

What makes a tank bromeliad special?

You may see a tank bromeliad as a beautiful addition to your landscaping, but if you were a certain female mosquito, you might see that same bromeliad as something else again; a wonderful spot to lay your eggs!

Aedes aegypti, *Ae. albopictus* and *Wyeomyia* spp. are the mosquito species most likely to lay eggs in bromeliads. *Wyeomyia* are tiny daytime biters that don't range far from where they emerge. All three of these mosquitoes can be quite a nuisance to you and your next-door neighbors! The two *Aedes* species have the potential to transmit dengue fever, chikungunya and Zika.



A mosquito requires very little water in which to lay her eggs and the tank bromeliad, because of its leaf structure, can hold plenty of water in each of its leaf axils. That can mean up to 100 mosquito larvae for each plant. Now multiply that by the number of bromeliads in your yard—that's a bunch of mosquitoes!

For more information

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A Home for Unwelcomed Guests

Tank Bromeliads



Your tank bromeliads could be the source of your mosquito problem. However, there are measures you can take to control these pests.

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More than you bargained for?

There is a way to tell if you are supplying a home for unwanted guests before they become a nuisance.



First, check to see if your plants are holding water. No water, no mosquitoes! If you do have water in your bromeliads, use a turkey baster to suck out some of the water and put it into a clear container. Now look to see if there are any mosquito larvae present.

If you don't see any of these "wigglers" there's no need to do anything;



but if you do find some uninvited guests in your bromeliads, you have several avenues open to you. (But be sure to clean your turkey baster first!)



What can you do to control mosquitoes in bromeliads?

Because tank bromeliad mosquitoes are active mostly during the daytime, nighttime spraying by mosquito control will have no effect on them. So, how can you nip the problem in the bud before those pesky mosquitoes start biting you? There are several options:

- Remove the plants.
- Use flying insect sprays labeled for mosquitoes. Once a month, spray a light mist over the plant and allow it to settle. Always read and follow label instructions when applying pesticides.
- Apply granular Bti (*Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis*, sold as Microbe-Lift BMC). Bti is a naturally-occurring soil bacteria that is effective in controlling larvae. Mix it with sufficient water and apply over the bromeliads.
- Apply Altosid Pro-G (methoprene) every 30 days to the water holding leaves of the plants. The insect growth regulator methoprene does not kill the larvae but prevents them from reaching adulthood.

Big box stores such as Lowe's and Home Depot sell lawn and ornamental insecticides that are labeled for mosquitoes and, if applied once a month, will provide control. These products attach to a garden hose and can be sprayed over the tops of the bromeliads.

This option is perhaps the easiest and most economical; one bottle (about \$10) treats up to 5,000 square feet—that's a lot of bromeliads, but it may have an environmental cost.

These products, such as Cutter Bug Free Backyard and Bayer Vegetable and Garden, are not designed to only treat for mosquitoes so they may kill other insects—some of which might be beneficial to your garden.



Whatever treatment you choose, follow label directions carefully and apply it to a small area of bromeliads first to be sure the product does not harm your plants.

