



Century plants are among the hardy cacti planted throughout the Xeric Scree Gardens. *Agave ovatifolia*, known as the whales tongue hardy century plant, boasts wide blue-grey leaves with dark spines along the edges of the leaves. It has been proven to be one of the hardiest of all century plant species suffering little to no winter burn. Whales tongue agave can be found growing natively throughout Mexico.

In 2007, we purchased a 1 quart size plant from Plant Delights Nursery in Raleigh, NC and potted it into a 1 gallon pot. In 2009, we planted that 1 gallon plant. Because of the surrounding heat from the parking lot, long hot summer days and nights, and an average of 40" of rainfall per year, the agave reached maturity at lightning speed. 9 years later, the agave has now reached 5' tall and 5' wide.

In the Piedmont region of NC, expect flowering to begin in 10 years. (In its native habitat, flowering can take up to 100 years, hence its common name. That is because in Mexico, agave is found growing in rocky soils, usually in the mountains where there is little to no nutrients in the soils. Compliment that with rainfall averaging less than 10" a year). Finally, after 9 years, we are seeing the next phase, a flower spike that will reach up to 15-20' in the air. Branches will form producing clusters of yellow fuzzy-like flowers. The process of branching and flowering is a several month process. All summer long, flowers will attract pollinators which will give us plenty of seeds to begin new plants as well as forming new plantlets will form along the stems. Unfortunately, this process means, our mature *Agave ovatifolia* will reach its end and die.