

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

NEWSLETTER

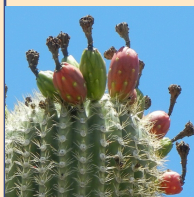
Fall 2020 Volume 34

Welcome to the Sonoran Desert Supermarket - Now Open!

By Alice Demetra

Visitors to Pinnacle Peak Park likely have easy access to food, whether at a farmer's market, nearby grocery store, or at the touch of a ClickList. For Indigenous People—from the earliest Archaic Hunter/Gatherers to the Hohokam to the Pima and Papago—the Sonoran Desert was their food superstore. Step back in time and imagine Indigenous People doing their food shopping in the desert aisles of the Pinnacle Peak supermarket. [PK markers note approximate plant locations]

SAGUARO FRUIT: "JUNE SPECIAL—WHILE THEY LAST!"



Throughout Pinnacle Peak you'll encounter the iconic symbol of the Sonoran Desert—the Saguaro. The saguaro was so important to Indigenous People that they marked the start of their calendar year with the June harvest of its juicy crimson fruits. Pulp,

which possesses a subtle strawberry-watermelon taste, was prepared as jam or sun-dried for later use. Juice was enjoyed fresh, boiled into molasses-like syrup, or fermented into ceremonial wine. The plentiful tiny black seeds were ground into meal.

TREE PODS : "PICK SOME UP TODAY, SUPPLIES ARE LIMITED!"



Along the trail you'll find the three signature trees of the Arizona Uplands region of the Sonoran Desert—Foothill Palo Verde (L), Desert Ironwood (C), and Velvet Mesquite (R). Harvested in early June, the

immature green pods of the Foothill Palo Verde (PK4) contained seeds relished for their tender, sweet, green pea flavor. Mature, hardened seeds were roasted and ground into meal. Harvested later in June, brownish, marble-shaped Desert Ironwood seeds (Entry) were first soaked to leach out

their bitterness, then parched or roasted over hot coals. Eaten whole or ground into coarse meal, these seeds taste similar to peanuts or acorns. In indigenous cultures, Mesquite (PK56) was deemed their "tree of life." Dry, straw-colored pods were harvested prior to the monsoon. Both the pod's soft inner pith and the hard, lentil-shaped

seeds were pounded into meal that had a caramel-like sweetness and the texture of finely crushed graham crackers. Water and meal formed a dough that was pressed into cakes and sun-dried for storing. These cakes would be rehydrated and either eaten raw or added to soups and stews.

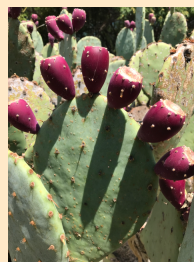
CHOLLA: "THIS BUD'S FOR YOU!"



Pinnacle Peak is home to buckhorn, Christmas, and teddy bear chollas, each with a role in indigenous diets. Buckhorn cholla buds (Grand View) were highly valued for their reliable abundance,

relative ease of harvest, powerhouse nutrition, and preferred taste. Picked in mid-April using saguaro rib tongs, buckhorn cholla buds were de-spined, pit-roasted, then eaten freshly cooked or sun-dried for times when food in the desert was slim picking. Their taste is reminiscent of asparagus or artichoke.

PRICKLY PEAR: "2-FOR-1 SALE: PADS AND FRUITS!"



Between PK31-34 you'll notice newly planted prickly pear cacti, a desert plant whose pads and fruits were food staples. After the removal of spines and glochids, the early Spring new-growth pads were eaten raw or cooked as a green vegetable. Uncooked pads have a lemony-tart green bean flavor, while cooked pads with their mucilaginous

texture taste somewhat like okra. The purple-red prickly pear fruits, ripe in August, have a musty, berry-like flavor with hints of watermelon, strawberry, and fig. Fruit pulp was eaten fresh, while juice was used for drinking or thickened into syrup.

YUCCA: "DESERT BOUNTY IN AISLES PK7-8"

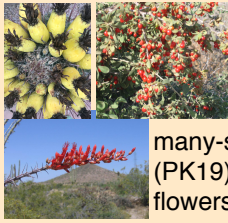


The white waxy, bell-shaped flowers of the soap tree yucca were eaten fresh or lightly roasted. They have a moist jicama-like flavor. Ripening to a reddish hue August through



October, the plump fruits of the banana yucca (PK7-8) were served raw or roasted, having a taste akin to sweet potato or summer squash. Sun-dried pulp was boiled for syrup or kneaded into cakes for winter use.

OTHER PLANTS: "TODAY'S SPECIAL"



Other desert plants eaten on a seasonal basis included the lemony yellow fruits of the barrel cactus (PK46-47), the sweet orange-y red, many-seeded berries of the wolfberry (PK19), and sweet nectar-laden ocotillo flowers (PK5).

"THANK YOU...COME AGAIN!"

Today, folks shop with a cart, recyclable totes, and a shopping list. Indigenous People shopped the incredible edible desert bringing hand-woven willow baskets, kuipad and saguaro rib tongs, and a mental shopping list based on their deep understanding of the seasons and their abiding oneness with nature. Their culture held that people and plants are equals and the act of harvesting allows them to walk among revered members of their

Madison Barasha

By Bronte Ibsen

Pinnacle Peak Park is a wonderful place not only because of the beautiful Sonoran Desert and all of the plants and animals that call this special place home, but also because visitors have the opportunity to interact with our illustrious staff members! One of the newest kiddos on the block is Madison Barasha. If you've had the pleasure of interacting with Madison you've undoubtedly seen her love and passion for nature and keeping it neat!

Madison is a Pennsylvania native who found a home here in the desert. She first fell in love with the outdoors when she went on a backpacking trip in the Grand Canyon – after spending six days in one of the seven wonders of the world she knew that she'd found her passion! She has a Bachelor's in Environmental Science with an emphasis in Management from Northern Arizona University. Since that trip to the Grand Canyon, she has truly taken it upon herself to

Dave Porter

By Yvonne Massman

If you have spent any time at Pinnacle Peak on a Saturday morning shortly after the park opening, then your path has most likely crossed paths with one of our regular hikers, Dave Porter! His fitness group calls him, "Double Dave" because on most days he will run the trail twice! And if you have gone to the Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park's website, www.foppp.org, at any time within the last year and seen the amazing YouTube running video posted there, that is the artistic creation of Dave's! Dave has always been fascinated with photography and videography, and attributes his photography skills to his father-in-law, Robert Campbell who is a professional photographer who has helped teach him new techniques. His expertise has provided the inspiration for the YouTube

plant/people community. Remember the importance of edible desert plants to Indigenous People summed up in their words: 'our souls are tied to the land.'

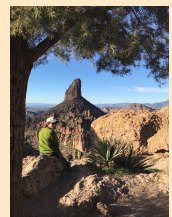
THE FINE PRINT

Never eat any portion of any plant unless you are certain of its identity, harmlessness, and means of preparation. Many Sonoran Desert plants, though edible, are high in alkaloids that may cause intestinal distress. Consumption by animals is not a reliable indicator of edibility. Always exercise caution when handling desert plants. Be advised that City of Scottsdale code states that "no person shall destroy, dig up, mutilate, collect, cut, harvest, or remove any live or dead tree or plant material." Harvesting desert foods is allowed on private land with permission of the owner. State Trust, BLM, NPS, and municipal lands each have specific prohibitions and/or harvesting permit requirements. *[All photos by author.]*

better understand the natural world and the best ways to protect the resources we cherish. A large part of that is doing her best to educate the public about how cool nature is – like how lichens absorb heavy metals from the atmosphere! How metal is that?

When she's not working to save the planet, Madison enjoys hiking, painting, reading, cooking, backpacking, photography and dancing. She also played lacrosse in high school and played at the collegiate level for a year!

This well-rounded and interesting woman was also a dancer for 6 years, mooed at some cows that mooed back, and has swam in the Aegean Sea. If you get a chance the next time you stop by the park, say hello to Madison and maybe ask her about her favorite dad joke – she's got a few up her sleeve.



Madison Barasha.

videos.

Dave is VERY serious about his fitness! He has logged over 1,500+ runs of Pinnacle Peak trail, and lives life with his pillars of health consisting of exercise, nutrition, rest, and mental fitness.

Dave first visited Pinnacle Peak Park in December of 2002. Even with traveling to over 20+ countries and many regions in the world he says that in his heart, Pinnacle Peak is one of his favorite places on earth. Since that inaugural hike, Dave commented that, "I've been continually awed by this place, so much that I don't see it



Dave Porter.

just as a workout, but more of an extension of my being.” His favorite attributes of the trail are the people, and the camaraderie among the individuals that comes out every weekend.

Dave is a wonderful member of our unique community here at the Peak. His presence here exemplifies the special sort of place this park is where there is a place for everyone. If you see Dave on the trail maybe say hello as he’s whipping past you!

Recognition Award for Yvonne Massman

By Tom Eye

In early June, the Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park recognized Yvonne Massman for her contribution to Pinnacle Peak Park, the Preserve, and our Scottsdale community. Yvonne is the Natural Resources Coordinator of Pinnacle Peak Park and parts of the Preserve.

In addition to a crystal award, flowers and gift card, the Friends sent letters to the City Council, Mayor, and the Scottsdale leadership outlining the specifics for this award:

“Yvonne’s commitment to her work is exemplary. She demonstrates high standards for herself, park staff and volunteers. She is thoughtful about programs to benefit the park and provides innovative ideas for effective program implementation. Her knowledge of the Sonoran Desert and its plants and animals is impressive. She continually shares

this knowledge with volunteers, staff, and visitors.

We are impressed by her endless energy, engagement, and preparation in all facets of her work. Yvonne is a positive role model for volunteers, staff, and others with her passion, caring and commitment. She is a valuable asset to the City of Scottsdale and a great partner to the Friends.”

Please join us in thanking Yvonne for making Pinnacle Peak Park such a special place.



Yvonne Massman

The The Mule Deer

By Bob Scalia

Two species of deer inhabit our Sonoran Desert. They are the mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and the white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). Chances are you have seen some deer in the Pinnacle Peak area, and if so, it was almost certainly a mule deer! They tend to prefer the lower valleys and foothills below 4,000 feet, while white-tailed deer thrive in higher mountain areas.

The term *desert mule deer* is generally used to describe those mule deer found from West Texas through the southern portions of New Mexico, Arizona and California.

It certainly comes as no surprise how mule deer get their name. Their ears are disproportionately larger than other deer species. Their coat ranges from a reddish-brown in the summer to a bluish-gray in the winter. They have a light gray face and a distinctive black forehead; both of which contrast with their white eye rings and muzzle markings. A mule deer’s white tail has a distinctive black tip and is surrounded by a large white rump.

The mule deer is the larger and more prolific of Arizona’s deer. Adult males, known as bucks, measure as much as 42 inches tall at the shoulder, and can weigh more than 200 pounds. Adult females, known as does, weigh an average of 125 pounds. Both become sexually mature at around 18 months of age, and have a life span of around ten years.



Photo by Enzo Bonnett

Bucks grow antlers in preparation for the winter mating season, also known as the rut, when the bucks fight for a harem of

does. Come spring, and after the breeding season, these antlers are shed.

Following a gestation period of about 190 days, does give birth to one or two spotted fawns. Birth is timed so that she and her newborn can take advantage of plant growth following the summer rains. The fawns’ spots disappear after about two months. Young deer will typically stay with their mother until the following spring.

In our area, a mule deer’s natural predators are primarily mountain lions, coyotes and bobcats. Their flight behavior is unusual. Unlike a white-tailed deer, a mule deer does not ‘flag’ its tail. It often flees from danger in a motion called ‘stotting’, wherein all four hooves uniformly land and push off at the same time in a bouncing motion which lifts their entire body off the ground.

Mule deer are herbivores, and mostly feed around dawn and dusk. In the Pinnacle Peak area, browse (shrub species) is their staple food source, as it is available year-round, supplemented when available by forbs (broad-leaved weeds) and cactus fruits.

*To learn more, I suggest checking out **Deer of the Southwest**, by Jim Heffelfinger. It is an excellent informational source on both the Southwestern Mule Deer and the White-Tailed Deer, and the primary one used in writing this article.*



Photo by Enzo Bonnett

Pinnacle Peak Park Scheduled Activities:

Fri., 10/16/20	6:15PM - Astronomy Talk Registration Begins 10/3	Sat., 1/9/21	6:00PM - Astronomy Talk Registration Begins 12/26
Sat., 11/14/20	5:45PM - Astronomy Talk Registration Begins 10/31	Sat., 2/13/21	6:30PM - Astronomy Talk Registration Begins 1/30
Sat., 12/12/20	5:45PM - Astronomy Talk Registration Begins 11/28	Fri., 3/12/21	7:00PM - Astronomy Talk Registration Begins 2/26

** Call the Pinnacle Peak Park main number at (480) 312-0990 to make reservations for the Astronomy Talk or Full moon Hike*

*** Minimum age to attend the Astronomy Talk is eight years old.*

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

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