

# Yucca Moth



**yucca flowers are pollinated  
only by yucca moths**

# Yucca Moth - Multiple spp.

Genus: *Prodoxus* Family: *Prodoxidae*

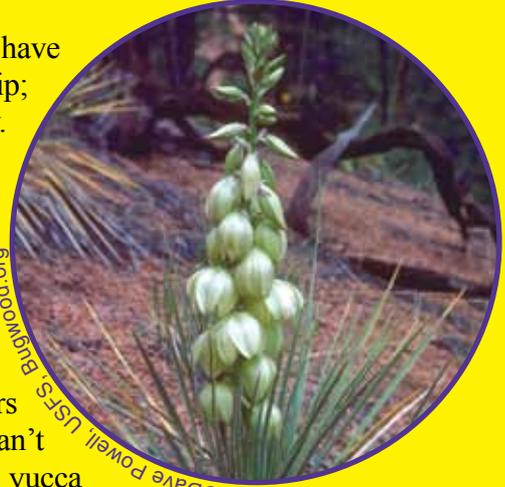
White with black legs

Very tiny, up to 10 mm

There are about 100 species of Yucca moths

Yucca moths and yucca plants have a rather special relationship; they have mutual dependency.

This mutual dependency means that without the yucca moth for pollination the yucca flowers would not produce seeds and without the yucca seeds for food the yucca caterpillars would not survive. Why can't other pollinators pollinate yucca plants? The yucca moth has genetically specialized mouth parts to stuff small pollen balls from the yucca flower's anthers into the cup shaped yucca flower's stigma; this action completes pollination.



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Yucca plants grow across Montana and are sometimes called Spanish bayonet because of their stiff and very sharp leaves.

Humans have found many applications for using the fibrous yucca leaves over the centuries. In the Appalachians the Indians would cut the yucca leaves, pierce a piece of meat with the sharp end, and tie the fibrous leaf over a branch to hang the meat to dry.

In the southwestern United States the leaves were cut, the bottom 1/2 inch soaked in hot water until soft, and then that area was scraped. After scraping stringy fibers would remain, looking much like bristles on a paint brush. Southwestern Indians used these brushes for decorating clay pots and other items. Yucca is also called soapweed as Indians used pounded roots for soap. Indians had many other uses for yucca too.