



desert place

Natural beauty
through preservation

Presented by:
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Bursage: a natural

This plant series ends with information about the ground cover shrub, *Ambrosia deltoidea* (commonly called bursage or rabbit bush), which blankets the Desert Foothills.

As you look out over the desert, these low bushes will be the most common ones seen. The leaves are grayish-green, triangular and the lower surfaces are densely matted with short wool. The fruit is a small bur which is annoying if it comes into contact with the skin.

After a rain the bush will quickly turn green. In dry times it drops its leaves.

The bursage acts as a nursery for seedlings and young cacti, protecting them from animals and providing shelter, shade and moisture. It gives shade and cover to insects, rodents and birds.

The plant's buds provide the vitamin A essential for the nesting success of quail. The bursage is also a major food source for the kangaroo rat.

Bursage helps human desert dwellers as well. It is an important erosion control plant, holding the soil down during heavy rains and keeping the dust down during summer storms.

During a wind storm the difference between a piece of land that has been cleared of bursage and one containing native desert vegetation is starkly evident.

The cover the bursage provides also helps hold in moisture and lowers the temperature of the soil by cutting down on reflection of heat from the bare ground. Once this bush has been cleared from an area, undesirable weeds begin to grow in its place and the desert, which in its natural state is maintenance-free, becomes a constant chore.

For all these reasons and to keep the balance of the desert intact, it is best to preserve this useful plant.

plants are: **Flowers of the Southwest Deserts** by Natt N. Dodge; **Trees and Shrubs of the Southwestern Desert** by Lyman Benson and Robert A. Darrow; **Landscaping with Native Arizona Plants** by the Arizona Chapter of the Soil Conservation Society of America; and **Desert Wildflowers** by Edmund C. Jaeger.