WHAT IS A BROMELIAD PUP?

A pup is the offset of another bromeliad plant. Pups can form at anytime but this most often occurs after your bromeliad has bloomed. Once a mature bromeliad reaches the point where it has a healthy bloom and a strong core, the original plant (known as the mother) will stop producing leaves and will begin producing its next generation of plants. Pups will not reveal a bloom at this point but you will be able to identify the cup forming as it grows upward from the base of the mother. It is possible for the mother plant to have multiple offsets growing at the same time. When these pups reach a certain size they can be harvested, planted, and cared for on their own. The mother will continue to thrive and produce additional offsets for the next year or two.

WHEN AND HOW TO REMOVE BROMELIAD PUPS

The longer the pups are left attached to the mother plant, the faster they will reach their own maturity. By leaving these offsets attached, they are able to take in nourishment from their mother, expediting their growth. However, removing the pups when they are smaller will allow the original bromeliad to focus the entirety if its energy on throwing even more pups. The choice on when to harvest is yours depending on your intentions.

Bromeliad pups can be safely removed when they are 1/3 to 1/2 the size of the mother plant. Another good indicator that the offsets can survive on their own is the presence of roots. Root formation is not necessary for a pup to survive so don’t be alarmed if they don’t exist yet.

Use a sharp, sterilized knife or scissors to remove your new plant, cutting as close to the mother plant as possible without
injuring it. Sometimes there will be an outer leaf shielding the base of the pup. You can gently peel this leaf away to reveal the entire base.

Once the pups have been removed, simply replace the soil around the mother plant and it should continue to provide you with additional offsets.

**HOW TO POT BROMELIAD OFFSETS**

After the pup has been harvested from the mother, dip the cut ends in a fungicide and rooting hormone before potting it individually. Prepare a small 4” plant pot with a light, well-draining medium. Because a pup’s root system is limited or non-existent, you may find the plant to be a little top heavy with nothing to anchor it down. When placing your new plant in within the pot take care not to set it too deeply in the potting mix in an effort to support its weight. Instead, use wood sticks or stakes to hold the plant up until it produces a root system that is able to withstand its own weight.

**CARING FOR PUPS**

Light, warmth, and humidity are three important factors in growing healthy bromeliads. While newly potted pups enjoy bright indirect light, they require less light than full grown, mature bromeliads. Be sure to keep the new plants watered. It is best to keep the potting medium moist but not wet. Over-watering bromeliad pups can cause rotting at the base of the plant, which could lead to a low chance of survival at this critical stage.

As the plant becomes stable with its roots system you can remove the supports and allow it to start receiving more light. Provide the plant with some good light in the morning especially during the summer months. Shade for the rest of the day after the morning sun usually leads to a good bloom on a bromeliad.

Taking a bromeliad from the pup stage to full maturity is incredibly rewarding. It’s a process that can be repeated over and over and takes approximately 2-3 years. With the proper knowledge and care, bromeliad propagation can be a great way to build your collection.