



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Bromelia balansae¹

Edward F. Gilman²

Introduction

This large, spiny-leaved bromeliad forms impressive clumps of wavy, 12 to 16-inch-long foliage, spreading slowly by underground stems, making it ideal for use as a groundcover or living fence (due to the spiny leaves) (Fig. 1). A person will walk through a mass planting of this only once. In late spring to early summer the center leaves turn a bright scarlet and from this center arises a flower spike composed of rose-colored flowers edged with white, making a dramatic landscape accent.

General Information

Scientific name: *Bromelia balansae*

Pronunciation: bro-MEEL-ee-uh bal-AN-see

Common name(s): Bromeliad, Heart-of-Flame

Family: Bromeliaceae

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; ground cover; mass planting; border; suitable for growing indoors; accent

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 2 to 4 feet

Spread: 4 to 6 feet

Plant habit: upright; round

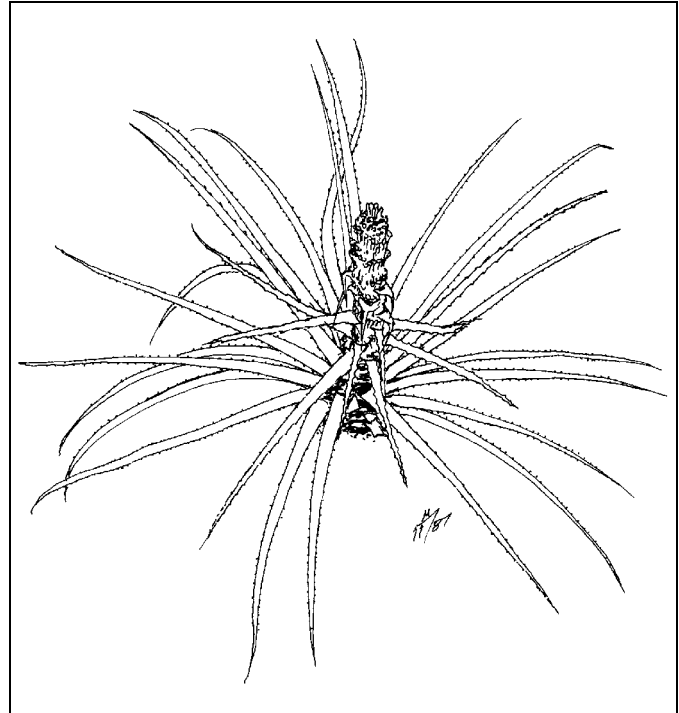


Figure 1. Bromeliad.

Plant density: open

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: basal rosette

Leaf type: simple

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-74, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1999. Please visit the EDIS web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Florida Cooperative Extension Service / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences / University of Florida / Christine Taylor Waddill, Dean



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf margin: spiny
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: more than 36 inches
Leaf color: purple or red
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: red
Flower characteristic: spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: unknown
Fruit characteristic: showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: usually with one stem/trunk

Current year stem/twig color: not applicable
Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; alkaline; loam
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: may self-seed each year
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Easily grown in full sun to light shade, Heart-of-Flame's main requirement is good soil drainage. Plant on two to three-foot centers for a thick, tropical-looking ground cover. A mass planting in front of a shrub border will draw attention.

The leaves of the cultivar 'Variegata' have white margins.

Propagation is by division of the offsets or by seed.

Heart-of-Flame may be bothered by scale.

Pests and Diseases

Root rots in poorly drained soils.