**Yucca elephantipes**  
*Spineless Yucca*¹

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 (Fig. 1). 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 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  
**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; suitable for growing indoors; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; specimen; no proven urban tolerance  
**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

![Figure 1. Middle-aged Spineless Yucca.](image)

**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 20 to 30 feet  
**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

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Crown shape: upright
Crown density: open
Growth rate: fast
Texture: coarse

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate; spiral (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: lanceolate; linear
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: >36 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Fruit
Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: green
Current year twig thickness: stout

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
**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.

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**Culture**

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

**Other**

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**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.