

# Bromeliads

Native to tropical America, bromeliads belong to a family of over 3,000 species. Terrestrial bromeliads absorb nutrients and moisture through their roots; vase bromeliads collect food and moisture in a vase structure formed by the leaves, while air bromeliads collect their nutrients and moisture from the surrounding air.

## Location

Bromeliads prefer bright, filtered light rather than direct sun. They thrive in humid conditions, so plant in groups to raise humidity. They don't like rich soil and prefer coarse sandy or gravelly soil combined with Searles Cymbidium & Bromeliad Mix. Good drainage is essential. Vase or air bromeliads don't need to be planted at all, but can be attached to trees, fences or rocks since they don't rely on roots to supply nutrients and moisture.

## Planting

Dig a shallow hole, large enough to allow for the rootball of the plant. Combine Searles Cymbidium & Bromeliad Mix with existing soil. To ensure good drainage, mound the mixture above the surrounding soil level. Plant the bromeliad and lightly cover the roots. Do not plant too deep. Water well after planting.

## Repotting

Choose a day that is not too hot. Thoroughly water the plant before repotting. Using a clean tub or pot approximately 1/3 larger than the original, fill to 1/3 deep with Searles Cymbidium & Bromeliad Mix. Remove the plant from its old pot, gently releasing old potting mixture from the roots. Check roots for pests or diseases. Repot the bromeliad and fill the remainder of the pot with the Cymbidium & Bromeliad Mix. Gently pack the mix around the plant to the same level on the stem as in the original pot. Water thoroughly and do not expose to direct, strong sunlight.

## Watering

Water the plants weekly and mist every couple of days. If the humidity drops below 60%, mist daily. If the soil mix dries out and will not hold moisture, sprinkle some Searles Penetraide onto the surface and water in.

## Feeding

Apply diluted Searles Fish & Kelp Plus to the foliage every second month to keep plants healthy and strong. For bigger and brighter flowers, feed with diluted Searles Liquid Potash directly into the bromeliad's vase just as the flower begins to appear.

## Propagating

Bromeliads produce offspring or "pups" which sprout along the base of the parent plant. Choose pups that are at least a third the size of the parent plant. Separate the pups from the parent by cutting as close as possible to the base, taking care not to damage the parent and keeping the pups' roots intact. After drying out for a day, the pups can be planted directly into pots of Searles Cymbidium & Bromeliad Mix.

## Pests and Diseases

Bromeliads are relatively pest free but the vase varieties could become a breeding ground for mosquitos. Flush the vase weekly. This also reduces the risk of fungal rot. Remove chewing pests by hand and gently scrape scale off with your fingernail. Don't use insecticides as these can build up in the vase and harm the plant.

