

Century Plant

Known as the Century Plant, this is the most popular of agave species, which are native to the southwestern United States, Mexico and northern South America. It forms freely suckering rosettes of about 25 bluish-green, fleshy leaves up to 1.2 metres long and 20 cm wide. The lanceolate leaves have strong, hooked, dark spines on their edges and sharp tips, which may injure unwary passers-by. A position at a distance from foot-trafficked areas is essential. It is best suited to a rock garden, where it tolerates poor and saline soils, drought and heat. When grown in a pot, *A. americana* requires good drainage. The tall bloom stalks with flowers reach a total height of 6 metres, or sometimes even 13 metres. It does not take a century for the plant to grow, flower and die, but it is an astonishing event anyway. The stalks, which resemble asparagus, may grow up to 30 cm a day and then branch into cushions of yellowish flowers. Bulbils or baby plants, produced on the flower's stalk, can be used for propagation, as can offsets and seeds. At this stage, extra watering is beneficial. The flower stalk can be roasted and eaten. *A. americana* usually flowers when ten or more years old, after which the plant dies: the dramatic dry bloom stalk is sometimes left as an attraction. Agaves are very easy to grow in Arriyadh; they have bold, sculptural forms, and are a strong accent in parks and gardens. They require only low maintenance such as tidying up dead leaves or pruning unwanted offsets. They are sometimes attacked by the agave weevil.



GENERAL

Origin	: Mediterranean, sub-tropical
Vigour	: fairly fast growing
Humidity	: very arid, semi-arid
Propagation	: direct sowing, division
Maintenance	: low

CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: resistant
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: medium
Salinity/ppm	: moderate (2000 ppm)
Hardiness	: -6°C

SHAPE

Type	: cacti, succulents
Height	: 0.8 m-2 m
Spread	: 1.5 m-3 m
Foliage	: evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: light green, secondary: light yellow
Size	: 300 cm - 900 cm
Period	: June - September
Smell	: scented, moderate, flower

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: capsule
Fruit size	: 4 cm - 5 cm