

FORCING THE ISSUE...

Tropiflora's recommendations for making your bromeliads bloom.

One of the most useful and unique characteristics of bromeliads is their willingness to bloom with chemical stimulation. This allows commercial growers to force blooming to correspond to various seasons or even to individual orders. Hybridizers often force blooming in order to have two desired plants available for crossing at the same time, rather than leave it to chance. Hobbyists too can force blooming so that they may enjoy their plants in bloom to suit their needs.

Of course most bromeliads will bloom on their own if given proper conditions of feeding, watering and light. Many bromeliads bloom on their own in about a year from an offset or two to five years from seed. Some plants are more reluctant than others to bloom and may need to remain in a clump to bloom naturally. For these plants it is especially handy to be able to induce blooming artificially.

There are several ways to induce blooming and some general requirements to assure that your success rate is improved. For certain not all bromeliads are as readily bloomed artificially as some others. However, only experimentation will tell which are easily bloomed.

GENERAL RULES OF THUMB

1. Bromeliads at or near maturity are more likely to bloom when treated, and those closer to their normal blooming season are the easiest.
2. Plants chosen for treatment should be healthy and well fed, but should not be fertilized during the period two weeks before treatment to two weeks after the bloom initiation period.
3. Nighttime temperature should remain above the 65 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit (18 to 21 Celsius) range during the bloom inducing period.
4. Drain water from the center of the plant before treatment if possible.

METHODS

There is only one real way to force your bromeliad to bloom, and that is exposure to ethylene. Ethylene is a gas produced when fruit ripens and is also produced for agricultural and industrial uses.

1. **Apple In A Bag.** An old trick is to seal a bromeliad in a plastic bag along with one or more ripe apples. Set the bag in a shaded place for ten days to two weeks as the fruit ripens or rots. The resulting emission of ethylene may be sufficient to induce the plant to bloom in six to fourteen weeks.
2. **Chemical application of ethylene.** Ethylene is available in various forms, from gas to liquid and crystal forms. Gas is best used by commercial operations and must be bubbled into a tank of pure water until the proper concentration is reached. For most applications, a liquid formulation that can be mixed with water is best. Commercially available compounds such as Ethrel®, Omaflora® or Florel® all contain the same active ingredient, Ethepon®, in varying concentrations. We use Florel which has a concentration of 3.9% Ethepon. To use Florel here are some guidelines:
 - a. Follow the General Rules Of Thumb listed above.
 - b. Read the product label and observe all safety precautions recommended.**
 - c. Mix Florel with pure water, only enough for the application at hand, to apply immediately.
 - d. The 'normal' concentration is 8 fluid ounces Florel per gallon. Reduce volume as needed to maintain a 2,500 ppm concentration of the active ingredient.
 - e. Apply as a spray to the upper surface of the plant until wet. Do not spray to runoff.
 - f. Alternately, pour an ounce or so into the center cup.
 - g. Dispose of all unused mix. This chemical rapidly loses potency after mixing and is considered not useable after four hours.

More or less chemical may be needed to initiate blooming and experimentation is recommended before treating large numbers of plants or prized specimens. When the chemical is applied correctly and all other conditions are normal, flowering is induced in 6 to 14 weeks. This period is variable with different bromeliad genera and is effected by temperature and other environmental conditions. Experimentation is essential.

However you choose to 'force the issue', you will soon be rewarded with a new dimension to your bromeliad hobby, that of flowering your plants on demand.



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