



**Scientific Name:**

*Acacia greggii*

**Common Name:**

Catclaw Acacia

**Duration:** Perennial, Deciduous **Growth Habit:** Tree, Shrub **Arizona Native Status:** Native **Habitat:** Desert, Upland, Riparian **Flower Color:** Pale yellow, Cream

**Flowering Season:** Spring, Summer, Fall **Height:** Up to 23 feet (7 m) tall, but usually less

**Description:** The flowers are densely clustered on cylindrical flower spikes. The flowers are followed by up to 6 inch (15 cm) long, flat, curled, green seedpods that dry to a dark brown color. The leaves are green, alternate, and bipinnately compound with oval leaflets. The branches have wickedly sharp, curved, cat claw-like thorns that can easily scratch skin and snag clothing. Close encounters with this plant can leave you looking like you were in a cat fight.



**Scientific Name:**

*Baccharis sarothroides*

**Common Name:**

Desert broom

**Duration:** Perennial, Evergreen **Growth Habit:** Shrub **Arizona Native Status:** Native **Habitat:** Desert, Upland, Riparian. It grows in washes, along roadways, and in other disturbed areas. It is equally likely to occur in wetlands or non-wetlands. **Flower Color:** White to cream, Tan **Flowering Season:** Fall, Winter **Height:** Up to 10 feet (3 m) tall, but usually less

**Description:** The plants are dioecious, with male and female flowers on separate plants. The flower heads are rayless. The slender female flowers are followed by abundant, white, downy seeds that cover the plants in large, cottony masses and easily become airborne and drift in the wind like snow. The leaves are green, thick, sessile, and very narrowly linear-oblongate. The stems are green, angular, and nearly leafless. The branches were used as brooms by Native Americans and others.



**Scientific Name:**

*Ephedra trifurca*

**Common Name:**

Longleaf Ephedra

**Duration:** Perennial **Growth Habit:** Shrub **Arizona Native Status:** Native **Habitat:** Desert, Upland. This unusual plant grows on dry, sunny flats and slopes in the desert and grasslands. **Flower Color:** Non-flowering **Height:** To 6 feet (1.8 m) tall, but usually half that

**Description:** The plants are dioecious. At the stem nodes, the male plants produce 1 or more reddish brown, egg-shaped pollen cones, while the female plants produce 1 or more reddish brown, flower-like seed cones with 6 to 9 whorls of circular, papery, translucent bracts in groups of three. The scale-like leaves are in whorls of three at the stem nodes and will become dry, gray, and shredded with age and can fall off. The stems are slender, rigid, jointed, initially glaucous yellow-green in color, and then aging to yellow and then gray. The base of the plant is woody. The similar Mormon Tea (*Ephedra viridis*) has yellowish seed cones and bright green stems.



**Scientific Name:**  
*Isocoma tenuisecta*  
**Common Name:**  
Burroweed

**Duration:** Perennial **Growth Habit:** Subshrub, Herb/Forb **Arizona Native Status:** Native **Habitat:** Desert, Upland. It grows in dry, sunny, open, disturbed areas like roadsides, graded areas, and in overgrazed pastures and rangeland. **Flower Color:** Golden yellow disks **Flowering Season:** Summer (late), Fall **Height:** 1 to 3 feet (30 to 91 cm) tall

**Description:** The rayless flower heads are in rounded clusters at the tips of the woody stems. The leaves are alternate, dark green, small, thickened, gland-dotted, and pinnately-lobed with linear, point-tipped lobes.



**Scientific Name:**  
*Parkinsonia florida*  
**Common Names:**  
Blue Palo Verde

**Duration:** Perennial, Deciduous **Growth Habit:** Tree, Shrub **Arizona Native Status:** Native **Habitat:** Desert, Riparian. It commonly grows in desert washes. **Flower Color:** Bright yellow **Flowering Season:** Spring **Height:** To 30 feet (9.1 m) tall

**Description:** The flowers are up to 1 inch (2.5 cm) wide and have 5 bright yellow petals. The flowers are followed by flat, brown, bean pods. The leaves are bipinnately compound with 1 to 3 pairs of small, oval, bluish green leaflets. There is a spine at each leaf node. The photosynthesizing bark is smooth and blue-green in color. The trees are a spectacular brilliant yellow color when in full bloom. has lighter yellow flowers with a white upper petal.



**Scientific Name:**  
*Prosopis velutina*  
**Common Name:**  
Velvet Mesquite

**Duration:** Perennial, Deciduous **Growth Habit:** Tree, Shrub **Arizona Native Status:** Native

**Habitat:** Desert, Upland, Riparian. Velvet Mesquites grow taller in areas with more water, and along washes and rivers, they can form dense, shady riparian woodlands known as mesquite bosques. **Flower Color:** Light greenish yellow to pale golden yellow **Flowering Season:** Spring, Summer

**Height:** To 30 feet (9.1 m) tall or more

**Description:** The flowers are densely clustered on 4 inch (10 cm) long, spike-like racemes. The individual flowers are tiny and have 5 petals. The flowers are followed by flattened, elongated, green drying in to tan, 6 inch (15 cm) long bean pods. The dry, fallen bean pods can become curled after exposure to rain and weather. The bean pods are eaten by desert animals like squirrels, rabbits, rodents, javelina (collared peccaries), coyotes, and deer. The leaves are bipinnately compound with 15 to 30 pairs of green, oblong, secondary leaflets. The foliage is covered in short, fine, velvety hairs. The branches have sharp, woody spines. The bark is dark ashy brown in color and very rough and flaking. Any wounds in the wood will ooze sticky, black sap.



**Scientific Name:** *Parkinsonia microphylla*  
**Common Names:** Foothills or Yellow Paloverde

**Duration:** Perennial, Deciduous **Growth Habit:** Tree, Shrub **Arizona Native Status:** Native **Habitat:** Desert. These trees are very common and widespread in desert areas here. **Flower Color:** Buttery yellow and white **Flowering Season:** Spring **Height:** To 25 feet (7.6 m) tall  
**Description:** The flowers are 1/2 inch (1.3 cm) wide and have 5 petals. The top petal is white, and the other 4 petals are yellow. The leaves are bipinnately compound with 5 to 7 pairs of tiny, oval leaflets. The branches are spine-tipped. Some of the branches are shed during times of drought, and there are typically branch scars on the trunk and fallen branches under the trees. The photosynthesizing bark is smooth and yellowish green in color.



**Scientific Name:**  
*Opuntia engelmannii*  
**Common Name:**  
 Engelmann's Pricklypear

**Duration:** Perennial **Growth Habit:** Shrub, Cactus **Arizona Native Status:** Native **Habitat:** Desert, Upland. **Flower Color:** Bright to pale yellow, Orange, Red, Salmon pink to buff (when old) **Flowering Season:** Spring **Height:** To 5 feet (1.5 m) tall  
**Description:** The showy flowers are up to 3 inches (7.6 cm) across and have solid colored tepals with no red at the base. The lighter colored flowers age to a salmon or peachy pink color. The flowers are followed by plump, vase-shaped or barrel-shaped, red to reddish purple fruits that are dotted with bundles of glochids (painfully sharp micro-spines) but no large spines. The stem pads are dull green, flattened, oval to shaped like an inverse teardrop, and have 0 to 6 white or less commonly yellow, drooping spines ringed by sparse, brown or golden glochids at each areole. Many of the large spines have a dark base.



**Scientific Name:**  
*Cylindropuntia arbuscula*  
**Common Name:** Arizona  
 Pencil Cholla

**Duration:** Perennial **Growth Habit:** Shrub, Cactus **Arizona Native Status:** Native **Habitat:** Desert **Flower Color:** Red, Bronze to golden brown, Yellow-green  
**Flowering Season:** Spring. These cacti bloom from late April to June. **Height:** To 9 feet (2.7 m) tall, but usually less  
**Description:** The flowers are up to 1 1/2 inches (3.8 cm) wide and have green to bronze anther filaments, a whitish to reddish style, and pale yellow-green stigma lobes. The fruits are green to yellowish, may be tinged with red, and last throughout the winter. The green, pencil-like stems are 1/2 inch (1.3 cm) in diameter and have usually 0 to 2 deflexed spines per areole, but there can be as many as 4 spines per areole.



**Scientific Name:** *Simmondsia chinensis*  
**Common Name:** Jojoba

**Duration:** Perennial, Evergreen  
**Growth Habit:** Shrub  
**Arizona Native Status:** Native  
**Habitat:** Desert, Upland  
**Flower Color:** Inconspicuous (yellowish green)  
**Flowering Season:** Winter, Spring, Summer. It blooms anytime from December to July.  
**Height:** To 7 feet (2.1 m) tall

**Description:** The male and female flowers are on separate plants. The flowers are small, greenish yellow, and have 5 large sepals. The female plants produce hard, green, acorn-like capsules that shrivel and turn chestnut brown with age. The capsules or "nuts" contain an oily liquid wax that is used in cosmetics. Jojoba oil is not used in food because it is not digestible. The leaves are thick, leathery, dull grayish green, oval to narrowly egg-shaped, and in upward-pointing opposite pairs. The bark is smooth and greenish aging to red-brown and then gray.



**Scientific Name:** *Lycium pallidum*  
**Common Name:** Wolfberry

**Plant Characteristics:** Duration: Perennial, Deciduous;  
**Growth Habit:** Shrub  
**Arizona Native Status:** Native  
**Habitat:** Desert, Upland, Riparian. This plant grows in sunny locations in riparian areas, higher elevation deserts, chaparral, grasslands, and juniper woodlands.  
**Flower Color:** Pale green, Purple, Dull greenish-purplish, White  
**Flowering Season:** Spring

**Description:** The flowers have exerted stamens and are pendulous, up to 1 inch (2.5 cm) long, and broadly tubular with 5 partly overlapping, flared lobes. The flowers are followed by egg-shaped, 1/3 inch (1 cm) in diameter, orange-red or glaucous red berries. The leaves are pale glaucous blue-green in color, hairless, clustered on the stems, and spatulate, oblanceolate, or broadly oval-shaped. The branches are long, often bent, and have long, straight, sharp, woody spines. The plants have several main stems and a slender, rangy, often lopsided appearance.



**Scientific Name:** *Acacia constricta*

**Common Names:** Whitethorn  
Acacia, White-thorn Acacia

**Plant Characteristics:**  
**Duration:** Perennial, Deciduous  
**Growth Habit:** Tree, Shrub  
**Arizona Native Status:** Native  
**Habitat:** Desert, Upland  
**Flower Color:** Yellow, fading to yellow-orange  
**Flowering Season:** Summer  
**Height:** To 10 feet (3 m) tall or more

**Description:** The flowers are clustered in fuzzy, 1/2 inch (1.3 cm) diameter balls. The flowers are followed by long, narrow, green to red-tinged seedpods that dry to a brown color. The leaves are bipinnately compound with tiny, green, oval leaflets. Some of the branches have distinctive straight white, up to 2 inch (5 cm) long



**Scientific Name:** *Dodonaea viscosa*

**Synonyms:** *Dodonaea ehrenbergii*, *D. elaeagnoides*, *D. eriocarpa*, *D. jamaicensis*, *D. microcarya*, *D. sandwicensis*, *D. spathulata*, *D. stenoptera*, *D. thunbergiana*, *Ptelea viscosa*

**Common Names:** Florida Hopbush, Hopbush, Keys Hopbush

**Plant Characteristics:**

**Duration:** Perennial, Evergreen

**Growth Habit:** Tree, Shrub

**Arizona Native Status:** Native

**Habitat:** Desert, Upland

**Flower Color:** Inconspicuous (yellowish)

**Flowering Season:** Spring, Summer, Fall

**Height:** To 15 feet (4.6 m) tall

**Description** The small, petalless flowers are followed by showy, hop-like seedpods. The seedpods have 3 seeds and 3 or 4 rounded wings. The seedpods are initially green, later becoming yellow-green to greenish cream, and then becoming tinged red or pink before finally drying to a papery brown. The leaves are alternate, narrowly oblanceolate, dark green, and very shiny.

**Special Characteristics**

Poisonous – The plants are poisonous because they contain toxic saponin, a bitter, soapy, foaming substance.

Arroyo Chico Plant list

Acacia, Catclaw *Acacia greggii*

Acacia, Sweet

Acacia, Whitethorn, *Acacia constricta*

Barrel cactus, *Ferocactus wislizenii*

Burrobrush, *Isocoma tenuisecta*

Creosote, *Simmondsia chinensis*

Cholla, Buckhorn

Cholla, Pencil *Cylindropuntia arbuscula*

Desert Broom, *Baccharis sarothroides*

Ephedra *Ephedra trifurca*

Hedgehog cactus,

Mesquite, Velvet *Prosopis velutina*

Palo Verde, Blue *Parkinsonia florida*

Palo Verde, Yellow or Foothills *Parkinsonia microphylla*

Prickly Pear Cactus *Opuntia engelmannii*

Sahuaro cactus, *Carnegiea gigantea*



**Scientific Name:**

*Aloysia wrightii*

**Common Name:**

Oregonillo

**LEAVES:** Intense oregano-like aroma from crushed leaves which are small, opposite, and with crenulate margins. Prominent impressed veins give the leaves a distinct texture.

**SHRUB:** A woody shrub normally 1 to 1½ meter tall with thin, weak branches that are angled.

**RANGE:** Fairly widespread through much of the Sonoran Desert in Arizona especially on upper bajadas and partly shaded rocky slopes from 500 to well over 1000 m elevation. Often requires a bit of searching to find.

**FRUIT:** Small nutlets.

**FLOWERS:** Very small five pointed flowers are white to lavender in color and arranged into long, narrow spikes. The enlarged view of an individual flower is shown several times actual size.

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