

Yucca filamentosa - Yucca or Adam's Needle (*Agavaceae*)

Yucca filamentosa is an evergreen, drought hardy, bold focal point foliage plant with a radiating "southwestern look". Yucca also has prominent flowering stalks in mid-summer.

FEATURES

Form

- short- to medium-sized evergreen ornamental "shrub"
- evergreen foliage forms a clump maturing at 2.5' tall x 2.5' wide, but the annual woody inflorescences bolt up to 8' tall
- radiating clump growth habit
- slow growth rate of spread, but a rapid growth rate for the annual upright inflorescences

Culture

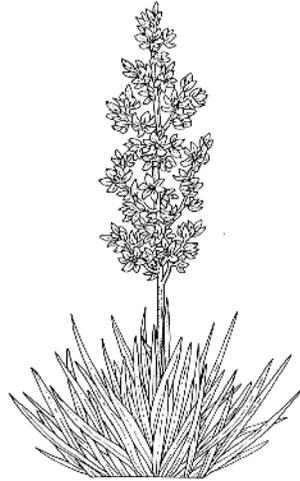
- full sun to full shade
- performs best in full sun in moist, well-drained, deep soils, but it is extremely urban tolerant, including tolerance to poor soils, various soil pHs, soil compaction, heat, high light reflection, extended drought, pollution, and winter salt spray; however, it does not tolerate poor drainage or wet sites, and does not bloom in full shade
- propagated primarily by root segments and clump division, but also by seeds
- Agave Family, with few disease or pest problems abundantly available in container form
- the flowering stalk should be deadheaded (pruned away, all the way to the ground) after flowering is finished, as the fruiting stalk is unsightly and will persist for 2-3 yrs. as "dead wood" unless it is removed
- Yuccas have many deep tap roots, and are extremely difficult to completely remove by digging out; in fact, this serves as a method of propagation, as many miniature Yuccas will return in a couple of months or the next year from the remaining or broken root segments; in this case, repeated applications of herbicide are needed for control

Foliage

- medium green, glaucous, evergreen, sword-like, radiating from ground-level fibrous stems, and bending downwards with age
- lanceolate and slightly concave leaves are each to 2.5' long, with veins that are parallel along the length of the blade
- margins have exfoliating white threads (hence the specific epithet)

Flowers

- creamy-white conical inflorescences range from 3-8' tall, blooming during July and Aug., and are quite showy when in flower
- individual flowers hang downwards, with petals that resemble huge teeth emerging from the corolla, and



bloom from the bottom to the top of the semi-woody inflorescences

Fruits

- the yellowish green fruit capsules occur along the persistent upright stalks, maturing to brown in early autumn if left alone, but best pruned away for neatness and to promote the superior evergreen foliage effect

Twigs

- the very short, fibrous, semi-woody to pulpy stems occur at ground level and are hidden by the dense evergreen foliage

Trunk

- not applicable

USAGE

Function

- a bold evergreen focal point in the landscape, either in group plantings or solitary, used at entranceways, borders, rock gardens, island beds, or as a specimen

Texture

- bold texture in foliage, flower, and fruit
- thick density for the evergreen foliage, and open density for the large inflorescences

Assets

- evergreen foliage
- extremely urban tolerant (especially to heat, drought, and blazing sun exposure)
- winter salt spray tolerant

Liabilities

- dead basal foliage needs to be carefully removed in early spring and immature fruiting stalks are best pruned away just after flowering has finished in mid-summer, to keep the plant tidy
- removal by digging entails follow-up with several applications of herbicide, as the remaining root segments will resprout

Habitat

- Zones 4 to 9
- Native to the Southeastern U.S. (although it is often planted for a "southwestern" xeriscape look)

SELECTIONS

Alternates

- true southwestern accent plants (basically members of the Cactus Family and similar families)

Cultivars- Variants – Related species

- there are several species of *Yucca*, and some of the cultivars below may actually belong to other species, although commonly associated with *Yucca filamentosa*

- Yucca filamentosa* 'Bright Edge' - green foliage with a clearly demarcated thin yellow margin, less prone to reversion to the green-foliaged form

- Yucca filamentosa* 'Color Guard' - a better substitute for 'Golden Sword', having a more crisply defined yellow stripe running down the center of the blade

- Yucca filamentosa* 'Golden Sword' - green-margined foliage has broad and ill-defined yellow streaks in the center of the leaf blade, but subsequent lateral shoots are prone to reversion to the natural green-foliaged form

- Yucca filamentosa* 'Hofer Blue' - foliage is distinctly glaucous and blue-silver to blue-green in spring, fading to green-blue in winter