



Dasyilirion longissimum

Origin and Habitat: Fairly limited in range in northeastern Mexico

Description: The Toothless Sotol (*Dasyilirion longissimum* syn: *Dasyilirion quadrangularis*) is a slow growing durable evergreen shrub that looks like a miniature palm with a large fountain-like clump of very stiff grassy leaves, eventually forming (after many many years) a solitary trunk , most resembling the genus *Xanthorea*, the grass trees of Australia. (completely unrelated, though) Even the flower spikes look similar. This appearance makes it very easy to identify. Withstanding intense drought, they can live more than 150 years. It is possibly the most beautiful "sotol".

Trunk: Solitary, large, woody, felted with old leaves, 90-200 (or more) cm tall, but occasionally old plants may develop multiple heads of leaves, typically branching after flowering.

Leaves: Very numerous (The crown of mature plants is composed of hundreds of leaves), stiff, grass like, leathery, with smooth edges, spreading symmetrically in all directions from the trunk to form a more or less rounded rosette 1.5-2.5 cm wide. They are dull greys green to glaucous-green, larger at the base and narrowing farther out on the leaf. (usually less than 6 mm wide) quadrangular in cross section (the upper and lower surfaces raised to low keels), completely unarmed, with smooth or slightly rough margins with no distinct teeth and long (the more shade it's in, the longer the leaves), apex entire lacking the frayed tips that are common in this genus. They can stretch up to 90-180 cm. Older leaves droop around the base, forming a shaggy mantle that collects water and provides support. But in cultivation the bottom leaves

can be trimmed exposing an ornamental symmetrical spiral leaf-base pattern that never fails to attract comments.

Inflorescence: Plants dioecious. It forms a 2-3(-5) m tall spike of which the top 1/3-1/4 is the flowering section which is composed of a large number of racemes which occur within the bracts.

Flowers: Small very numerous (hundreds), white, tan, cream or brownish-yellow that emerge from reddish buds.

Blooming season: They may go years without blooming, then send up the tall flower stalk in summer.

Fruits: If successfully fertilized, will produce a colourful red-pink plume of tightly packed seeds in autumn. Fruit are dry, indehiscent, 3 winged, 7-9 mm long, scarcely notched with a single seed.

Notes: There is a lot of confusion today surrounding the names *Dasyilirion longissimum* Lemaire (1856) and *Dasyilirion quadrangulatum* Watson (1859) and it seems that they are one in the same.