Black-spined Agave

Agave macroacantha

Plant Height: 12 inches

Flower Height: 6 feet

Spread: 16 inches

Sunlight:

Hardiness Zone: 9

Other Names: syn. Agave flavescens ssp. macroacantha



Black-spined Agave
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



Black-spined Agave
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Description:

A small to medium sized agave featuring rosettes of evenly spaced, narrow blue-gray leaves with black spines and teeth; numerous rosettes form dense clumps; rarely flowers, and then rosette will die; grown for foliage; makes a dramatic accent planting

Ornamental Features

Black-spined Agave is primarily valued in the landscape or garden for its interestingly mounded form. It features bold spikes of light green cup-shaped flowers with brick red stalks rising above the foliage in late winter. Its attractive succulent sword-like leaves remain silvery blue in color with pointy black spines and tinges of chartreuse throughout the year.

Landscape Attributes

Black-spined Agave is an herbaceous evergreen perennial with a mounded form. Its wonderfully bold, coarse texture can be very effective in a balanced garden composition.

This plant will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and usually looks its best without pruning, although it will tolerate pruning. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Suckering
- Spiny

Black-spined Agave is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- Rock/Alpine Gardens
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Black-spined Agave will grow to be about 12 inches tall at maturity extending to 6 feet tall with the flowers, with a spread of 16 inches. Its foliage tends to remain dense right to the ground, not requiring facer plants in front. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 15 years. As an evegreen perennial, this plant will typically keep its form and foliage year-round.

This plant should only be grown in full sunlight. It prefers dry to average moisture levels with very well-drained soil, and will often die in standing water. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for a low-water garden or xeriscape application. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in poor soils. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This species is not originally from North America. It can be propagated by multiplication of the underground bulbs.

Black-spined Agave is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.