

# WILD & WACKY

Take a journey through the Garden to explore the wildest and wackiest plants on Desert Discovery Loop Trail. Desert plants may look tough, but many of their unusual traits help them to thrive in the hot, dry desert.

**1. SEARCH** along the *Virginia G. Piper* Charitable Trust Desert Terrace Garden walkway for the starfish-shaped plant.

- When in bloom, this plant makes a big stink! The red, fleshy flowers on this spineless succulent smell like rotting meat. This helps attract flies for pollination.



**2. SEEK & FIND** the twisted cactus near the giant snails.

- Find a cactus with spiraled stems near the giant **Wild Rising** snails. Named for its unusual shape, the 'twisted cactus' is rarely found in the wild. Scientists cannot explain its odd form. Do you have a guess why this cactus twists?
- **ACTION:** *Can you twist your body into the shape of a twisted cactus?*



**3. SEEK & FIND** the creeping devil cactus in the *Kitchell* Family Heritage Garden.

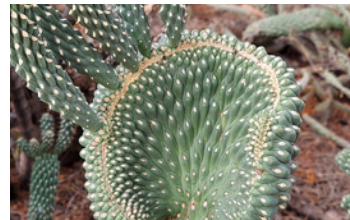
- You found the first documented plant in the Garden.
- Always on the move, it forms new roots at the tip of each stem, allowing the plant to slowly roam. In 1939, it was three feet long. Today, the plant has crept more than 45 feet.



**4. SEEK & FIND** a boxing glove cholla on the Desert Discovery Loop Trail.

**HINT:** *Look to the left side of the trail past Webster Center.*

- Look closely for a cactus shaped like a 'boxing glove.'
- Some cactus will mutate creating interesting forms.
- Plant collectors seek out these 'weird' plants to add to their gardens.



**5. SEEK & FIND** a crested Whortleberry Cactus in *Stardust Foundation Plaza*.

- This plant is one of many crested cactus in the Garden. Crests are an unusual form that creates ripples or fan-like shapes. Some say they look like a brain.
- How many crested cactus can you discover in the *Sybil B. Harrington Cactus and Succulent Galleries*?
- Crests are unusual and no one knows exactly why the crested variation happens, but some experts suspect damage from frost or lightning, a genetic abnormality or hormonal quirk.
- Crested cactus inspired researchers at Arizona State University to look for new ways to treat cancer.



**6. SEEK & FIND** the boojum tree along the *Desert Discovery Loop Trail*.

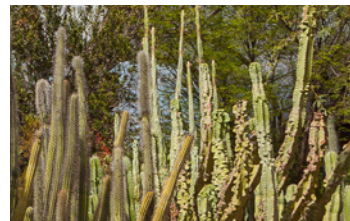
**HINT:** Look near the *Sybil B. Harrington Cactus and Succulent Galleries*.

- “What is that?!” is a common reaction to this peculiar plant. This ancient tree is called ‘Cirio’ (candle) in its home on the Baja peninsula. The giant plant grows leaves when it rains and drops them when it is dry, conserving water.
- The large stems stores water and acts like a canteen-when the plant is thirsty.



**7. SEARCH** for the Totem Pole Cactus located outside *Sybil B. Harrington Cactus and Succulent Galleries*.

- Look closely - this spineless wonder is covered in bumps that preserve water to help it survive in the hot, dry desert.
- The totem pole cactus does not have spines.



**8. LOOK** for an agave on the *Desert Discovery Loop Trail*.

- Agave leaves grow in a rosette - leaves are pressed tightly together before they open.
- Carefully (leaves have sharp points on the end) look at the agave leaves. What do you notice? Do you see any patterns?
- Agave leaves have patterns that were imprinted on them before the leaves opened. Wacky!
- Agaves have been used for food, fiber, medicine and tools and agaves are used to make tequila.

