

20. [Fairy Duster](#) - *Calliandra eriophylla*  
(right side of trail)

The shrub reaches about 2 feet by 2 feet. It flowers in the spring with pink fluffy balls. Indigenous people used leaflets and stems for decoration after childbirth.

21. [Nurse Tree or Nurse Plant](#) - (left side of trail)

Nurse Trees, such as this, provide a micro-habitat which provides warmth in the winter and shade in the summer allowing fragile young plants to start to grow. For example, Saguaro seedlings are more likely to survive in the protective canopy of a nurse tree, like this Palo Verde. If you look closely under this Palo Verde, you can see a young Saguaro growing and thriving in the protective environment.

22. [Englemann's Hedgehog Cactus](#) - *Echinocereus engelmannii* (left side of trail)

This Hedgehog Cactus grows about 1 foot tall and in clumps of about 2 ½ feet across. It blooms in the spring with purple flowers. Major pollinators are bees. The Hedgehog Cactus has a waxy coating to help minimize water loss. The spines can help deter herbivores, but the major function of the spines is for shade. The amount of sunlight the plant gets determines the diameter and length of the spines. This reduces surface temperature and water loss. Indigenous people ate boiled buds and raw fruit.

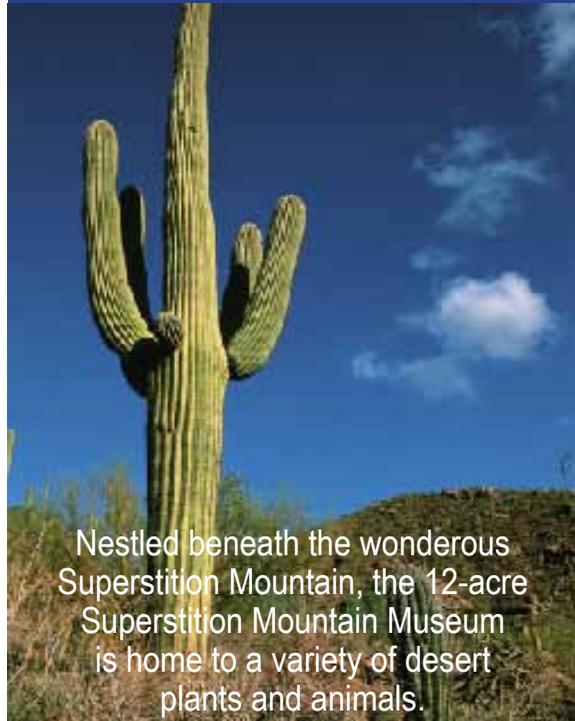
23. [Mesquite Tree](#) - *Prosopis velutina* (right side of trail)

This tree reaches about 30 feet tall. It blooms yellow, catkin-like flowers in spring. The dropped seed pods are a main diet of Coyotes. Indigenous people made a sweet drink from the pods and ground the seeds for flour.



# SUPERSTITION MOUNTAIN MUSEUM

## NATURE WALK GUIDE (Total Walking Distance = 1/3 mile)



Nestled beneath the wonderous Superstition Mountain, the 12-acre Superstition Mountain Museum is home to a variety of desert plants and animals.

We invite you to walk our 1/3 mile trail where you will find many of these plants identified.

We hope you enjoy your nature walk today.  
Thank you!



1. [Chain Fruit Cholla](#) - also called [Jumping Cholla](#) - *Cylindropuntia fulgida* (right side of trail)

There are more than 20 species of Cholla. This is the largest of all the Cholla and can grow up to 15 feet tall. It blooms small pink flowers from June to August. When new fruit grows, they are added to those of previous seasons creating a chain that can be 2 feet long. It is also referred to as “Jumping Cactus” because while they don’t actually jump, they just seem to when you are surprised by one fastened to your leg. It’s easy to imagine it leaped on you when you weren’t looking. Birds and mammals eat the fruit. Indigenous people ate the buds for significant amounts of protein and calcium.

2. [Century Plant](#) - *Agave americana* (left side of trail)

An Agave is unusual in that it flowers only once and then dies. This Agave lives 10 to 40 years. Agave is called Century Plant because it was believed to live for 100 years. This Agave is native to central Mexico. It reaches 5 feet to 7 feet tall and spreads to 12 feet wide. Agaves are leaf succulents, not cacti. Today, the heart of this species is fermented to make Mezcal. Pre-Columbian uses included a beer-like drink called Pulque. The heart was baked and eaten; and rope was made of fibers from the leaves. It is used as an antiseptic, diaphoretic, diuretic, and a laxative. The sap from this plant will burn your skin.

3. [Blue Palo Verde](#) - *Parkinsonia florida* (left side of trail)

This is an example of the Blue Palo Verde tree. It may reach about 45 feet tall and has a bluish tint to the young bark and branches. Blue Palo Verdes rarely live to be 100 years old. Palo Verde Trees often serve as nurse plants for other desert plants, especially Saguaros. Bighorn Sheep, Mule Deer, Jack Rabbits and other small mammals eat Palo Verde leaves, branches and seeds. Numerous birds forage, nest and perch in Palo Verdes.

4. [Giant Saguaro](#) - *Carnegiea gigantea* (left side of trail)

The giant Saguaro is often referred to as the “Lord of the Desert”. Fully-grown Saguaros may stand 50 feet tall and live 200 years. It is a very slow-growing cactus and at 10 years old may only stand 5 or 6 inches tall. At 75 years it may only be 10 – 12 feet tall and may just be starting to grow its first arm. A Saguaro is about 98% water and may weigh 10-15 tons! The root system is very shallow so it can take advantage of even light rainfall. The roots extend out in all directions about as far as the cactus is tall. The Saguaro blooms in May and is the state flower of Arizona. It is a favorite of most desert birds. The major pollinators are nectar feeding bats.



5. [Ocotillo](#) - ([okoteo](#)) *Fouquieria splendens* (right side of trail)

Mature Ocotillos may have as many as 75 branches and most of the year the branches are leafless and appear to be dead. In March through June, the Ocotillo has bright red flowers that appear in 10-inch clusters on the ends of its branches and again after periods of heavy rain fall. Ocotillos may reach 20 feet tall and can live for over 200 years.

6. [Prickly Pear Cactus](#) - *Opuntia engelmannii* (left side of trail)

There are 57 species of Prickly Pear Cacti. Like most cacti, Prickly Pears have large spines, which are actually modified leaves. Fruits of most Prickly Pears are edible and the branches (pads) can be cooked and eaten as a vegetable. Prickly Pears are popular in making candy and jelly and have medicinal use as well. The stems can be used to treat type II diabetes and stomach aches. There is a concern about the possible toxic effect to the kidneys so widespread use has not become popular. Prickly Pears live to be about 30 years old.

7. [Buckhorn Cholla](#) - *Cylindropuntia acanthocarpa* (right side of trail)

The Buckhorn Cholla is similar to the Staghorn Cholla except its mature fruit is dry. It is covered by spines that only stay on the plant for a few months. This Cholla can grow from 3 to 15 feet tall and has stems that range from green to purplish in color. Flowers range from red to yellow and yellow-green in color. The fruit are pale yellow and drop off after a few months.

8. [Jojoba Bush](#) - *Simmondsia chinensis* (Right side of trail)

Jojoba bushes have male and female plants. The plant can live up to 200 years. Many desert mammals nibble on Jojobas enjoying their succulent, spineless leaves. The Jojoba bean is about 50% oil, which is actually a liquid wax. The wax is used for cooking, cosmetics, as a lubricant and even a car wax.



9. [Foothill Palo Verde](#) - (Spanish for green wood or stick) *Parkinsonia microphylla* (right side of trail)

This is an example of the Foothill Palo Verde tree. It generally only reaches about 20 feet tall. It has a yellowish-green bark. The Foothill Palo Verde blooms in the spring, right after the Blue Palo Verde blooms. The flowers are a dull yellow with the fifth petal being white. The tree may live to be between 100-400 years old. Foothill Palo Verdes often serve as nurse plants for the other plants, especially Saguaros. Big Horn Sheep, Mule Deer, Jack Rabbits and other small mammals eat the leaves, branches and seeds. Numerous birds forage, nest and perch in the Palo Verdes.

10. [Brittle Bush](#) - *Encelia farinose* (right side of trail)

The bush gets about 3 feet by 3 feet. It has yellow flowers in the spring. Indigenous people used the resin as glue to hold points on arrow shafts and to seal pots and baskets. The children used the upper stem resin as chewing gum. Spanish friars and monks used the resin as incense. Cowboys used the stems as a toothbrush. It was also used to treat toothaches and could be used to harden a loose tooth.



11. [Triangle-leaf Bursage](#) - *Ambrosia deltoidea* (right side of trail)

This bush reaches about 2 feet tall by 2 feet wide. The flowers are about ¼ inch and are a yellow-green and bloom from February to July. Burr-like seeds are dispersed by attaching to passing animals. This bush is a nurse plant for other plants.

12. [Ironwood](#) - *Olneya tesota* (left side of trail)

Ironwoods are one of the largest and longest living trees in the desert. These trees can reach 45 feet tall and can live up to 1,500 years. The seed pods are eaten by small mammals and birds. The wood is very dense and will sink in water unlike most woods that will float. The Ironwood bloom in spring and have white to lavender flowers. These trees provide a shady sanctuary and rich soil that help increase plant diversity in an area and provides benefits to wildlife. More than 230 plant species have been recorded starting their growth within the protective micro climate under Ironwood "nurse plants." Sixty-two species of reptiles, 64 species of mammals, as well as insects, use Ironwood for forage and cover. Indigenous people ate the seed pods and made handles out of the wood for tools.

13. [Pincushion Cactus](#) - *Mammillaria microcarpa* (left side of trail)

This small cactus likes full sun, but does best next to a small shrub where it is overlooked by rabbits. This cactus grows about 6 inches tall and in clumps about 5 inches across. The flowers are pink and bloom in the spring. There are more than 175 species of Pincushion Cacti, of which 10 are found in Arizona. Indigenous people ate the fruit and used boiled plants for earaches.



14. [Teddy Bear Cholla](#) - *Cylindropuntia bigelovii* (right side of trail)

This cactus is also called Jumping Cholla. The "canes" of Cholla are actually modified branches that serve several functions: water storage, photo synthesis and flower production. The flowers are a light lime green and bloom in spring. The Cholla is called Teddy Bear, because it resembles the fuzzy arms and legs of a teddy bear.



15. [Desert Mistletoe](#) - *Phoradendron californicum* (left side of trail)

This is a parasitic plant that grows in clumps about 3 feet long. It can be seen growing in Palo Verdes (as seen here), Mesquites and Ironwood trees. The plants flowers are tiny and are a greenish-yellow and bloom from January to March. The fruit are white to pink berries, which are dispersed by the Phainopepla (a shiny black bird). Indigenous people ate the berries and made a medicinal tea from the stems.

16. [Fishhook Barrel Cactus](#) - *Feroocactus wislizeni* (left side of trail)

This Barrel Cactus reaches between 3 and 6 feet tall. It can live 50 to 100 years. Fishhook Barrels bloom in late spring with red to yellow flowers and have yellow fruit which are eaten by birds and mammals. Old folklore said that the Barrel Cactus was a source of water for people lost without water in the desert. The water contains oxalic acid and is likely to cause diarrhea or worse. It is not a source of potable water. Indigenous people boiled pulp with Mesquite beans and ate it as a sweet dish. The spines were heated and bent to make fish hooks.



17. [Creosote Bush](#) - *Larrea tridentata* (left side of trail)

The Creosote Bush is an extremely long-living plant. One Creosote plant, named "King Clone" near Lucerne Valley in California has been carbon dated to 11,700 years old. Mature Creosote bushes are so efficient at absorbing water that seeds that fall nearby cannot accumulate enough water to germinate effectively creating a "dead zone" around the plant. It has yellow flowers in the spring. Indigenous people used the stems and leaves for steam to inhale for congestion or as a tea for flu, stomach cramps, cancer, coughs and others. The FDA has issued warnings that drinking this tea (called Chaparral Tea) can cause damage to the liver and kidneys.

18. [Mormon Tea](#) - *Ephedra trifurca* (right side of trail)

Mormon Tea grows to about 4 feet tall. It flowers in the spring and has yellow male and female cones (like pine cones) that are wind pollinated. The over-all plant is a greenish-yellow. Indigenous people, Mormon pioneers and Spanish speaking people of the Southwest used this plant for pneumonia, diabetes, syphilis and other ailments.

19. [White Ratany](#) - *Krameria greyi* (right side of trail)

This is a grayish-green shrub that grows about 32 inches by 3 feet. This parasitic plant sends roots to surrounding shrubs and extracts nutrients from their host plants. It has red-violet flowers that bloom in spring and late summer. It makes good cover for reptiles and small mammals in summer time. Deer browse on the White Ratany in early spring and late summer. Indigenous people used the plant for sore eyes, dysentery and red dye made from the roots.