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Native to central Arizona, southwest New Mexico, and Mexico, the squat geometry of this *A. parryi* variety works with its gracefully curved terra-cotta container. When *A. parryi* reaches 20-25 years old, it will send up a “mast” of bright-yellow blossoms.

AGAVES INDOORS

COLD TOLERANCE

Some agaves are listed as hardy to Zone 7 and reputedly tolerant of an occasional dip to 25 degrees Fahrenheit. “But sustained cold is a killer,” warns Filippone. She brings all of the agaves into her greenhouses for the winter—some of them (the larger ones) stay in all year long. Inside, they are regularly subjected to temperatures of 50 degrees Fahrenheit without a whimper. And in fact, 40 degrees won’t faze them.

LIGHT NEEDS

In the recesses of her house, they can tolerate low light for several weeks. Stronger light is preferable or they begin to stretch and distort from the typical rosette form, although some people appreciate the rather wavy look that months of low light tends to produce. Less light also translates into less frequent watering.

WATERING

For agaves in containers, Filippone has found that watering once a week is sufficient, depending on the soil. These plants prefer to dry out a bit between watering.

SOILS

Filippone mixes her own soil of two parts sand and one part compost. She only fertilizes once a year with compost tea. Outdoor-grown plants require more frequent fertilizing to hold their color.

PROPAGATING

In addition to the progeny that sprout from the underground stems, some agaves make plantlets on their flower stems. Pups can be pulled free for replanting.

RESOURCES

At first, pulling together a collection of agaves entailed advanced search tactics, because Filippone is drawn to unusual plants that are often hard to find. Her first agave encounter was at Glendale Botanicals’ booth at the annual Trade Secrets plant sale in Sharon, Connecticut. For further agave forays, she turned to the mail-order sources Yucca Do Nursery and Plant Delights Nursery, patiently growing the small, shippable plants to maturity. Recently, agaves have become more prevalent in local nurseries as Monrovia Nursery

has caught agave fever.

For the architect, presentation is everything. When it comes to containers she likes using cast iron, cast stone, or hefty terra-cotta. Filippone cautions that agaves can be weighty, so having heavy ballast down below will prevent toppling. Also an antique dealer, Filippone sells the containers that she picks up during annual buying expeditions to France. Additionally, she often pots them in Guy Wolff hand-thrown terra-cotta. Other sources include Campo de’ Fiori, Seibert & Rice, and [Pennoyer Newman](#).