Introduction

The attractive orange foliage with red tips of this easy-care bromeliad is a perfect background for the brilliant, springtime flower stalk which emerges from the tight center rosette of leaves. The flower stalk is composed of a cluster of red and yellow showy bracts. It is the long-lasting bracts which are most noticeable and can be used as cut flowers indoors for a period of weeks.

General Information

Scientific name: Aechmea blanchetiana
Pronunciation: ee-k-MEE-uh blan-ket-ee-AY-nuh
Common name(s): Bromeliad
Family: Bromeliaceae
Plant type: perennial; herbaceous
USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 1)
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 4 feet
Spread: 1 to 2 feet
Plant habit: vase shape
Plant density: open
Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: basal rosette
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: spiny
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 18 to 36 inches
Leaf color: orange
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: pink; salmon
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
Use and Management

Growing best in partial shade in moisture-retentive but well-drained soil, this bromeliad makes a handsome 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.

Propagation is by division of the offsets or by seed.

Problems include scale and mosquitoes which may breed in the trapped water in the leaves.

Pests and Diseases

Root rot is a problem if the soil is kept too moist. No irrigation is needed to maintain the plants once they are established.