

# Plant Fun Facts



*Beardgrass (Bothriochloa barbinoides), USDA Forest Service photo*

- Saguaro's (*Carnegie gigantea*) can live to be 150-200 years old! Saguaro flowers are pollinated by bats during the night and by bees and birds during the day.
- Hedgehog cactus (*Echinocereus* sp.) fruit tastes like strawberries and is a major food source for rodents and birds.
- Beardgrass (*Bothriochloa barbinoides*) is a perennial bunch grass that grows along roadsides and is said to have a sharp smell of blueberries if you crush its seeds.
- Alligator Juniper (*Juniperus deppeana*), typically found above 4,500 ft elevation, has bark that looks like an alligator's skin.
- The Tonto Basin agave (*Agave delamateri*) is a rare domesticated plant that was tended by pre-Columbian people. It was most likely used for food and fibers.



*Tonto Basin Agave (Agave delamateri), USDA Forest Service photo*

# Want to learn more?

Visit the Tonto National Forest's Resource Management page for more information

<https://fs.usda.gov/r03/tonto>



## Caring for the land and serving people.



*Brittlestem, USDA Forest Service photo*

## Contact Us

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Forest Service  
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# Spines to the Pines

Experience the diversity of plant life  
on the Tonto National Forest





## Why we care about plants...

"Spines to the Pines" means the Tonto National Forest contains many different ecosystems. Our districts encompass the Sonoran Desert, semi-desert grasslands, Arizona chaparral, juniper and oak woodlands, ponderosa pine forest and mixed-conifer forest.

Plants are foundational organisms that provide many essential benefits to the ecosystem including clean air, food, and wildlife habitat. Several plants such as Arizona walnut, jojoba and agave are also culturally significant to many local American Indian Tribes.

*Climate change and other stressors are impacting native plant habitat, forest health and ecosystem function. Restoring habitat resilience is a major priority on the Tonto National Forest.*

*Saguaros in the Superstition Wilderness, USDA Forest Service photo*



## Programs within our Forest

Our forest botany program participates in numerous activities to ensure the preservation of our lands for generations to come. A day in the life of a botanist can include:

- Monitoring for rare and invasive plants to manage for multiple uses. The Tonto is one of the most floristically diverse forests in the Southwest region with:
  - 4 botanical areas
  - 7 research natural areas
- Collaborating with partners on research, plant conservation, and citizen science programs.
- Coordinating native seed and plant production. The Tonto has partnerships with local nurseries to provide viable seed options for large-scale restoration efforts. Two examples are:
  - Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI)
  - Sonoran Desert rehabilitation post-wildfire

*Botanists examining grasses through a hand lens, USDA Forest Service photo*



## Resources

### Volunteer:

Friends of the Tonto  
[www.friendsofthetonto.org/](http://www.friendsofthetonto.org/)

Ongoing volunteer projects include:

- Invasive plant mapping and monitoring
- Restoration efforts
- Riparian photo point monitoring
- Rare plant monitoring
- Milkweed for the monarchs

### Learn more:

Arizona Native Plant Society  
[aznps.com/](http://aznps.com/)

Here you can find publications, conservation news and info on how to grow native plants in your own backyard.

### SEINET

[swbiodiversity.org/seinet/](http://swbiodiversity.org/seinet/)

This portal was created to house data on plant observations and collections from museums, universities and other agencies.

*Southwestern prickly poppy, USDA Forest Service photo*

