



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Agave americana*¹

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Introduction

Century Plant is a hardy survivor, tolerating heat, drought, and salty seaside conditions (Fig. 1). Its tight rosette of blue-green, stiff, sword-shaped leaves, each up to six feet long and 10 inches wide, makes a dramatic statement in the landscape. It 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. The plant attracts attention due to its very coarse texture and blue-green leaf color. 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*

Pronunciation: uh-GAW-vee uh-mair-rick-KAY-nuh

Common name(s): 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: 8 to 10 feet

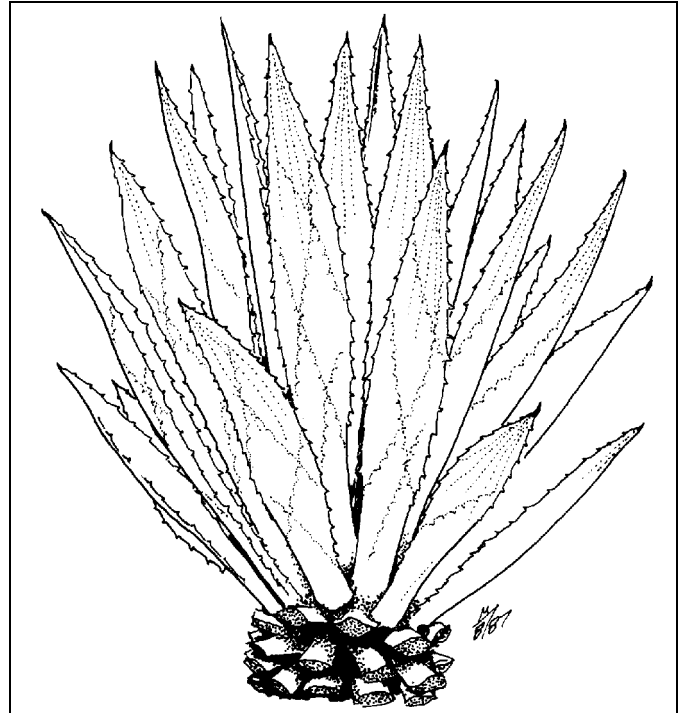


Figure 1. Century Plant.

Plant habit: round

Plant density: open

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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: blue or blue-green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: flowers once

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: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: may self-seed each year
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Century Plant does best in full sun but can adapt to some shade. After 10 years or more (though not a century), a lofty flower spike is produced, sometimes reaching a height of 20 feet, 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.

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.