

BROMELIANA

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ASSESS YOUR LIGHT AND WHAT PLANTS GROW BEST IN IT

by Herb Plevier

I've written about this topic many times, but it will be useful for inexperienced members to learn the basic factors of the available light in their apartments or homes. Then they will be better able to choose the plants that will grow best in their setups.

1. Indoors, your plants can *never* receive the strong, direct overhead light of the sun and sky, as do greenhouses, lathhouses or the outdoors. Indoors the sunlight and sky light come through the windows at a slant - the angle depends on the direction the window is facing, the season and the time of day. As the sun rises low in the east it moves and rises through ESE, SSE, South, SSW, WSW and West. The closest it comes to overhead is between 12 noon and 1 pm. Think of the implications of these basic facts:

a. A north-facing window will provide only enough light for species and cultivars that can grow in moderate light.

b. From mid-May through August, an east to

south-south east window will have about 4 hours of sunlight. During that period the sun will not reach a south or SSW facing window until about 10 am. It will not reach a south-facing window until about 11 am and by 1 pm the sun will be so high that only about 2 feet in from the window will be sunlit. The west-south-west and west windows will get sun from about 2 pm until sunset.

c. From the late fall through winter and early spring, an east to south-south east window will have about 2 hours of sun while a south or SSW facing window will have about 3 -4 hours of sun. The WSW and west window will have about 2-3 hours of fading sun.

2. If you live in a house or a lower floor of an apartment building, your windows will not receive

much horizon light from the sky. The higher up you are, the stronger is the horizon light.

3. Determine if your windows are unobstructed or obstructed by taller building in front of your windows. Obviously, such obstructions will partially or totally cut down on the sunlight in which case plants



Catopsis compacta
photo by Herb Plevier



Catopsis compacta (L.) and Pitcairnia andreana (R.) Can grow in moderate light from a north or obstructed east window, but better in the good light of an unobstructed east window.

NEXT MEETING - Tuesday, October 3rd, 2017 **promptly** at 7:00 pm at the Ripley-Grier Studios, 520 - 8th Avenue (betw. 36th & 37th Ave) **Room 16M**.
VIDEO OF HIGHLIGHTS OF WORLD BROMELIAD CONFERENCES FROM 1972 TO 2016. Also: discussion on how to carry newly potted plants through the fall and winter. Please bring in some plants for sale and for Show and Tell.



Soft-leaved Guzmanias such as G. 'Anita' and G. 'Columbian Gold' can grow in good north or obstructed east light, but they'll grow better in good unobstructed east light.

that can adapt to moderate light should be your choice.

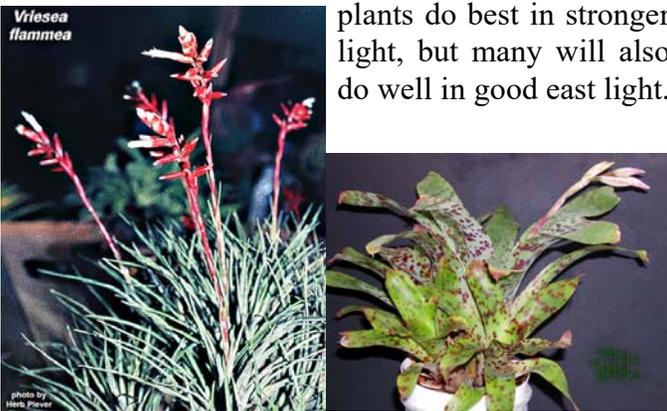
4. The glass panes of your windows cut down on the amount of light they will pass through. Window panes in the metropolitan area become quickly coated by soot from pollution which further reduces the light. You should periodically clean your windows (as often as possible and convenient).

5. In our northern latitude, the intensity of the sun even in the summer is less than it is in the southern latitudes.

6. A good fluorescent light unit provides the same amount of light regardless of the season. It will not provide enough lumens to grow those neos and Billbergias that need intense light.

7. Many genera will adapt and grow adequately to a wide range of light, but they will grow best in the maximum light you are able to provide them. It may be hard work but it is also necessary (and lots of fun) to continually test by **trial and error** what plants will grow best in the different exposures you may have in your apartment. In

general, spiny, stiff-leaved plants do best in stronger light, but many will also do well in good east light.



Vriesea flammea and V. guttata can grow in moderate light and will grow better in the good light of an east window.

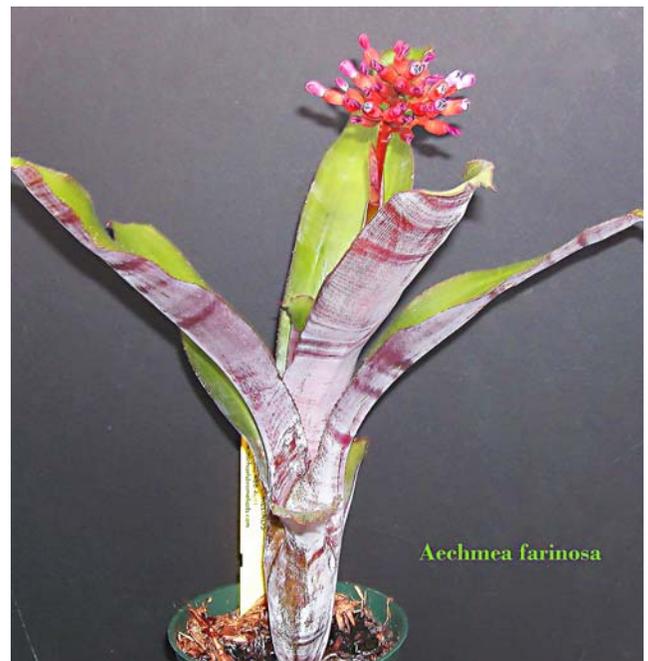


1 of 8 Tillandsia logs hanging in 2 clear east windows

Many soft-leaved plants can grow in moderate to good light (some sunlight) and even stronger light.

With these principles in mind, we can now proceed to discuss what species and cultivars will grow best or won't grow well in your different micro-environments.

You should resist the temptation to buy those beautiful Neoregelias you see in the south. With the exception of a few light sensitive plants, neos won't color up or get strong markings in even the best of indoor light. The same advice applies to many Billbergias; those Billbergias with strong markings and color need strong light to keep them that way. For example, the beautiful *Billbergia* 'Hallelujah' will not color up well indoors, but the similar, equally attractive *B.* 'Strawberry' does great in my east win-



Aechmea farinosa v. discolor blooms in my east window



Bromelgia 'Strawberry' & *B.* 'Fantasia' grown in good east light with high color and markings, bloom regularly.



Aechmea 'Blue Tango'



Aechmea 'Morgana' - sunny south light

dows, as do *B.* 'Fantasia' and *B.* 'Poquito Mas' which get good markings and color and bloom regularly. Another exception is *Billbergia decora* which does not like to grow in strong light as suggested by its faint grey bar-markings.

Most *Aechmeas* need good to high (indoor) light. My favorite - *A.* 'Morgana' (a *fasciata* cultivar) regularly blooms in my sunny south window as does *Aechmea* 'Blue Tango'. On the other hand discolor *Aechmeas* with maroon undersides such as *Aechmea fulgens*, *A. miniata*, *A. farinosa*, *A.* 'Foster's Favorite' and soft, green leaved *Aechmeas* such as *Aechmea carvalhoi*, do well in an east exposure.



Dyckia fosteriana cv. 'Silver Queen' needs good to strong sunny light

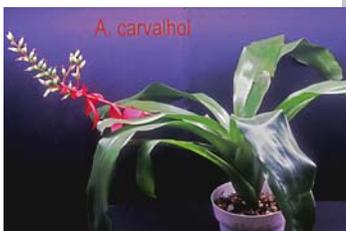
The other spiny stiff or fleshy leaved genera we have been growing indoors - *Aechmeas*, *Canistrums*, *Cryptanthus*, *Deuterocohnias*, *Dyckias*, *Hohenbergias*, *Orthphytums*, *Quesnelias*, *Sincoraeas* and *Wittmackias* - will all grow best in your maximum light (good to

indoor strong). *Cryptanthus* color up best for me grown close to fluorescent lights.

If you only have north or east exposures or obstructed light, you can still grow *Catopsis* and *Pitcairnias*, and some green leaved *Guzmanias* and *Vrieseas* and most *Tillandsias*. For *Canistropsis* and *Nidulariums* a good east to south to west exposure will be fine.

I've grown many hundreds of *Tillandsias* mounted on cork bark logs in the good light of my east windows, and they do well in all seasons whether it is sunny or dark and cloudy. Because indoor environments are deficient in the humidity they need, I soak my *Tillandsias* in the bathtub in fertilized water every 8 to 10 days. (We get humidity in the summer, but our air conditioning cools the air so it holds less moisture than the outside summer air.)

I've also grown many hundreds of *Guzmania* and *Vriesea* species and cultivars; indoors they can adapt to a wide range of light from



Aechmea carvalhoi - east light



Cryptanthus 'Arlet' flowering under fluorescent lights



Guzmania 'Candy Cane'



Guzmania musaica

NEWS and NOTES

moderate to good light in my east windows and about 3 to 4 feet back from my south window. Even difficult plants to grow such as *Guzmania musaica* and tricky variegates as *G.* ‘Candy Cane’ do well indoors.

Tillandsias are easy to grow and flower in my east window. However, some plants like *Wallisia cyanea* (formerly *Tillandsia cyanea*) will take full south sun. I learned this while visiting Hawaii many years ago. I was privileged to have been invited by the famed May Moir to visit with her in her house and see her collection. I was astounded to see hundreds of *T. cyanea* in bloom in full, open sun densely covering a side yard. The place was high up in the heights outside Honolulu; it likely received lots of rain and sprinkles, and the humidity was high. Since then I have grown *cyanea* in good to bright light.



Wallisia cyanea

I noted above that Catopsis are choice plants for indoor growers who have limited available light. But we have a problem with the fact that some really nice Catopsis species are no longer available for sale. The beautiful *C. compacta* (photo on p. 1), *C. floribunda*, *C. paniculata* and *C. subulata* are not listed. These are good house plants that you can grow in low-moderate to good east light.



Catopsis subulata (fcb)

BCR Registration of New Hybrids - Hybridist-nurserymen always show up in force to sell their plants in the sales area of BSI’s World Bromeliad Conferences. But lately, many of them are failing to name and register their cultivars with the BSI’s Bromeliad Cultivar Registry. Whatever the reason, this practice is certainly unacceptable for our society, and it violates the rules of the International Cultivar Authority and International Cultivar Nomenclature. When I see a photo of a gorgeous new hybrid with a formula name only I’m always tempted to reprint it in Bromeliana, but if it is not named and registered in the BCR I won’t touch it in principle.

My personal (minority so far) view is that unregistered cultivars should not be permitted entry to BSI sponsored shows including the WBC. I also strongly believe that plants with formula names only should not be permitted entry in any show. One of these days we’re going to see two wholly dissimilar plants with the same formula name from the same grex entered in a show. Perhaps that may be the eye-opener attendees need, to understand this issue.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY GRACE - Bromelphiles around the world celebrated the 100th birthday of Grace Goode, one of our honorary trustees from Australia. Grace is a great hybridizer, horticulturist and inspirational organizational leader for bromeliad growers in Australia.

New web address for TAXON, the up to date list of accepted and changed bromeliad genera and species. <http://www.bsi.org/new/the-new-bromeliad-taxon-list/>

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