



Bromeliads guaranteed to excite true aficionados will be in the spotlight at World Bromeliad Conference XXII include; 1. *Aechmea recurvata* (in bloom) - small, cold-hardy plant. 2. *Orthophytum burle-marxii* (in habitat in Brazil). 3. *Dyckia brevifolia* 'Yellow Glow' 4. *Tillandsia baileyi*. 5. *Cryptanthus* 'Sahara.' 6. *Hechtia stenopetala*. 7. *Orthophytum* species.

## WORLD SPOTLIGHT ON BROMELIADS

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When many people think of bromeliads, they usually think of "airplants." It's true, many are epiphytic and will grow with no soil (although they really do need nutrients and water they get from the air). But the wonder of bromeliads is that there's so many different kinds that you can almost always find one that will grow where it suits you.

Epiphytic bromeliads attach themselves by holdfast roots to a structure to give themselves access to moisture and nutrients. It might be a lush tree in the rainforest, a rock or a cactus, or even on the



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ground. There is an incredible number of this type of bromeliad that we can grow in South Texas. Tillandsias are often epiphytes, but many other genera such as Neoregelias, Aechmeas, Vrieseas and more also will grow epiphytically mounted on wood or rock.

In Texas, we're familiar with several Tillandsias that grow here naturally: Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) and ball moss (*Tillandsia recurvata*) in the Houston area. Spanish moss has very small greenish flowers that are pleasantly fragrant. *Tillandsia baileyi* is found in the vicinity of the King Ranch in South Texas. You may be a bromeliad grower and not even know it, if they're growing in your yard!

Many other bromeliads are true terrestrials - they require a growing substrate of some kind to survive. Cryptanthus, for example, are native to Brazil and grow there in habitats ranging from Atlantic rainforest to dry, rocky savanna. They come in many different colors, shapes and patterns, and are not your typical green houseplant; in fact there are many varieties that will grow very happily next to houseplants like African Violets.

On the other end of the spectrum, you have the mean, spiny but beautiful Hechtias and Dyckias, very popular with the serious bromeliad collector these days. One Hechtia, *H. texensis*, actually grows here in Texas in the Big Bend area and another, *H. glomerata*, is found near the Rio Grande River in Zapata and Starr Counties, Texas. A surprising number of terrestrial bromeliads grow on solid rock outcrops or very rocky soil such as these Hechtias.

So, check out the many different varieties available and choose one (or more) that will adapt and do well in your growing conditions right here in South Texas.