

Botanical Tours



10. Fire Barrel Cactus
Ferocactus gracilis

Sharp, red spines make this cactus's point! Like most barrel cactus, this plant starts out globular as a youngster. Over time, it grows taller, but still stout—just like a barrel. It's a hardy survivor, thriving in areas of poor soil and scant rain.

**Fun
Fact**

The best time to plant a barrel cactus is in early spring, before new roots start to form in summer.



13. Desert Agave
Agave deserti

A central gutter on each leaf directs moisture from dew or rain to the plant's root region. This species is also known as the century plant because it was once believed to bloom only every 100 years. In truth, it flowers at about 20 years of age—on a 15-foot-tall stem.

**Fun
Fact**

The Agaves belong to the same family as lilies.



11. Candelabra Cactus
Myrtillocactus cochal

This massive desert denizen can grow 10 feet tall and about as wide. Its many compact, branched arms curve upwards, giving it an iconic shape. It blooms multiple times during the year, producing nectar-rich flowers that range from ivory to pale green.

**Fun
Fact**

In the past, people gathered the old, woody stems of this plant to use as firewood when resources were sparse.



14. Datilillo
Yucca valida

This multi-trunked yucca can grow to about 20 feet tall, and its pale flowers smell somewhat like dill. The edges of the fibrous leaves are hard and dangerously sharp. The "skirt" of dead leaves drooping around the trunk provides shelter for insects, birds, and other wildlife.

**Fun
Fact**

The name datilillo translates to "little date"—from a distance, a grouping of these plants looks a bit like a grove of date palms.



12. Organ Pipe Cactus
Stenocereus thurberi

Some people mistake this plant for a saguaro, but it belongs to a completely different genus. Reaching 30 feet in height, organ pipe cactus can live to 150 years old. However, it doesn't flower until it's around 35 years old.

**Fun
Fact**

From April to June, three-inch-wide white flowers open to attract their pollinator: nectar-feeding bats. The blooms close as the sun rises.



15. Cardon
Pachycereus pringlei

The ribbed structure of this plant serves an important purpose: as it stores water during the rainy season, it's able to expand in girth. Dried ribs of the cactus were used by indigenous people for fishing spears, poles, fences, and house rafters.

**Fun
Fact**

Cardon are trioecious: some flowers are male, some are female, and are complete blooms with both stamen and pistil.





1. Leafy Limberbush

Jatropha cinerea

A member of the Euphorbiaeae family, this shrublike succulent grows to about five feet high and wide. Its flexible limbs and spreading habit gave rise to the name “limberbush”. During extreme drought, it drops its leaves to conserve moisture, quickly replacing them after a good rain.

Fun Fact

Male blossoms present in clusters, while female flowers appear singly.



4. Adam's Tree

Fouquieria diguetii

This giant looks like a bunch of spiny sticks—until it rains. Then, it flushes with small, emerald leaves. Soon, bright red, tubular flowers bloom at the tips of the branches, drawing hummingbirds and bees.

Fun Fact

They may be spiny like cactus, but Fouquieria belong to their own unique family of plants.



7. Our Lord's Candle

Hesperoyucca whipplei

At 5 to 10 years of age, this plant rapidly sprouts a 10- to 15-foot-tall flower spike, referenced in the common name. Once the hundreds of small, bell-shaped blooms are pollinated, the plant dies, but the spike can remain upright for several years.

Fun Fact

This plant's blossoms are pollinated only by the California yucca moth *Tegeticula maculata*—a unique, exclusive relationship.



2. Shaw's Agave

Agave shawii

Also known as coastal agave, it is native to the Pacific coastal strip from Southern California to Baja California, Mexico. The plant flowers when it is 20 to 30 years old, then dies. However, numerous offshoots sprout around the base. Over time, they form an impenetrable thicket of sharp spines.

Fun Fact

Small mammals, reptiles, and other animals rely on the dense thickets as protective hiding and birthing spots.



5. Indian Comb

Pachycereus pecten-aboriginum

This plant's nectar is an important food source for migrating lesser long-nosed bats in Mexico. From January to March, the flowers open in the evening and close by midday. However, in the Sonoran desert, the flowers stay open a bit longer, attracting daytime pollinators, too.

Fun Fact

Indigenous people used the spiny fruits to groom their hair, earning the plant its common name.



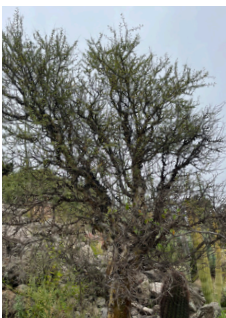
8. San Diego Barrel Cactus

Ferocactus viridescens

Growing just one foot high and wide, this rare species is found along the coast of northern Baja and southern California. Most of its native habitat has been destroyed by or is threatened by human activity. However, it can be grown in dry coastal home landscapes.

Fun Fact

The newest spines of this cactus are red, but eventually fade to tan or gray.



3. Baja California Elephant Tree

Pachycormus discolor

Look for this tree's swollen trunk with its waxy outer bark. Endemic to Baja California, the trunk stores water to help the tree survive the hot, dry summer. It also drops all its leaves. Then, in the moist winter-spring season, new leaves appear. It is dioecious (DY-ee-shuhs), with separate male and female plants.

Fun Fact

This tree's scientific name *Pachycormus* translates to “pachys” meaning thick and “cormus” meaning trunk.



6. Red-Stem Elephant Tree

Bursera hindsiana

This tree starts as a spreading shrub before reaching its full height of 16 feet (5 meters). It grows smooth reddish twigs and a light reddish-grey multi-trunk. It grows best along desert washes and coastal hillsides. Small flowers bloom in the fall, followed by orange-red berries.

Fun Fact

If cut, the plant oozes an aromatic resin, this acts as a deterrent to insects and mammals. Commonly known as copal incense, it is used in perfumes, incense, and oils. The scent is said to calm and clear the mind.



9. Boojum

Fouquieria columnaris

This rare plant grows only in the mid-third of the Baja Peninsula and a small area on the coast of Sonora, Mexico. With more than 200 specimens, ours is the largest collection outside of their native habitat. It can take 50 to 100 years for a boojum to mature and flower.

Fun Fact

The name “boojum” comes from Lewis Carroll's poem “The Hunting of the Snark.”