



## Red Yucca (*Hesperaloe parvifolia*) Use in Utah

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### Quick Facts

- Red yucca is similar in appearance to common yucca (*Yucca spp.*) but has narrower, spineless leaves (Image 1).
- It has red flower spikes for much of the summer.
- Red yucca grows 2-4 feet high and wide, prefers full sun, and grows well in nutrient poor soil.

### Introduction

Red yucca is native to southwestern Texas and adjacent parts of Mexico. It has been used in landscapes there for many years. It has recently been found to grow well in colder areas including much of the Wasatch Front and warmer areas of Utah (USDA hardiness zones 5-11). Many online references, such as Texas A&M University, indicate that red yucca is only hardy to Zone 7. However,

based on our experience, success of the plant in local botanical gardens, and information provided by commercial growers, we have found the plant hardy to USDA Zone 5. It blooms for most of the summer and is relatively carefree.

### Planting, Care and Maintenance

#### Planting and Establishment

Plant red yucca in sunny locations with well-draining soil. It does not tolerate being kept permanently wet. During the first year of establishment, soil should not be allowed to completely dry out between irrigations. Do not plant in low lying areas or other spots in the landscape where cold air will settle.

#### Irrigation

After establishment, red yucca needs deep, infrequent irrigation spaced 3 to 4 weeks apart, depending on the temperature and soil type.

#### Fertilization

Red yucca is tolerant of nutrient-poor soil and rarely needs supplemental fertilizer. Over fertilizing can cause plants to become excessively large and reduce flowering.

#### Size and Spacing

Red yucca typically reaches 2-3 feet high and wide but with age and irrigation may reach to 4 feet or larger. Space plants 3-4 feet apart.



Image 1. Red yucca (*Hesperaloe parvifolia*).

## Other Maintenance

Remove spent flowers periodically to encourage more blossoms. Because red yucca is evergreen, the foliage should not be cut back in the fall. Doing so may severely damage or kill the plant. Mature plants will propagate themselves by periodically producing new, small plants ('pup' plants) around their base (Image 2). These pup plants can be successfully dug and moved in spring or fall (mid-September through May), avoiding the heat of the summer. Leave as much soil and root intact as reasonably possible, and replant in pots or elsewhere in the landscape. (D. Basinger, personnel communication, September 9, 2016,)

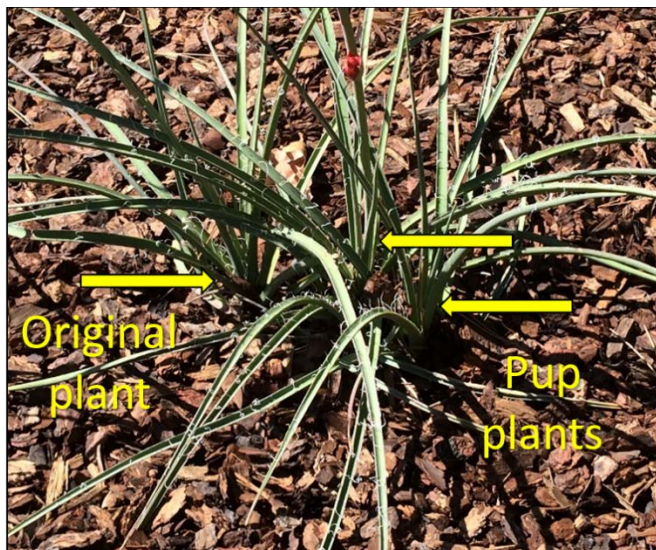


Image 2. A young clump of red yucca showing the original plant and two 'pup' plants.

## Species, Cultivars and Varieties

The main plant type available in commerce is *H. parvifolia*, the species (Image 3). However, there are at least two named cultivars, 'Coral Glow' and 'Yellow', that are currently available through online nurseries or by special order at local nurseries. The cultivar 'Coral Glow' (Image 4) has pinkish-yellow flowers, much lighter in color than the species. The cultivar 'Yellow' has bright yellow flowers (Image 5). These cultivars have the same size and growth characteristics as the species.

## Diseases and Pests

Red yucca is usually pest and disease free. The most common problem is root rot diseases promoted by excessive irrigation. Because red yucca attracts pollinators, it is important to use reduced risk insecticides such as horticultural soaps and oils, in the area around red yucca.

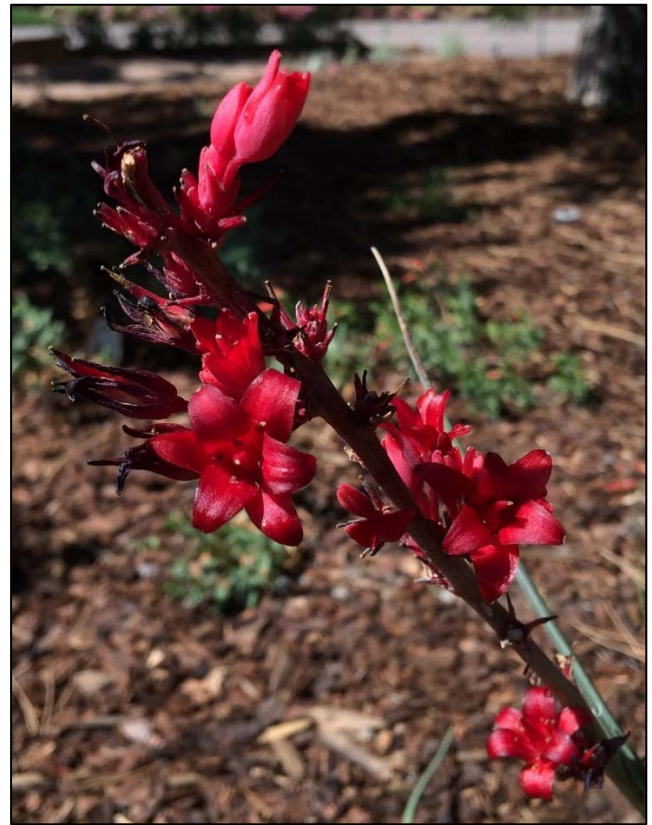


Image 3. *Hesperaloe parvifolia* with red flowers.



Image 4. *Hesperaloe parvifolia* 'Coral Glow' with coral-orange flowers.



Image 5. *Hesperaloe parvifolia* 'Yellow'. Image courtesy Fritz Hochstätter.

## References

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