

## The Century Plant

I like visiting in Arizona, Nevada and California, in part due to a fascination for the desert. I guess that's because this barren and arid land is so different from my native Tennessee. A common sight in America's Southwest desert is the century plant. It's unique. The century plant (*Agave Americana*) thrives in rocky, mountainous desert sites. It has dramatic, splayed leaves that grow up to a foot wide. The plant can reach 12 feet in diameter.

But what makes the century plant unusual, as its name suggests, is its long reproduction cycle. For 20 or 30 years (no, not a literal 100 years), the six-foot tall plant stands the same height and puts out no flowers.

Then one year, without warning, a new bud sprouts. The bud, which resembles a tree-trunk-size asparagus spear, shoots into the sky at a fantastic rate of seven inches per day and reaches an eventual height of 20 to 40 feet. Then it crowns itself with several clumps of yellowish blossoms that last up to three weeks.

Like the century plant, many of the most glorious things that happen to us come only after a long wait. Maybe it's the end of a stringent weight-loss program with good results. Or perhaps it's the graduation of a child or grandchild after a long time of encouragement and saving money for that purpose. It could be the answer to prayer for a miracle in the health of a loved one.

But consider our residents...

They've lived long lives, some with successes, some with failures and some with frustrations over the course of events for them personally or for their families. All of them are waiting for something good, something special, to happen to them. We have the power and the imagination to make it happen.

--Beecher Hunter