Black-spined Aloe

Aloe melanacantha



Black-spined Aloe
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Plant Height: 12 inches

Flower Height: 3 feet

Spread: 24 inches

Sunlight: ○

Hardiness Zone: 9b

Description:

A usually solitary, nearly stemless ball shaped rosette of triangular, rough textured, brownish-green leaves that blush red with drought stress; yellow spines age to black; red-orange flowers emerge from erect terminal spikes in winter and fade to yellow

Ornamental Features

Black-spined Aloe features showy spikes of red flowers with orange overtones rising above the foliage in mid winter. It has attractive grayish green foliage with pointy black spines and tinges of red. The succulent narrow leaves are highly ornamental and remain grayish green throughout the winter.

Landscape Attributes

Black-spined Aloe is a multi-stemmed evergreen shrub with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its relatively coarse texture can be used to stand it apart from other landscape plants with finer foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance shrub, and usually looks its best without pruning, although it will tolerate pruning. It is a good choice for attracting bees and hummingbirds to your yard, but is not particularly attractive to deer who tend to leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spiny

Black-spined Aloe is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Black-spined Aloe will grow to be about 12 inches tall at maturity extending to 3 feet tall with the flowers, with a spread of 24 inches. It has a low canopy. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 40 years or more.

This shrub should only be grown in full sunlight. 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 a low-water garden or xeriscape application. Like most succulents and cacti, this plant prefers to grow in poor soils and should therefore never be fertilized. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in sandy soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is not originally from North America. It can be propagated by division.

Black-spined Aloe makes a fine choice for the outdoor landscape, but it is also well-suited for use in outdoor pots and containers. With its upright habit of growth, it is best suited for use as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. 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.