Eryngium yuccifolium  A. Michaux  
(Eryngium synchaetum)

Other Common Names:  Button Eryngo, Button Snakeroot.  
Family:  Apiaceae (Umbelliferae).  
Cold Hardiness:  With proper provenances, this species grows in USDA hardiness zones 4 to 9.  
Foliage:  Alternate, simple, yucca-like sword-shaped blue-green foliage clasps stout stems; basal leaves to 30” long, but leaves on flower stalks much shorter; strap-like ½” to 1½” wide, margins toothed on terminal portions becoming spiny at the base; the specific epithet refers to the yucca-like foliage.  
Flower:  Tiny individual fragrant flowers in ¾” diameter ball-like clusters in open flattened clusters atop tall flower stalks in late spring to summer; clusters subtended by holly or thistle-leaf like bracts; individual flowers are numerous and tightly packed; greenish white to white flowers have five-petals and two filiform styles.  
Fruit:  Seed heads eventually turn brown and are retained on the plant into winter until stems die back.  
Stem / Bark:  Stems — stout, stiffly erect, somewhat swollen at the nodes; glabrous, green to bluish green; Buds — small; green to blue-green; Bark — not applicable; basal leaves and floral stalks from semi-woody base.  
Habit:  Erect, 3’ to 4’ (6’) tall, sparsely branched herbaceous perennials from a woody base, with the vegetative tissues sort of reminiscent of a cross between an Iris and a Yucca; over time a cluster of foliage forms at the base; the plant’s texture is attractively coarse.  
Cultural Requirements:  Sunny sites with moist well drained soils are required; drainage is particularly important as plants are grown in mesic locations, less so in more arid regions; overly fertile soils result in lodging and plants benefit from being surrounded by shorter plants that can lend support to the tall flower stalks; transplant from containers or seed in place as taproots hinder successful transplant; prickly leaves may hinder maintenance activities around the plants.  
Pathological Problems:  No pathological problems of consequence are reported as long as plants are with good drainage; root rots can develop in wet soils.  
Ornamental Assets:  Assets include blue-green yucca-like foliage, unusual globe or button shaped honey-scented flower clusters, unusual thistle-like coarse textured foliage, and is a butterfly attractant.  
Limitations & Liabilities:  This species can become weedy under favorable growing conditions, lodges with excessive fertility, and can be hard to blend into some landscapes due to its bold form; flowers tend to attract numerous insects including bees and wasps.  
Landscape Utilization:  This species, as well as other members of this genus, are finding their way into cultivated perennial borders, primarily as coarse accent plants; fruit clusters or dried flowers are sometimes grown for cut flower use; this species would be particularly suitable for butterfly gardens, and wildflower and naturalized plantings in tall grass prairie portions of our region.  
Other Comments:  The genus name derives from the ancient Greek name for plants in this genus; the name rattlesnake master comes from the use of the plant by native Americans to treat snakebites; the genus is reputed in several cultures to have aphrodisiac virtues.  
Native Habitat:  Native to the tallgrass prairies of the Central U.S. from Texas to Iowa and Southern Minnesota.  
Related Taxa:  Many members of this large genus of annual, biennial, or perennial herbaceous plants to semiwoody subshrubs are cultivated for their unique spiny foliage or flowers or unusual textures; the genus contains over 100 to 200 or more species depending upon the authority; many taxa form clumps of thistle-like foliage with thistle-like bracts subtending the flowers which vary from silvery white, bluish, to even purplish tint; many Eryngium L. are known as a Sea Holly due to the remembrance of their foliage or bracts to that of hollies (Ilex spp.) and origins from coastal areas; Eryngium leavenworthii J. Torrey & A. Gray, Leavenworth’s Eryngo, is an annual Hill Country and Southern Plains species, with striking purplish flower heads reminiscent of small prickly pineapples; the name honors an early Texas plant explorer and U.S. Army surgeon named Melines Conklin Leavenworth.  


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