



Mojave Yucca

Scientific Name: *Yucca schidigera*

Recommended Varieties:

- Yucca is a perennial monocot in the agave family (Agavaceae).

Common Pest(s):

For the most part Mojave Yucca is pest free.

- Yucca Weevils

ipm.ucanr.edu

All Photos: Creative Commons

Growing Information

Native Habitat

Mojave Yucca is a species in the Agaveceae (Agave) family that is native to southern California. It grows in coastal sage scrub near the coast, in mountain chaparral, and in desert transition areas at elevations from sea level to 8,200 feet.

Ideal Planting Window

Fall transplanting is best especially in areas with mild winters and hot summers. This allows root systems to become established through the winter before they have to deal with heat stress.

Growing Guidance

Mojave Yucca reproduces only by seed, not by offsets as other Agaves do. Unlike most other members of this family, Mojave Yucca does not die after blooming, a trait it shares with Joshua Tree (*Yucca brevifolia*).

[Calscape](#)

[Desertusa](#)

[Calscape](#)



Interesting Facts

Flowers of the Yucca genus -- which includes the Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) -- depend on the small, white [pronuba moth](#) for pollination. This moth, in addition to gathering pollen, actually deposits her eggs in the ovary of the yucca flowers. The pronuba larvae feed on the developing fruit, but leave some seeds to mature.

Yucca wood has the lowest ignition temperature of any other wood, which makes it useful as a fire-starter.

Yucca plants are reliant on the yucca moth for pollination.

The range of this yucca is the Mojave and Sonoran deserts of southeastern California, Baja, southern Nevada and western Arizona.

A cylindrical, curved, dull-black berry with thick, edible flesh matures in late summer. The berry grows to 2 to 4 inches long by 1-1/2 inches wide containing many small black seeds. The berry dries and falls from the tree before winter.

[Desertusa](#)

Contact Information



RIVERSIDE COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

EMAIL: anrmgriverside@ucanr.edu

WEBSITE: <https://ucanr.edu/sites/RiversideMG/>

Native Habitat Description

Also called the "Spanish Dagger," this evergreen shrub or small tree has a few upright branches and bayonet-like leaves from 2 to 4 feet long and 1-1/2 inches wide. The trunk is grayish-brown and 6 to 12 inches in diameter. The Mojave yucca grows to a height of 16 feet. It supports wildlife by bringing Hummingbirds, numerous moths and butterflies to its flowers.

[Desertusa](#)
[Calscape.org](#)

Historical Uses

Yucca schidigera was not an important food plant for the indigenous people. However, the tough fibers from its leaves were an **incredible resource** to many desert tribes. The leaves were soaked in water and pounded with rocks to extract these valuable fibers. Once extracted, the fibers were woven into cordage, which was then assembled into ropes, fishing nets, shoes, baskets, sleeping mats and thatch for shelter.

Roots from the Mojave yucca produce a soapy lather when pounded and mixed with boiling water. This soapy, plant juice was used to wash hair. This primitive shampoo, referred to as 'amole' was also used in cleansing rituals.

Fruits from the stalk could be eaten raw or else roasted, the outer skin of the fruit has a bitter taste and so was often removed before consumption. The seeds could be ground into a flour, which was edible but not a favorite.

The prominent flower stalk served additional uses. The stalk could be carved into a decorative stick. There are reports of early people making musical instruments from these stalks, akin to a didgeridoo.

[Ethnoherbalist](#)