



## Native Plants - Backdrop to Our Lives

For many of us, the native plants of Tucson are a backdrop to our lives in the desert. Whether it's the **smell of creosote** when it rains, the **yellow canopies of paloverde** in the spring, or the **jumping cholla** we try to avoid while hiking - ouch! Many of these desert-dwelling plants are ones that we tend to appreciate seasonally or admire from afar, but they have unique properties that have helped sustain the lives of people living in the desert for hundreds of years.

You may have heard of prickly pear flavored margaritas or mesquite flour, but there are many other ways to use Sonoran native plants. From medicines, soaps, lotions, juices and jams, to dental floss, glue, fencing, and water-resistant building materials, there are hundreds of ways that native people have used a wide variety of plants that are still available to us.

*"Although our dependence on the environment is less visible in modern days, our*

*well-being is still tightly linked to plant health through landscape horticulture, design and agriculture."*

*Tanya M. Quist, Director*

## Meet A Campus Arboretum Tour Guide



**Marlene Shamis** is a third year Master Gardener and tour guide with the Campus Arboretum. She is passionate about the environment, as evidenced by her current position as a docent for Tohono Chul, her credentials as a Master Naturalist and Certified Phenology Leader, as well as previous work with Watershed Management Group.

Her favorite Arboretum tour is the **Sonoran Native Plants Tour**. She enjoys educating others about the special adaptations these plants have - from their clever ways of conserving water to protecting themselves from the heat of the sun. She says these unique plants *"make up a desert ecosystem that intrigues people from all over the world."* Her favorite Sonoran native plant is the wolfberry (*Lycium fremontii*), found in the Krutch Garden located on the UA mall.



*"It's a beautiful plant when leafed out but is also a useful food source for people and animals while providing shelter for many birds and butterflies."* ~ **Marlene Shamis**

## Featured Plant: Night Blooming Cereus



**Common Name:** night blooming cereus, Arizona queen of the night

**Family Name:** Cactaceae

**Botanical Name:** *Peniocereus greggii*

The **night-blooming cereus** is a Sonoran native cactus with slender and spindly pale-colored stems. This mysterious species may appear dull and lifeless, but is in fact blooming with life underneath the summer night sky. In order for the cacti to produce fruit, the flowers need to be cross-pollinated by nocturnal **hawk-moths** lured in by the vanilla scent of the blooms. This co-evolution is why a population of queens bloom all at once, one night a year. With the exception of a few stragglers, a majority of the cacti participate in a mass blooming event at sunset during June or July, producing white palm-sized flowers from 5-10 inches in diameter! As the night fades with the rising sun, so do the flowers, which die back the following morning.

**[Click here to learn more or find this plant on campus](https://apps.cals.arizona.edu/arboretum/taxon.aspx?id=733)**

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If you'd like to discover the variety of ways that native plants can be eaten or utilized:

**We invite you to join the Pima Co. Master Gardeners for the  
"Sonoran Native Plants Tour"  
Sunday, January 29th, 2022 at 9:30am.**

This tour will also describe the desert challenges plants experience and the adaptations they've evolved to allow them to survive and thrive.

Our hope is that learning about desert plant resilience will strengthen your connection to the complex ecosystems we share and inspire you to explore further.

Email [infoarboretum@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:infoarboretum@cals.arizona.edu) to RSVP for the tour.

Can't join us in person?

**Explore the virtual tour here:**

**<https://apps.cals.arizona.edu/arboretum/map/#Sonoran-Native-Plants>**

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*Promote stewardship and conservation of urban trees in Arizona.*

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