



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Aechmea distichantha*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

The attractive, green foliage of this easy-care, durable bromeliad is a perfect background for the brilliant, springtime flower stalk which emerges from the tight center rosette of leaves (Fig. 1). The flower stalk is composed of a cluster of red showy bracts lasting several months. It is the long-lasting bracts which are most noticeable and stand about 2 feet off the ground. They are very striking in full bloom.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Aechmea distichantha*

**Pronunciation:** eek-MEE-uh diss-stick-KANTH-uh

**Common name(s):** Bromeliad

**Family:** Bromeliaceae

**Plant type:** perennial; herbaceous

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

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

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

### Description

**Height:** 2 to 3 feet

**Spread:** 1 to 2 feet

**Plant habit:** vase shape

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** slow



Figure 1. Bromeliad.

**Texture:** coarse

#### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** basal rosette

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** spiny

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval)

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf venation:** parallel  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 18 to 36 inches  
**Leaf color:** blue or blue-green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** red  
**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** no fruit  
**Fruit length:** no fruit  
**Fruit cover:** no fruit  
**Fruit color:** not applicable  
**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not 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:** slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Soil salt tolerances:** poor  
**Plant spacing:** 18 to 24 inches

**Other**

**Roots:** not applicable  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive  
**Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

## Use and Management

Growing best in partial shade in moisture-retentive but well-drained soil, this bromeliad makes a handsome, tall ground cover or container plant. Place individual plants about 18 to 24 inches apart for an effective ground cover. A ground cover or mass planting in front of a green-foliaged shrub grouping which branches to the ground makes a nice, bright accent for a partially shaded spot. It can also be successfully grown epiphytically, or without soil, with moss around its roots and wired to the branches of rough-barked trees where its cupped rosette will catch needed water. Bromeliads are tough plants needing little care once they become established.

Propagation is by division of the offsets or by seed.

### Pests and Diseases

Problems include scale and mosquitoes which may breed in the trapped water in the leaves. Root rot is a problem if the soil is kept too moist. No irrigation is needed once the plant is well established.