Mexican Sea Holly

Eryngium venustum



Mexican Sea Holly
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Plant Height: 12 inches

Flower Height: 24 inches

Spread: 18 inches

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 4

Other Names: syn. Eryngium umbellifera

Description:

A distinctive sea holly featuring symmetrical, spiny whorls of sea-green narrow foliage; tall stalks end in small, white, thistle-like flowers in early summer, that mature to a lovely brown in fall; tolerates hot dry sites; great in mass plantings

Ornamental Features

Mexican Sea Holly features unusual clusters of white ball-shaped flowers with silver overtones rising above the foliage from early summer to mid fall, which emerge from distinctive bluish-green flower buds. The flowers are excellent for cutting. Its attractive spiny narrow pinnately compound leaves emerge light green in spring, turning dark green in color throughout the season.

Landscape Attributes

Mexican Sea Holly is an open herbaceous perennial with a mounded form. It brings an extremely fine and delicate texture to the garden composition and should be used to full effect.

This plant will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and is best cleaned up in early spring before it resumes active growth for the season. 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
- Self-Seeding

Mexican Sea Holly is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- Rock/Alpine Gardens
- Border Edging
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Mexican Sea Holly will grow to be about 12 inches tall at maturity extending to 24 inches tall with the flowers, with a spread of 18 inches. Its foliage tends to remain dense right to the ground, not requiring facer plants in front. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 10 years. 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 does best in full sun to partial shade. 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, and is able to handle environmental salt. 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 cuttings.

Mexican Sea Holly is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. It can be used either as 'filler' or as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination, depending on the height and form of the other plants used in the container planting. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.