
CACTUS and SUCCULENT SOCIETY of NEW MEXICO

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PLANTS FOR ALBUQUERQUE GARDENS

There are several species that are regularly found in gardens. It is hard to make a good list of these, as they change with time (with diggers and importers), but the following are often seen in yards, especially in Albuquerque.

Echinocereus dasyacanthus: A rather shaggy-looking plant, with mostly over 14 ribs and roughly 25 to 30 +/- 1 cm slender spines per areole. Spine colors tend to form bands around the plant (growth rings of a sort). Large flowers are usually yellow, but may be any cactus flower color possible (except perhaps white). From south central New Mexico, west Texas, northwest Coahuila, and northeast Chihuahua.

Echinocereus engelmannii: Comes in many variations. Plants usually form large clumps of branches. There are usually 2 to 4 central spines, the most prominent pointing out or slightly down. The spines have a dark mid stripe as in *E. fendleri*, and the flowers are like those of *E. fendleri*. It has 44 chromosomes, while *E. fendleri* has 22. This species is to *E. fendleri* much as *E. coccineus* is to *E. triglochidiatus*. Central and southeast Utah to northeastern Chihuahua, southwestern New Mexico, central Sonora, central Baja California Norte, southern California, and central Nevada. Names such as *acicularis*, *boyce-thompsonii*, *chrysentrus*, *fasciculatus*, *munzii*, *variegatus*, etc., are included here.

Coryphantha macromeris: A fleshy, strongly tubercled, clumping plant. Tubercles with a narrow groove. Stems to about 10 cm wide and tall. Green of plant showing through slender brown to white spines to 5 cm long. Summer flowers showy, pink to magenta. Sweet juicy green-to-brown berries, with nearly smooth brown seeds. Widespread in the Chihuahua Desert, south central New Mexico to Durango, Zacatecas, and Nuevo Leon.

Ferocactus wislizenii: Not reliably hardy here, but often planted (to eventually freeze to death). Must be protected in weather below 10 F. A large ribbed barrel, with heavy hooked central spines (usually reddish in color). Summer flowers are yellow to red. From west Texas and southern New Mexico to southern Arizona and central Sonora.

Ferocactus cylindraceus (= *acanthodes*): Same comments for cold-hardiness apply to this one. A large barrel with curved (but usually not hooked) central spines, usually yellowish to pinkish in color. Spring flowers are yellow. Californian, Mojave, western Sonoran, and Vizcaino Deserts.

Cylindropuntia imbricata var. *spiniosior*. Differs from our native variety in having more areoles per length of stem and thus looks more spiny. Tubercles mostly under 20 mm long (mostly over 20 mm in var. *arborescens*). Usually 5 rows of tubercles visible from one side of stem (mostly 4 in var. *arborescens*). Plants from Tucson, AZ, often have yellowish or orangey flowers. From adjacent parts of Arizona, Chihuahua, New Mexico, and Sonora.

Opuntia polyacantha var. *erinacea* (incl. *ursina*): An upright clumper, with joints thick and usually elongated. Spines very numerous and usually flexible; form numerous large areoles. Flowers in full color range. Fruits are like var. *hystricina*. Not a New Mexico native, growing wild in the Mojave region (closest are in Marble Canyon, AZ, reaching there through the Grand Canyon).

Opuntia polyacantha var. *rhodantha*: A spreading plant, with slightly tubercled joints. Areoles large and rather few. Spines tend to be few, with the centrals thick and angular, often annulate marked. Often very large flowers, in full color range. From western Colorado and southwest Wyoming to southeast Oregon and northern Nevada in deserts.

Opuntia aurea: A very close relative of *O. polyacantha*, but has few or no thick spines; the many areoles are not raised. Pads are smooth and glaucous, usually rounded and longer than wide. Large flowers in the same colors as *O. polyacantha*. This one has 66 chromosomes; *O. polyacantha* has 44. From the "Arizona Strip" in Arizona, Utah, and Nevada.

Opuntia basilaris: Variable, with several varieties, but always a low plant, branching mostly from near the joint bases. Joints usually stipitate, usually spineless (but have glochids!), look bluish or gray, and are minutely pubescent. Nice white to magenta flowers, with white stigmata. Fruit are dry.

Spineless *O. polyacantha* may look similar, but are not pubescent; may have yellow flowers and always have green stigmata. From central Utah and north central Arizona to southern California and northern Sonora, Mexico.

Opuntia microdasys: A busy plant, branching from top of joints. Spineless (NOT glochidless) joints are dull green and minutely pubescent. Glochids come in many colors. Mostly under 13 cm long. Flowers yellow to orange with deep green stigmata. Fruits red and juicy. Hardy only in warmest places here. From eastern Chihuahua Desert in northeast Mexico.

Those *O. microdasys* with red glochids are NOT *O. rufida*. *O. rufida* has thick round gray joints, mostly over 15 cm across. Glochids vary from white to red or near black. Grows a noticeable trunk with age. Not often seen in our area, but is hardy in the Albuquerque Heights. From the hottest parts of the western Chihuahua Desert (west Texas to eastern Durango and northern Zacatecas).

Opuntia lindheimeri: Like *O. engelmannii*, except spines translucent yellow. Spines tend to be longest on lower edge of joints. Flowers large, deep yellow, with dark green stigmata. Fruits tart rather than sweet. The cultivar "Linguiformis" has huge, long, narrow joints. Seedlings are hairy. Hardy from Albuquerque southward. From central Texas to east central Mexico. Likes lots of water in spring and summer, none in winter.

Opuntia wootonii: Like *O. valida*, except spines are longer, more slender, and yellowish (rarely silvery) with dark bases. Seedlings hairy. Hardy from Albuquerque southward. Known only from near Las Cruces, NM. Naturalized at Poncho Villa State Park in Columbus.

Opuntia acicularis: Related to *O. lindheimeri*, but slightly smaller. Most cultivars have no spines, but numerous long orange or chestnut-colored glochids. Sometimes there are some slender deflexed yellow spines. Seedlings are not hairy. Flowers are large and usually orange to red, sometimes yellow. Hardy in warmer parts of Albuquerque and southward. From near Laredo, Texas.

More spiny plants are sometimes confused with *O. strigil*, but that is a smaller, more upright plant, with small yellow flowers and yellow and black spines, from the Stockton Plateau in Texas and northern Coahuila.

Opuntia woodsii: Related to *O. engelmannii*. Large pads usually oblong. Spines stout and nearly white. Flowers very large and orange-red. Seedlings not hairy. From southwestern corner of Utah, and adjacent Nevada and Arizona, perhaps in the Grand Canyon.

Opuntia cacanapa: Has bluish joints that tend to stack upright, eventually with a short trunk. Areoles are few and small, usually with white wool. Leaves on new growth are conspicuous, green, and curve down. Glochids usually few. Spines none, or one to two per areole, mostly cylindrical, translucent yellow. Flowers late, usually in late June or early July (here). The cultivar "Ellisiana" is spineless, often called "Smooth Ears." Seedlings are hairy. Hardy south from Albuquerque (except in Valley cold pockets). From south and west Texas into northeastern Mexico.

Opuntia chlorotica: Has many areoles, round joints that stack upright. Grows a strong trunk with age. Spines may be lacking, but when present are slender and yellow to dull orange. Spines and areoles lengthen and increase in number on trunk. Variety *chlorotica* has green joints with yellow glochids and spines. Variety *santa-rita* has bluish joints (often purple under stress) with glochids and spines variable in color. Seedlings not hairy. From southern California to New Mexico, south to Durango.

Many other species of cacti are often imported and planted in yards, but usually these are in collections, and only a few individuals may occur in the whole area. It would be impossible to list all of these, as they could number over a hundred species. *Opuntia basilaris* and *aurea* are in Series *Polyacanthae*. *Opuntia lindheimeri*, *wootonii*, *acicularis*, *woodsii*, and *cacanapa* are in Series *Dillenii*. *Opuntia microdasys*, *rufida*, and *chlorotica* are in Series *Leuchotrichae*.