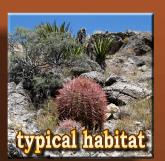


Barrel, beehive, and fishhook cactuses are just a few of the members of the tribe Cacteae in the subfamily Cactoideae. Such cacti are recognized by several distinctive characteristics: spherical to short columnar growth, ribbed to warty unsegmented stems, and non-sheathed spines of various shapes. The areoles produce various numbers and shapes of spines, but no glochids (bristles), such as produced by opuntias. The perfect (bisexual), perianthic, usually diurnal flowers present variously colored tepals, giving rise to fleshy fruit. Native to the deserts of the Western Hemisphere, cactids are common throughout the Mojave Desert, with at least a dozen or so species represented.

ubfamily



Potosi Mtn; Spring Mtns; NV



Mohawk Hill; Clark Mtn; CA



Visitor Center; Red Rock Canyon NRA; NV



Goodsprings; NV



Red Rock Cyn NCA; NV

Flowers: perianthic; bowl-shaped; broad apical ring; stigmas, stamens yellow; color (red midline); 3"

cylindrical barrel; solitary; unbranched; stout, erect, fluted (ribbed); gray green; to 72" Stems:

spines; smooth; radial (bristly), central (flat; transverse ridges); white to red; to 6" Leaves:

Blooms: May to September

Range: southwestern US; northwestern Mexico

Habitat: well-drained, rocky; desert scrub to pinyon-juniper woodlands; Lower to Upper Sonoran LZs

Notes:

common; perennial; grows to 6' in the Sonoran and Mojave deserts from s NV/sw UT south to Baja and nw MEX at elevations up to about 5,000'; scaly, round, yellow, fleshy (young) to tan, leathery (mature), 2" fruit; 12-30 spines (4 central) per areole; nectar glands present on areoles; aka California Barrel Cactus, Cliff Barrel Cactus, Spiny Barrel Cactus, etc.; 2 subspecies; moist flesh foraged by wildlife; buds, flowers, fruit eaten after boiling by native peoples

Mojave presence: native

Comments:

The pair at left in the Red Rock Canyon NCA looks like typical youngsters--carefree and unkempt! Whereas the mature elder at right near the Kingston Range in CA in June, 2016, is much more stately--as well it should be after a couple hundred years of weathering! Love the upper lower left shot--reminds me of some playful pranksters having fun at the expense of a couple of

young "ish" lovers!



Subfamily CACTOIDEAE (Cottontops)

Cottontop Cactus

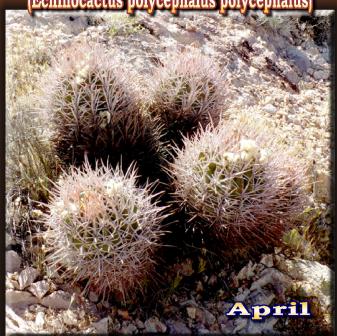
Echinocactus polycephalus polycephalus



DeathValley NP; CA



Death Valley NP; CA



Boss Mine; Goodsprings District; NV





Boss Mine; Goodsprings; NV

Flowers: perianthic; bowl-shaped; apical; yellow stigmas, filaments; woolly bases; fragrant; yellow; 2"

Stems: cylindrical barrel; one to many (branched from base); longitudinal flutes (ribs); gray green; 18"

Leaves: spines; flattened; interlaced; stout, straight or curved; canescent; straw yellow to pink; 3"

Blooms: June to August

Range: southwestern US; northern Mexico

Habitat: arid, rocky; desert scrub, slopes, etc. to Joshua woodlands; Lower to Upper Sonoran Life Zones

Notes:

common; perennial; aggregates grow to 3' tall and wide in the Mojave Desert, the Colorado Desert in CA, south into Sonora, MEX, at elevations of 1,000 to 5,000'; oblong, densely woolly, dry, 2.5" fruit bearing black, .125" seeds; 6-14 spines (4 central) per areole; no nectar glands on areoles; aka Many-Headed Barrel Cactus, Clustered Barrel Cactus, Woolly Cactus, etc.; main subspecies of E. polycephalus; attracts various pollinators; wool used by birds, rodents for nesting material; native peoples ground seeds into meal, used spines as fishhooks, needles, awls, etc.

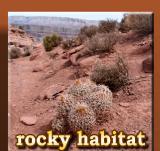
Mojave presence: native

Comments:

Of the two subspecies of the cottontop cactus, E. p. polycephalus is the more common and widespread. It is best distinguished from its cousin (next page) by its larger growth and densely woolly fruit.

Subfamily CACTOIDEAE (Cottontops)

Grand Canyon Cottontop



West Rim; Grand Cyn; AZ



West Rim; Grand Cyn; AZ



West Rim; Hualapai Plateau; Grand Canyon; AZ





West Rim; Grand Cyn; AZ

Flowers: perianthic; bowl-shaped; apical; yellow stigmas, filaments; woolly bases; fragrant; yellow; 2"

Stems: cylindrical barrel; one to many (branched from base); longitudinal flutes (ribs); gray green; 15"

Leaves: spines; flattened; interlaced; stout, straight or curved; canescent; straw yellow to pink; 3"

Blooms: June to August
Range: southwestern US

Habitat: arid, rocky; desert scrub, slopes, plateaus; Lower to Upper Sonoran Life Zones

Notes:

uncommon; perennial; aggregates grow to about 2' in the Grand Canyon region and Mohave Co., AZ, into the Gold Butte area of southern Nevada in the Mojave Desert at elevations of 1,500 to 5,500'; oblong, dry, fruit with yellowish spikes and scales protruding from tip; 6-14 spines (4 central) per areole; no nectar glands on areoles; attracts a variety of pollinators

Mojave presence: native

Comments:

Of the two subspecies of the Grand Canyon Cottontop, E. p. xeranthemoides is the less common. The specimens shown here were photographed in March, 2016, and October, 2018, at the West Rim of the Grand Canyon on the Hualapai Reservation. It is best distinguished from its cousin by its smaller growth and the yellowish spikes/scales protruding from the less woolly fruit.

Subfamily CACTOIDEAE (Beehives)

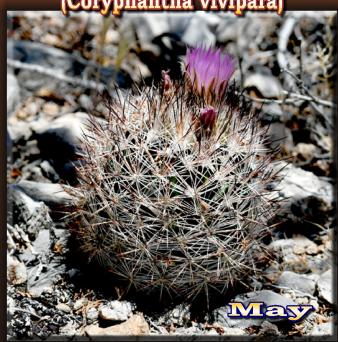
Beehive Cactus



Hualapai Plateau; AZ



Hualapai Plateau; AZ



Hualapai Plateau; Mohave County; AZ



Hualapai Plateau; AZ



Flowers: perianthic, funnelform; usually solitary; pinkish filaments, yellow anthers; pink; to lt purple; 2"

Stems: globed to short cylindrical; erect to squat; solitary to many; unbranched; tuberculated; green; 8"

Leaves: spines; smooth; stellate, interlaced; straight to curved, bicolored; tannish with brown tips; 1"

Blooms: April to June

Range: western interior North America

Habitat: sandy to gravelly; desert, prairie to montane woodlands; Upper Sonoran to Transition Life Zones

Notes:

uncommon; perennial; grows to about 8" tall, 4" wide, in a variety of habitats from n MEX north to sc CAN, Great Plains west to the Basin and Range at elevations of 3,500 to 8,000; fleshy, oval, green to brownish red, 1" fruit (seeds germinate in fruit, thus viviparous, giving rise to the specific name vivipara); synonymous genus Escobaria; areoles monomorphic on elongate, grooved, 1" tubercles, bearing ~20-30 spines each (3-12 central); aka Desert Beehive, Rose Beehive, etc.; potentially many subspecies (still debated); tolerant of a wide range of temperatures; host to bees

Mojave presence: native

Comments:

Though widespread throughout their range, these beehives are rather uncommon and easily overlooked. As such, it is even more uncommon to find one in bloom. In fact, the only I have ever encountered in full flower is the one shown here presenting itself on the Hualapai Plateau near the West Rim of the Grand Canyon in May of 2020.

Subfamily CACTOIDEAE (Beehives)

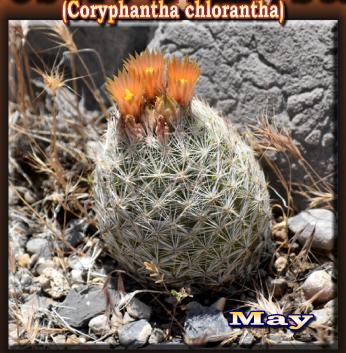
Desert Spinystar



Red Rock Cyn NCA; NV



Red Rock Cyn NCA; NV



Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area; NV



Red Rock Cyn NCA; NV



Red Rock Cyn NCA; NV

Flowers: perianthic, funnelform; apical clusters; fringed outer tepals, pale filaments; orange; 1.5"

Stems: spherical to short cylindrical; usually singular; erect, unbranched; tuberculated; green; 6"

Leaves: spines; smooth; stellate; straight, in dense aggregates; white with brown tips; .8"

Blooms: April to June

Range: southwestern US (Mojave Desert)

Habitat: rocky; ledges, cliffs on carbonate rocks in Joshua/pinyon-juniper woodlands; Upper Sonoran LZ

Notes:

uncommon; perennial; grows to about .5' tall in the Mojave Desert (mainly eastern) at elevations of 1,500 to 5,500'; fleshy, oval, green to brownish red, 1" fruit, bearing small brown seeds; dense groups of 18-40 spines (16-30 radial; 2-18 central) per monomorphic areole on each knobby tubercle; spine clusters pressed close against stem (serves to reflect heat, thus tolerant of excessive heat); aka Desert Pincushion, Yellow-Flowered Pincushion, etc.; considerd by some authorities to be a subspecies of C. viviparia (taxonomy under debate); host to insect pollinators, mainly bees

Mojave presence: endemic

Comments:

Not only is this pincushion uncommon, it's diminutive size contributes to the cactus being easily overlooked and unrecognized when not in bloom. The dense cover of closely packed pale spines, and peachy orange flowers are diagnostic traits to look for. I was fortunate to find

Canyon NCA in the spring months of 2017 to 2019,

and partly eaten in January of 2019 (lower right).

Subfamily CACTOIDEAE (Fishhooks)

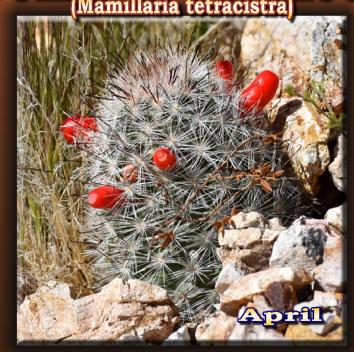
Common Fishhook



Lake Mead NRA; NV



Lake Mead NRA; NV



Hoover Dam Lodge; Lake Mead NRA; NV



Lake Mead NRA; NV



Lake Mead NRA; NV

Flowers: perianthic; funnelform; fringed tepals, green stigmas; shades of pink (white margins); 1.5"

Stems: spherical to cylindrical; usually singular; erect, unbranched; tuberculated; green; 10"

Leaves: spines; smooth, thin; stellate; longest spine hooked on end; white (radial), brown (central); 1.5"

Blooms: April to August

Range: southwestern US; Baja California and Sonora, Mexico

Habitat: sandy to rocky; desert scrub to Joshua woodlands; Lower to Upper Sonoran Life Zones

Notes:

uncommon; perennial; grows to 10" tall, 3" wide (usually much smaller), in the Mojave Desert south to nw MEX at elevations of 450 to 5,400'; elongated, fleshy, red, nipple-like, 1.5" fruit bearing black acorn-like seeds with unique, corky appendage; 30-65 spines (mostly radial; 1-4 central) in several ranks per areole on long, dimorphic (producing flowers or spines) tubercles; aka Nipple Cactus, Desert Fishhook Cactus, Corkseed Cactus, etc.; fruits edible

Mojave presence: native

Comments:

Though widespread in its range, this small cactus is still somewhat uncommon to encounter--especially in bloom! Its inconspicuous size also contributes to it being easily overlooked. However, it is much more readily recognized when its distinctive, red, nipple-like fruit is present. Additionally, look for the hooked central spines that define the genus. I spotted the individual shown here near the Hoover Dam Lodge in the Lake Mead National Recreation Area in May of 2019.