



# Project BudBurst

A National Phenology Network Field Campaign for Citizen Scientists



www.budburst.org

**Common Name:** Saguaro cactus  
**Scientific Name:** *Carnegiea gigantea*  
**Plant Family:** Cactaceae

### Identifying Characteristics:

**Size:** A young saguaro can be 5 cm (2 in) high during its first ten years. Growing very slowly, it takes a bowling pin shape over the first 30-35 years, after which it begins to bloom. This columnar cactus can grow to 15 m in height (50 ft). Arms begin to grow from the main stem typically once the cactus reaches 5 m (15 ft) in height. Older saguaros can have many arms.

**Leaves & Stems:** No leaves. Tree-like columnar trunk can bear several erect branches (arms) when older; green, many ribbed, and heavily armored with short, stout, straight spines.

**Flowers:** Saguaro flowers are approximately 8 cm (3 in) in diameter and white with yellow centers. Each flower has many waxy, white petals and numerous yellow anthers surrounding a large central yellow pistil.

**Habitat:** Saguaros are found on rocky slopes and flats at elevations up to approximately 1000 m (4,000 ft). Saguaros are found in the extreme south of California, throughout southern Arizona, and in northwestern Mexico.

**Bloom time:** Typically late April through early June, though flowers have been observed in every month of the year near Tucson, AZ.

Information source: USDA NRCS Plants Database (<http://plants.usda.gov/>); Kearney and Peebles (1951) *Arizona Flora*, and D. Bertelsen (2007).

**Did you know?** The average lifespan of a saguaro is estimated at 150 – 175 years. An adult after 125 years, some have lived to 200 years. The saguaro is very important in many ways to the Tohono O'odam and the Seri, as well as to wildlife.



Photograph by Mrs. W.D. Branford, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center



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**Phenological observation:**  
First Flower

### Distribution Area:

