



Caring for Tillandsias (A.K.A. air plants, air ferns, tillies)

LIGHT- Air Plants thrive in bright, indirect light. Morning or late afternoon sun is best as the hot mid-day sun can be too intense.

WATER - Tillandsias take up water through their leaves, using their roots mostly for anchoring to other plants. There are a couple different methods you can use to water your air plant. Misting is the easiest for most people, but needs to be done a couple times a week. If you are using this method, you need to be careful that the moss in the terrariums doesn't get soaking wet, causing the plant to be sitting in water for more than a couple of hours. Prolonged exposure to water can cause the air plant to rot. Another way to water your air plant is soaking it in a bath of clean, warm water for 1-2 hours, longer if the plant is showing signs of drought. This can easily be accomplished in a bowl, bucket, or even a bathtub. Some varieties of air plants can handle soaking for longer, but there are some that are sensitive to longer baths, so we recommend keeping the bath under 5 hours (Xerographica being one of the most sensitive). If any of your tillandsias are starting to blush or bloom, be careful to keep the bloom above the water to avoid rotting it out before it has finished its cycle. Allow your plants to dry before placing them back in their terrariums. For Xerographica and other larger air plants, let them sit upside down to let any excess water drain from the leaves. Soaking is the best way to hydrate your tillandsia. It should be done approximately once a week, or it can be used in a rotation with misting to revive a dry air plant! Your air plant will tell you that it is thirsty by closing (or curling) its leaves. You may also notice it having a slightly more gray or dusty look to the leaves. If you notice these signs, give your plant a good soak. Rain, bottled or spring water is best. Well water is fine, as long as it hasn't been through a softener. City water should sit for 4 hours before soaking if there are high levels of chlorine.

FERTILIZER- Orchid or houseplant fertilizer are best for tillandsias. We recommend using them once a month at 1/2 the recommended label rate. We use Peter's or Jack's brand in our greenhouse and have great luck with them. Be careful of some commercial brands, as they may contain additives that may be harmful to your air plant.

TEMPERATURE- Air plants are native to the warm climates in Central and South America, Mexico and even Florida. While they are used to the warm outside temperature of their native habitat, they will do just fine in the normal temperature range in most homes. They will experience cold damage when the temperature drops below 40 degrees F.

BLOOMING & GROWTH CYCLE- To encourage your air plant to bloom, you should make sure it receives adequate amounts of light, water and fertilizer. Exposing them to ethylene can also speed up the process. The easiest way to do this in your home is to place them by fruit. They will give off the gas as they ripen. Once a tillandsia blooms, it will start the (slow) process of forming off-sets or pups. The # of pups is different from plant to plant, but each one will usually form 3 or more. Once the pups are mature, you can pull them apart or leave them together as one large clump. Spent flowers can be removed with a sharp pair of scissors (or we use clean wire cutters for thicker stems). Tillandsias will naturally have some brown leaves at the base of the plant. These can be removed by simply pulling them off or trimming them with scissors. Be careful and look before removing leaves of plants that are producing pups as the little pups can be tucked in at the base of the dead leaf. Sometimes, the pups are actually the cause of the leaf browning because they have pushed the leaf away from the base of the plant.