



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Aloe barbadensis¹

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Introduction

Well-known for the reputed medicinal value of the juice of its leaves, Aloe is an easy-to-grow, clump-forming, succulent perennial (Fig. 1). Its thick, abundant, spiny-edged, fleshy, light green leaves emerge in a rosette on a very short stem. A natural for groundcover or specimen use in rock gardens, Aloe is also well-suited for use as a small accent or container plant. Growth is normally very slow and little maintenance is needed to keep plants looking good. Flower stalks appear from the center of the plant producing a showy, reddish inflorescence.

General Information

Scientific name: *Aloe barbadensis*

Pronunciation: AL-lo-ee bar-buh-DEN-sis

Common name(s): Aloe, Barbados Aloe, Medicinal Aloe

Family: *Liliaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous; ground cover

USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; ground cover; suitable for growing indoors; accent

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 1 to 2 feet

Spread: 2 to 3 feet

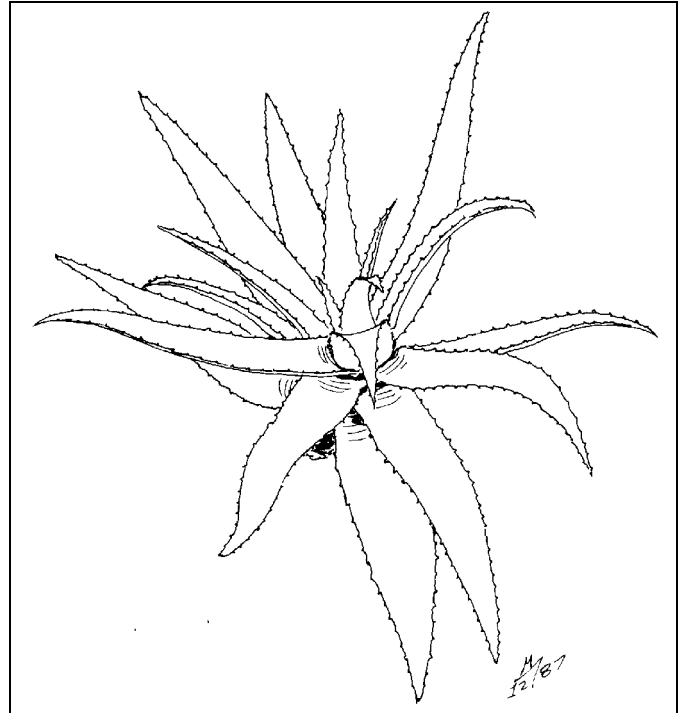


Figure 1. Aloe.

Plant habit: vase shape

Plant density: open

Growth rate: slow

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: spiny
Leaf shape: lanceolate
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 18 to 36 inches
Leaf color: variegated
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow
Flower characteristic: winter flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit
Fruit length: no fruit
Fruit cover: no fruit
Fruit color: not applicable
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable
Current year stem/twig color: not applicable
Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; acidic; clay; sand; loam
Drought tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 12 to 18 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Aloe will grow in full sun to partial shade on any well-drained soil and is only moderately salt-tolerant. The liquid inside the fleshy leaves helps relieve skin burns and is an ingredient in a variety of skin lotions. Plant on 12 to 18-inch centers for the best ground cover effect.

Propagation is by cuttings, seeds, or division of offsets.

This sturdy, drought-tolerant plant is only occasionally bothered by caterpillars which will chew holes in young, tender leaves.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.