

PLAN TOL OGY

> PLANTOLOGY
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO BETTER GARDENS

BY TEENA CRAWFORD & LISA ELLIS

> *Beschorneria yuccoides* | MEXICAN LILY

Beschorneria yuccoides which is also known as Mexican lily is a soft and sculptural plant with a dramatic presence in a garden. A strong foliage plant, its leathery leaves are grey green to blue green in colour. It is highly adaptable and useful in a multitude of garden styles and settings.

As a stemless plant, the Mexican Lily sits snugly on the ground with pointed glaucous leaves emerging from the central rosette. In time, the plant will develop offsets to form multiple rosettes. Surprisingly, the pointy leaf tips are not sharp, despite their appearance.

The dramatic triffid-like flowers emerge as enormous watermelon-red asparagus spears and stand as tall as one to two metres above the foliage. The pendant bell flowers are a muted-red opening to green tips. While the flowering event is very showy, in some gardens it may prove to be a botanical curiosity and an unwelcome distraction from the foliage show. It is entirely acceptable to cut off the flowers at the base and to encourage the plant to refocus energy on the foliage.

Beschorneria yuccoides is a plant that can be included in myriad garden settings. It is particularly handsome when included in foliage-driven gardens – in the city, by the coast and in the country. It is a marvellous plant for contemporary architecture. Given the generosity of its leaves, it can even be employed in more tropical-style plantings, as well as landscapes with a Mediterranean flavour. Its shape and leaf colour lend itself to a role in a mid-century garden, gravel garden, exposed rockeries and even gardens with a strong focus on cacti. The absence of spikes renders it perfectly suitable for pot culture or gardens for children and pets.

Mexican lily is very adaptable to different aspects, from full sun to full shade. It will oblige by establishing easily at the base of and beneath mature trees, including eucalypts and cypress.

Any moderately drained soil is suitable, whether clay, sand or loam. It is both frost tolerant and drought tolerant, making it perfect for country gardens and waterwise garden installations.

Beschorneria yuccoides is an excellent accent and foliage plant, and it is well worth considering how it can become a visual anchor in a garden, featuring its striking glaucous silvery foliage and form.

This plant has been recognised by the Royal Horticultural Society with the Award of Garden Merit.



settings & styles

Balcony garden
Cacti and desert style
Children's garden
Coastal garden
Container garden
Country garden
Courtyard garden
Foliage garden
Gravel garden
Lush tropical-style garden
Mediterranean style garden
Pet-friendly garden
Poolside garden
Rooftop garden
Rock garden

COMPLEMENTARY PLANTS

Ceratostigma plumbaginoides
Cupressus sempervirens
'Glaucia'
Geranium 'Rozanne'
Helichrysum angustifolium
Phlebodium aureum
Plectranthus argentatus
Rosmarinus Blue Lagoon
Senecio mandraliscae

ASSOCIATE PLANTS

Bougainvillea glabra
Euphorbia rigida
Plumbago auriculata
Salvia leucantha

SPECIES FOR SUBSTITUTION

Agave attenuata
Furcraea bedinghausii

species summary

PLANT TYPE perennial, evergreen

DESCRIPTION

rosette-forming evergreen perennial with blue green sword-shaped foliage, and tall branched spikes carrying small flowers in spring

SCIENTIFIC NAME *Beschorneria yuccoides*

PHONETICS BESH-orn-air-ee-ah yuck-oyd-ees

COMMON NAME false red yucca
Mexican lily
false yucca

PLANT FAMILY Agavaceae – agave family

DERIVATION *Beschorneria* is named after German amateur botanist Friedrich Beschorner; *yuccoides* means 'yucca-like'

ORIGIN Mexico

RELATED TO *Beschorneria septentrionalis* is shorter with broader bright green foliage.

DIMENSIONS height and width 1 metre

SPACING 1 metre

FLOWERING SEASON spring

FLOWERS tall, arching, branched flower spikes carrying small nodding green-and-pink flowers

STEMS/BARK leaves are stemless; flower stems are fleshy and pinkish in colour

GROWTH RATE moderate

LIFESPAN >20 years

NOTABLE CULTIVARS *Beschorneria yuccoides* 'Reality' has variegated cream and green striped foliage; 'Flamingo Glow' has yellow and green striped foliage

cultivation notes

Mexican lily grows and establishes quickly in gardens after good soil preparation.

Provide consistent moisture for the first year of establishment, after which plants will continue to flourish with minimal care.

Fertilise plants in spring and again after flowering to encourage healthy, vigorous new growth.

For those who find the flowers unattractive, remove emerging stems when young. The plant's strength is its foliage, form and adaptability to a wide range of conditions.

tolerances

ASPECT full sun
afternoon sun
morning sun
part shade
dappled light

SOIL adaptable

WATER REQUIREMENTS tolerates periods of dryness

WIND EXPOSURE coast
tall building draught winds
rooftop exposure

FROST generally unaffected by frost
light tolerance

POLLUTION high tolerance



