Lindley's Nursery and Garden Center

Pencil Cactus

Euphorbia tirucalli



Pencil Cactus
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 30 feet

Spread: 10 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 10a

Other Names: syn. Euphorbia laro, Milk Bush, Finger Tree

Description:

An upright, nearly leafless succulent with brownish old growth; small clusters of yellow flowers appear in late spring to early summer at the end of bright green stems; an interesting textural plant for dry sunny areas

Ornamental Features

Pencil Cactus features dainty clusters of buttery yellow flowers with red overtones at the ends of the branches from late spring to early summer. It has attractive green evergreen foliage. The succulent narrow leaves are highly ornamental and remain green throughout the winter.

Landscape Attributes

Pencil Cactus is a dense multi-stemmed evergreen plant with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its relatively fine texture sets it apart from other landscape plants with less refined foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and should only be pruned after flowering to avoid removing any of the current season's flowers. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Pencil Cactus is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting



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Planting & Growing

Pencil Cactus will grow to be about 30 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 10 feet. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 4 feet from the ground, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 60 years or more.

This plant does best in full sun to partial shade. It prefers dry to average moisture levels with very well-drained soil, and will often die in standing water. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for xeriscaping or the moisture-conserving landscape. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in sandy soils. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This species is not originally from North America, and parts of it are known to be toxic to humans and animals, so care should be exercised in planting it around children and pets. It can be propagated by division.

Pencil Cactus is a fine choice for the yard, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Its large size and upright habit of growth lend it for use as a solitary accent, or in a composition surrounded by smaller plants around the base and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when grown in a container, it may not perform exactly as indicated on the tag - this is to be expected. Also note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.



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