

Yuccas

Yucca spp.

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Yuccas are evergreen plants. They are very drought tolerant landscape plants, and are therefore very suitable for dry sites. They will languish in poorly drained soils. Due to their relatively long sword-shaped leaves and upright stiff habit, yuccas yield a bold and sometimes "xeric" (arid/desert) appearance in the landscape. This look may not mesh with the theme of other plantings, thus yuccas should be carefully used in the landscape. They can be used as a specimen plant, in mass, or as accent plants. White yucca flowers, usually occurring in late spring/early summer, are quite showy and add a few weeks of drama to the landscape. Flowers are produced on "spikes" that rise above the foliage which makes them especially eye catching. Some species have sharp spine-tipped leaves which pose a safety problem to pedestrians. Also, some species are not cold hardy in the entire mid-Atlantic region; hardiness zones will be noted for individual species (see Additional Information section). Since the cultural information is similar for yucca species, the Summary information will encompass most yucca species; individual species differences will be noted. Cultivar information will be noted for each species.

There are a few yucca species used in the eastern US but there are several other species that are used in the southern and southwestern portions of the US. This article will cover those species those species which are suitable for Virginia and other mid-Atlantic states.

Summary:

Foliage: Relatively long sword-shape leaves; evergreen

Height: About 5 feet

Spread: About 3 feet (will produce side shoots which will expand plant width)

Shape: Upright

Main features: Yuccas are very drought tolerant plants with a bold landscape look. Their sword-shaped foliage and late-spring flowers are very attractive features.

Plant Needs:

Zone: Depends on species

Light: Full sun to part shade

Moisture: Average to dry

Soil type: Most soils but must be well-drained

pH range: Acid to alkaline

Functions:

Yuccas can be used as a specimen plant, in mass, or as accent plants.

Care:

Yuccas do not have any special care requirements other than removing flower stalks (spikes) at the end of the flowering period. Plants may be divided, or side plants removed, to propagate new plants.

Additional Information:

Adam's-needle Yucca

Yucca filamentosa

Adam's-needle yucca is a very hardy species and can be grown in zones 4 to 9. There are several cultivars listed in the trade as Adam's-needle yucca, but may actually belong to other species.

'Bright Edge' narrow green leaves with bright gold margins

'Color Guard' center of leaf has a cream-yellow central stripe

'Golden Sword' center of leaf has a yellow central stripe

Small Soapweed

Yucca glauca

Small soapweed is a short yucca with narrow glaucous (bluish) green leaves and is hardy in zone 4 to 8.

Spanish-dagger

Yucca gloriosa

Spanish-dagger is a tall-growing yucca (6 feet or higher) with glaucous green leaves and is hardy in zones 7 to 9 (perhaps 6b?).

Margaritaville™ ('Hinvargas') with yellow to yellow-green vertical stripes in leaves

'Variegata' thick blue-green leaves with a wide gold margin

Curveleaf Yucca

Yucca recurvifolia

Curveleaf yucca is quite similar to Spanish-dagger and sometimes listed as a variety of the Spanish-dagger species. It is hardy from zones 7 to 9 (perhaps 6b?)