

*Agave aurea* BRANDEGEE SSP. *promontorii*  
(TRELEASE) R.H.WEBB & G.D.STARR comb. nov.  
(Fig. 6)

**BASIONYM:** *Agave promontorii* Trelease, *Missouri Bot. Gard. Report* 22: 50. 1911.

**TYPE LOCALITY:** Sierra de la Laguna, BCS, 21 January 1906 (Nelson & Goldman 7437, US) (Fig. 2).

This subspecies has large, solitary rosettes that are up to 100-200 cm tall and 200-250 cm wide. The green, lanceolate leaves are 100-150 cm long and 11-17 cm wide, generally gracefully arching, and have straight margins with curved marginal spines that are mostly 4-8 mm long, 5-10 mm apart, and reddish brown. The terminal spine is 3-5 cm long, dark brown, and has a short-decurrent margin on the leaf. The inflorescence is 5-9 m tall with a stout shaft bearing conspicuous deltoid bracts and a broad panicle with 25-30 umbels. Flower buds are red to purplish, and the flowers are campanulate and 60-75 mm long.



**Figure 6.** *Agave aurea* ssp. *promontorii* in the Sierra de la Laguna east of Rancho Burrea, a site Gentry (1978) discusses in reference to this species.

*Agave aurea* ssp. *promontorii* is a large plant that has obvious affinities to *A. aurea* ssp. *aurea*, and we have a difficult time distinguishing the two subspecies other than the obvious differences in size. Trelease (1911) described *A. promontorii* as distinct from *A. aurea* based on its more glaucous leaves with a heavier, more awl-pointed spine, but he probably was unaware that the distribution of *A. aurea* ssp. *aurea* surrounds that of *Agave aurea* ssp. *promontorii* (Fig. 2), and the difference is primarily one of elevation: *A. aurea* ssp. *promontorii* only occurs in the northern Sierra de la Laguna at elevations of 900–1800 m. Gentry (1978, 1982) gives what we believe is misleading information on the size of *A. aurea* ssp. *promontorii* using photographs of the plant in cultivation in San Diego; we visited the Rancho Burrea locality he discussed and found plants with rosettes only slightly larger than those of *A. aurea* ssp. *aurea*.

If taken out of habitat, and despite the misleading photographs in Gentry (1978), *A. aurea* ssp. *promontorii* would be difficult to distinguish from the other members of the *Campaniflorae*. The large size of both the rosette and the leaves distinguishes it somewhat from *A. aurea* ssp. *aurea*, particularly the form of that subspecies from its type locality near Comondú, and *A. aurea* var. *capensis* is much smaller and prolifically offsets. Gentry (1978) discussed the *A. aurea* population north of Todos Santos and remarked on the similarity of plants to *A. aurea* ssp. *promontorii*, but observed no individuals of the latter at this locality. A population of *A. aurea* south of La Paz (Fig. 4) has average sized plants with abnormally large flower stalks and an unusual inflorescence structure that resemble those pictured on page 83 in Gentry (1978) and indicates that *A. aurea* ssp. *promontorii* warrants subspecies status, and not species status.