

Vriesea [VREE-zha]



Bromeliads within the genus *Vriesea* are primarily known for their spectacular, long lasting inflorescence (flower spikes.) Most *Vrieseas* are tank bromeliads with soft, shiny, yellow-green to dark green leaves. Many have foliage that is red or strikingly marked with intricate patterns of bands or translucent windows. The flowers are mostly sword-shaped varying from single to many branched. The bracts are usually brilliant red or yellow and last several months, bicolor and multicolor spikes are common. Many hybrids (cultivars) have been developed, producing flowers of superior color and plants more adaptable to indoor culture.

Vrieseas are very closely related to plants within the genus *Tillandsia*. Just as some *Tillandsias* are green, tank forming plants, some *vrieseas* are gray-leafed, atmospheric epiphytes (air plants.) Give the gray-leafed *vrieseas* the same care as epiphytic *Tillandsias* and green leaf-leafed *Tillandsias* the same care as tank forming, green-leafed terrestrial bromeliads. *Vrieseas* are very prolific, producing many offsets (pups) during the flowering process. These pups may be separated when they reach a size about half that of the parent plant. Pot in a loose potting mix that is both well draining and holds moisture: **Do not use garden soil.**

Care: *Vrieseas* adapt to a wide range of light conditions, from fairly deep shade (Guamanian conditions) to bright filtered sunlight (*Neoregelia* conditions.) At higher intensities, plants require high humidity to prevent burning. When growing outdoors 60-70-% shade cloth is recommended. Feed your *vriesea* frequently, twice or more per month during the growing season (April till October.) *Vrieseas* prefer mild temperatures, but can tolerate temperatures from just above freezing to over 90 degrees for short periods of time. Use a complete, water soluble fertilizer (*Epiphytes delight*) or a non-bromeliad fertilizer at 1/4 to 1/8 the recommended quantity; the fertilizer should be slightly acidic. Be sure to drench the foliage, central cup as well as the soil with nutrient rich water. Slow release fertilizers can be added to the potting soil in addition to or instead of foliar feeding. Tank type bromeliads can be fed exclusively through the roots. For more cultural information please refer to *Bromeliads: A Cultural Manual*.