they bloom only once in their lifetime, the bloom can last from several days to multiple months, depending on the species and care. While blooming, the plant develops pups – small offshoots that will grow into their own and eventually bloom again. Once they are about 1/3 of the size of the parent plant, you can twist and pull the pups off or allow them to continue to grow in a clump together.

### I'M IN LOVE! WHERE CAN I BUY THESE?

You're in luck! We have over 10 species available at our upcoming Houseplant and Succulent Sale on November 1st and 2nd. Look for juncifolia, capitata 'Peach', bulbosa, kolbii, bracycaulos, and more! We hope to see you there.