



Dennis' 7 Dees



AIR PLANT CARE

Air plants (Tillandsias) are members of the Bromeliad family and distant relatives to pineapples! They are known as “epiphytes” which are non-parasitic plants that grow on other plants or structures instead of in soil—they absorb water and nutrients through their leaves rather than from roots.

Tillandsias are native to the forests, mountains, and deserts of northern Mexico, southeastern United States, Mesoamerica, the Caribbean, and central Argentina. Depending on the species, they can appear silver-gray and fuzzy, smooth and green, or even develop colorful new growth. They range in size from less than an inch to the size of a large grapefruit. Occasionally, air plants are color-enhanced with a plant-safe dye to give them a brighter, more colorful appearance, though this will slowly fade over several months as the plant is watered.

LIGHT

Indirect bright/medium light (no direct sun):



- Directly in north-facing window
- Further away from east or south-facing windows
- Be cautious with west exposure, which may be too sunny and hot in the afternoon
- Fluorescent light is okay, but plants must be within 3 feet of light and allowed at least 12 hours daily

WATER

Once per week, fully submerge in room temperature water 15–30 minutes. Shake off excess water and drip-dry plants upside-down or on their sides until completely dry (about 1–3 hours).



- Best done in the morning
- Avoid distilled or softened water
- Adjust watering according to humidity and light levels; plants in very dry locations or bright light may need misting in addition to regular soaking

FERTILIZER

Feed once or twice monthly from March to September with 2-1-2 ratio food or regular houseplant fertilizer (non-urea) diluted to ¼ strength.



Assorted nutrients can also be provided by soaking in rainwater, pondwater, or aquarium water. Household dust has even been known to provide some nutrients!

SOIL

Nope! Planting in soil can actually cause harm.



TEMPERATURE

Average indoor temperatures: 50–90 °F



REPRODUCTION

Small plantlets will form around the base of the plant before, during, or after flowering.



Each air plant will form a flower at the peak of its life-cycle, then begin to die. Plantlets can either be separated from the parent or left to grow in its place.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problems with pests/diseases are rare; most issues are from overwatering/underwatering.



Signs of underwatering: Foliage is dry, browning at the tips, or slightly rolling inward. Try soaking more often, soaking for longer periods, or misting between soaks.

Signs of overwatering (or not thoroughly dried): Plants develop a darkened color near the base or feel soft/soggy to the touch and have begun to rot. Overwatering is often fatal or difficult to recover from.

Avoid contact with copper—it is toxic to air plants.

DISPLAY IDEAS

There are endless possibilities for display:



- Glued or mounted to cork or driftwood
- Placed in seashells or decorative dishes
- Displayed in terrariums (open terrariums only)
- Set in hanging or wall planters
- Used in holiday décor and special arrangements