

# Eryngium yuccifolium

## N. Rattlesnake-master, Button Eryngo

Tried and True  
Native Plant Selections  
for the Mid-Atlantic



Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia  
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This **native\*** of Midwestern prairies and moist Southeastern sites provides unique form, texture, and color contrast in the garden. Striking flower heads attract myriad pollinators. Bluish-to-grey-green leaves resemble yucca, as reflected in its epithet. One common name, though, comes from the mistaken belief that it provided an antidote to rattlesnake bites.

Perennial	Foliage, July Clumps, Flowers with Bee, Fruit	
Height: 3½–6** feet		
Spread: 3–6 feet		
Bloom Color: Greenish white		
Characteristics		
Clump-forming, erect, tuberous-rooted <a href="#">perennial</a>		
Basal <a href="#">rosettes</a> of (≤18-inch) long, <a href="#">parallel-veined</a> , <a href="#">glaucous</a> leaves tapering to a sharp point with widely spaced marginal bristles; reduced <a href="#">stem</a> leaves		
<a href="#">Cymes</a> of globose or <a href="#">ovoid</a> heads of fragrant, five- <a href="#">petaled</a> flowers with <a href="#">persistent calyx</a> , five <a href="#">stamens</a> and two- <a href="#">styled pistil</a> subtended by sharp <a href="#">bractlets</a> on solitary glaucous stem June–Sep; <a href="#">schizocarps</a> follow with two <a href="#">alate</a> seeds		
Can spread by seed and may become weedy		
Attributes		
Tolerates <a href="#">clay soil</a> , wet soil, drought; no serious diseases or pests, although rodents may feed on <a href="#">crowns</a> ; <a href="#">deer</a> and rabbits rarely severely damage		
Use in fresh/dried arrangements; winter interest		
<a href="#">Ethnobotanic</a> uses as medicine and weaving fiber		
Attracts bees, butterflies, moths, other pollinators; <a href="#">larval</a> host to ~3 <a href="#">lepidopterans</a> incl. Black Swallowtail		
Growing and Maintenance Tips		Excellent Replacement for
<a href="#">Soil Requirements</a> : Well-drained, average		<a href="#">Miscanthus sinensis</a> - Chinese Silver Grass
<a href="#">Light Requirements</a> : Sun		<a href="#">Pennisetum alopecuroides</a> - Fountain Grass
<a href="#">Water Requirements</a> : Moist, Dry (occasionally)	<a href="#">Yucca aloifolia</a> - Spanish Dagger	
Site away from walkways due to bristly leaf margins	<p>*In the Mid-Atlantic, <i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i> var. <i>yuccifolium</i> is endangered in MD. In VA, it is rare where it occurs—mostly in southeastern counties as well as in Fairfax County in NoVa.</p> <p>**The US Forest Service notes that this plant benefits from some competition, especially from native grasses, to limit its height. Besides <a href="#">Schizachyrium scoparium</a> (Little Bluestem), it performs well with coneflowers, such as <a href="#">Echinacea purpurea</a> and <a href="#">Rudbeckia (R. fulgida, R. hirta)</a>, and <a href="#">Liatris</a> (Blazing Star).</p>	
May need staking; divide late spring or early fall		
Use in border, cutting, meadow, night, or rock gardens		
<a href="#">Hardiness</a> : USDA Zones 3a–8b		
developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria		

Images by Mary Free, [MG Tribute Garden](#) and by Elaine Mills (clumps, fruit), [Glencarlyn Garden](#)