

CACTI & SUCCULENTS

Cacti and other succulents embody the flavor Southwest native gardens. Throughout the year, their striking forms contrast with other plants. When in flower, their large, colorful blooms are the focal points in the garden. Because of their ability to store water in their stems, they thrive in the driest part of a landscape. It is best to place these sharp-spined plants away from walkways and out of the wind, both to protect people and to prevent windblown leaves and litter from catching in the spines.



Tree Cholla

Cactus family

Cylindropuntia imbricata

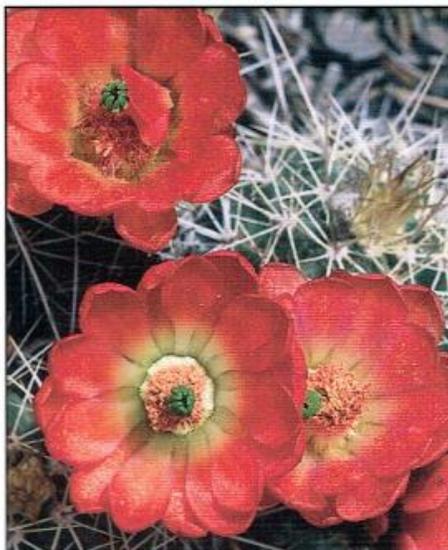
Size	6' High x 5' Wide
Blooms	Magenta flowers in late spring
Water	Very low
Exposure	Full sun
Areas	All

Tree Cholla contributes height and texture to a desert garden. When in flower, it rivals rose bushes with abundant large colorful flowers. The spiny cylindrical stems form interesting branching structures. Large yellow fruits decorate the stems throughout the winter. Wildlife find food and shelter in Tree Cholla. The woody skeletons are used for crafts.

Christmas cholla

Cactus family

Cylindropuntia leptocaulis



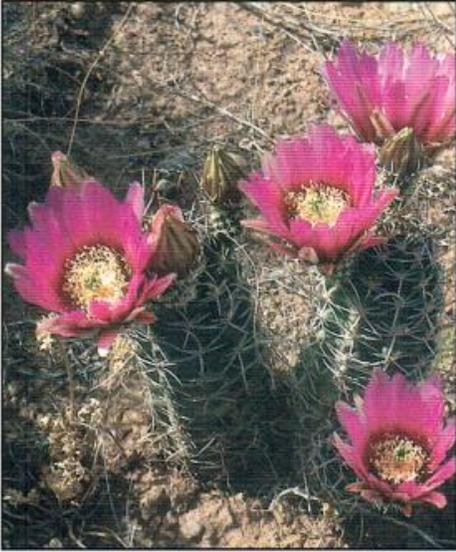
Red-Flowered Hedgehog Cactus

Cactus family

Echinocereus coccineus

Pollinator	Bees, hummingbirds
Size	12" High x 12" Wide
Blooms	Red flowers in spring
Water	Very low
Exposure	Full sun
Areas	All

A profusion of large orange-red flowers provides a spectacular accent to any local landscape. A colony will grow from one stem, adding more stems every year. After several years, the mound could be up to three feet across and bear dozens of flowers. The red flowers attract hummingbirds, while songbirds eat the plump juicy red fruits. Claret Cup Hedgehog Cactus (*Echinocereus triglochidiatus* var. *triglochidiatus*), popular in the nursery trade, has larger, darker, flowers and fewer, stouter spines.



Strawberry Hedgehog Cactus Cactus Family

Echinocereus fendleri
Size 8" High x 6-8" Wide
Blooms Magenta flowers in spring
Water Low
Exposure Full sun
Areas All

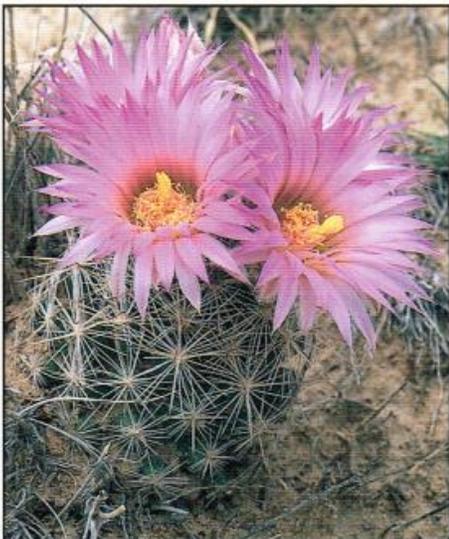
A low clump of three-inch-wide stems of Strawberry Hedgehog Cactus will burst into bloom in spring. When it does, the large colorful flowers eclipse all else in the garden. As the spiny edible fruits ripen, they turn from green to reddish-purple and taste like strawberries. Early European explorers noted the similarity of these cacti to the spiny mammals of English hedgerows.



Chihuahuan Pineapple Cactus Cactus Family

Echinomastus intertextus
Size 6" High x 4" Wide
Blooms White tinged with pink in early spring
Water Very low
Exposure Full sun
Areas All

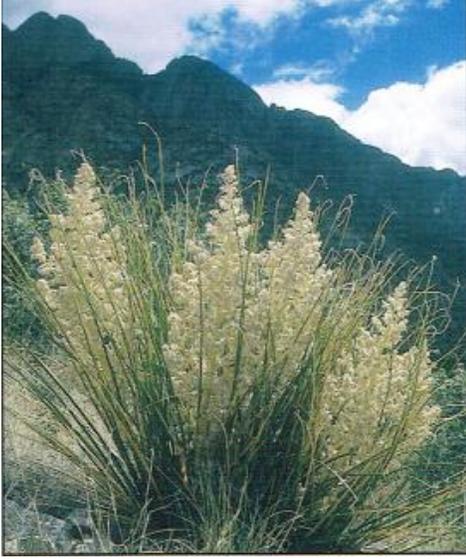
Chihuahuan Pineapple Cactus is the earliest flowering cactus in Central New Mexico. In March, pale inch-wide flowers emerge from the top of the solitary stem. Called "pineapple cactus" because of its shape, it is the hardiest of the barrel cacti and grows in juniper savannah and desert grassland. At higher altitudes its range may be limited more by excess moisture than by cold.



New Mexico Pincushion Cactus Cactus Family

Escobaria vivipara
Size 6" High x 8" Wide
Blooms Pink flowers in spring and summer
Water Very low
Exposure Full sun
Areas All

The New Mexico Pincushion Cactus bears large satiny flowers in spring and again during summer rains. Plump juicy berries follow the flowers. The spherical stems are nearly obscured by numerous small spines lying close to the skin. The Latin name *vivipara* indicates the New Mexico Pincushion Cactus can reproduce by forming side stems that can become independent plants.



Beargrass

Nolina family

Nolina geenei

Pollinator Sandia hairstreak butterfly

Size 3' High x 3' Wide

Blooms Spikes of tiny white or pastel flowers in spring

Water Low

Exposure Full sun

Areas All

Beargrass is not a true grass at all, but a close relative of the yuccas. Long stiff, narrow leaves form a dense fountain shape. In spring, two-foot-long lacy flowering stalks appear among the leaves, each bearing hundreds of small flowerers. With leaves narrower than yucca leaves and stiffer than grass, Beargrass can provide a substitute for ornamental grass in low-water situations. *Nolina geenei* is the native species in our area, but is often offered by nurseries as *Nolina texana*.



Englemann Prickly Pear

Cactus Family

Opuntia engelmannii

Size 6' High x 6" Wide

Blooms Large yellow flowers in spring

Water Very low

Exposure Full sun

Areas Heights, Valley, West Mesa

Englemann Prickly Pear, the largest of the prickly pears, with numerous foot-wide pads, is a striking accent plant. The four-inch showy flowers are replaced in mid-summer by purple pear-shaped fruits that may be made into jelly, preserves or wine. Because of its size, Englemann Prickly Pear makes an effective living fence. It requires a well-drained soil.



Purple Prickly Pear

Cactus Family

Opuntia macrocentra

Size 2' High x 3' Wide
Blooms Yellow flowers in late spring to early summer
Water Very low
Exposure Full sun
Areas Heights, Valley, West Mesa

Purple Prickly Pear adds winter color to the garden when cold weather turns the pads from a blue-green to shades of purple. The five-inch-wide oval pads are thin in cross-section. Top edges of the pads are armed with black spines that can be as long as six inches. Purple Prickly Pear bears yellow flowers with brilliant red centers. The fruit is like a reddish-orange ping-pong ball. This cactus requires good drainage and is prone to rot if kept continuously moist.

Brown Spined Prickly Pear

Cactus family

Opuntia phaeacantha



Broadleaf Yucca

Agave family

Yucca baccata

Size 3' High x 6' wide
Blooms White flowers on 5 foot spikes in spring
Water Very low
Exposure Full sun
Areas All

With its rosette of two-foot-long leaves, Broadleaf Yucca adds form to a garden. In spring, clusters of large, creamy flowers bloom on stalks that are as long as the leaves. Later the flowers develop into banana-shaped bunches of fleshy fruit, a staple food of the Pueblo people. Extra watering during the spring and summer months will increase growth.



Soap Tree Yucca

Agave family

Yucca elata

Pollinator	Yucca moth, whose caterpillars also consume its seeds
Size	7-20' High x 3' Wide
Blooms	Tall spikes of large white flowers in summer
Water	Very low
Exposure	Full sun
Areas	Heights, Valley, West Mesa

The dramatic silhouette of the Soap Tree Yucca lends a distinctive southwestern appearance to the garden. A dense tuft of two-foot-long, sword-like leaves encircles the top of the stout trunk. During summer months, the flower stalk bears a striking elongated cluster of large, waxy flowers. An extract from the roots produces lather for washing. Even today soap from yucca root is used for shampooing. Soap Tree Yucca is the State Flower of New Mexico.



Narrowleaf Yucca

Agave Family

Yucca glauca

Size	2' High x 2' Wide
Blooms	Large white flowers in spring and summer
Water	Very low
Exposure	Full sun
Areas	All

This elegant plant brings the desert into the garden. Stiff narrow leaves form a clump at the base. Every two or three years, four-foot flower stalks crowded with waxy white bell-shaped flowers push up well above the leaves. The yucca plant was important to prehistoric Native Americans in many ways. The leaves yielded fiber needed for weaving sandals, mats, nets and baskets.