

***Yucca aloifolia* Spanish Bayonet¹**

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Introduction

Spanish bayonet makes a dramatic landscape statement, its dark green, stiff, dagger-like leaves projecting from thick, inclining trunks. Spikes of bright white blossoms appear in the center of the plant above the foliage in springtime to late summer depending on the year. With the sharp-needed tips removed with shears, Spanish bayonet makes a wonderful accent at entryways or in a shrub border. Their striking texture adds an accent to any garden. Plants eventually form attractive, multi-stemmed clumps. High salt tolerance makes Spanish bayonet ideal for seaside plantings.

General Information

Scientific name: *Yucca aloifolia*

Pronunciation: YUCK-kuh al-loe-iff-FOLE-lee-uh

Common name(s): Spanish bayonet, aloe yucca

Family: *Agavaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 6 through 11 (Figure 4)

Planting month for zone 7: year-round

Planting month for zone 8: year-round



Figure 1. Full Form—*Yucca aloifolia*: Spanish bayonet.
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

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Figure 2. Leaf—*Yucca aloifolia*: Spanish bayonet.
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Figure 3. Flower—*Yucca aloifolia*: Spanish bayonet.
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Planting month for zone 9: year-round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year-round

Origin: native to Florida

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: specimen; naturalizing; border; accent; attracts butterflies; screen

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant



Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 10 to 15 feet

Spread: 3 to 5 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: linear

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 12 to 18 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristic: summer flowering; spring flowering; pleasant fragrance

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristic: suited for human consumption

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically, multi-trunked or clumping stems; can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk; not particularly showy

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: very thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: alkaline; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: good

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: sprouts from roots or lower trunk

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Spanish bayonet is often confused with Spanish dagger. Leaf margins on Spanish dagger (*Yucca gloriosa*) are smooth, whereas those on *Yucca aloifolia* (Spanish bayonet) are

rough. The outer halves of the leaves on Spanish dagger also bend toward the ground, whereas those on Spanish bayonet do not.

Growing in full sun or partial shade, Spanish bayonet does well on any well-drained soil and should be watered sparingly, if at all. Plants can also tolerate nearly full shade.

The cultivar 'Tricolor' has green and white leaves.

Propagation is by division of the suckers or by cuttings of any size at any season. Occasionally plants are grown from seed.

Pests and Diseases

Pest problems include scale and yucca moth larvae, which may bore through and weaken the terminal shoot.

Leaf spot can be a problem in areas with poor air circulation.