



United States Department of Agriculture

A Conservation Plant Released by the Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Los Lunas Plant Materials Center, Los Lunas, NM

## ‘Bonita’ soaptree yucca *Yucca elata* Engelm.



‘Bonita’ Soaptree yucca

‘Bonita’ soaptree yucca (*Yucca elata* Engelm.) was released in 1978 by the New Mexico State University Los Lunas Agricultural Science Center, the New Mexico Department of Transportation, and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service Los Lunas Plant Materials Center.

### Description

‘Bonita’ soaptree yucca is a woody plant useful for beautification, soil stabilization, and ornamental landscaping, and it is the New Mexico state flower.

This woody plant reaches heights up to 20 feet or more in its natural range. The trunk diameter, when mature, is 6-to-12-inches in diameter. Older plants may have several branches from either the base or trunk. The straight, narrow, tapering sharp-pointed leaves are

evergreen, but older ones die and hang down forming a thick thatch on the trunk and branches.

The plants begin flowering in June at the northern limits of their natural range but start earlier farther south. The bell-shaped flowers are white with a light-green or yellow tint and are quite showy. Each has three petals and three sepals which are alike. The flowers are borne on tall (up to 8 feet or more) woody seed stalks which become quite hard when dry.

### Source

The original seed of ‘Bonita’ soaptree yucca was collected about two miles west of Gage, New Mexico. It was tested as NM-748.

### Area of Adaptation and Use

Transplanted ‘Bonita’ soaptree yucca plants have survived for several years as far north as Brighton, Colorado. This is farther north than the natural range of the species which is southwestern Texas and south into Mexico from central Arizona and New Mexico at elevations from 1,500 to 6,000 feet. The range of adaptation can be extended by using nursery produced plants. The plants are cold-hardy and drought resistant but can be killed by too much water on heavy soils. Sandy and loamy soils are preferred.

### Establishment and Management for Conservation

#### Plantings

‘No special planting techniques are necessary for this variety other than normal procedures for any transplanted material.

### Seed and Plant Production

This variety is propagated by seed. The seed should be planted during May and covered with about ½ inch of soil. Most germination occurs within two weeks if soil temperature is high enough and soil moisture is adequate. The thin black seeds are formed in capsules which dry and persist late into the season. Numerous flowers are formed at the USDA-NRCS Los Lunas Plant Materials on plants grown from seed, however no seeds have been produced. Apparently, this is north of the range of the specific moth needed to pollinate the flowers. The first flower stalks to be produced on plants at the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center were seven-year old plants.

Seedlings generally need to be two years old for potting and bare-root planting. New plants can arise from sprouts of larger roots that remain in the ground after older plants are removed.

Plants over two feet tall can be produced within five years if seedlings are space-planted in a nursery and receive adequate water and fertilizer.

#### **Availability**

*For conservation use:* Bonita' soaptree yucca is available commercially as bare-root stock or as containerized stock.

*For seed or plant increase:* Breeder seed will be maintained by the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center. Limited numbers of live plants are available to commercial growers for establishing seed source nurseries. Seed for initial commercial nursery production can be obtained from the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center, through Resource Conservation Districts and site crop improvement, or through seed growers associations.

*For more information, contact:*  
Los Lunas Plant Materials Center

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<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/nmpmc/>

#### **Citation**

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For additional information about this and other plants, please contact your local USDA Service Center, NRCS field office, or Conservation District <<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>>, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov/>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/>>



This is a joint release among New Mexico State University's Los Lunas Agricultural Science Center, the New Mexico Department of Transportation, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Los Lunas Plant Materials Center.

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