

Air Plants

*‘Tillandsia’*

**Lighting:**

In order to thrive, air plants need bright, indirect light. As a general rule of thumb, the higher the humidity in your space, the more light is tolerated by the air plant. This means that if you’re putting your air plant where it will receive loads of light, you should plan to mist it more often - twice a week or even daily. A sunny bathroom makes a happy home for an air plant, because the humidity from your shower will take care of most plant misting for you.

Many people ask us if they can place their air plant in an office or basement room where it won’t get any natural light. The answer is yes, but there are a few specific rules to follow to ensure your plant’s success. Full spectrum (fluorescent) light is a must. Regular incandescent bulbs don’t emit the quality of light these plants need to photosynthesize. Your Tillandsia should be placed no further than 3 feet from the light source. Also, if you’re going to use fluorescent light, the plants will need, at minimum, 12 hours per day.

**Watering:**

The first step to watering your air plant is to evaluate your space. How much light is your plant receiving? What is the temperature in your home at this particular time of year? Is the space very dry (is your plant near a heater or fireplace?) Or is it very humid?

After you answer these questions, you can adapt the air plant watering regimen to suit your particular needs. Here’s what we recommend as a starting point:

* Every one to two weeks, soak your air plant in room temperature tap water for 5-10 minutes.
* After soaking gently shake excess water from your plant. Turn it upside down and place it on a towel in a bright space. *This is very important! Air plants will quickly rot if they are allowed to stand in excess water.*
* From the time soaking ends, the plant should be able to dry fully in no more than 3 hours. If your plant stays wet longer than this, it may rot. Try placing it in a brighter place with more air circulation to facilitate faster drying.
* 1-3 hours is the optimal drying time for your air plant after soaking.
* Once a week, mist your plant thoroughly, so that the entire surface of the plant is moistened (but not so much that there is water dripping down into the plant).
* The hotter and dryer the air (summer, early fall) the more you need to water. The cooler and more humid the air (winter and spring) the less water your air plant will need. Remember, though, that heaters and fireplaces dry the air!
* Do all watering in the morning. Evening soaking or misting disrupts the plants ability to respire overnight and extends drying time.

**Temperature:**

Air plants are pretty easygoing when it comes to their temperature. They do best between 50-90 degrees F. Ideally, overnight temperatures will be about 10 degrees cooler than daytime temperatures.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call us at 360-457-8462

**Fertilizing:**

Incorporating orchid or Bromeliad fertilizer into your watering regimen once or twice a month is a great way to keep your air plant happy. Just add a pinch to your water and proceed as usual. Fertilizing your air plant encourages it to blossom and reproduce (or pup -- more on this later).

**How to Care for Air Plants in Aeriums and Terrariums:**

* Follow the care regimen outlined above - just remove your plant from the aerium, terrarium or glass in order to mist/soak it, and allow it to dry before replacing it in the glass
* Keep in mind that keeping your air plant in glass will create a micro-climate: Glass vessels will be more humid and hotter than the surrounding area.
* Take care not to put glass vessels too close to a window. Glass intensifies the rays of the sun. You don’t want to fry your plant!

If you cannot remove your air plant from its glass container:

* Since your plant won’t come out of the glass, you won’t be able to soak it and so will have to rely solely on misting. This is totally fine.
* Small glass = less air circulation = longer drying time for plant = less frequent misting.
* Large glass = more air circulation = shorter drying time for plant = more frequent misting.
* When misting your air plant, try to mist around the plant, rather than into the plant. You don’t want to over-water it, but rather to create a humid environment.
* Depending on the vessel, we’d suggest starting by misting weekly, and adjusting as necessary.

**How to Care for Mounted Air Plants:**

Like air plants in small glass vessels, you probably won’t be able to soak your mounted air plant. However, since they’re not contained to a humid, micro-climate like aeriums, mounted air plants will need even more frequent misting. We recommend starting with twice weekly misting, and adjusting as necessary, depending on how long it takes your plant to dry in your space.

**Air Plant Life Cycle:**

Did you know that air plants flower once in their life? Depending on the species, these blossoms last from a few days to a few months, and can be a whole variety of beautiful bright colors, like pink, red and purple. Flowering is the peak of the air plant life cycle, but also marks the beginning of the plant’s old age - after it flowers, the plant will eventually die.

But don’t despair! Just before, during or after flowering, depending on the species, your air plant will reproduce by sending out 2-8 “pups”. These baby air plants, which start out very small, will eventually grow into their own mother plants. Pups can safely be separated from the mother plant when they’re about ⅓-½ its size. Careful not to remove them too early, as they’re actually receiving nutrients from the mother air plant!

(Selected information provided from ‘AIR PLANT CARE: HOW TO CARE FOR AIR PLANTS, AERIUMS AND TILLANDSIA MOUNTS’ by Pistils Nursery.)