

BLOOM

A magazine
about growing



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Why Don't Cacti Need Water?

By: Mya Kagan

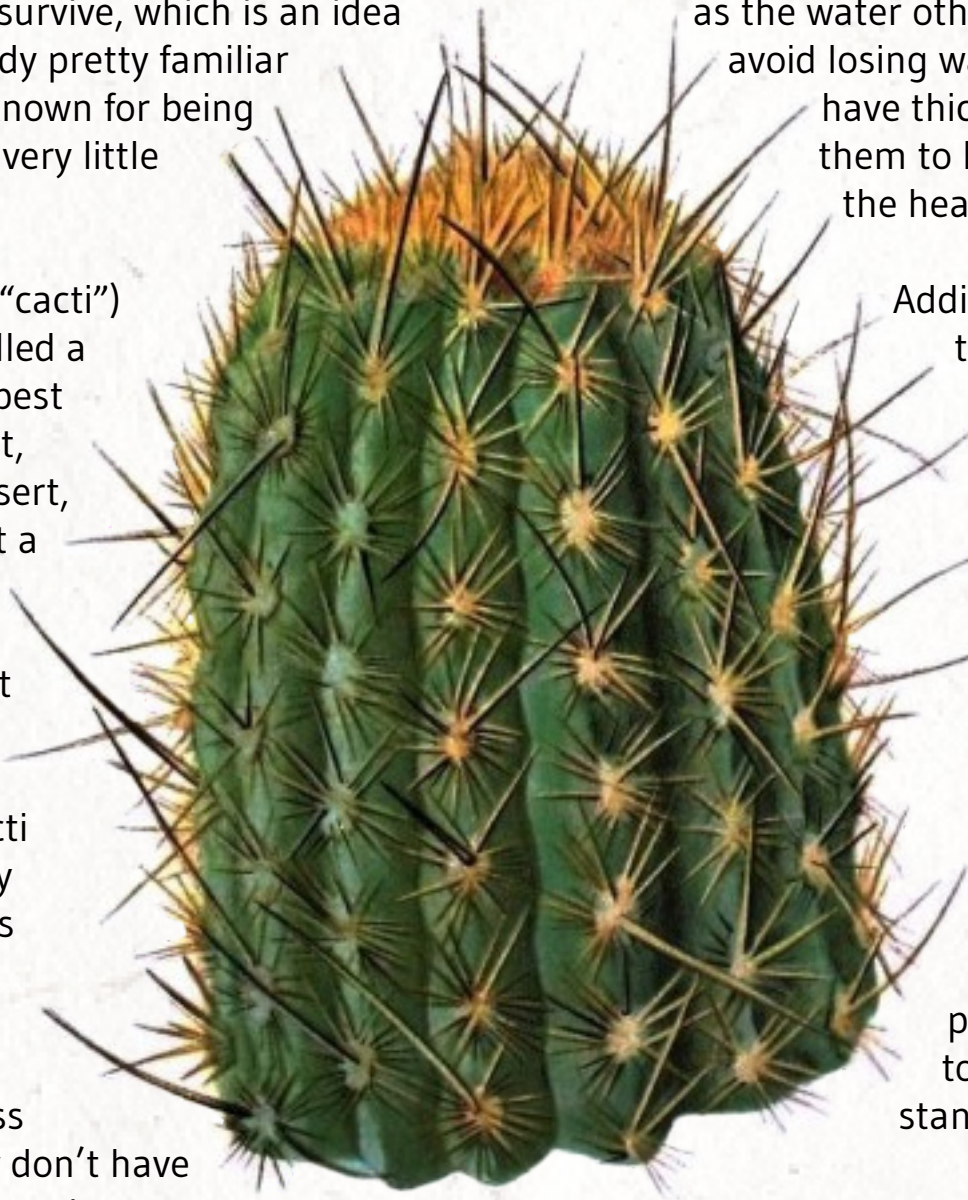
Plants need water to survive, which is an idea you're probably already pretty familiar with. But a cactus is known for being able to live with very, very little water!

Cactuses (also called "cacti") are a type of plant called a "succulent," and are best known for living in hot, dry places like the desert, where they do not get a lot of water. Cactuses do need some water to survive, but can get along with a lot less than most plants. In the deserts where cacti live, sometimes it only rains one or two times a year!

One reason cactuses can get along with less water is because they don't have leaves, so the water a cactus drinks does not evaporate as much

as the water other plants drink. To help to avoid losing water in the hot sun, cacti have thick skins. Their skin allows them to lock in the water, despite the heat and the sun.

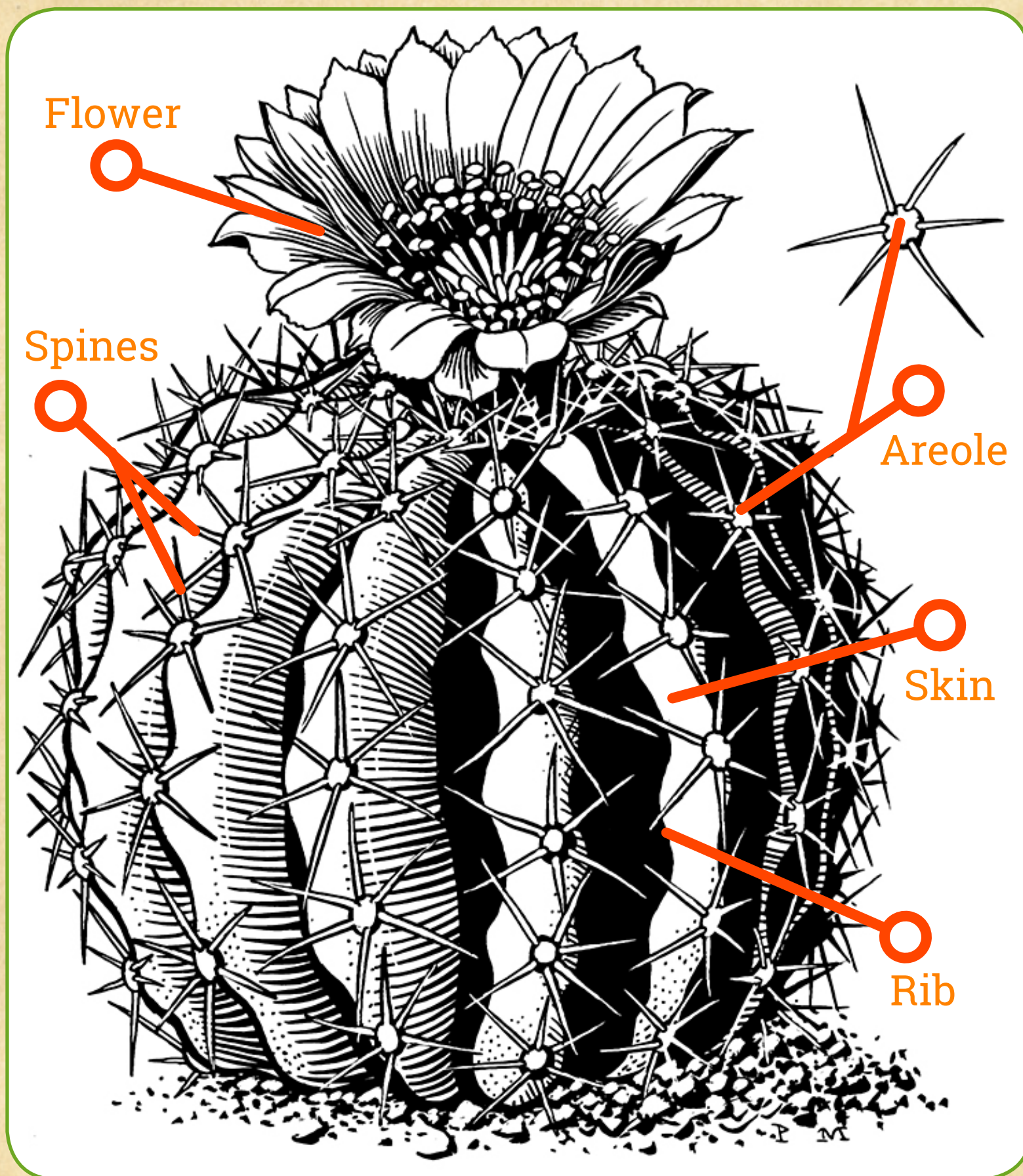
Additionally, cactuses have thick stalks which allow them to store water for a long time and roots that are good at finding and soaking up water even when it is scarce! A cactus stalk is used to store all of the cactus's water, unlike other plants who use their roots to store water. Also, since the stalk of a cactus is full of water, there is a lot of pressure inside the stalk to help keep the cactus standing tall. - Neat!



Tap Me!

Tap the Cactus to Explore its Anatomy.
Who Knows, You might be Surprised!

The Barrel Cactus



Hint: touch the orange circles

← Return

The Barrel Cactus

Flower



Cactus Flower



All cacti can grow flowers when they are mature. Some cacti don't bloom until they are more than 30 years old! Others won't bloom, even if they are old enough, unless they get proper light conditions, watering and fertilization.

Many cactus flowers only bloom at night. Cacti are well suited to survival in the unforgiving heat of their desert habitats, and night blooming is another adaptation. Like other flowers, cacti flowers are pollinated by birds, moths and other insects. Because of the extreme heat of the desert in daytime, these creatures typically make their appearances at night. Blooming at night allows the cacti to take full advantage of attracting these creatures for pollination.



How to Grow Your Own Cactus Indoors

Dispite a cactus's rough-looking exterior, they actually make wonderful, easy-to-care-for house plants! If you want to care for your own spiky friend, here's what you'll need:

1



Potting soil formulated for a cactus - the right kind of soil makes all the difference for your new friend to be happy!

2



Spade and **thick gardening gloves** - you need thick gloves to keep your hands safe from a cactus's spikes. The spade is for digging in the soil to make the cactus a new home.

3



Bowl or **Pot** - whatever you choose to be a new home for your new cactus. Be sure to pick out something with no holes, which would drain moisture from the soil.

4



Sand - this is for covering the soil once you have planted the cactus. It serves as a protective covering to help retain moisture.

5



Cactus - choose a cactus that fits in the bowl or pot you are going to use, keep in mind, though, that cacti grow very slowly!

Steps:

1

Put the potting soil in the growing dish or bowl. Leave a little space at the top to allow room for the cactus.



2

Place your cactus in the potting soil using gardening gloves. Gently push it just deep enough to allow it to stand up straight.



3

Put the potting soil around the base of the cactus and pat it gently with your hands.



4

Place a layer of gravel or sand on the top of the potting soil around the base of the cactus.



5

Place the cactus in a warm, sunny location where it will get 4 to 6 hours of sunlight each day.



Tips:

- Water your cactus about once a month.
- Put your cactus in the sunniest part in your home, cactus love sun!
- Always wear gardening gloves when handling your cactus.
- Ask your parents to help you to fertilize the cactus 1-2 times a year using houseplant food with nitrogen and phosphorus

Article By: Amelie Raury

Life Span of the Saguaro Cactus

By: Mera Low

Saguaro cacti, *Carnegiea gigantea*, only grow in the Sonoran Desert. The Sonoran Desert is a desert in southern parts of Arizona and California and some north-western parts of Mexico. These cacti are the most often portrayed in cartoons, and often are what people think of when they think of the word "cactus."

Saguaros are a very slow growing cactus. Studies indicate that a saguaro grows between 1 and 1.5 inches in the first eight years of its life. These tiny, young saguaros are very hard to find as they grow under the protection of a "nurse tree." As the saguaro continues to grow, its much older nurse tree may die. Some scientists think that competition from the saguaro may lead to the death of the nurse tree by taking water and nutrients from the soil in the immediate area.

As a saguaro begins to age, growth rates vary depending on climate, precipitation and location.

We do know that the period of greatest growth in a saguaro cactus is from unbranched to branched adult. Saguaro branches normally begin to appear when it reaches 50 to 70 years of age.

In areas of lower precipitation, it may take up to 100 years before arms appear!



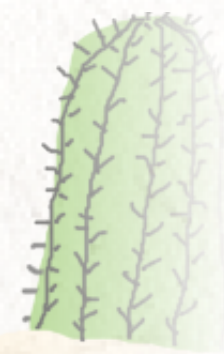
When a saguaro reaches 35 years of age it begins to produce flowers. Though normally found at the terminal end of the main trunk and arms, flowers may also occur down the sides of the plant. Flowers will continue to be produced throughout a saguaro's lifetime.



Saguaro Seeds



1.5 inches tall
10 years



1 foot tall
32 years

