

Agave americana

COMMON NAMES

century plant

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Very large perennial plant with rosette growth form. The leaves are up to 2 m long, are fleshy and triangular in cross section. The leaves are leathery, glaucous and have coarse teeth on the margins. Leaves are usually dull green, although a variegated form is also present. After 10 to 15 years vegetative growth it produces a large woody spike (scape) up to 10 m tall with a terminal panicle of many yellow flowers. Black seeds are produced in 5 cm long capsules.

SIMILAR TAXA

Very distinctive plant. Is similar to *Furcraea foetida*, but *Agave* does not produce bulbils and does not have a trunk at all. Other rosette form herbs are present in NZ e.g.. *Beschcorneria yuccoides*, but none are as large or as well armed as *Agave americana*.

HABITAT

Terrestrial. Thrives in dry conditions, coastal cliffs, sand dunes.

GENUS

Agave

FAMILY

Agavaceae

AUTHORITY

Agave americana L.

FLOWERING

February, March.

YEAR NATURALISED

1869

ORIGIN

Mexico

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental

TOLERANCES

Tolerates salt and very dry conditions.



Kaitoke Lake, Wanganui. Apr 2007.
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LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial. rosettes last for 10-15 years, they die after flowering and are replaced by lateral rosettes. Spreads both vegetatively and by seed. Seeds are produced in panicles high on the flowering scape. Dispersed by gravity and humans.

ETYMOLOGY

agave: From the Greek aganos 'noble', referring to its stately form when in flower

americana: Of South America

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

NVS CODE

AGAAME

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/agave-americana/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026