

CACTACEAE – CACTUS FAMILY

Plant: succulent, spiny herbs and shrubs

Stem: mostly succulent, may be very large

Root: usually shallow

Leaves: usually leafless or small and dropping early, spines usually present

Flowers: perfect mostly; often showy; many sepals and petals (often alike) which may be fused at base; many stamens in groups or spirals; ovary inferior, 3 to many carpels

Fruit: fleshy, often edible with many seeds

Other: most adapted to arid climates though some found in most climates;
Dicotyledons Group

Genera: 125+ genera; widespread in US, locally *Coryphantha* and *Opuntia* (prickly pear)

Cactaceae (Cactus Family) – Flowers mostly of numerous tepals, axillary and solitary; the fleshy green part of the cactus is modified stem, leaves are absent or short-lived, spines are borne from buds on Areoles (modified branches) – many genera and species

Examples of some genera



Buck-Horn Cholla

Cylindropuntia acanthocarpa (Engelm. & J.M. Bigelow) F.M. Knuth



Eastern Prickly-Pear Cactus [Devil's Tongue]
Opuntia humifusa (Raf.) Raf.



California Barrel Cactus

Ferocactus cylindraceus (Engelm.) Orcutt



Erect [Shell Mound] Prickly-Pear Cactus
Opuntia stricta (Haw.) Haw.

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Buck-Horn Cholla

Cylindropuntia acanthocarpa (Engelm. & J.M. Bigelow)

F.M. Knuth

Cactaceae (Cactus Family)

Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, Clarke County, Nevada

Notes: flower of numerous tepals, yellow- to orange-red; stems roughly cylindrical, tubercles (bumps or raised areas are usually 3x longer than wide, 6-20+ spines per areole, central spine usually the longest; fruits dry and usually with spines; sandy to rocky desert habitat; summer

[V Max Brown, 2014]



California Barrel Cactus

Ferocactus cylindraceus (Engelm.) Orcutt
Cactaceae (Cactus Family)

Red Rock Canyon National Conservation
Area, Clarke County, Nevada

Notes: flower of numerous tepals, bright yellow, at the
top of the plant; spines numerous (12 to 30+ per areole,
at various angles), often reddish but may be yellowish;
fruits fleshy with many seeds; stem cylindrical; sandy
and rocky habitats; spring to summer (several varieties)

[V Max Brown, 2014]



Eastern Prickly-Pear Cactus

[Devil's Tongue]



Opuntia humifusa (Raf.) Raf.

Cactaceae (Cactus Family)

Oak Openings Metropark, Lucas County, Ohio

Notes: flower of numerous tepals, bright yellow, often with red at the base; stems flattened, fleshy, 1-2 segments; spines solitary or paired, sometimes absent, white, gray or brown; fruits fleshy without spines; sandy soils; summer

[V Max Brown, 2005]



Erect [Shell Mound] Prickly-Pear Cactus



Opuntia stricta (Haw.) Haw.

Cactaceae (Cactus Family)

Cedar Key, Levy County, Florida

Notes: flower of numerous tepals, yellow; stems flattened in segments (plants may be 2+ m in height), fleshy, may be large (30+ cm), dull and glabrous; many spines (0-11) per areola - eye, yellow in color turning brown in old age; fruits fleshy without spines, purplish; coastal sandy soils; spring to summer

[V Max Brown, 2011]

