

Plant Table

Plants on this list are “low water use” and local to the Tucson area unless otherwise noted in the description.

Name	Scientific name	Description
TREES		
Whitethorn acacia	<i>Acacia constricta</i>	Tree, to 10'; thorny, tough, adaptable in well-drained soil; butterfly larval source; good cover and forage for birds
Catclaw acacia	<i>Acacia greggii</i>	Small tree or large shrub, to 10'; catchy catclaw thorns—good for out-of-the-way places, good cover/ forage for birds
Netleaf hackberry	<i>Celtis reticulata</i>	Tree to 15'; attractive and distinctive growth form, light knobby bark; great for birds to forage and nest in; used by many butterfly larvae; slow grower; may need slightly more water while getting established; seeds edible
Desert willow	<i>Chilopsis linearis</i>	Tree to 15'; pink, pea-like flowers (on locally native variety) attract hummingbirds; willowy growth form but not true willow; partial shade
Western mulberry	<i>Morus microphylla</i>	Tree 6–10'; locally native mulberry; fruits good for birds; good cover during warm months; a bit more water to get established than other desert trees
Ironwood	<i>Olneya tesota</i>	Tree to 20'; classic thorny, upland desert tree; great for birds, edible seeds; cold sensitive in low-lying areas but seems to survive in most Tucson neighborhoods; seeds tasty green or dried
Blue palo verde	<i>Parkinsonia florida</i>	Tree to 20'; thorny, bottomland tree; prodigious yellow flowers in spring; attractive green bark photosynthesizes while tree leafless; stately, good for birds; seeds and flowers edible
Little-leaf palo verde	<i>Parkinsonia microphylla</i>	Tree to 12'; smaller, thorny, tough upland desert palo verde; yellow-green wood, equally prodigious yellow flowers in spring; good for birds; seeds and flowers edible, sweeter than blue palo verde
Screwbean mesquite	<i>Prosopis pubescens</i>	Tree to 15'; thorny, shrub-shaped tree with odd, screw-shaped seed pods; attractive; good for birds; pods can be ground and used in food preparation but don't yield as much as velvet mesquite
Velvet mesquite	<i>Prosopis velutina</i>	Tree to 25'; Our native mesquite; all-around great tree for birds, insects, etc.; pods ground and meal used in a variety of recipes; avoid South American and hybrid mesquites
LARGE SHRUBS		
Four-winged saltbush	<i>Atriplex canescens</i>	Shrub to 5'; gray-green, extremely tough, adaptable; survives with almost no water or grows big quickly with more moisture; good habitat restoration plant; very good wildlife cover
Quailbush	<i>Atriplex lentiformis</i>	Shrub to 7'; sprawling gray-green shrub; great cover for wildlife, quail like it; W AZ low elevation native
Desert broom	<i>Baccharis sarothroides</i>	Shrub to 5'; bright green, very tough, low-water; best shrub of all for pollinators; weedy in disturbed soil, but is locally native
Red barberry	<i>Berberis haematocarpa</i>	Prickly shrub to 5'; red berries eaten by birds; attractive fragrance and holly-like leaves
Desert hackberry	<i>Celtis pallida</i>	Shrub to 8'; large, thorny shrub; one of the best shrubs to create cover, food and nesting opportunities for birds; orange berries in late summer eaten by bird and people alike
Bitter snakewood	<i>Condalia globosa</i>	Shrub to 8'; one of our great, thorny desert shrub that provides food (insects, berries), cover and nest opportunities
Kearney's snakewood	<i>Condalia Warnockii</i> var. <i>Kearneyana</i>	Shrub to 8'; a great, thorny desert shrubs that provide food (insects, berries), cover and nest opportunities; edible berries
Coursetia	<i>Coursetia glandulosa</i>	Shrub to 8'; beautiful yellow-white flowers; butterfly larvae; underused in landscaping
Hopseed bush	<i>Dodonea viscosa</i>	Leafy shrub to 7'; large, non-thorny shrub that can provide cover; good hedge plant
Creosote	<i>Larrea tridentata</i>	Shrub to 8'; classic, low-desert drought-tolerant shrub with fragrant foliage; small yellow flowers attract pollinators
Anderson wolfberry	<i>Lycium andersonii</i>	Shrub to 5'; wolfberries are classic, large spiny shrubs with edible fruits that provide cover and food for birds; small purple flowers visited by hummingbirds; fruits edible
Narrow-leaf wolfberry	<i>Lycium berlandieri</i>	Shrub to 5'; wolfberries are classic, large spiny shrubs with edible fruits that provide cover and food for birds; small purple flowers visited by hummingbirds; fruits edible

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Baja wolfberry	<i>Lycium brevipes</i>	Shrub to 8'; wolfberries are classic, large spiny shrubs with edible fruits that provide cover and food for birds; small purple flowers visited by hummingbirds; this is the biggest species; Baja CA native; fruits edible
Fremont wolfberry	<i>Lycium fremontii</i>	Shrub to 5'; wolfberries are classic, large spiny shrubs with edible fruits that provide cover and food for birds; small purple flowers visited by hummingbirds; fruits edible
Graythorn	<i>Ziziphus obtusifolia</i>	Shrub to 6'; one of our classic large, thorny shrubs that provide food and shelter for birds; edible berries; used by moth larvae; fruits edible
SMALL TO MEDIUM SHRUBS		
Indian mallow	<i>Abutilon incanum</i>	Shrub, to 6'; large-leafed, likes sun, butterfly host
Palmer mallow	<i>Abutilon palmeri</i>	Shrub, to 3'; large-leafed, warm microclimate in winter, orange flowers attract pollinators, highly drought-tolerant
White-ball acacia	<i>Acacia angustissima</i>	Shrub, to 4'; attractive fern-like leaves, white flower balls attract butterflies, native bees; needs slightly more water than most
Fragrant bee brush	<i>Aloysia gratissima</i>	Shrub, to 4'; small, wispy white flowers have nectar that attracts pollinators; cold- and low-water-hardy; fragrant
Wright's bee brush; Oreganillo	<i>Aloysia wrightii</i>	Shrub to 3'; good for pollinators; used as herb; medicinal uses
Flame anisacanthus	<i>Anisacanthus quadrifidus</i> var. <i>wrightii</i>	Shrub to 3'; attractive, dark orange flowers attract hummingbirds; tough once established; native of SW Texas and N Mexico
Desert honeysuckle	<i>Anisacanthus thurberi</i>	Shrub to 4'; red-orange flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies
Western mugwort; wormwood	<i>Artemisia ludoviciana</i>	Shrub to 3'; attractive feathery silver-green foliage; used by butterfly larvae; hardy when established, can spread
Desert milkweed	<i>Asclepias subulata</i>	Erect shrub to 4'; long mostly leafless stems with terminal flower clusters; attracts butterflies; striking accent plant; W AZ native
Desert bahia	<i>Bahia absinthifolia</i>	Shrub/wildflower to 1'; Small, tough plant with yellow daisy-like flowers
Sweet bush	<i>Bebbia juncea</i>	Shrub to 3'; not showy but tough and local, attracts butterfly and hosts larvae
Smooth bouvardia	<i>Bouvardia glaberrima</i>	Shrub to 3'; showy red flowers attract hummingbirds; may need a little more water than most
Fairy duster	<i>Calliandra eriophylla</i>	Shrub to 3'; puffy, pink flower clusters attract hummingbirds; hosts butterfly larvae; tough local native
Sundrops	<i>Calylophus hartwegii</i>	Shrub to 2'; large yellow flowers; hosts sphinx moth larvae
Fragrant dalea	<i>Dalea bicolor</i> var. <i>orcuttiana</i>	Shrub to 3'; lavender flowers good nectar source; larvae host; most fragrant dalea, makes great tea; native to Baja California and Sonora
Feather dalea	<i>Dalea formosa</i>	Shrub to 2'; larvae host; small, attractive spring blooms are purple; well-drained soil; teas can be made from most daleas
Black dalea	<i>Dalea frutescens</i>	Shrub to 3'; purple flowers; pleasant odor; medicinal uses; W TX & Chihuahuan native; teas can be made from most daleas
Trailing indigo bush	<i>Dalea greggii</i>	Trailing shrub/groundcover to 2'; lavender flowers; used by butterfly larvae; W TX & Chihuahuan native; teas can be made from most daleas
Brush dalea	<i>Dalea pulchra</i>	Shrub to 4'; butterfly larvae; pink flowers; needs good drainage; teas can be made from most daleas
Sacred datura	<i>Datura wrightii</i>	Shrub to 3'; perennial root, annual above-ground growth; large, attractive, white trumpet-shaped flower attracts sphinx moths
Twin dropseed	<i>Dicliptera resupinata</i>	Shrub to 3'; small but attractive purple flower; used by butterfly larvae; tough
Brittlebush	<i>Encelia farinosa</i>	Shrub to 3'; attractive, daisy-like flowers good for pollinators; gray-green leaves; tough when established, may reseed
Mormon tea; joint fir	<i>Ephedra</i> spp.	Shrub to 4'; local species include <i>E. trifurca</i> , <i>E. nevadensis</i> ; <i>E. viridis</i> from N. AZ also available; used to make tea; medicinal

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Butterfly mist	<i>Eupatorium greggii</i>	Spreading low shrub to 3'; puffy bluish-purple flowers incredibly attractive to butterflies and other pollinators; native to some sky islands, needs a little more water than others on this list
Goodding's Verbena	<i>Glandularia gooddingii</i> (<i>Verbena gooddingii</i>)	Shrub to 2'; light, blue-purplish flowers attract pollinators; hardy and showy
Chuparosa	<i>Justicia californica</i>	Spreading shrub to 4'; classic, drought-tolerant hummingbird plant, red flowers (yellow variety available); blooms often
Red justicia	<i>Justicia candidans</i>	Erect shrub to 4'; red flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies; may need slightly more water to get established
Mexican honeysuckle	<i>Justicia spicigera</i>	Shrub to 3'; orange flowers attract hummingbirds; N Mexico native
Velvetpod mimosa	<i>Mimosa dysocarpa</i>	Shrub to 4'; showy purple flowers; butterfly larvae host; may need a little more water to get established
Tufted evening primrose	<i>Oenothera caespitosa</i>	Shrub to 1'; large white flowers visited by sphinx moths
Firecracker penstemon	<i>Penstemon eatonii</i>	Erect perennial to 3'; attractive, red flowers attract hummingbirds
Parry penstemon	<i>Penstemon parryii</i>	Short-lived perennial to 3'; attractive pink flowers attract hummingbirds; reseeds easily
Odora	<i>Porophyllum gracile</i>	Shrub to 2'; moth larvae host; fragrant; medicinal uses
Lemonade berry	<i>Rhus trilobata</i>	Shrub to 4'; airy, attractive shrub; small yellow flowers; berries used to make a lemonade-like drink
Desert senna	<i>Senna covesii</i>	Short-lived perennial to 1.5'; attractive yellow flowers, good for pollinators
Desert mallow	<i>Sphaeralcea ambigua</i>	Short-lived perennial to 3'; lots of bright orange flowers great for pollinators; other varieties have pink to lavender flowers
Golden dyssodia	<i>Thymophylla pentachaeta</i>	Small shrub to under 1'; lots of attractive yellow flowers; reseeds, good ground cover; used by butterfly larvae
Hummingbird trumpet	<i>Zauschneria latifolia</i> (<i>Z californica</i>)	Shrub to 3'; showy red flowers visited by hummingbirds and butterflies; used by moth larvae

CACTI, SUCCULENTS, AGAVES, YUCCAS AND OTHER ACCENT PLANTS

Golden-flowered agave	<i>Agave chrysantha</i>	Rosette to 3' high; beautiful yellow flowers (flowers once)
Hohokam agave	<i>Agave murpheyi</i>	Rosette to 3' high; believed to have been grown in large Hohokam plantations, pit-roasted for food; used for fiber; easily reproduces vegetatively (pups)
Palmer agave	<i>Agave palmeri</i>	Rosette to 3' high; bat-pollinated
Shin dagger	<i>Agave schottii</i>	Rosette to 1' high; bat-pollinated
Saguaro	<i>Carnegiea gigantea</i>	Columnar cactus to 40'; bat and bird pollinated; woodpecker holes host many bird species' nests; slow growing
Buckthorn cholla	<i>Cylindropuntia acanthocarpa</i>	Jointed cactus to 5'; flowers good for pollinators; good structure for cactus wren and curve-billed thrasher nests
Chain-fruit cholla	<i>Cylindropuntia fulgida</i>	Jointed cactus to 6'; flowers good for pollinators; good structure for cactus wren and curve-billed thrasher nests
Cane cholla	<i>Cylindropuntia spinosior</i>	Jointed cactus to 6'; flowers good for pollinators; good structure for cactus wren and curve-billed thrasher nests
Staghorn cholla	<i>Cylindropuntia versicolor</i>	Jointed cactus to 7'; flowers good for pollinators; good structure for cactus wren and curve-billed thrasher nests
Desert spoon, sotol	<i>Dasyliion wheeleri</i>	Yucca-like rosette to 4' with annual flower stalk to 10'; white, spring flowers good for pollinators; attractive accent

Name	Scientific name	Description
Engelmann's hedgehog	<i>Echinocereus engelmannii</i>	Small columnar cactus to 1'; brilliant magenta flower
Fishhook barrel cactus	<i>Ferocactus wislizenii</i>	Barrel cactus to 6'; yellow flowers for pollinators and edible fruit
Ocotillo	<i>Fouquieria splendens</i>	Shrub to 12'; unique growth form with branches growing upward from base; terminal red flowers attract hummingbirds and other pollinators; small leaves when moisture is present
Red hesperaloe	<i>Hesperaloe parviflora</i>	Yucca-like rosette to 3'; hummingbirds like the red flowers; distinct growth form; good for large pots; TX and Coahuila native
Sprawling prickly pear	<i>Opuntia phaeacantha</i>	Sprawling prickly pear to 3'; yellow flowers visited by insects and birds; fruits eaten by birds and other animals
Santa Rita prickly pear	<i>Opuntia santa-rita</i>	Less sprawling prickly pear to 3'; yellow flowers visited by insects/birds; fruits edible; attractive purplish pads
Night-blooming cereus	<i>Peniocereus greggii</i>	Thin-stemmed cactus to 3'; inconspicuous until briefly blooms in early summer for one night only, when it is pollinated by sphinx moths; fruit eaten by animals
Arizona yucca	<i>Yucca arizonica</i>	Rosette to 4'; used by moth larvae; yuccas are classic accent plants
Soaptree yucca	<i>Yucca elata</i>	Rosette on trunk to 10'; edible flowers, used by moth larvae
VINES		
Queen's wreath	<i>Antigonon leptopus</i>	Vine, grows prodigiously; beautiful clusters of pink flowers attract pollinators; perennial root, above ground dies back after first frost. Resprouts in spring. Sonora and Baja California native.
Southwest pipevine	<i>Aristolochia watsonii</i>	Vine to 5' long; unobtrusive; attractive purplish foliage; annual growth on perennial root; hosts larvae of pipevine swallowtail
Virgin's bower	<i>Clematis drummondii</i>	Vine 6-12'; used by butterfly larvae; inconspicuous vine but showy flower/seed clusters in summer
Snapdragon vine	<i>Maurandya antirrhiniflora</i>	Vine to 8'; delicate vine with small but beautiful red to purple flowers; visited by hummingbirds; partial shade
Arizona passion flower	<i>Passiflora arizonica</i>	Vine to 20'; astonishing flowers; hosts butterfly larvae; edible fruits; attractive
HERITAGE FRUIT		
<p>These heritage fruit trees and vines are believed to be descended from some of the stock brought into the Sonoran Desert by early missionaries and explorers. Having survived this long, these varieties may be the hardiest in our climate. Still, these plants need significantly more water than the native plants listed above. Some are cold sensitive and others benefit from partial shade. These trees were researched by the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum and are available from Desert Survivors Nursery.</p>		
Lime	<i>Citrus limettioides</i>	Cold sensitive
Orange	<i>Citrus sinensis</i>	Cold sensitive
Quince	<i>Cydonia oblonga</i>	Several varieties available
Fig	<i>Ficus carica</i>	More than one variety available
Apricot	<i>Prunus armeniaca</i>	
Plums	<i>Prunus domestica</i>	
Peach	<i>Prunus persica</i>	
Pomegranate	<i>Punica granatum</i>	Several varieties available
Pear	<i>Pyrus communis</i>	
Grape	<i>Vitis vinifera</i>	
Guava	<i>Psidium guajava</i>	