



ARIZONA-SONORA
DESERT
MUSEUM

ARIZONA-SONORA DESERT MUSEUM PLANT CARE INFORMATION

Saguaro

Carnegiea gigantea

DESCRIPTION: Saguaro has a slow growth rate to an eventual size of 25' or more. Smaller plants can grow as much as 3" to 8" per year. Branching in nature begins at around 70 years, although it may occur much earlier in cultivation. Some plants never branch. Flowers appear after the plant is approximately 35-50 years old. The flowers are large (2" across by 3" long), waxy, and white, opening in the evening and closing late the next morning. In Sonora, these flowers are important nectar sources for nectar-feeding bats (a pollinator which coevolved with this plant), while in Arizona the white-winged dove is the primary pollinator. O'odham peoples have gathered the ripe fruits using traditional long sticks made of Saguaro ribs. The fruit has uses that range from mush, to wine, to jam and syrup. The seeds have been used for oil. The woody ribs of the plant can be used for splints, furniture and fences. The Saguaro is native only to the Sonoran Desert, as it occurs in Arizona, Sonora, Mexico, and the southeastern corner of California.

RECOMMENDED USE: Accent, desert revegetation or enhancement. Pot culture is possible, but growth rates will slow down or cease as the plants' roots fill the pot.

CULTURE:



Hardiness: As a small plant, protect at temperatures below 25°F. Larger plants endure short freezes of 20°F or less.



Sun tolerance: Small plants should be planted under a tree or shrub, or slowly acclimatized to full sun. See the care sheet entitled "Hardening Greenhouse-Grown Succulents for the Garden".



Watering and feeding: While in a pot, weekly watering is necessary during warm weather. It can be adapted to natural rainfall in the ground, but would benefit from occasional deep waterings. It benefits from monthly feeding during the growing season when containerized. Fertilization is not needed in the ground.



Soil requirements: Most soils will be okay, as long as they are well drained.



Pruning: Do not prune!

