

## Bromeliad

*Bromeliaceae*



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### Botany

There are more than 2,700 species of bromeliads. One of the most well-known bromeliads is the pineapple. Bromeliads typically have bright red, orange, purple or blue flowers, and can grow in a number of different ways: they can be *terrestrial*, growing on the ground; *saxicolous*, growing on rocks; or *epiphytic*, growing on other plants and trees. Epiphytic bromeliads

have the ability to absorb nutrients and moisture from the atmosphere, so they are sometimes called "air plants". Hundreds of these plants can grow on branches of tropical trees, sometimes causing the branches to break under their weight.

### Habitat

Bromeliads are native to the Neotropics. One species now thrives in western Africa, and is thought to have been introduced accidentally.

### Did you know?

Many bromeliads have stiff, overlapping leaves which hold rainfall like buckets. Leaves and debris fall into these reservoirs and help algae and other single-celled organisms to grow, which in turn feed mosquitoes, insect larvae and other organisms. The bromeliad is like a small ecosystem in itself – animals such as tree frogs, snails, flatworms, tiny crabs and salamanders might spend their entire lives inside them.

### Sources:

- Jukofsky, Diane. *Encyclopedia of Rainforests*. Connecticut: Oryx Press, 2002.
- Bromeliad Society International: <http://bsi.org/>