Carrion Flower

Stapelia lepida



Carrion Flower
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 12 inches

Spread: 24 inches

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 9

Other Names: Starfish Flower, Orbea lepida

Description:

A clump forming succulent with erect green stems that resembles a small cactus, but it is not in the cactus family; star shaped blooms, appearing in fall, are attractive but smell like rotting meat and attract flies; site carefully

Ornamental Features

Carrion Flower is a highly distinctive and unusual plant. Although it actually isn't technically a cactus, it is still a succulent evergreen which behaves much like a cactus. It is characterized by the highly modified and distinctive smooth ribbed green stems that comprise the bulk of the plant, and which are designed to retain water for extended periods of time. Its leaves remain green in color throughout the year.

Landscape Attributes

Carrion Flower is an unusual succulent evergreen plant with a generally mounded habit of growth. Unlike a cactus, which this plant resembles, it does have foliage, but it's the smooth green ribbed stem segments that are of primary interest from a landscape or garden perspective.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and usually looks its best without pruning, although it will tolerate pruning. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Invasive
- Self-Seeding

Carrion Flower is recommended for the following landscape applications;

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

Planting & Growing

Carrion Flower will grow to be about 12 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 24 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 10 years. As an evegreen perennial, this plant will typically keep its form and foliage year-round.

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. This plant should not require much in the way of fertilizing once established, although it may appreciate a shot of general-purpose fertilizer from time to time early in the growing season. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in poor 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. It can be propagated by division.

Carrion Flower is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. It is often used as a 'filler' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination, providing the canvas against which the thriller plants stand out. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.