

# BROMELIANA

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## YOU CAN GROW ALMOST ANY BROMELIADS INDOORS

by Herb Plover

Yes, indeed you can grow almost any brom in your apartment or home, but it is wise to select plants that will adapt and grow best - and fit best - in your setup. So it is up to you to evaluate your available light (moderate, diffuse or bright), how much sun does a particular position receive in different seasons - and select those plants that will grow and color up well and are of a size to fit in your available spaces.

This sounds complicated and it is. You will have to know if a particular species or cultivar you like will be happy in one of the places in your setup. I will supply some information here, based on growing broms for more than 50 years, that may help you choose. But in the final analysis, you will have to find out what plants to grow in your particular conditions



Discolor form of *Ae. farinosa*



*Aechmea orlandiana*

by trial and error. Of course it helps to know the size of the plants you might want to acquire. To see photos of those plants go to Brom-L (<http://botu07.bio.uu.nl/brom-l/>, the Bromeliad Cultivar Register ([www.registry.bsi.org/](http://www.registry.bsi.org/)) and [www.fcbs.org](http://www.fcbs.org) where you can see photos (and get information) of species and cultivar hybrids. All the photos shown in this article are of plants that I have grown in my apartment.

You can take it as a given that plants with spines (*Aechmea*, *Billbergia*, *Canistrum*, *Cryptanthus*, *Dyckia*, *Hohenbergia*, *Neoregelia*, *Orthophytum*, *Quesnelia* etc.) need bright light to flourish. Indoors, they will not burn in direct sun unless you allow them to dry out. BUT, there are exceptions.

Discolor Aechmeas with maroon undersides (*A.*

**NEXT MEETING** - **Wednesday, December 21st**, 2016 at 6:30 P.M. at the home of Michael Riley and Francisco Correal, 101 West 104<sup>th</sup> Street, corner Columbus Avenue. (Take the 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. #1 train or the Independent A, B, or C trains to 103<sup>rd</sup> St.)

**HOLIDAY PARTY!** - Once again Michael and Francisco have graciously offered to host our annual party in their beautiful home. The party is open to members and their spouses, families or significant others. Michael and Francisco will provide the main courses; please RSVP them at 212-666-2395 if you plan to attend. AND let him know if you will bring a side dish, salad, fruit or dessert. Michael has added new plants to his collection of bromeliads, orchids, aroids, ferns, etc. growing epiphytically on his living room walls.

*farinosa*, *A. miniata*, *A. 'Foster's Favorite*, etc.), *Canistropsis* and some *Nidulariums* will do fine in diffuse light. I have omitted genera as *Alcantarea*, *Hechtia*, etc. because their species are too large for indoor setups and I've left out other genera and species that are too difficult to grow out of habitat.



*Aechmea chantinii*

However, I have grown many large *Aechmeas* that may grow tall but don't have a big horizontal spread. They won't fit on a window sill, but I grow them set back a few feet in my 6 ft. x 20" plant tray on which I can create different levels of height. Although I have substantially cut down on the number of pot plants I grow, I always have one or two pieces of *Aechmea 'Morgana'* and an *A. 'Blue Tango'* and *A. 'Del Mar'*. Of course I've also grown many small *Aechmeas* such as *Aechmea recurvata*, *A. racinae*, mini *A. chantinii*.

*Nidularium fulgens* needs bright light while the *lineatum* form of *Nid. innocentii* (now deemed to be *N. 'Lineatum'* - a cultivar and not a variety) does best grown under fluorescent lights.

I have grown many *Billbergias* and have found that only a few of them are sufficiently light responsive to color up indoors. *Billbergia 'Poquito Mas'* and *B. 'Strawberry'* color up beautifully and *B. 'Fantasia'* is covered with white blotches and spots in an unobstructed east facing window. In the same light *B. 'Muriel Waterman'* and *B. 'La Noche'* have bloomed with strong barring on maroon leaves. The



*Billbergia decora* - note coiled petals

helicoid *Billbergia decora*, does well in moderate to diffuse light - and not well in bright light.

We simply can't get strong enough sun to get the color and markings of most of the gorgeous Neos we see in the South and in California; they will turn green when grown indoors. However some

Neo species and cultivars are light sensitive and will grow well and color up indoors. The tricolor form of *Neoregelia carolinae* and many cultivars of which it is the seed or pollen parent will look good in diffuse light. *Neoregelia 'Gespacho'* gets bright red blotches when grown under fluorescent lights that are high in the red/blue spectrum.

I grow all my *Cryptanthus* under fluorescent lights where they color up better than they do in my south facing windows, especially *Cryptanthus 'Strawberries Flambe'*, *Cr. 'Arlety'* and *Cr. 'Elaine'*. As my Crypts react poorly to cold winter temperature on the window sill, a fluorescent setup suits them fine.

*Dyckias* grow well in a bright-light window, and they can flourish in the dry atmosphere of an apartment - but don't let the medium dry out for too long. The silver and grey *Dyckias* (ex. *Dyckia fosteriana*, *D. 'Toothy'*) I've grown kept their color, but those that have red color will lose it in the fall and winter. They will turn almost black with a hint of green, but this enhances the appearance of the strong white spines. That is exactly what happened to my *Dyckia 'California'* that a generous friend gave me as



*Nidularium 'Lineatum'*



Neo. 'Picolo' small cultivar of variegated form of *Neo.carolinae*



*Cryptanthus 'Strawberries Flambe'*





*Pitcairnia tabuliformis*



*Guzmania musaica*



Variegated, minor form of *Guz. lingulata*

a gift at the Houston World Bromeliad Conference last June.

*Pitcairnia* is a diverse group of species; some have spines and some do not. They grow fine in diverse light. A little trickier to grow is the beautiful species *Pitcairnia tabuliformis*.

Except for the finicky Racinaeas, the Tillandsioids really flourish in an apartment. Catopsis, Guzmanias and Vrieseas do fine even in moderate light, including fluorescent lights, but the latter two do best in my south facing window where they can get diffuse to bright light. My big plant tray in that window now has eight plants coming into bloom; I think this is a response to the incredible



*Orthophytum navioides*

warm, bright, clear days we have had since August - 3 months with only a few cloudy or rainy days, and the same is forecast for November.

We are fortunate to have had that weather though it is worrisome that it is likely

due to global warming. Other sections of the country have been roasting from excessive heat. Already, the year 2016 has broken all records for the hottest year in history. Yet, there are still people denying we are afflicted by global warming and climate change - many who are not skills for Big Oil, Coal and Gas.

We are also lucky to have such good water in New York City. Piped in from the upstate Croton reservoir, it has a pH of from 6.3 to 6.6. (I remember my earlier tests years ago that found the water pH to be 6.1-6.2.) It's nice to be able to use tap-water for your plants.

I've grown hundreds of Guzmanias species and cultivars, and I still have many of them - mostly of minis, small and medium size. Among the larger, more recent cultivars I like *Guzmania* 'Nacho' whose leaves develop strong red-pencil lines in diffuse light,



*Catopsis floribunda*



*Vriesea* 'Carly' (small plant)



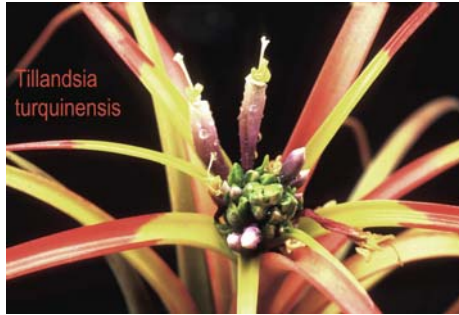
*Vriesea (Lutheria!) splendens*



*Guzmania* 'Nacho'



One of 8 cork logs loaded with Tillandsias



*Tillandsia turquinensis*



*Tillandsia atroviridipetala*

and it puts up a gorgeous, long-lasting inflorescence. I also grow the albo-margined form of *Guzmania* ‘Denise’. It consistently produces clean, white margins on every leaf, generation after generation. Grant Groves should name and register this cultivar. (How about ‘Denephew’?)

I used to grow many large, tank-type *Vrieseas* like *Vriesea fenestralis* and *Vr. hieroglyphica*. Now I grow smaller plants: *Vriesea* ‘Splendret’, *V.* ‘Evita’, *V.* ‘John Arden’, *V.* ‘Carly’, *V.* ‘Tiffany’, *V.* ‘Vogue’, *V.* ‘Spotlight’ and a few others.

Of all the genera, I have found the grey and silver leaved *Tillandsias* the most adaptable, easiest to grow indoors. I have about 200 of them. Regardless of where they come from, they are mounted on eight large cork logs hung in an unobstructed east window. I also have mounted *Tillandsia seleriana*, *T. xerographica* and *T. ehlersiana* on separate small cork pieces that I grow in my south-facing window. I soak my *Tillandsias* in my bathtub filled with tap water with 3 tblsp. of 5-12-26 fertilizer for about an hour every 8 to 10 days. It takes two fillings in the tub to do the job.

I used to run four humidifiers in my apartment during the late fall, winter and early spring. I abandoned that onerous daily job last year, but my *Tillandsias* are still growing well and bloom regularly. The only species I have had difficulty in establishing

are some forms of *Tillandsia tenuifolia* and *T. punctulata*.

Of course, I have grown many great, green leaved *Tillandsias* in pots such as *Tillandsia multicaulis*, *T. leiboldiana*, *T. cyanea*, *T.* ‘Wildfire’, *T. wagneriana*, etc. I’m now growing two pots of recently acquired *T. laxissima*. □

*N E W S* and *N O T E S*

**TAXONOMY-** Many important changes in sub-family *Tillandsioideae* have been proposed by 8 leading biologists in an article published in *Phytotaxa* (#279-1). We’ll summarize the changes in a coming issue of *Bromeliana*.

**2017 DUES** - will be due and payable at the end of this month. Single and joint memberships are \$25.00; the domestic subscription rate for *BROMELIANA* is \$8.00 and an overseas subscription is \$12.00. Please mail your check payable to N.Y. Bromeliad Society to Barbara Lagow, 54 West 74th Street, #603, N.Y.C. 10023 or pay your dues at the Holiday Party on December 21<sup>st</sup>.



*Tillandsia zecheri v. cafayatenensis*

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