

SPECIES FACT SHEET

Cactaceae (Cactus family)

Brady's Pincushion Cactus*Pediocactus bradyi***RARE PLANT****Habitat and ecology**

Brady's pincushion cactus grows in scattered populations over a 27 square mile area near Marble Canyon along the Colorado River in Arizona. Its soil requirements are specialized: it grows only on chips of Kaibab limestone that overlay soils derived from Moenkopi shale and sandstone outcrops. These soils occur along gently sloping benches at 3,860 to 4,490 feet in elevation. The sites have sparse vegetation of low shrubs, annuals, and grasses. Brady's pincushion cactus was only discovered in 1958 and historically may have occurred northeast along the Colorado River from its current distribution. Currently, it occurs in only 10-20% of its potential habitat.

Description

Brady's pincushion cactus is an inconspicuous, rounded cactus. It usually has one stem that grows up to 2.4 inches tall and 2 inches in diameter. Clusters of fourteen to fifteen straw-colored spines radiate from a point that is elliptical in shape. The spines have somewhat comb-like hairs, and their tips point downward. From late March into April, a straw-yellow flower blooms at the end of each stem. The green fruit, which contains brownish-black seeds, turns reddish-brown at maturity, usually in late May to early June. During drought, the cactus retracts into the soil.

Conservation status and threats

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has listed Brady's pincushion cactus as an endangered species since October 26, 1979. Arizona lists the cactus as critically imperiled.

Brady's pincushion cactus is primarily threatened by collectors of rare cacti, especially since populations are easily accessible from the highway. In addition, Brady's pincushion cactus is threatened by off-road vehicles, uranium mining, and livestock grazing. Because it is restricted to a specific soil type and has a small gene pool, it is particularly vulnerable to extinction.

Related species

Winkler's pincushion cactus (*Pediocactus winkleri*),



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Brady's pincushion cactus is inconspicuous but grows a straw-yellow flower in spring.

its closest relative, has peach-colored flowers and fewer spines. In addition, the spines do not have comb-like hairs.

References

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