Elephant's Trunk

Pachypodium namaquanum



Elephant's Trunk
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 7 feet

Spread: 24 inches

Sunlight: ○

Hardiness Zone: 10

Other Names: Halfmens, Club Foot

Description:

A stemmed succulent that forms a tall trunk, covered with long spines; compact, wavy green leaves at the crown are deciduous, re-sprouting each spring; yellow flowers emerge in late winter; a striking landscape or garden accent in dry, frost free areas

Ornamental Features

Elephant's Trunk features showy clusters of lightly-scented yellow star-shaped flowers with red tips held atop the stems from mid winter to early spring. Its attractive small crinkled narrow leaves remain green in color throughout the season.

Landscape Attributes

Elephant's Trunk is an herbaceous perennial with a rigidly upright and towering form. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other garden plants with less refined foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and should never be pruned except to remove any dieback, as it tends not to take pruning well. It is a good choice for attracting bees and butterflies to your yard, but is not particularly attractive to deer who tend to leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spiny

Elephant's Trunk is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Vertical Accent
- Rock/Alpine Gardens
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Elephant's Trunk will grow to be about 7 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 24 inches. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 3 feet from the ground. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 60 years or more. As an herbaceous perennial, this plant will usually die back to the crown each winter, and will regrow from the base each spring. Be careful not to disturb the crown in late winter when it may not be readily seen!

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 sandy soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is not originally from North America, and parts of it are known to be toxic to humans and animals, so care should be exercised in planting it around children and pets..

Elephant's Trunk is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. With its upright habit of growth, it is best suited for use 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. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.