Aechmea blanchetiana Bromeliad

Edward F. Gilman

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 that are most noticeable. They can be used as cut flowers indoors for a period of weeks.

General Information
Scientific name: Aechmea blanchetiana
Pronunciation: eek-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

Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
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 tolerance: 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 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 that 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. Wire it 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.

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.

Other problems include scale and mosquitoes, which may breed in the trapped water in the leaves.