**Agave americana ‘Marginata’**

Edward F. Gilman

**Introduction**

Variegated Century Plant is common in cultivation, having twisted green leaves with marginal bands of bright yellow (Fig. 1). The leaves gracefully fold back on themselves giving much the appearance of giant bands of striped ribbon. Its tight rosette of stiff, sword-shaped leaves, each up to six feet long and 10 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 six feet away from walks and other areas where people could contact the spiny foliage.

**General Information**

*Scientific name:* *Agave americana* ‘Marginata’  
*Pronunciation:* uh-GAW-vee uh-mair-rick-KAY-nuh

*Common name(s):* Variegated Century Plant  
*Family:* Agavaceae  
*Plant type:* shrub  
*USDA hardiness zones:* 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)  
*Planting month for zone 9:* year round  
*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

**Description**

*Height:* 6 to 8 feet  
*Spread:* 6 to 10 feet

**Foliage**

*Leaf arrangement:* spiral

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** spiny  
**Leaf shape:** lanceolate  
**Leaf venation:** none, or difficult to see  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** more than 36 inches  
**Leaf color:** variegated  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white  
**Flower characteristic:** summer flowering

**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 tolerances:** unknown  
**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

**Other**

**Roots:** usually not a problem  
**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

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**Figure 2.** Shaded area represents potential planting range.
Use and Management

Century Plant is a hardy survivor, tolerating heat, drought, and salty seaside conditions. It grows best in full sun but can adapt to shade. After 10 years or more (though not a century), a lofty flower spike is produced, sometimes reaching a height of 20 feet or more, with terminal panicles of pale yellow to white blooms. The plant dies after blooming. The plant is typically used in residences as a free-standing specimen, not planted in mass. Due to its large size, most residences only need one of these. Larger commercial landscapes have room for multiple mass plantings which can create a dramatic impact.

Variegated Century Plant is propagated by detaching the well-rooted suckers appearing at the base, or by plantlets formed on the flower spike.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.