TAGAWA gardens

African Milk Barrel*

Euphorbia horrida



African Milk Barrel
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 3 feet

Spread: 24 inches

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 9

Description:

An attractive, bold plant for a sunny border; cactus-like branches are covered with long, red spines; pale yellow flowers in spring; adds an exotic dimension to the garden

Ornamental Features

African Milk Barrel is a highly distinctive and unusual plant. Although it actually isn't technically a cactus, it is still a succulent evergreen which behaves much like a cactus. It is characterized by the highly modified and distinctive spiny ribbed grayish green stems that comprise the bulk of the plant, and which are designed to retain water for extended periods of time. It has attractive dark green deciduous foliage. The glossy narrow leaves are highly ornamental but do not develop any appreciable fall color. It produces brown capsules in early summer.



African Milk Barrel flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

African Milk Barrel is an unusual succulent evergreen plant with an upright spreading habit of growth. It commonly grows as a shrub-like plant with multiple 'branches' and stems. Unlike a cactus, which this plant resembles, it does have foliage, but it's the spiny grayish green ribbed stem segments that are of primary interest from a landscape or garden perspective.

This is a relatively low maintenance shrub, and should not require much pruning, except when necessary, such as to remove dieback. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spiny

African Milk Barrel is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- Rock/Alpine Gardens
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

African Milk Barrel will grow to be about 3 feet tall at maturity, 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 60 years or more.

This shrub 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 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 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.

African Milk Barrel 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. 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. Be aware that in our climate, this plant may be too tender to survive the winter if left outdoors in a container. Contact our experts for more information on how to protect it over the winter months.

This plant is not reliably hardy in our region, and certain restrictions may apply; contact the store for more information.

** This is a 'special order' plant - contact store for details*