**Agave angustifolia** Variegated Caribbean Agave

Edward F. Gilman

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**Introduction**

Variegated Caribbean Basin is not common in cultivation, having green leaves with marginal bands of bright white (Fig. 1). The leaves are borne from a very short trunk. Its tight rosette of stiff, sword-shaped leaves, each up to 3 feet long and 2 inches wide, makes a dramatic statement in the landscape and is much favored for use in rock gardens. The sharp spine at the tip of its toothed leaves is often removed to protect people and pets. Locate it at least 6 feet away from walks and other areas where people could contact the spiny foliage.

**General Information**

- **Scientific name:** Agave angustifolia
- **Pronunciation:** uh-GAW-vee an-gus-tif-FOLE-ee-uh
- **Common name(s):** Variegated Caribbean Agave
- **Family:** Agavaceae
- **Plant type:** shrub
- **USDA hardiness zones:** 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)
- **Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round
- **Origin:** native to North America
- **Uses:** border; accent; mass planting
- **Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

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**Description**

- **Height:** 3 to 4 feet
- **Spread:** 3 to 4 feet
- **Plant habit:** round

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Use and Management
Caribbean Agava is a hardy survivor, tolerating heat, drought, and salty seaside conditions. Little if any irrigation is needed to maintain the plant once established. It grows best in full sun but can adapt to some shade. After 10 years or more (though not a century), a lofty flower spike is produced, with terminal panicles of pale yellow to white blooms. The plant can be used in residences as a free-standing specimen and is usually not planted in mass due to its unusual color and form. Due to its large size and striking habit and color, most residences only need one of these. Larger commercial landscapes have room for multiple mass plantings which can create a dramatic impact.

Propagation is by detaching the well-rooted suckers appearing at the base.

Pests and Diseases
None of major concern.

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: spiny
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: more than 36 inches
Leaf color: blue or blue-green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: flowers periodically throughout the year

Fruit
Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches
Fruit cover: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristic: persists on the plant

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; usually with one stem/trunk
Current year stem/twig color: not applicable
Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture
Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerance: unknown
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other
Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Plant density: open
Growth rate: slow
Texture: coarse