



## FYN Garden Q & A Series

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Yards & Neighborhoods



### FYN Topic: *Agave Americana*

**Question:** What is this plant called? It looks both like an octopus and a cactus. I saw it growing at a golf course. It reminded me of the plant, mother in law's tongue, with long, dark-green blades and a wide, yellow stripe down the center. The tall, swirling leaf blade forms in the center and is surrounded by spiraling spiny leaves about 3-5 feet long. Dan from Ft Myers

**Answer:** The plant is probably one of the cultivars of *Agave Americana*, also known as the Century Plant. These huge, spiny succulents start out as a small, basal sucker growing from a runner from a larger, parent plant. Eventually, a mammoth rosette of octopus-looking leaves grow to fill a space, 15 by 20 feet. In the center, a single, odd-looking, long and wide leaf appears. After waiting 10 to 30 years or longer (every 100 years as its name implies is unlikely), a tall flower stalk grows with yellow flowers. After a plant blooms one time, the stalk fades and the entire plant dies. Century plants are well suited to grow in our sandy, well-drained soil. A single plant can easily deter unwanted visitors, both wildlife and human. The variety you saw was probably, *Agave Americana 'medio-picta aurea.'* Learn more from the fact sheet, 'Agave and Yucca, Tough Plants for Tough Times' at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/EP/EP41900.pdf>



**Agave Americana**

### Useful Links

<http://www.floridayards.org>  
<http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>  
<http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>  
<http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu>

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by emailing [Extgardener@leegov.com](mailto:Extgardener@leegov.com). Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

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