



ARIZONA-SONORA DESERT MUSEUM

PLANT CARE INFORMATION

Pincushion Cacti *Mammillaria* species

DESCRIPTION: The Sonoran Desert region is rich with species of Pincushion Cacti; over 50 according to some taxonomists. They vary from solitary stems to clumps of 50 or more. Flower color varies by species although blooming times are often simultaneous. Here are some descriptions of some unusual species:

Mammillaria saboae. Here is a miniature, clumping pincushion found naturally in the oak woodlands of Sonora and Chihuahua, Mexico. Rarely more than a half dozen heads growing in a crack in a boulder in habitat, this specimen is quite large. Flowers are 1” across and a brilliant rich lavender in color.

Mammillaria lindsayi A large, globular pincushion with light-green flesh and yellow spines. It offsets sparingly along the stem. Many pale yellow flowers are produced several times a year. Fruit are elongated and red. This species is from southeast Sonora and southwest Chihuahua, Mexico.

Mammillaria tesopacensis. This beautiful pincushion species has a similar form to *M. lindsayi*, but has dark green stems with dark red or black spines. Flowers are reddish-maroon, and fruits are red. Native to central Sonora, in the vicinity of Tesopaco.

Mammillaria canelensis This is a tough, yet beautiful pincushion species that grows at a moderate rate to 10-15 heads or more, each the size of a softball. Flowers can be yellow, pink, or lavender and borne in whorls around each stem from the tufts of white hairs. Native to Sonora, Mexico.

RECOMMENDED USE: Accent, container, enhanced desert revegetation.

CULTURE: We are guessing that these are hardy into the upper 20's here. They all do best in light shade. In a pot, water 3-6 times a month during the warm season. Once to twice a year feeding with a complete fertilizer, or monthly with a weak solution will keep them healthy. No feeding is necessary in the ground and it will tolerate most soils that have adequate drainage. All can be used in the ground once they become large clumps, but will still need watering and care.

Mammillaria boottii A small, clumping pincushion with light blue-green flesh. Many large, pink

flowers are produced several times a year. Fruit are elongated, orange, and persistent. From near Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico. Prefers light shade in the afternoon. Low water use. Fertilize spring and early summer. Hardy to around 26°F. Best kept in a container because of its small size.

Mammillaria petrophila X. This pincushion cactus is the result of nature taking over in our greenhouse. Pollinators, probably bees, got in and carried pollen from another species of pincushion cactus flower to those of *Mammillaria petrophila*. The result is this cute globular cactus with an attractive light-pink flower. If it takes after its non-pollen parent, it will make side heads to form a compact clump eventually.