

Yucca elephantipes: Spineless Yucca¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

Introduction

A dramatic landscape element, Spineless Yucca is the tallest of the Yuccas, reaching 30 feet in height with a 15-foot spread, its single, thick, rough trunk topped with straplike, four-foot-long leaves. The trunk can grow to four-foot-thick. Sprouts often grow from the base of the trunk forming a multi-trunked tree. Spineless Yucca grows fairly rapidly but usually stays under 20 feet in height, and is ideal for use in succulent gardens or large planters. Unlike



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Yucca elephantipes*: Spineless Yucca
Credits: Ed Gilman

its close relative, Spanish Bayonet, Spineless Yucca can be used in close range of people since it lacks the formidable, terminal spine and has harmless leaves. It was introduced into Florida in 1956 as a substitute for the spiny Spanish Bayonet.

General Information

Scientific name: *Yucca elephantipes*

Pronunciation: YUCK-uh ell-uh-fan-TYE-peeZ

Common name(s): Spineless Yucca, Soft-Tip Yucca

Family: *Agavaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: indoors; deck or patio; specimen; container or planter; highway median

Availability: not native to North America

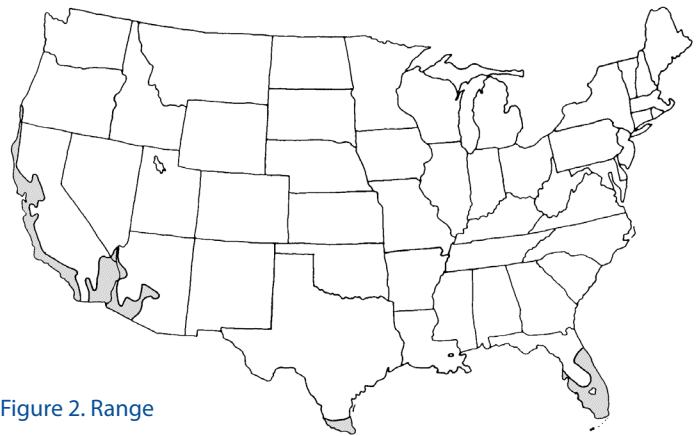


Figure 2. Range

1. This document is ENH-831, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office. U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.

Description

Height: 20 to 30 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: upright/erect

Crown density: open

Growth rate: fast

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: lanceolate, linear

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: more than 36 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

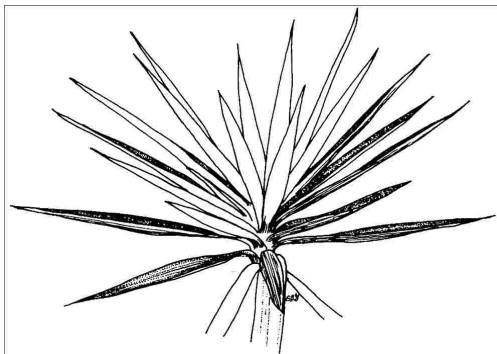


Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: white/cream/gray

Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green

Current year twig thickness: very thick

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

The two to three-foot-tall bloom is produced on top of the stalks once the plant is 8 to 10 feet tall. Blooms are edible and high in calcium and potassium and can be used in salads. Leaves contain large amounts of ascorbic acid.

Spineless Yucca grows easily in full sun or partial shade on any well-drained soil. Do not plant Yucca unless drainage is superior. Yucca grows well as a houseplant in a well-lighted area.

A Spineless Yucca cultivar with striped foliage, 'Variegata', may be found in some nurseries, and may be gaining in popularity.

Propagation is by seed or by cuttings of any size. Suckers at the base of the plant root quite easily.

Pests

Pests include Yucca moth borers, scale, and black weevil which bore into roots and stems.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern, except root rot in soils kept too moist. Do not irrigate Yucca. Leaf spots sometimes infect Yucca but do no real harm to the plant.