



Agave

Agave americana

Century Plant, American Aloe, Mezcal, Mescal

Description:

Height: 4'-5' tall & 6'-8' wide

Flowers: 3.5", yellow

Fruit: 2" - 5"

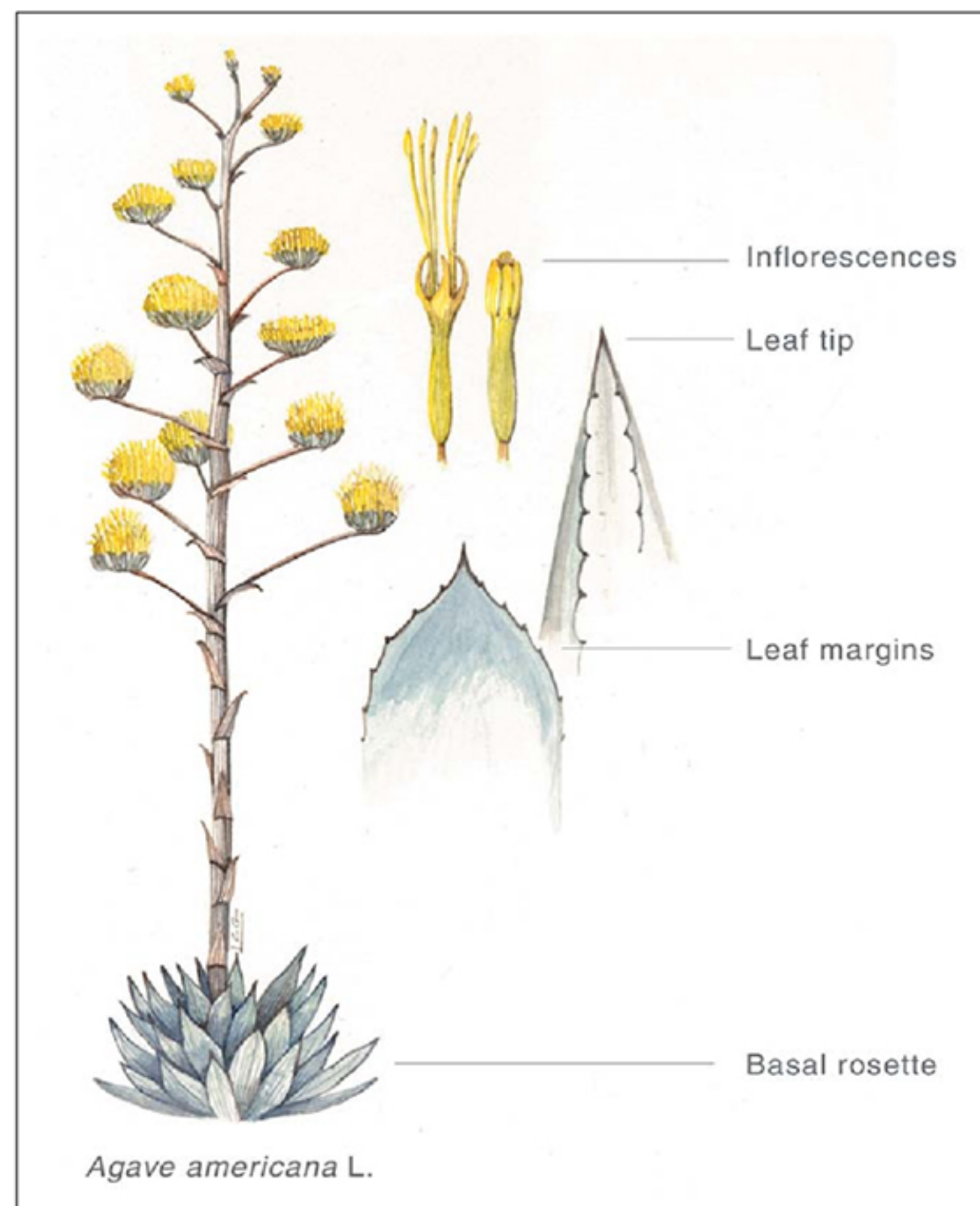
Pads: 12" long, round or oval shaped, green-violet, glochids (tiny hair-like barbed thorns)

Flowering: Spring - Summer

Uses:

The American Agave can be medicinal and is edible. Medicinally, because the sap has anti-bacterial properties, it is very useful not only for curing internal issues like dysentery and other digestive issues, but it can also be applied externally as a poultice to heal wounds.

The heart of the plant, found partly underground, and the sap are very sweet and can be eaten. The seed can be ground for flour. The stalk can be roasted and has been the



compared to asparagus as they are in the same plant family. The most famous use of the plant is for producing tequila.

Native Cultures:

Used by several native peoples in the U.S. Southwest. Reports show that the Mescalero Apaches depended on the

plant for a variety of uses, such as using the fibers as rope and using the sharp points at the end of the leaves as needles for sewing. The Hohokam cultivated agaves as a major food crop.

Habitats:

The Agave grows on steep slopes, in sandy and gravelly areas, and is found in southern California, Utah, and Arizona.

Pollinators:

Agave primarily rely on hummingbirds, hawk-moths, and regional bees.

Flowering:

After maturing for 10-20 years, the plant will begin to bloom a tower that will grow for 3-4 months, up to a foot a day, before eventually starting to droop, and then dying as a whole.



Folklore and Notes:

The name "agave" comes from a Greek word meaning "illustrious." The plant was named this by a Swiss Botanist Charles C. Parry. In Greek mythology, the Queen of the Maenads, followers of the god of winemaking, was named Agave. Similarly, Aztec culture has a legend around the agave and the goddess, Mayayhuel, who finds herself transformed into an agave after an ill-fated love affair. The sap that can be used to create tequila was considered an elixir for those who were in mourning for her death.

Image Resources:

Illustration: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Botanical-briefs%3A-the-century-plant--Agave-L.-Crawford-Eickhorst/97798528b0001eb738e2bd305728a64c7c7f7b22>

Photographs: Jed Kraft