

*Stenocereus thurberi*

[Synonyms : *Cereus thurberi*, *Lemaireocereus littoralis*, *Lemaireocereus thurberi*, *Marshallocereus thurberi*, *Pachycereus thurberi*, *Pilocereus thurberi*, *Rathbunia thurberi*]

**ORGANPIPE CACTUS** is a shrub-like cactus. Native to south-western North America and north-western Mexico, it has a tall brownish-green column (branched near the base), with large brown-felted, spiny clusters and purple-pink to whitish flowers.

The flowers open at night.

This cactus is a protected plant in the State of Arizona (United States).

*Thurberi* commemorates an American botanist who specialised in grasses, Dr. George Thurber (1821-1890). He was quartermaster and commissary to the 1850-1854 United States-Mexican International Boundary Survey and as a botanist on it discovered many new plants. From 1859-1863 he was Professor of botany and horticulture at Michigan Agricultural College (part of the foundation of today's Michigan State University), then Editor of the *American Agriculturist* from 1863-1885. He was also the second President of the illustrious Torrey Botanical Club (now The Torrey Botanical Society) from 1873-1880.

The small spiny fruit were eaten by the Seri Middle American Indians (they made them into a porridge-like mush) and several North American Indian tribes including some of the Apache and some of the Tohono O'Odham also ate them. Records suggest that the latter (for whom it was a staple food) seem to have prepared the fruit and seeds in many ways. As well as preparing them as a porridge they also used the fruit for making wine, syrup and jam. The juice provided a respected ceremonial drink and the seeds were dried and stored as little cakes not only for future food but also for enjoyment as a kind of confectionery.

Some of the Tohono O'Odham tribe used the plant to make torches for lighting, and they made an ink from the fruit.