



Flower Power

**After the dark and dormant days of winter, spring is upon us!
The desert is buzzing, chirping, and blooming back to life!**

Ethnobotany is the study of the relationship between plants and people expressed through the food, clothing, tools, construction, medicine and ornamentation we obtain from the plant kingdom.

You may have heard of medicinal plants such as ginger, chamomile, or lavender, but did you know there are desert plants with therapeutic benefit? Many of the Sonoran desert flowering plants have medicinal properties and have been used for centuries by native communities to treat a variety of ailments.

A common way to use medicinal plants in treating internal ailments is to prepare the leaves or flowers as a tea. The flowers of **Texas ranger** (*Leucophyllum frutescens*) can be brewed to soothe cold and flu symptoms and provide a calming sedative effect similar to chamomile. The blooms of **brittle bush** (*Encelia farinosa*) can alleviate stomach pain and promote healing due to the plant's anti-

inflammatory and anesthetic properties. Tea made from **desert globemallow** (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*) can soothe inflammation of throat and bronchial tissues, aid in digestion, and encourage immune system function.

Without considering the traditional uses of Sonoran native plants, you may mistake those powerful therapies as just another spring-time flower, but with plants, there's always more than meets the eye!

“Plants growing all around us are packed with nourishment and healing properties just waiting to be discovered.”

**Maria Rojas, Campus Arboretum Intern
Class of 2023**



Texas ranger

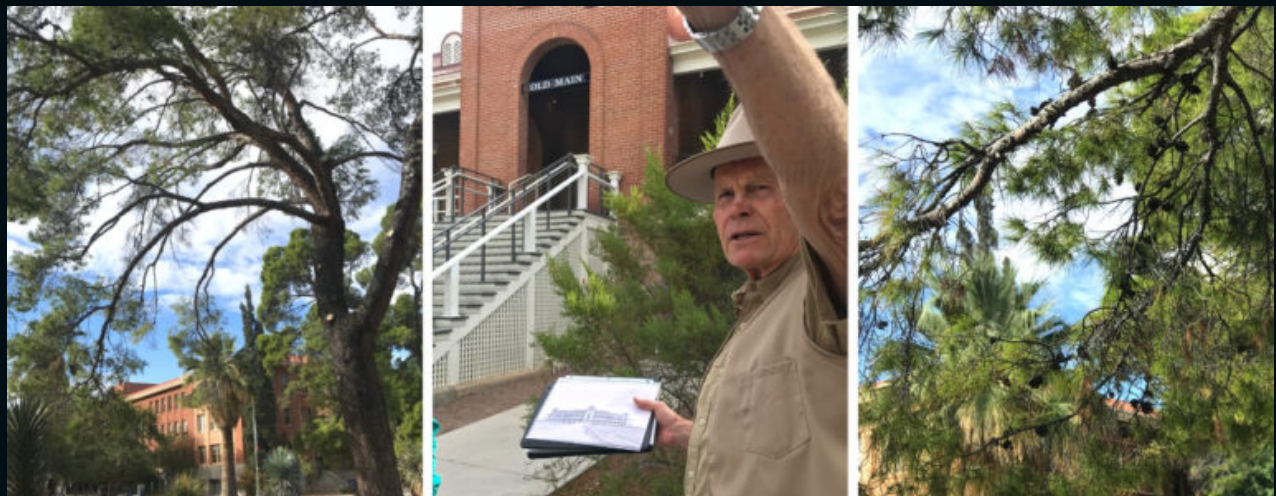


Brittle bush



Globemallow

Meet A Campus Arboretum Tour Guide



Tony Knight is a Pima County Master gardener for desert native plants and was instrumental in creating the **Sonoran Native Plant Tour** given on campus.

Before retiring to Tucson, Tony was a veterinary professor at Colorado State University. He was a master gardener and native plant master In Colorado, making him proficient in both the Shortgrass Prairie and Sonoran Desert ecosystems. Cacti are some of his favorite Sonoran native plants, including the majestic **saguaro** (*Carnegiea gigantea*) and mysterious **queen of the night** (*Peniocereus greggii*). The **Joseph Wood Krutch Garden** located on the UA mall has both of these fascinating plants on display.

“The Krutch garden has an amazing variety of native desert plants that beautifully coexist in a very small space”. ~ Tony Knight

Featured Plant: Ocotillo



Common Name: Ocotillo

Family Name: Fouquieriaceae

Botanical Name: *Fouquieria splendens*

The ocotillo is a desert thorny shrub that can reach 20ft tall and live 60 years, though some have been estimated to live over 100 years! When ocotillos are water stressed they will drop their leaves and photosynthesize from their stems, even though they deceptively look like dry sticks. They will regrow their leaves as

soon as water is available, making them a good indicator of soil moisture.

Ocotillo has numerous uses in **food, construction, and medicine**. The Tohono O'odham dried flower nectar in the sun to create a crystallized candy. The stems can be used as fencing material for gardens or homes. The Cahuilla soaked the flowers in water to create a drink that helped to treat cough. The Apache ground dried roots into a powder to make a bathing soak for injured body parts and fatigued muscles. Ocotillo are highly revered desert shrubs and are protected under the **Arizona Native Plant Law**.

[Click here to learn more or find this plant on campus](https://apps.cals.arizona.edu/arboretum/taxon.aspx?id=123)

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Campus Arboretum Tours



If you'd like to learn more about medicinal plants growing on campus:

We invite you to join the Pima Co. Master Gardeners for the

"Medicinal Plants Tour"

Sunday, April 2nd, 2022 at 9:30am.

On this tour you will learn about some Sonoran Native plants and their historical uses, chemical properties, uses in modern medicine, and current science confirming their therapeutic properties for human health.

Email infoarboretum@cals.arizona.edu to RSVP for the tour.

Can't make it this Sunday?

The next Medicinal Plants Tour will be May 14th.

or

Explore the virtual tour here:

<https://arboretum.arizona.edu/tours/medicinal-plants-tour>

[Click HERE to view the full calendar of Campus Arboretum Tours](#)

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