

Club Chollas



Club chollas and their kin, the **chollas** , are members of the tribe **Cylindropuntieae** in the subfamily **Opuntioideae**. These mat-forming cacti are unusual in their habit of growth, and are characterized by several distinctive traits. Their short stems are **club shaped** rather than cylindrical, and the spines are large, spreading, **flattened blades** (rarely enclosed in leathery epidermal **sheaths** typical of true chollas). The cottony white areoles produce various numbers of spines/**glochids** (bristles), depending on species. But the most peculiar trait is the large, showy flowers that erupt from funnel-shaped **floral tubes**! While 14 species are native to the deserts of the southwestern United States and Mexico, only 2 are represented in the Mojave.

Subfamily **OPUNTIOIDEAE** (Club Chollas)

Parish Club Cholla (*Grusoniaia parishii*)



typical habitat

Dolan Springs, AZ



August

Pierce Ferry Road; Dolan Springs, AZ



floral tube; flower

Red Rock Cyn NCA; NV



bladed spines

Dolan Springs, AZ



club-shaped stems

Dolan Springs, AZ

- Flowers:** perianthic; bowl-shaped; solitary atop floral tube; **yellow** (red midstripes, pointed tips); 3"
- Stems:** club-shaped; unbranched; prominent tubercles; **green** to **reddish**; 4"
- Leaves:** spines; radiating; stout, flattened, blade-like; grayish white to **red-brown**; 3"
- Blooms:** May to July
- Range:** south-central and northeastern Mojave Desert to southern Great Basin Desert
- Habitat:** well-drained; sandy to gravelly; desert scrub to Joshua woodlands; Lower Sonoran Life Zone

Notes:

uncommon; perennial; grows as wide, prostate mats to 10" high mainly from Mohave Co., AZ, ne through CA to Clark, Nye, and Lincoln counties, NV (disjunct population in s CA), at elevations of 3,000 to 5,000'; 2-3" fleshy, tuberculated, yellow, **club-shaped** fruit (spineless, but protected by numerous radiating **glochids**) that produce dark brown seeds; 17-22 (5-6 central) spines per **tubercle** from cottony **areole**; aka **Matted Cholla**, **Ground Mat Cholla**, **Devil's Cactus**, **Dead Cactus**, etc.; pollinated by bees

Mojave presence: native

Comments:

Most of the time this cactus looks like just dead, spine-covered vegetation. Being low growing, it is so inconspicuous that it is easily overlooked. Thus, the specimens shown here near Dolan Springs, AZ, in April and August, 2023, are the only ones I have conclusively recognized. Note the very

unusual cottony white areoles of this species (left).



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