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Zulu Giant

Stapelia gigantea

Plant Height: 8 inches

Flower Height: 12 inches

Spread: 24 inches

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 9a

Other Names: Carrion Flower, Giant Toad Flower, Starfish Flower

Description:

A spine-free, clump forming succulent with erect green stems that resembles a small cactus, but it is not; very large, star shaped blooms, appearing in fall, are attractive but smell like rotting meat and attract flies; site carefully



Zulu Giant
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Zulu Giant 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 smooth ribbed green stems that comprise the bulk of the plant, and which are designed to retain water for extended periods of time. Its leaves remain green in color throughout the year. This plant features unusual fragrant buttery yellow star-shaped flowers with burgundy stripes at the ends of the stems from late summer to mid fall.



Zulu Giant flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

Zulu Giant is an unusual succulent evergreen plant with a generally mounded habit of growth. Unlike a cactus, which this plant resembles, it does have foliage, but it's the smooth green ribbed stem segments that are of primary interest from a landscape or garden perspective.

This plant will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and is best cleaned up in early spring before it resumes active growth for the season. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Invasive
- Self-Seeding

Zulu Giant is recommended for the following landscape applications;

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

Planting & Growing

Zulu Giant will grow to be about 8 inches tall at maturity extending to 12 inches tall with the flowers, with a spread of 24 inches. Its foliage tends to remain low and dense right to the ground. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 10 years. As an evegreen perennial, this plant will typically keep its form and foliage year-round.

This plant 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. This plant should not require much in the way of fertilizing once established, although it may appreciate a shot of general-purpose fertilizer from time to time early in the growing season. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in poor soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. 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. It can be propagated by division.

Zulu Giant is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. It is often used as a 'filler' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination, providing a mass of flowers against which the thriller plants stand out. 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.