

SPANISH NEEDLES

Yucca filamentosa

By Helen Hamilton, *President of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

An unusual, tropical-looking plant, Spanish Needles forms clumps of stiff, dagger-like, bluegreen leaves, with loose threads on the edges. The leaves grow 2-3 feet tall, and have evergreen, woody stems. Cream-colored flowers grow in large terminal clusters on a six-foot tall stem, followed by an oblong, pickle-shaped fruit.

This is a plant of dry, sandy soils and sand dunes, especially near the coast. Spanish Needles is native to eastern and central United States and grows in nearly every county in Virginia, blooming June through September.

Yucca fruit can be cooked and eaten after the seeds are removed; the large petals are used in salads. Yuccas depend on the Yucca Moth as their agent of pollination, and these moths depend on yuccas for food. ❖

