

# THE TRANSPLANTED GARDENER

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Residents of Saddlebrooke Ranch, if you have noticed the strange asparagus stalk coming from the center of the large blue-gray agave, botanically named *Agave weberi*, near the north wall of the main entrance, you are witness to the near birth of a rare “century plant” bloom. The bloom stalk could be as much as 20 feet tall before it opens to reveal yellow flowers. Unfortunately, once the plant produces a flower, it will die. Many agaves put all of their energies into reproduction, and simply can't live to produce a second flower.

Agaves are New World plants. The *Agave weberi* is thought to be native to NE Mexico and southern Texas, though due to historic trade and transportation around the world and back, the actual native location is difficult to determine. The *weberi* is blue gray in color with mostly smooth leaf margins, having a long black dagger-like terminal spine. It can grow to 6-8' in height and similarly round. The leaf blades are 4" in width and can be several feet long. *A. weberi* is one of the hardier agaves in cultivation. It can usually endure temperatures dropping to 10 degree F for short periods of time. It typically throws offsets, commonly called pups. These are cloned offspring which grow from rhizomes beneath the soil surrounding the parent plant.

When any agave bears offsets, they can be removed to relocate by pulling away groundcover and cutting the attached umbilical cord-like rhizome with a sharp shovel or trowel. I often use an old steak knife to make this cut. Try to make the cut as cleanly as possible to reduce disturbance to the resulting new plant. Taking as many roots as you can, simply pot up the new pup or place it in another spot in the garden at the same depth it was originally growing. Water sparingly and watch as your new agave takes root and grows.

Another agave worth growing in our Saddlebrooke and Saddlebrooke Ranch gardens is *A. parryi*, variation *truncata*, the artichoke agave. This particularly offsetting agave makes large family groups. It is blue-gray in color, about 2-3 feet in diameter and 1-2 feet tall. Its rounded form is ideal as a foil for large columnar cacti in the landscape design. Needing very little supplemental water once established, the *parryi's* agave is an excellent choice for our gardens.

The Queen of Agaves, *A. victoriae-reginae*, is a regal plant, featuring white bud prints on its compact leaves. Named in honor of Queen Victoria, it will reach as much as 1 ½' tall and 2' round at maturity. *A. victoriae-reginae* is not known for offsetting. This slow growing species is quite winter hardy to temps in the low teens. Once established it seldom needs irrigation except in the extreme heat of high summer.

Consult your professional landscaper for advice on a suitable agave for your garden.  
And, who knows, you may be witness to your own special century flower.