



GROWING *exotics* IN PERTH

How to Grow Bromeliads in Perth

Bromeliads are fascinating ornamental plants, which come from the tropical parts of America and are a member of the pineapple family - Bromeliaceae. They come in a brilliant range of sizes, shapes and colours. Their dominant feature is the dazzling foliage and flowers, which give colour and texture to any display. This fact sheet looks at the care of **rosette** type bromeliads. Rosette are those with leathery, spiny, thick or powdery leaves. They are often hardier in extreme weather (eg. heatwaves or frosts) than those with shiny, thin, spineless foliage, which generally need more protection.

Flowering

Bromeliads produce stunning flowers and have a long display period, but generally only bloom once. This is because the plant grows new leaves from the centre – the same place the flower stalk grows from. The stalk blocks the growth of the new leaves and so the plant puts its energy into growing new plants called pups. Therefore, when selecting a bromeliad it is important to go for one with visually appealing foliage.

Growing Conditions

Bromeliads are very hardy plants that can be grown outdoors in most areas of Australia. They have particular growing conditions including sunlight, drainage and fertiliser.

Sunlight

Bromeliads prefer bright, filtered sunshine, such as under 70% shade cloth, a polycarbonate roof, an enclosed patio or under a finely-leaved tree canopy (e.g. Jacaranda). Types with foliage markings (pink/red-flushed stripes, crossbands or spotting/marbling etc) need higher light intensity to maintain their colour. If the foliage is bleaching or burning, the summer light is too intense – shift the plant to a shadier position or add more coverage. Cold sensitive types are better kept indoors or in a sheltered winter position if possible.

Potting Mixes

Bromeliads require very free draining soil that doesn't pack down. Regular potting mix is too heavy, as is Perth's garden soil. Many bromeliads are epiphytic types (i.e. tree branch dwellers, which are found naturally growing in the forks of branches, surviving on minimal moisture and nutrients). These grow best in an open bark-based mix, such as orchid potting mix. Terrestrial varieties (groundcovers) usually prefer a soil based medium and more direct sun (however there are some exceptions – eg. Cryptanthus).

Watering

Water at least twice weekly in summer (growing period), filling the rosette vases from the top and saturating the pots. Normally once weekly in winter is adequate (resting period). They respond well to humidity so planting in groups and using a sprayer or mister will assist plant health.

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How to Grow Bromeliads in Perth cont.

Fertilising

Slow release granules applied twice annually, in autumn and spring, are often adequate. Baileys Controlled Release Fertilisers are safe and beneficial. Some growers foliar feed regularly also, in weak dilution only, resulting in excellent compact growth. Powerfeed and half strength liquid fertiliser is suitable for most bromeliads. Avoid any fertiliser with a high nitrogen content.

Pests

Pinspot (black) scale and soft brown scale can be troublesome, and are best eliminated by Eco Oil or Pest Oil. Destroy snails hiding in rosettes, which can attack juicy flower spikes.

Propagation

Some varieties can be propagated from seed, however the most common method is by harvesting pups.

Each growth (rosette) blooms once only when mature, then slowly dies. The parent plant's base usually produces offsets ("pups") around flowering time, which when 2/3 the parent's size can be cut off in the warmer months and planted separately, or left to form a clump.

Cut the pup as close as possible to the mother plant using a clean, sharp knife. Let the pup dry out for a day before planting.

General advice only. Please ask one of our Horticulturists if you require specific advice for your situation.