

Yucca filamentosa

[Synonyms : *Yucca concava*, *Yucca filamentosa* var. *bracteata*, *Yucca filamentosa* var. *concava*, *Yucca filamentosa* var. *elmensis*, *Yucca filamentosa* var. *filamentosa*, *Yucca filamentosa* var. *laevigata*, *Yucca filamentosa* var. *latifolia*, *Yucca filamentosa* var. *maxima*, *Yucca filamentosa* var. *media*, *Yucca filamentosa* var. *mexicana*, *Yucca filamentosa* var. *nobilis*, *Yucca filamentosa* var. *patens*, *Yucca filamentosa* var. *ramosa*, *Yucca filamentosa* var. *recurvifolia*, *Yucca filamentosa* var. *variegata*]

YUCCA is a succulent evergreen shrub. Native to the south-eastern coast of North America it has fragrant, sometimes red-tinged outside, creamy-white flowers.

It is also known as Adam's needle, Adam's needle-and-thread, Bear-grass, Bear's thread, Christmas bells, Confederate flax, Common yucca, Curly hair, Eve's darning needle, Eve's thread, *Fiberpalmlilja* (Swedish), Grass cactus, *Hapsijukka* (Finnish), *Juka niťovitá* (Czech), *Juka vláknitá* (Czech), Needle-and-thread, Needle palm, Our Lord's candle, *Palmlilie* (German), *Palmlilja* (Swedish), Silk grass, Soap root, Soap weed, Spanish bayonet, Spanish dagger, Spoon-leaf yucca, and Thread-and-needle.

The flowers (which open towards evening) are pollinated by a small moth.

Filamentosa is derived from Latin *filum* (thread) meaning 'thread-bearing' with reference to the leaves.

North American Indian tribes are said to have eaten the seed pods.

Some Indian tribes used the leaf fibre for cordage and cloth. Cherokee Indians washed their blankets with the boiled, pounded roots – and their fishermen also scattered pounded roots over the water to stun the fish.

For the Cherokee tribe yucca must have attracted some measure of respect as it was used in their ceremonial ritual.

The shrub provided a source of medicines for several North American Indian tribes. Nanticoke Indians applied a root poultice to sprains, and both the Catawba and Cherokee Indian tribes applied it to various skin problems. Internally the Cherokee also prescribed an infusion for diabetics.

Fire-seared leaves have been used by local farmers as strings for suspending joints of meat in smoke-houses.

Records show that yucca was introduced to Britain in the mid-17th Century by John Tradescant the Younger (1608-1662).

Medicinally, the plant has been used to treat some venereal diseases and rheumatism.