Eucomis C.L. L'Heritier de Brutelle  
(Pineapple Lilies)

(previously included in either the *Basilaea* or *Fritillaria*)

- *Eucomis* spp. are known under a variety of descriptive African and European names, including Pineapple Flower based on the general resemblance of the inflorescences to a dwarf pineapple inflorescence; different authorities variously classify the genus in the *Asparagaceae*, *Hyacinthaceae*, or *Liliaceae*; *Eucomis* generally form evergreen or winter dormant clumps of whorled stout strap-like leaves that can be as much as 20” long and 4” wide; leaves may be in erect clusters or in splayed rosettes lying on the ground; most are shiny or lustrous green, while other taxa may have purplish or reddish margins or sometimes even entirely bronze to bronze-purple foliage; margins of the leaves on many species are undulate; the bold medium-coarse to coarse texture of the foliage can be of interest in addition to the showy inflorescences.

- Flowers are borne on stout scapes topped with whorls of showy bracts above the fat dense spike of small individual flowers; scapes can be up to 24” tall with spikes of flowers 4” to 6” (8”) long; individual flowers are splayed stars of six tepals, edged in purple on *Eucomis bicolor* J.G. Baker, surrounding a smaller circle of six fused stamens in a star-shaped cluster which in turn surround the pointed green three chambered pistil; inflorescences vary among species and hybrids providing overall displays ranging in color from showy yellow-green to darker purple shades; in our region, the various taxa flower somewhere between late spring or early summer to late summer or very early fall; mostly taxa are pollinated by fly species, thus many genotypes contain emit sulfurous compounds resulting in varying degrees of malodorous flowers best enjoyed from a bit of a distance away.

- Several species including, the more commonly cultivated *E. bicolor*, and a number of hybrid cultivars are becoming more common in our regional nursery trade where they are useful depending upon the genetics involved in USDA hardiness zones 9 (8) to 13; reports of tolerance to cold in USDA zones 7 and even 6 are sometimes reported, but our experience is that most *Eucomis* are more reliable in warmer zones; *Eucomis* can be grown in most well drained garden soils with a sunny to mostly sunny exposure; they appear to be reasonably soil pH adaptable and heat tolerant; growth rates and propensity to multiply are variable among taxa and growing conditions.

- Often grown in clusters as a coarse accent in perennial or mixed annual and perennial borders, *Eucomis* can also be used in patio or other seasonal containers in regions where winters are too severe; *Eucomis* can be incorporated into tropical and subtropical themes and even rock gardens with proper placement.

- This genus consisting of about ten species and comes to us from South Africa; the indigenous people originally collected them for their medicinal properties, however several species are reported to be poisonous so caution is advised; the genus name derives from the Greek word "eukomos" meaning beautiful or lovely hair in reference to the showy bracts on the top of the inflorescences.

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