

## Agave Alert: Agave Flower to Bloom at Woodland Park Zoo

*A Bloom from this Type of Plant is Rare in Seattle Area*

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo is bursting with excitement over a rare bloom getting ready to take place. The plant under the spotlight is an agave ovatifolia—or whale’s tongue agave—that typically grows in Mexico and has big, grayish-blue leaves with spiky edges.

Whale’s tongue agave take about 10 years to mature, and their blooms can reach from 12 to 15 feet tall creating a dazzling display. The agave blooming at the zoo can be found on the southern end of the penguin habitat where guests can get an up-close look at the towering stalk, estimated to be 10 to 12 feet tall. Agave plants thrive in arid and semiarid environments similar to the desert environments Humboldt penguins are home to in Peru and Chile.

This type of agave is used to make mezcal and, without pollinators, the alcoholic spirit would cease to exist! Agave blooms attract all kinds of pollinators including bees and hummingbirds—but bats are the most significant pollinators of agave in Mexico.

The zoo’s horticulture staff expect the agave to begin blooming soon and the flowers should last for most of the summer, so be sure to stop by and see it during your next zoo visit. Unfortunately, agave plants die after they bloom so you don’t want to miss this rare opportunity! Horticulture staff plan to gather viable seed from the agave once the seedpods mature to grow new plants at the zoo in the future.

### Protect Pollinators:

- Provide shelter so pollinators can find safe places to hide and to protect their young:
  - Leave wood piles; preserve bare ground for ground nesting bees; leave grass clippings; keep leaf litter piles; preserve dead trees and branches; after brushing, place pet fur on branches for bird nest material; install a bee hotel.
  - Plant native plants to provide habitat and food – both for adult insects (flowers) and for their young (many eat leaves!)
  - Plant diverse flowering plants.
  - Healthy plants start with healthy soil – use finished compost and mulch, such as Zoo Doo, and avoid chemicals to build healthy soil in your garden.
- Provide water for pollinators.
  - Place a small dish with marbles or rocks and water in your yard or on your patio.
- “Be a bug hero”—Insects need advocates who are willing to make changes in their own landscapes. Teach others to care for them and spread the word to encourage pollinator-friendly practices across the state.
- To learn more, visit [www.zoo.org/pollinators](http://www.zoo.org/pollinators).



Woodland Park Zoo offers a safe, outdoor experience for all. Visit [zoo.org](http://zoo.org) for information. Zoo hours: 9:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m. daily through September 4.

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