



PROJECT MUSE®

Water Wise

Wendy Mee

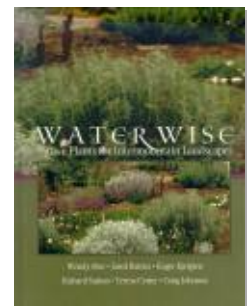
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Cacti

Coryphantha vivipara
NUTTALL PINCUSHION
Cactaceae (Cactus family)

Appearance

FORM/SIZE: Succulent. Stems solitary or colonial, barrel-shaped, to 6" tall.

ROOTS: Extensive and shallow.

SPINES: Clustered, ½" long, 3–12 central and 12–20 radial, spreading, whitish near base, dark-tipped.

FLOWERS: Showy, clustering, waxy, rosy purple-pink petals, yellow stamens. Blooms May–July.

FRUIT: Berry, many-seeded, green.

DORMANCY PERIOD: After flowering. Expands in spring with water uptake, then shrinks.

Natural Habitat

HABITAT AND RANGE: Open, rocky slopes. Alberta to Manitoba, south to OR, UT, NM, and TX.

ELEVATION: 4,800'–9,000'.

PLANT COMMUNITIES: Pinyon-juniper, cool desert shrub.

SOIL: Sandy.

EXPOSURE: Open.

Landscape Use

HARDINESS ZONES: Range indicates cold hardiness.

DROUGHT TOLERANCE: High.

ESTABLISHMENT: Good, quick from cuttings.

MAINTENANCE: Requires good drainage, may be sensitive to excessive winter moisture.

BEST USE: Sand garden, xeric garden, rock garden.

WILDLIFE VALUE: Pollinated by bees.

Comments

Nuttall pincushion is a lovely small barrel cactus that looks like clustered eggs. It puts on a show in spring with its pink flowers with yellow centers. It would work well in a rock garden or xeric garden if given space to show off its form and colors.



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USU HERBARIUM



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Echinocereus engelmannii

ENGELMANN HEDGEHOG CACTUS

Cactaceae (Cactus family)

Appearance

FORM/SIZE: Succulent. Stems solitary or in loose clusters, cylindrical, 4"–12" tall and 4" wide, 10–13 ribbed.

ROOTS: Extensive and shallow.

SPINES: Clustered, 10–18 per areole. Central spines 2–6, with one much longer, to 3" long, curved or twisted. Radial spines 6–12, appressed and spreading, to ½" long.

FLOWERS: Showy, funnel-shaped, from near top of stem, petals magenta or pinkish purple, stamens yellow. Blooms May–June.

FRUIT: Berry, ovoid to oblong, green to red with deciduous spine clusters.

DORMANCY PERIOD: After flowering, dry season.

Natural Habitat

HABITAT AND RANGE: Open rocky slopes. Widespread, common within range. CA, NV, UT, AZ.

ELEVATION: 2,900'–6,200'.

PLANT COMMUNITIES: Pinyon-juniper, cool desert shrub, salt desert shrub.

SOIL: Gravelly, well-draining.

EXPOSURE: Open.

Landscape Use

HARDINESS ZONES: Have not been determined.

DROUGHT TOLERANCE: High.

ESTABLISHMENT: Quick from cuttings.

MAINTENANCE: Requires good drainage, may be sensitive to excessive winter moisture.

BEST USE: Xeric gardens, rock gardens.

WILDLIFE VALUE: Pollinated by bees.

Comments

Engelmann hedgehog cactus is a barrel-stemmed cactus whose common name is derived from the spines that are so close together they resemble a hedgehog. It has a very showy pink flower in spring that is so open it looks like a small colorful pail, and the spines can also be of different colors. It is taller than Nuttall pincushion (*Coryphantha vivipara*); thus it could be used in a more prominent position in the rock garden or dry landscape and hold it own in terms of space with other plants.

Echinocereus triglochidiatus

CLARETCUP CACTUS

Cactaceae (Cactus family)

Appearance

FORM/SIZE: Succulent. Numerous stems, mound-forming, 7–12 ribbed.

ROOTS: Extensive and shallow.

SPINES: 3–12 per cluster, white to gray to black, central spines 1–3, straight, curved or twisted. Radial spines 5–8, spreading.

FLOWERS: Showy, cup-shaped, borne near tip of stem, scarlet or claret red, stamens red. Blooms May–July.

FRUIT: Berry, cylindrical, fleshy, purplish red, with spines.

DORMANCY PERIOD: After flowering.

Natural Habitat

HABITAT AND RANGE: Open, rocky slopes. NV to CO, south to CA, UT, AZ, NM, TX, and Mexico.

ELEVATION: 3,200'–9,000'.

PLANT COMMUNITIES: Pinyon-juniper, cool desert shrub, salt desert shrub.

SOIL: Sandy, rocky.

EXPOSURE: Open.

Landscape Use

HARDINESS ZONES: Have not been determined.

DROUGHT TOLERANCE: High.

ESTABLISHMENT: Quick from cuttings.

MAINTENANCE: Requires good drainage, may be sensitive to excessive winter moisture.

BEST USE: Xeric garden, rock garden.

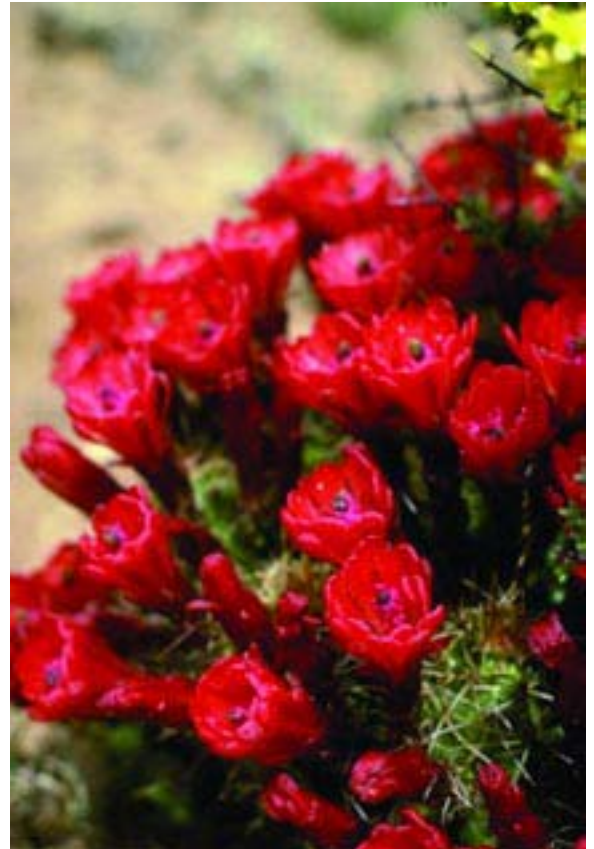
WILDLIFE VALUE: Pollinated by bees and hummingbirds.

Comments

Claretcup cactus is actually a small barrel cactus, but it can form large colonies which give the impression of one sprawling plant. It is a showstopper in spring, producing copious large, wine to orange-red flowers that are a shocking contrast to the surrounding desert habitats in which it is found.



USU HERBARIUM



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O. erinacea



USU HERBARIUM

O. erinacea var. *ursina*

Opuntia erinacea

COMMON PRICKLYPEAR

Cactaceae (Cactus family)

Appearance

FORM/SIZE: Succulent. Stems jointed, segmented, flat to roundish, 4"–12" tall and 3' wide, gray-green.

ROOTS: Extensive and shallow.

SPINES: Areoles with yellow to brown barbs, spines one to several per cluster, straight or curved, flattened basally, deflexed, flexible, generally only near top of segments.

FLOWERS: Showy, from previous year's areoles along top of terminal segments, yellow, bronze, pink, or violet. Blooms May–July.

FRUIT: Berry, dry, tan or brown, with deciduous spines.

DORMANCY PERIOD: After flowering.

Natural Habitat

HABITAT AND RANGE: Open, rocky slopes. ID to CA, UT, AZ, NM, WY.

ELEVATION: 4,000'–9,000'.

PLANT COMMUNITIES: Parkland, aspen forest, mountain brush, pinyon-juniper, cool desert shrub, salt desert shrub.

SOIL: Gravelly.

EXPOSURE: Open.

Landscape Use

HARDINESS ZONES: Range indicates hardiness.

DROUGHT TOLERANCE: High.

ESTABLISHMENT: Quick from cuttings.

MAINTENANCE: Requires good drainage, may be sensitive to excessive winter moisture.

BEST USE: Xeric, rock gardens.

WILDLIFE VALUE: Pollinated by bees.

Comments

Common pricklypear can provide interesting form and texture in any xeric garden with its expanse of pads. It hybridizes with other *Opuntia* species, especially plains pricklypear (*O. polyacantha*) to form a complex of intergrades whenever they are grown together.

Opuntia polyacantha
PLAINS PRICKLYPEAR
Cactaceae (Cactus family)

Appearance

FORM/SIZE: Succulent, stems segmented, flattened, not easily detached, 8" tall and 4" wide, blue-green.

ROOTS: Extensive, 12" minimum depth.

SPINES: Areoles only slightly barbed, 6–10 spines per cluster, variously oriented.

FLOWERS: Showy, yellow, bronze, pink to violet.
Blooms May–July.

FRUIT: Berry, dry, barbed with spines, tan or brown, deciduous.

DORMANCY PERIOD: After flowering, winter.

Natural Habitat

HABITAT AND RANGE: Open plains, foothills. Widely distributed throughout range. British Columbia to Saskatchewan, south to NV, UT, NM, OK, and MO.

ELEVATION: 3,500'–7,200'.

PLANT COMMUNITIES: Parkland, coniferous forest, aspen forest, mountain brush, pinyon-juniper, cool desert shrub, salt desert shrub.

SOIL: Fine to coarse, dry, pH 7.0–8.8, low fertility.

EXPOSURE: Open.

Landscape Use

HARDINESS ZONES: Hardy to –28°F.

DROUGHT TOLERANCE: High.

ESTABLISHMENT: Quick from cuttings. Rapid growth rate, moderate seedling vigor.

MAINTENANCE: Requires good drainage, may be sensitive to excessive winter moisture.

BEST USE: Xeric garden, rock garden.

WILDLIFE VALUE: Pollinated by bees.

Comments

Plains pricklypear is a very widely distributed cactus that extends well into the high plains. The yellow flowers are attractive but not spectacular, and thus this species is probably best used as a background plant in the rock garden. Another similar species is brittle pricklypear (*O. fragilis*), whose pads are easily detached.



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Pediocactus simpsonii

SIMPSON FOOTCACTUS

Cactaceae (Cactus family)

Appearance

FORM/SIZE: Succulent. Stems solitary or colonial, subglobose, 6" tall, to at least 8" wide.

ROOTS: Extensive and shallow.

SPINES: Central spines 4–10 per cluster, to 1" long, brownish-black, radial spines 10–25 per cluster, white.

FLOWERS: Showy, white, pink, yellow, or greenish.

FRUIT: Berry, green to red.

DORMANCY PERIOD: After flowering, winter.

Natural Habitat

HABITAT AND RANGE: Exposed, rocky ridges. WA to WY, south to NV, UT, AZ, and NM.

ELEVATION: 4,800'–9,000'.

PLANT COMMUNITIES: : Parkland, pinyon-juniper, rock outcropping, cool desert shrub, salt desert shrub.

SOIL: Rocky.

EXPOSURE: Open.

Landscape Use

HARDINESS ZONES: To at least zone 5.

DROUGHT TOLERANCE: High.

ESTABLISHMENT: Quick from cuttings.

MAINTENANCE: Requires good drainage, may be sensitive to excessive winter moisture.

BEST USE: Xeric garden, rock garden.

WILDLIFE VALUE: Pollinated by bees.

Comments

Simpson footcactus is one of the nicest barrel cacti in that the large colonies it forms create a distinctive, nearly geometric pattern that is itself quite attractive. These colonies are then graced with lovely reddish pink flowers with sunburst-yellow centers. It is a marvelous plant for the rock garden or any low-water landscape.

