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'BONITA' SOAPTREE YUCCA



STATE FLOWER OF NEW MEXICO

USEFUL FOR ORNAMENTAL PLANTINGS

IDEAL ROADSIDE BEAUTIFICATION SPECIES

'BONITA' SOAPTREE YUCCA

'Bonita' Soaptree Yucca (*Yucca elata* Engelm.) is a woody plant useful for beautification, soil stabilization, and ornamental landscaping. Soaptree Yucca is the state flower of New Mexico.

This variety was released in 1978 by the Agricultural Experiment Station of New Mexico State University, the New Mexico State Highway Department, and the Soil Conservation Service of the USDA.

ORIGIN AND DESCRIPTION

The original seed of 'Bonita' Soaptree Yucca was collected about two miles west of Gage, New Mexico. It was tested as NM-748.

This woody plant reaches heights up to, **20** feet or more in its natural range. The trunk diameter, when mature, is 6 to 12 inches. Older plants may have several branches from either the base or trunk. The straight, narrow, tapering, sharp-pointed leaves are evergreen, but older ones die and hang down forming a thick thatch on the trunk and branches.

The plants begin flowering in June at the northern limits of their natural range but start earlier farther south. The bell-shaped flowers are white with a light green or yellow tint and are quite showy. Each has three petals and three sepals which are alike. The flowers are borne on tall (up to 8 or more feet) woody seed stalks which become quite hard when dry.

AREA OF ADAPTATION

Transplanted 'Bonita' Soaptree Yucca plants have survived for several years as far north as Brighton, Colorado. This is farther north than the natural range of the species which is southwestern Texas and south into Mexico from central Arizona and New Mexico at elevations from 1,500 to 6,000 feet. The range of adaptation can be extended by using nursery produced

plants. The plants are cold-hardy and drought resistant but can be killed by too much water on heavy soils. Sandy and loamy soils are preferred.

ESTABLISHMENT

'Bonita' Soaptree Yucca will be available commercially in 1979 as bare-root stock or in containers. No special planting techniques are necessary for this variety other than normal procedures for any transplanted material.

COMMERCIAL PROPAGATION

This variety is propagated by seed. The seed should be planted during May and covered with about 1/2 inch of soil. Most germination occurs within two weeks if soil temperature is high enough and soil moisture is adequate. The thin black seeds are formed in capsules which dry and persist late into the season. Numerous flowers are formed at the SCS Plant Materials Center in Los Lunas, New Mexico on plants grown from seed, however no seeds have been produced. Apparently, this is north of the range of the specific moth needed to pollinate the flowers. The first flower stalks to be produced on plants at the Los Lunas PMC were seven-year old plants.

Seedlings generally need to be two years old for potting and bare-root planting. New plants can arise from sprouts of larger roots that remain in the ground after older plants are dug.

Plants over two feet tall can be produced within five years if seedlings are space-planted in a nursery and receive adequate water and fertilizer.

Breeder seed will be maintained by the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center. Limited numbers of live plants are available to commercial growers for establishing seed source nurseries. Seed for initial commercial nursery production can be obtained from the Los Lunas PMC through Resource Conservation Districts

and state crop improvement or seed growers associations. Additional information on commercial propagation of this variety is available from the Los Lunas PMC, 1036 Miller Street SW, Los Lunas, New Mexico 8703.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication was prepared and published by the New Mexico State Highway Department and the New Mexico Crop Improvement Association. Additional information is available on the use of 'Bonita' Soap-tree Yucca from any conservation district or Soil Conservation Service office serving your area. Assistance is available without regard to race, creed, color, sex or national origin.