



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Stapelia nobilis*¹

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Introduction

Growing in clumps made up of four-sided, rigid, spineless stems, Carrion Flower resembles cacti (Fig. 1). The stems are not strong enough to grow more than eight-inches-tall before bending back to the ground, providing great architectural interest to a groundcover bed or raised planter. Carrion Flower is most often grown for the novelty of its bloom, a 12-inch purple star, mottled with darker colors. Having the aroma of rotting meat, the odor is not usually offensive on plants blooming outside in summer.

General Information

Scientific name: *Stapelia nobilis*

Pronunciation: stuh-PEEL-lee-uh NO-bill-liss

Common name(s): Carrion Flower

Family: *Asclepiadaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

Description

Height: .5 to 1 feet

Spread: 2 to 4 feet

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: open

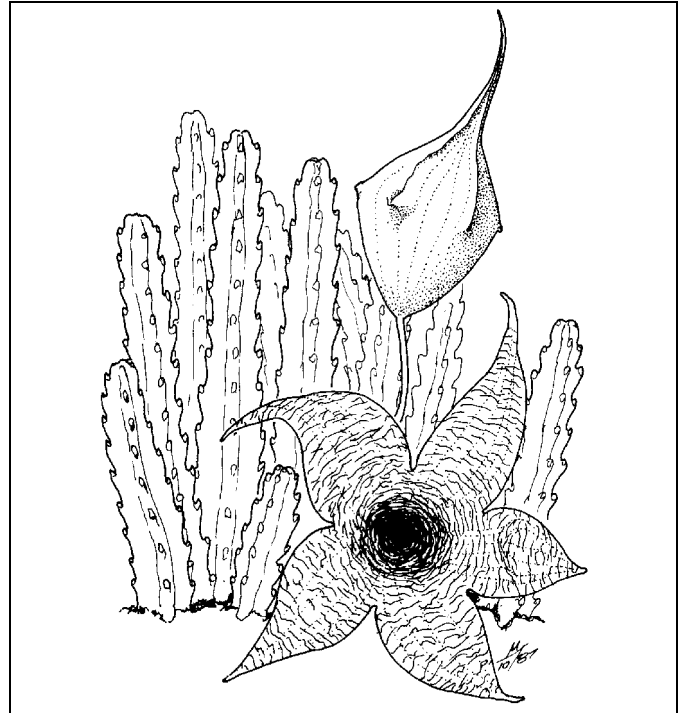


Figure 1. Carrion Flower.

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: unknown

Leaf margin: unknown

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf shape: unknown
Leaf venation: unknown
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: unknown
Leaf color: variegated
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: unpleasant fragrance; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown
Fruit length: unknown
Fruit cover: unknown
Fruit color: unknown
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable

Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: very thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
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: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

Carrion Flower should be grown on rapidly-draining soil in light shade. When exposed to full sun, the stems will turn an unattractive bronze color. Plants should remain dry during the winter and have only moderate water during the summer. Carrion Flower should be used outside only in frost-free locations.

Propagation is by seed, division of the clumps, or by stem cuttings.

Scale, mealy bugs, and mites may cause problems.

Pests and Diseases

Carrion Flower is susceptible to root rot on poorly drained soils or if over-watered.