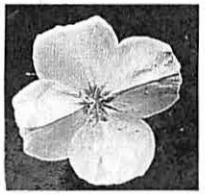
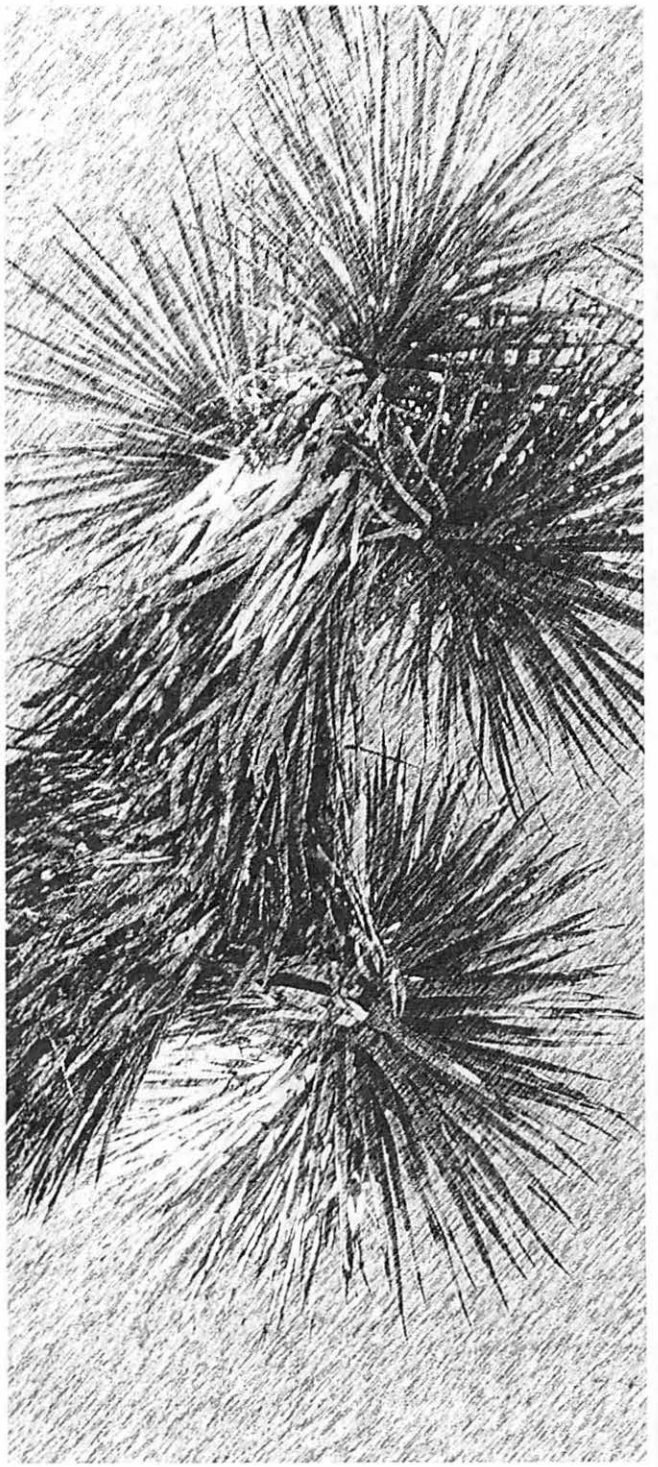


**Dune Primrose**
**(*Onagraceae deltoides*)**

The dune primrose can be found growing near the Kelso Dunes and blooming between March and May. These gorgeous white flowers grow two to three inches wide and have delicate petals the consistency of tissue paper. At night the flowers release a fragrance that attracts the white-lined sphinx moth, often mistaken for a humming bird they are so large. When the flower dies, it's stems curl up to form an enclosure that is known as a "birdcage" or "devil's lantern."

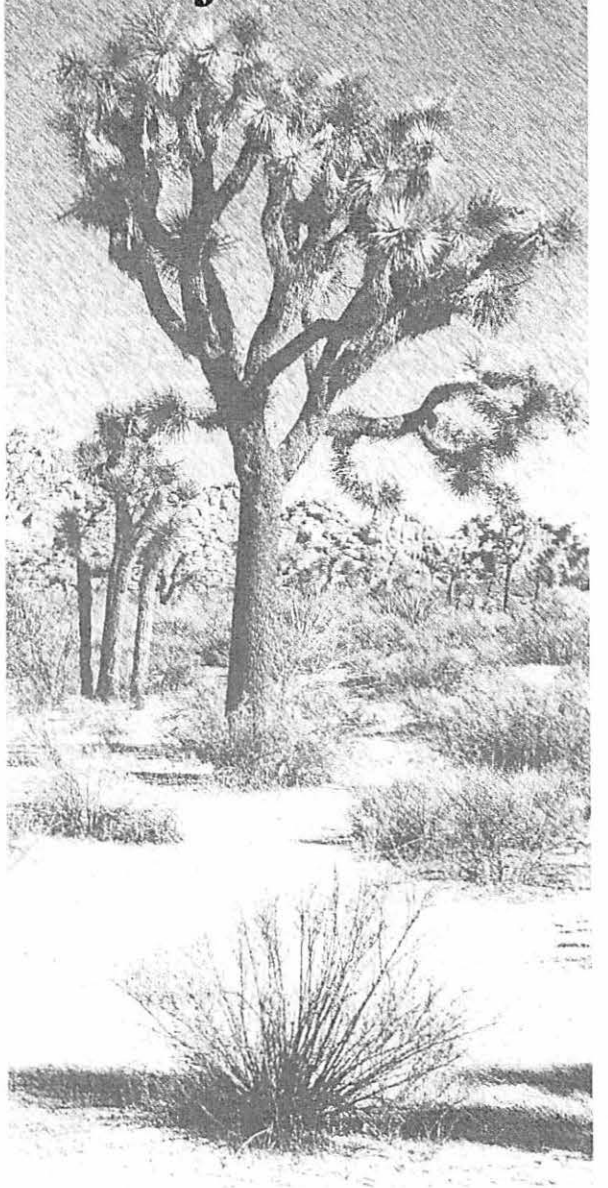
**Cresote Bush**
**(*Larrea tridentate)***

Creosote is one of the most prevalent plants in Mojave National Preserve. Resilient and hardy, it can grow in elevations that reach 4,000 feet. The bush propagates by sending shoots out in rings cloning itself. It is considered the oldest living thing on the planet, with the oldest clone group dated at about 9,400 years old. Southwest Natives appreciated the creosote bush for its medicinal uses. Some tribes chewed and swallowed a small piece of creosote branch to cure diarrhea. Other tribes made a strong tea from the dried leaves to treat the common cold or to relieve kidney pain. The resinous leaf nodes are also known to soothe bruises and wounds.



Mojave National Preserve

# Common Plants of the Mojave Desert



**Coyote Melon (*Cucurbita foetidissima*)**

Coyote melon has similar growth patterns to cucumbers and pumpkins. Both plants have large leaves and spreading vines. Although they look like a melon that's ready for the eating, the pulp is unpalatable. The plant is still useful however. Native Americans have used this plant for thousands of years, extracting oil for cooking and roasting the high protein seeds turning them into mush. The dried fruit was picked to make gourd rattles used during ceremonies. The root and plant pulp could be crushed and used as a cleansing agent for washing clothes. The crushed leaves are also an effective insecticide.

**Pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*)**

Found in higher elevations in the preserve, the Pinyon pine is often mixed with Junipers. These trees produce cones with kidney bean-sized nuts that ripen in the fall. They are very nutritious, supplying amino acids, fats, carbohydrates, and proteins. One pound of pine nuts supplies about 3,000 calories. They have been an excellent food source for wildlife and humans for thousands of years.

**Mojave Yucca (*Yucca schidigera*)**

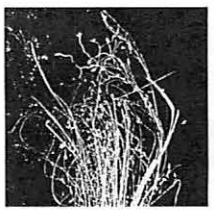
Some know this yucca as the Spanish dagger, nicknamed for the poky ends of its leaves. Southwestern Native Americans traditionally had many uses for the Mojave yucca. Fruits were eaten raw or dried for later use. Leaves and roots contain a detergent like substance, were pulped to produce soap. Fibers obtained from the leaves were made into rope, twine, hats, hairbrushes, shoes, mattresses, and saddle blankets.

**Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia jaegeriana*)**

The Joshua tree has been described different ways: weird, strange, peculiar, unique. Explorer John C. Fremont described them as "the most repulsive tree in the vegetable kingdom," However you view the trees, they play an important role in the Mojave Desert ecosystem, providing habitat for numerous birds, mammals, insects, and lizards. Living at least 150 years, the Joshua tree will branch dozens of times over its life, but grows only about one inch per year.

**Cholla Cactus (*Cactocea spp.)***

Cholla cacti are highly adapted to survive in the dry and unpredictable desert. They use their spines for protection and shade, and their thick skin and pulp to preserve water. All chollas have a woody skeleton with a mesh pattern. There are many cholla species in California deserts. However, cholla species are often difficult to differentiate because they can hybridize. Some species of cholla hardly breed at all because their seeds are sterile. In these cases, the plants rely on clonal propagation. The stem segments fall to the ground, cling to animals passing by, and taking root where it falls off creating a genetically identical plant to the original parent plant.



**Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides)***

One of the earliest edible plants to mature in the spring, this hardy grass is an important part of the food web. The relatively large, protein -rich seeds are major food sources for birds, rodents, and other wildlife. Humans gathered the seeds along the edges of the dunes, drying and grinding them into flour for thousands of years.