



Ocotillo, *Fouquieria splendens*, is a slow-growing plant native to the Southwest region. Boasting tall slender cane stalks that bloom with bright red-orange, trumpet shaped flowers, the Ocotillo is a popular desert landscape plant requiring little maintenance.

Ocotillo Characteristics

- A mature plant typically reaches 12 feet high and 10 feet wide, but can grow much larger.
- Thrive in full sunlight and attract hummingbirds.
- Deciduous, meaning they shed their leaves through the winter months and leaf out after periods of sufficient soil moisture.
- Can tolerate low temperatures down to 10° F before suffering serious injury or damage.
- Red-orange flowers blossom in the Spring

Planting Your Ocotillo

According to the University of Arizona's Cooperative Extension, transplanting is best done March through May. Plant a bare-root Ocotillo in dry, loose, sandy soil with light to moderate amounts of organic content to ensure root development. If your Ocotillo is marked on the South side, it should be planted facing South. To help the ocotillo from falling over or blowing down in a storm, large stones may be placed over the root area (2-4 inches from the trunk). Ocotillos need full sunlight in open areas where surface water does not collect



The soil line on the root of the Ocotillo should be level with the ground when planting.

Little Maintenance Required

The Ocotillo is highly drought tolerant and considered a low-water-use plant. It will require irrigation after it has been planted. Avoid over watering the soil, as too much groundwater will cause the roots of the plant to rot. Instead, water by spraying the cane of the plant and keep the soil moist. Water newly planted Ocotillos once a day (typically for 10 minutes) and established Ocotillos every month or so.

The Arizona Municipal Water Users Association (AMWUA) recommends the "Do no harm" pruning method. Essentially, the best method of care for your Ocotillos is to only remove dead or diseased wood. This is particularly true for Ocotillos in the ground for less than three years.

Some degree of growth set-back is expected after planting. Wait patiently - these plants often look like they are dead, especially in periods of drought. With minimal care and watering, most Ocotillos will develop into attractive and healthy plants when left alone.

Sources

University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Office
AMWUA Landscape Plants for the Arizona Desert Guide

