

AGAVE GEMINIFLORA

by Sue Haffner

The *Agave geminiflora* in my side yard is putting up a bloom stalk that now reaches above the roofline of my house. It's beautiful: glistening green, maroon and brown, towering over the plant.

This agave forms a tight rosette of very narrow dark green leaves (1/4 to 1/2 inches wide, 18 to 24 inches long), with fine filaments along the leaves. The terminal spines are sharp but flexible. My plant is about 4 feet in diameter.

October to November is the normal flowering time for this species. The buds are green tinged with red; the petals are pale yellowish green with a reddish blush.

While it's been in cultivation since 1797, *Agave geminiflora* was only rediscovered in habitat in 1951, in Nayarit state, Mexico, growing in oak woodland at 3-4,000' altitude.

It can make a dramatic landscape plant, but I'm not sure of its frost tolerance, as my plant is in a semi-protected location between my house and the neighbor's. In summer it gets full sun from late morning until late afternoon; in winter it's in the shade. It seems to do better with regular watering.

As is true with most agaves, *A. geminiflora* is monocarpic—that is, it will bloom and die. This one does not normally produce offsets (though plants grown in crowded containers have been known to offset). Propagation is by seed.

My plant has been in place for many years and I'll be sad to lose it. Now I have to find another!

The drawing below, of *Agave geminiflora*, is from an Italian manuscript of 1816. The plant was grown in Europe as a yucca, a dracaena, even as a bromeliad (*Bonapartia*), before it was officially identified. Its value as a landscape specimen is long established.

