

***Hesperoyucca whipplei*** (Torrey) Trel., OUR LORD'S CANDLE. Perennial herb, evergreen, clonal, rhizomatous, hemispheric-rosetted, cespitose with 1–15+ rosettes of different sizes and ages, a clone with 0–2 old or new, erect to ascending flowering stalks 115–470 cm tall; shoots with fibrous, swordlike, rigid, spine-tipped leaves, initially with only basal leaves but upper internodes eventually elongating to become the lower portion of an inflorescence with cauline leaves, flowering after numerous years of vegetative growth, that shoot dying after fruits dehisce, glabrous; rhizomes between plantlets horizontal < 100 mm from soil surface, < 15 mm diameter. **Stems (peduncles):** 1 per rosette, initially hidden beneath leaf bases with no visible internodes, typically 50–80 mm diameter at the lowest internodes. **Leaves:** helically alternate, simple, sessile, without stipules; blade linear, 330–1150+ × 10–29 mm but flaring to < 50 mm at white base, not watery succulent, tapering very gradually to spinelike tip, leaf base thick and ± 3-angled to hemi-cylindric and densely fibrous in ×-section, tough, becoming thinner and widely U-shaped approaching tip, minutely toothed and entire on margins, the tip 10–20 mm long, very hard and sharp, parallel-veined, surfaces raised-stripped with many fine ridges, initially green, upper surface aging bluish green and appearing glaucous but wax hard to remove, lower surface typically green. **Inflorescence:** panicle with 40–55 spreading, racemelike branches, terminal, in outline ellipsoid to oblong-ellipsoid or nearly cylindric (often appearing ovoid when starting to flower), 350–1500+ × 200–400+ mm, flowering base to tip and along racemes, bracteate, glabrous; peduncle erect, ≥ panicle; bracts of peduncle leaflike, in a graded series reduced upward, flat to U-shaped in ×-section, wide at bract base tapering suddenly; bract subtending lateral branch reflexed, narrowly tapered-triangular, 5–40 mm long, the long bracts spine-tipped; lateral racemes 50–210 mm long, with 5–21 unevenly distributed, pendent flowers, often with several aborted buds at tip; bractlet subtending pedicel long-acuminate, to 10 mm long for the oldest flower decreasing to the youngest flower of the raceme, cream, persistent or not; pedicel at anthesis 15–30+ mm long increasing in fruit, 2-parted by an abscission zone, the lower part cylindric, 7–28 × ca. 1.5 mm, straight to slightly curved, the upper part pulvinuslike, thicker and stout, becoming straight to bent, narrowly vase-shaped and forming support beneath receptacle for positioning fruit to upright position from its original pendent orientation. **Flower:** bisexual, radial, at anthesis ca. 35 mm across, eventually spreading and 50–60 mm across, with guavalike (*Psidium*) scent from minute glands on perianth and filaments; **tepals** 6 in 2 whorls, fused by bases of inner tepals + to filament bases of stamens attached to outer tepals, initially bell-shaped but later dishlike; tepal elliptic, 25–44 × 8.5–18 mm (inner tepals slightly wider), somewhat fleshy, cream-colored or outer tepals sometimes purplish-tipped, inconspicuously veined or midvein raised on lower surface (inner tepals), corolla persistent beneath developing fruit; **stamens** 6, fused to bases of tepals for 2.3–6.5 mm; filaments spreading to ascending, club-shaped, 10–17.5 × 2.3–4.2 mm, 1.5–2.5 mm wide near base, thick and fleshy, compressed front-to-back at base, white; anthers basifixed, dithecal, 2 mm long, creamy white, with a tuft of wavy white hairs at tip, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen clustered into pollinia, the pollinia ± ∩-shaped, vivid yellow, sticky; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, pillarlike and 3-lobed, 9–17 × 6–8 mm, cream-colored, each lobe shallowly 2-lobed, 3-chambered, each chamber with ± 50 ovules in 2 rows attached to center; style + stigma mushroomlike, the style stout-tapered, 2.5–3 mm long, minutely papillate; stigma caplike and 3-lobed, 3 mm wide, green, hairy on outer portion, the hairs

club-shaped and colorless to semitransparent. **Fruit:** capsule, loculicidal, splitting from tip 2/3 to base when still green thereby spreading slightly to reveal 6 stacks of seeds; when still green oblong, 22–42 × ca. 20 mm, hard, plump, with 6 shallow grooves; when dehiscent spreading to erect, dark brown or charcoal brown aging dark gray on dead stalks and valves with torn margins. **Seed:** ± rounded and flat, ca. 6 mm diameter, dull black. Early March–late July.

Native. Rosetted perennial herb common in sunny habitats throughout the range, with the densest populations on ocean-facing slopes of the SMM in coastal sage scrub. From a seed, *Hesperoyucca whipplei* produces a hemispheric rosette, but before flowering the rhizome forms others rosettes (ramets) at the plant base, and in old plants a clump of rosettes, presumably formerly attached form the clone. In a given year, spring formation of the inflorescence only occurs for a small percentage of plants in a local population; generally, the larger the rosette, the larger the inflorescence, so that there is a wide range of heights and numbers of flowers per inflorescence, locally and throughout the range. Flowering is peak during April and May. Fruits open and drop their seeds during summer months, but dead stalks often persist in the upright position for another year if not snapped by strong wind or weakened by decay. Our populations have been described as *Yucca whipplei* Torrey subsp. *intermedia* A. L. Haines, but recent treatments no longer recognize either subspecies or varieties for this highly variable species.  
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