Aloe barbadensis
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Introduction

Well-known for the reputed medicinal value of the juice of its leaves, Aloe is an easy-to-grow, clump-forming, succulent perennial (Fig. 1). Its thick, abundant, spiny-edged, fleshy, light green leaves emerge in a rosette on a very short stem. A natural for groundcover or specimen use in rock gardens, Aloe is also well-suited for use as a small accent or container plant. Growth is normally very slow and little maintenance is needed to keep plants looking good. Flower stalks appear from the center of the plant producing a showy, reddish inflorescence.

General Information

Scientific name: Aloe barbadensis
Pronunciation: AL-lo-ee bar-buh-DEN-sis
Common name(s): Aloe, Barbados Aloe, Medicinal Aloe
Family: Liliaceae
Plant type: herbaceous; ground cover
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: not native to North America
Uses: border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; ground cover; suitable for growing indoors; accent
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 1 to 2 feet
Spread: 2 to 3 feet

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral

Figure 1. Aloe.
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: spiny  
Leaf shape: lanceolate  
Leaf venation: parallel  
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen  
Leaf blade length: 18 to 36 inches  
Leaf color: variegated  
Fall color: no fall color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy  

Flower  

Flower color: yellow  
Flower characteristic: winter flowering  

Fruit  

Fruit shape: no fruit  
Fruit length: no fruit  
Fruit cover: no fruit  
Fruit color: not applicable  
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy  

Trunk and Branches  

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable  
Current year stem/twig color: not applicable  
Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable  

Culture  

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade  
Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; acidic; clay; sand; loam  
Drought tolerance: high  
Soil salt tolerances: poor  
Plant spacing: 12 to 18 inches  

Other  

Roots: not applicable  
Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers  
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding  
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive  
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant  

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Use and Management

Aloe will grow in full sun to partial shade on any well-drained soil and is only moderately salt-tolerant. The liquid inside the fleshy leaves helps relieve skin burns and is an ingredient in a variety of skin lotions. Plant on 12 to 18-inch centers for the best ground cover effect.

Propagation is by cuttings, seeds, or division of offsets.

This sturdy, drought-tolerant plant is only occasionally bothered by caterpillars which will chew holes in young, tender leaves.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.