

Agave americana

COMMON NAME

century plant

FAMILY

Agavaceae

AUTHORITY

Agave americana L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

NVS CODE

AGAAME

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

HABITAT

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

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*.

FLOWERING

February, March.

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

YEAR NATURALISED

1869

ORIGIN

Mexico

ETYMOLOGY

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

americana: Of South America



Agave americana. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



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Reason For Introduction

Ornamental

Life Cycle Comments

Perennial. rosettes last for 10-15 years, they die after flowering and are replaced by lateral rosettes

Reproduction

Spreads both vegetatively and by seed.

Seed

Seeds are produced in panicles high on the flowering scape.

Dispersal

Gravity, humans

Tolerances

Tolerates salt and very dry conditions.

MORE INFORMATION

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