

in the garden *by Stephen and Kristin Pategas*



STEPHEN & KRISTIN PATEGAS

Strikingly Structural Agaves

For succulent plants that say “Wow!” and can stand up to the cold, look to a selection of agaves. These clumping perennials have leaves that are either spiny or spineless. They range from diminutive to giant. Once some of them produce their solo flower spike

that perform equally well as low groundcovers or in containers. They make striking focal points in the garden and will have visitors commenting and reaching out to stroke them.

The Queen Victoria agave’s compact form and white markings resemble a crown, thus its dedication in name to Queen Victoria. This agave is hardy from Zones 9 through 11 (Central Florida is in Zone 9b) and occasionally pro-

duces pure white nectar loaded blooms on a flower spike that can reach 4 to 7-feet tall

Both agaves prefer full sun and well-drained soils. They handle regular irrigation and heavy rainfalls as well as drought and restricted watering – truly plants meant for our changing landscape needs. Ours are planted in containers and came through 27 degrees without a blemish with just a light sheet covering for protection. Try

these agaves along with other low water use plants within an irrigation zone for reduced watering and be prepared for any droughts or increased watering restrictions.

Queen Victoria and squid agaves are both available from local nurseries, such as Palmers Garden & Goods or Lukas Nursery, that order plants from Monrovia Nursery. Or try mail order from Yucca Do Nursery, Inc. (979-542-8811 or www.yuccado.com) of Hempstead, TX and Plant Delights

(919-772-4794 or www.plantdelights.com) of Raleigh, NC. You’ll be sure to want more agaves once you see the hot response these get from your guests. ■



Queen Victoria agave is happy in a container for years.



Queen Victoria agave is low water use and has spines.



Squid agave is a strokeable spineless succulent.

(typically after a number of years or decades), they will slowly decline. Luckily many produce small plants or pups near their base that, if left to grow, will continue the show. Other agaves form plantlets (like miniature agaves) on their flower stalk which can also be propagated.

New agaves are constantly being tested and introduced for the landscape industry and two that have turned our heads are *Agave victoriae-reginae*, the Queen Victoria agave and *Agave bracteosa*, the squid agave. Both are smaller agaves (12-inch and 24-inch height, respectively)

duces new plants below its base. Its bloom spike can reach 4-feet in height and the creamy-white flowers tinged with purple are a great nectar source for insects, birds, and bats.

The squid agave lives up to its moniker with spineless light green leaves that curve and undulate like a floating squid. This hardy agave from Zones 8 through 11 generates new plants from its base or roots and can reach 2 to 3-feet wide. When planted en masse squid agave creates a striking groundcover. It can bloom many times in its life, a most unusual trait in agaves. It

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