

Tillandsias

Tillandsias are epiphytic plants (able to grow without soil) which grow mostly on trunks and branches of trees and often rocks. Most are native to Latin America, although a few species may be found in the southern United States. There are over 400 recognized species.

They are generally easy to grow outside in San Diego areas. Provide them with filtered light in an outdoor patio, under or in a tree, or other similar place. Tillandsias do best with good air circulation. Some varieties may take full sun on the coast. As a general rule, the grayer stiffer leaved varieties need more light and less moisture. Tillandsias may be grown outdoors if you provide them fresh air, good light and humidity.

Plants may be submerged every couple of weeks in a sink containing a small amount of water soluble plant food. Grown inside, a misting once or twice a week is usually enough. If you provide light, water and nutrients, you will find Tillandsias are one of the most carefree plants you can grow. They may also be mounted on cork bark, cholla wood, driftwood or whatever you find attractive. Small amounts of hot glue are often used to mount them because it hardens rapidly. Fish line and fine wire also work fine to hold them in place.

Blooms can vary a lot from very small to medium size and showy. Some are lightly fragrant. When old enough to bloom they often produce offshoots called “pups” or baby plants, usually forming near the bases on some and on the stems of others. In time, the parent plant will eventually decline and die, but by this time, the “pups” are well established and can even be divided off to form new plants. Since the parent plant produces several “pups” the clumps will often grow into a much larger clump if not divided. These clumps will continue to grow and bloom year after year. If they get too large, simply divide them and start new smaller clumps. Pests are rare therefore you have little to be concerned about.