

Montezuma Castle

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot
National Monument
Camp Verde, Arizona 86322



Plants of the Verde Valley

The many habitats of the Verde Valley host a wide range of plant life. From riparian corridors to high desert plateaus, the vegetation has evolved to cope with the stresses of desert life. All of the plants listed are visible from the trail. As you walk, look for visible adaptations that have enabled these species to thrive here.

Please remember that it is against the law to collect these or any other plants on national park property.



BLUE YUCCA
Yucca baccata
Agave Family
3,000 to 8,000 feet elevation

Also known as banana yucca or datil, this plant has stiff, pointed, sword-like leaves, which can be up to 3 feet long and 3 inches wide. Leaves radiate out from the base of the plant. Flower stalk can be up to 5 feet tall. Flowers are white, waxy, lily-like and bell shaped, up to 3 inches long and are followed by large fleshy fruits, which are up to 5 inches long. Fruits are eaten by animals and by people. Leaves have an abundance of strong fiber for cordage and clothes. Roots have been used for soap, shampoo and as medicine.



FOUR-WING SALTBUCH
Atriplex canescens
Goosefoot Family
2,000 to 8,000 feet elevation

This gray-green shrub grows 4 to 5 feet tall. Leaves are up to 2 inches long and are narrow. Seeds are encased in a 1/2-inch wide pod that has 4 papery wing-like bracts along its sides. Seeds and leaves are eaten by people and animals. Leaves, seeds and roots are medicinal.



DESERT WILLOW
Chilopsis linearis
Bignonia Family
1,500 to 5,000 feet elevation

Also known as Desert Catalpa, this large shrub or small tree grows up to 25 feet tall. Very narrow light green leaves are up to 6 inches long. Flowers are up to 1 1/2 inches long, orchid like, whitish tinged with yellow and lavender, fragrant and occur in clusters. Flowers are followed by long, slender bean-like seed pods up to 8 inches long. Native people have used desert willow for roofing material, bows, and basketry.



ONE-SEED JUNIPER
Juniperus monosperma
Cypress Family
3,000 to 8,000 feet elevation

Evergreen tree grows up to 25 feet tall. This tree has gray fibrous shredding bark and green scale-like leaves. Cones are berry-like, 1/4 inch diameter and usually contain only one seed. Juniper berries have been used by many cultures for medicine and food. Branches and twigs have traditionally been burned to create smoke for purifying a place or a person. Wood used to make a variety of tools and for fire.



VELVET MESQUITE
Prosopis velutina
Pea Family
0 to 5,000 feet elevation

This small tree grows to 30 feet tall. The leaves are pinnately compound, and dark brown bark covers the trunk. Flowers are small, yellow, fragrant and form cylindrical spikes up to 4 inches long. Mesquite is an important source of food for bees, wildlife, and native people of the Southwest. The tree adds nitrogen to the soil and provides valuable habitat for wildlife. Native people used bark for baskets and medicine.



WAIT-A-MINUTE BUSH
Mimosa biuncifera
Pea Family
3,000 to 6,000 feet elevation

Also known as cat claw, this shrub grows to 8 feet tall. Branches have small claw-like thorns, and bipinnate leaves are dark green. White or pink flowers are ball-like and up to 5/8 inch in diameter. Flowers are followed by clusters of flat, slightly curved seedpods. Plant provides shelter for wildlife, prevents erosion, and is a source of nectar for honey bees.



VELVET ASH
Fraxinus pennsylvanica ssp. velutina
Olive Family
2,000 to 7,000 feet elevation

This deciduous tree grows up to 30 feet tall. Pinnately compound leaves are up to 6 inches long with 3 to 7 individual leaflets that are each up to 1 1/2 inches long. Young leaves have a velvety surface. Deeply furrowed grey bark covers the trunk. Yellow male flowers and greenish female flowers occur on separate trees. Seeds occur in maple-like pods. Birds and other animals eat the seeds.



ARIZONA SYCAMORE
Plantanus wrightii
 Plane Tree Family
 2,000 to 6,000 feet elevation

This large deciduous tree can grow up to 80 feet in height with many branches. The tree has lobed maple-like leaves and smooth whitish bark. Seeds occur in light brown ball-like clusters. Found primarily along waterways. This tree prevents erosion and provides nesting for birds. The Sinagua used this plant in construction of dwellings.



ARIZONA WALNUT
Juglans major
 Walnut Family
 3,500 to 7,000 feet elevation

This deciduous tree grows up to 50 feet tall with widely spreading branches. Pinnately compound leaves are yellowish green and the bark is furrowed grey-brown. Each compound leaf is up to 14 inches long and has 9 to 13 lance shaped leaflets, which are up to 4 inches long. Tree produces a small edible nut enclosed in a round 1 inch seed husk.



BARBERRY
Berberis haematocarpa
 Barberry Family
 3,000 to 5,000 feet elevation

This shrub grows to 6 ft. tall. Holly-like pinnate bluish green leaves with 3 to 5 leaflets. Each leaflet has pointed lobes ending in sharp spikes. Flowers are yellow, fragrant and occur in clusters. Flowers are followed by juicy red berries, which are eaten by wildlife and humans. Roots have been used to make yellow dye and for medicinal purposes.



NETLEAF HACKBERRY
Celtis reticulata
 Elm Family
 1,500 to 6,000 feet elevation

This deciduous tree can grow up to 30 feet tall. Smooth gray bark becomes warty with age. The oval shaped leaves are up to 2 1/2 inches long and can have either smooth or toothed edges. The orange-red berries and seeds are eaten by wildlife and people.



CATCLAW ACACIA
Acacia greggii
 Pea Family
 Below 5,000 feet elevation

This deciduous shrub grows up to 23 feet tall with scaly gray to brown bark. Bipinnately compound leaves are up to 3 inches long. Branches have sharp 1/4-inch long curved thorns. Fragrant pale yellow flowers occur on cylindrical spikes and provide nectar for bees and other insects. Humans have ground the thin, flat, and often curved seed pods into flour and made into mush or cakes.



GRAY THORN
Zizyphus obtusifolia
 Buckthorn Family
 1,000 to 5,000 feet elevation

Also known as southwestern Condalia, this spiny shrub grows up to 10 feet tall with gray bark and small oblong dark green leaves. The leaves fall off during dry periods. Small inconspicuous whitish-green flowers in clusters are followed by bluish black 1/4 inch elliptical shaped fruits. Birds eat the fruit and the roots have been used medicinally by indigenous cultures.



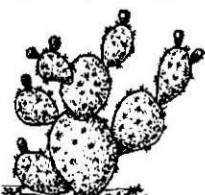
COTTONWOOD
Populus fremontii
 Poplar Family.
 150 to 6,000 feet elevation

This large tree with furrowed grey bark and shiny triangular leaves is found primarily along waterways and in moist areas. It has been used for a variety of medicinal purposes: as a survival food, for fuel wood, in construction, and to make kachina dolls, drums, and tools. The tree is a favorite food of beavers.



CREOSOTE
Larrea tridentata
 Caltrop Family
 Below 4,500 feet elevation

Also known as chaparral and greasewood, this evergreen shrub grows up to 10 feet tall. The shrub has strongly scented, waxy, green to yellowish-green leaves. Flowers are yellow, have 5 petals and are up to 1 inch wide. Flowers are followed by a globe shaped fuzzy white seedpod. Some creosote plants are believed to be more than 11,000 years old. Humans have used the plant for a variety of ailments. It is also an important source of pollen and nectar for bees and other insects.



PRICKLY PEAR
Opuntia phaeacantha var discata, or *Opuntia engelmanni*
 Cactus Family
 1,500 to 7,000 feet elevation

This cactus grows up to 5 feet tall. Flat, oval pads are up to 16 inches long and 9 inches wide. Flowers are yellow, orange, or red and are up to 3 1/4 inches wide. The plant produces red or purple fruits, which are up to 3 inches long. Fruits are sweet and are eaten by people and animals. Various parts of the cactus are used for food, cosmetics, and