

Bromeliads Are Safe

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Harmless Mosquitoes Breed in Bromeliads

Concerns over the Zika virus have led to worries about Bromeliads because many of these plants hold water in their center where mosquitoes can potentially breed. What is not commonly known is that the mosquitoes that typically breed in Bromeliads are the harmless *Wyeomyia* mosquitoes (according to one study, 98.8% of the mosquitoes found in Bromeliads were harmless *Wyeomyia* mosquitoes). By harmless, it is meant that they do not transmit any diseases to humans. In fact, because of the competition of mosquito larvae, the number of mosquitoes emerging from Bromeliads that are capable of being carriers of Zika is effectively zero (0%).

Only Two Types of Mosquitoes can Transmit the Zika Virus

Roughly 80 species of mosquitoes are found in Florida. Only two species (*Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*) are capable of bearing the Zika virus. Except in exceptional circumstances (polluted water), those two types of mosquitoes do not breed in Bromeliads. (Let's look at an analogy. A certain breed of dogs is found to sometimes attack humans. An arguably defensible response would be to ban or limit that dog breed, not to ban all dogs!)

What kind of water do potentially Zika-bearing mosquitoes like? They like polluted water. A great example of this would be the dirty water in a water saucer underneath a potted plant or even dirty water found in a bottle cap! If you are concerned about potentially Zika-bearing mosquitoes, your time would be best spent eliminating standing water in any type of receptacle holding polluted water, such as empty buckets, old tires, or even rain gutters.

Two Approaches to Preventing Zika-bearing Mosquitoes in Bromeliads

When it comes to Bromeliads, there are two approaches that can be used to ensure that potential Zika-bearing mosquitoes are not present: an ecology-based method and a "kill all mosquitoes" method.

An Ecology-based Method

With an ecology-based approach, you would adopt practices which encourage the harmless *Wyeomyia* mosquitoes to breed in Bromeliads (thereby preventing other mosquito species from breeding). You would do your best to keep the water in Bromeliads clean. You would not allow grass clippings to get into the Bromeliads. You would not allow *Neoregelia* Bromeliad flowers to decompose in Bromeliads. You would not use BTI products (sold as Mosquito Bits®) or other methods to kill the harmless *Wyeomyia* mosquitoes found in Bromeliads. Basically, you just keep the water in Bromeliads clean.

The "Kill All Mosquitoes" Method

An alternative approach would be to kill all the mosquitoes that breed in Bromeliads. This means that you will generally be killing the harmless *Wyeomyia* mosquitoes. The disadvantage of this approach is that you would have to continually apply whatever killing method you adopt on a frequent basis. This may be a lot more effort than adopting the ecology-based approach. However, there are circumstances where this might be preferable. But it is a brute force method that would likely be overkill in many, if not most, situations.

Most Mosquitoes are Not Harmful

Most mosquitoes are not harmful to humans and are only an annoyance. They actually perform valuable functions. Not only do they pollinate plants, they are a major food source for other wildlife-- from fish and other aquatic animals to birds, bats, and other insect predators. Mosquitoes represent a considerable biomass of food for wildlife and their extinction, if it were achievable, would likely lead to a huge adverse effect on the entire ecosystem.

For more information (including source material), go to
<http://www.sanfordgardenclub.com/bromeliadsaresafe.html>