



Plants of the Desert Research Learning Center



1. Common sotol

2. Brittlebush

3. Velvet mesquite

4. Monkeyflower



5. Yellow paloverde

6. Organ pipe cactus

7. Yucca

8. Buttonbush

9. Desert honeysuckle



10. Florida hopbush

11. Saguaro cactus

12. Candy barrelcactus

13. Ocotillo

14. Spreading fleabane



15. Desert ironwood

16. Arizona ash

17. Verbena

18. Desert willow



19. Globemallow

20. Penstemon

21. Pine needle milkweed

22. Desert marigold



1. Common sotol (*Dasylyrion wheeleri*)—This shrub is used to make the alcoholic drink, sotol. It is also used for food and for its fibers. The leaf blades are spiny, but relaxed-looking.

2. Brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*)—This common shrub has bluish to gray-green, powdery-looking leaves. Its flowers will turn entire mountain slopes yellow in springtime.

3. Velvet mesquite (*Prosopis velutina*)—The seed pods are often ground into flour and used in cooking. Its wood is also widely used.

4. Monkeyflower (*Erythranthe guttata*)—Found in the Learning Center stream, this plant always grows in or near water.

5. Yellow paloverde (*Parkinsonia microphylla*)—Paloverde means “green stick” in Spanish, named for the tree’s distinctive green bark.

6. Organ pipe cactus (*Stenocereus thurberi*)—The distinctive formation of this cactus gives it the name, “organ pipe.” Its delicious fruits can be eaten or made into sweets.

7. Yucca (*Yucca* sp.)—These shrubs are known for their tough, sword-shaped leaves that may be used for weaving or turned into fibers. They are also host plants for pollinating moths. The leaf blades are very stiff and smooth-edged, with a sharp tip.

8. Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)—This shrub almost always occurs in wetland habitats. Its white, rounded flower clusters are striking.

9. Desert honeysuckle (*Anisacanthus thurberi*)—Hummingbirds love the sweet nectar of this shrub’s bright, red-orange flowers. It typically grows in canyon bottoms or near washes.

10. Florida hopbush (*Dodonaea viscosa*)—Rocky limestone soil is this shrub’s favorite place to grow. Its pretty, reddish fruit is three-winged.

11. Saguaro cactus (*Carnegiea gigantea*)—The icon of the Sonoran Desert and largest cactus in the US. They can grow up to 60 feet tall and live for up to 200 years.

12. Candy barrelcactus (*Ferocactus wislizeni*)—This species tends to lean southward, giving it the nickname, “compass barrelcactus.” The cactus spines are very strong and shaped like fishhooks.

13. Ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*)—Its beautiful red flowers are a favorite of pollinating hummingbirds. The stems are used for fencing and ramada roofing at the Learning Center.

14. Spreading fleabane (*Erigeron divergens*)—These daisy-like flowers can range in color from white to lavender. Plant parts can be made into an oil to treat pets for fleas; hence the name, “fleabane.”

15. Ironwood (*Olneya tesota*)—The wood is known for its hardness and is used for tools and carvings. Also an excellent nurse tree, providing a shady canopy for other plants to thrive under.

16. Arizona ash (*Fraxinus velutina*)—This water-loving tree has rough gray bark. A winged fruit helps disperse its seeds in the wind.

17. Verbena (*Glandularia* spp.)—A common shrub with bright purple flowers. An attractive plant for pollinators.

18. Desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*)—Commonly found along washes, this tree has long seed pods and striking purple flowers.

19. Globemallow (*Sphaeralcea* spp.)—Flowers range in color from pink to red. The plant is often used as food by butterfly and moth larvae.

20. Penstemon (*Penstemon parryi* & *Penstemon eatonii*)—These beautiful wildflower species occur in a variety of colors and are highly attractive to pollinating hummingbirds.

21. Pine needle milkweed (*Asclepias linaria*)—The thin leaves help to identify this plant, which is sometimes confused with juvenile pine trees. It is a great pollinator plant and is known to host monarch butterflies.

22. Desert marigold (*Baileya multiradiata*)—A common wildflower often spotted in bloom along highways in springtime. The plant was historically mixed with clay to make adobes and plaster.