

Spring flowers burst into bloom



a desert place

Natural beauty
through preservation
Presented by:
CONSERVATION COMMITTEE of the
Cave Creek Improvement Association

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As always, our desert emerges from its winter rest, not from a blanket of snow as with the higher elevations but with the subtle changes on our desert floor.

Once the night temperature rises above freezing and the sun begins its slow trek northward again, warming on its way, the first early flowers start emerging.

One of the first, even before the blue lupine, is the delicate blue dick, reaching for the sun on its slender stalk and poking its pale blue petals through the protection of the bursage and brittle bush.

Brittle bush is also an early bloomer with neat round bushes laden with bright yellow daisy-like flowers on the ends of brittle stalks, so aptly named.

Following, comes the desert mallow, chuparosa and some rare clumps of flaming red penstemon,

found along the banks of the washes as a rule.

The next to bloom is the ever delightful desert poppy, filling the gullies and hillsides with their golden carpeting.

And finally, the much maligned creosote bush (also known as greasewood) which has covered all the lowlands and right into the city, before subdividers and builders rashly tore it out. So, attention commercial lot owners and builders, take another look before you again destroy a useful desert plant.

Right now, the creosote is coming out with a lovely small yellow flower, nestled against minute white cotton balls. If the esthetics do not reach you, remember that these sticky-leaved bushes, can give you much needed shade in the hot summer months.

They also keep the heat off the ground and protect other desert

plants trying to survive, not to mention small desert creatures such as quail, squirrels and lizards.

Again, commercial lots do not need to be bulldozed into extinction, such as one in our present neighborhood, where everything except for a few saguaros, have been removed.

The vast area for parking can and should contain desert ground cover in islands, again to keep the heat off the pavement, not to mention the esthetics when they all come in bloom. There would be absolutely no upkeep.

Commercial buildings can be built around saguaros or trees. A good example is Tlaquepaque, this very feature has drawn people from miles around to admire and be charmed. It could do the same for an otherwise run-of-the-mill shopping center.

My own spring search, begins not with flowers, but with the first sighting of that fascinating and awesome creature, the Gila Monster. For, with his appearance, the rattlesnakes cannot be far behind. And sure enough, my

protector, Monty, cornered one in his own backyard last week.

It was the largest one I have seen yet, with orange-pink skin dotted with black popcorn like balls, black feet and large sharp claws which he used to climb in my tightly fenced compound.

He went out the same way after I hurriedly dragged Monty away to lecture him on the ways of Gila Monsters. The reptile's jaws clamp like a vice if he is disturbed or picked up. It is protected by the state as a vanishing breed due to many not caring to understand him, so again leave him be.

The next day brought an encounter with a rattlesnake on our walk. We thank the friendly Gila Monster for the warning.

Finally, do take the time to watch the desert finches. The males puff out their red breasts as they approach the female and sing their hearts out. She pecks at her food, totally ignoring her courtiers, or so it would seem, until they all fly off to a nearby palo verde to continue that age old fight. Ain't nature grand.



Gila Monster