

# AIR PLANTS!



Almost endless ideas can be used to make versatile designs with air plants (*Tillandsia spp.*). Cups, shells, goblets, antlers, driftwood, cork pieces, glass vases, and coils of wire can display air plants upright, upside down or sideways! The choice of materials can compliment a range of styles from rustic to modern. Because they are epiphytes (they derive their moisture and nutrients from the air, rain and debris around them, and only use their roots for support), the plants can be hung from objects or can be encouraged to root onto a substrate. There are just a few simple rules for keeping air plants happy and healthy, and they can relate to how you display them.

Air plants need bright, filtered light. Indoors place them no further than 3 feet from an east or west window. Watch for leaf burn if they get too much direct sun. Although they can withstand freezing to 100°F temperatures, they are best between 50 and 90°. The watering regime is important. Depending on whether your air plant is attached to an object or can be removed, submerge them in tepid water for one to several hours (not more than 12 hours) at least once weekly, or spray until dripping 2-3 times per week. Spray misting is insufficient even done daily. Afterward, ensure that sufficient air circulation allows them to dry within 4 hours. Fertilizing is not really necessary but a monthly application of dilute orchid fertilizer can be used.

To use in simple vessels such as cups or shells, or hung in wire coils, screens, grates or nooks of branches, you just need to place them - no medium is necessary. Alternatively, the plants can sit on or lightly in media such as moss, Spanish moss, reindeer moss, sand, rocks, or lichen, as long as the base is mostly open to the air to avoid rotting.

Air plants can also be attached to almost any substrate as long as the substrate can dry sufficiently after watering. If you want them to root onto the surface, they need to be attached securely, with no wobble. Wire, fishing line or a non-petroleum adhesive will work. If you use a glue gun, allow 20 seconds for glue to cool before placing the plant. In the right situation, they will also root without help. Placing air plants in baskets and watering them overhead without removing them will allow the roots to penetrate the basket. Within a few weeks the basket can be hung on a wall.

