

# *Aechmea gamosepala*

## Matchstick Bromeliad



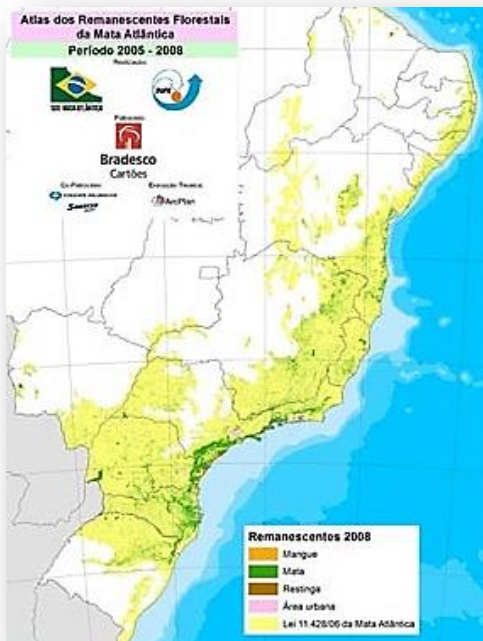
Bromeliads are widely distributed throughout central and south America, with just a few extending into the southern states of the USA, and one species, *Pitcairnia feliciana*, in West Africa. These popular drought hardy plants are considered to have evolved fairly recently, originating in the tepuis of the Guyana Shield of north-east South America and now widely dispersed from sea level to 4200 m in a diverse range of habitats, from deserts to rainforests. Most are epiphytes, others grow on rocks and a few are terrestrial. The sole African species is believed to have reached Africa via long-distance dispersal about 12 million years ago. The Pineapple is probably the best known of all Bromeliads.



*Aechmea gamosepala* is an epiphytic bromeliad, one of many species characterised by tightly interlocked leaves forming a well with the potential to capture and store water and nutrients, as well as host a great diversity of invertebrates which in

turn benefit their hosts by contributing nitrogen to their aquatic habitat. This bromeliad is a native of the Atlantic Rainforests of southern Brazil, from the state of São Paulo south to Rio Grande do Sul.





For decades, much has been said about the destruction of the Amazon rainforests, but in Brazil, the coastal Atlantic Rainforests, or **Mata Atlântica**, have been under vastly more pressure than the Amazon. The Atlantic Rainforests extend from Brazil, to Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina, and include a great diversity of tropical forests, including coastal mangroves, low forests on coastal dunes, dry forests, semi-deciduous forests, rainforests and even high-altitude shrubby grasslands. Originally estimated to cover 1.2 million

square kilometres, now only about 100,000 square kilometres survive. The Mata Atlântica is considered to be older than the Amazon, and because of its isolation from other tropical forests, has evolved unique ecosystems with many species found nowhere else on earth. The flora of the Mata Atlântica includes over 23,000 plant species; 40% of these are endemic. .



Encyclopedia of Life:

<http://eol.org/pages/1127204/details>

Hance, J.: Brazil's Atlantic Forest, Mata Atlântica, <http://rainforests.mongabay.com/mata-atlantica/mata-atlantica.html>

Map adapted from: David H. Benzing, Bromeliaceae: Profile of an Adaptive Radiation

Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aechmea\\_gamosepala](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aechmea_gamosepala)

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