Chilean Cactus

Echinopsis chiloensis



Chilean Cactus flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 20 feet

Spread: 3 feet

Sunlight:

Hardiness Zone: 9

Other Names: syn. Trichocereus chiloensis, Hedgehog Cactus

Description:

This cactus variety forms towering stands up to twenty feet tall, and over time will create an impressive clump; very slow growing; white flowers are nocturnal; excellent for xeriscaping, and water conservation gardens

Ornamental Features

Chilean Cactus is a member of the cactus family, which are grown primarily for their characteristic shapes, their interesting features and textures, and their high tolerance for hot, dry growing environments. Like all cacti, it doesn't actually have leaves, but rather modified succulent stems that comprise the bulk of the plant, and which are designed to hold water for long periods of time. This particular cactus is valued for its rigidly upright and cylindrical habit of growth, and usually grows as a single spiny ribbed grayish green stem. This plant features bold white cup-shaped flowers with creamy white eyes along the stems from mid spring to mid fall. It produces green berries from early summer to late fall.

This plant is primarily grown as an ornamental, but it's also valued for its edible qualities. The sweet fruit is most often used in the following ways:

- Fresh Eating
- Preserves

Landscape Attributes

Chilean Cactus is a large succulent evergreen plant with a strongly upright, cylindrical form. It tends to grow as a solitary entity comprised of a single stem, and it doesn't usually spread laterally. As a type of cactus, it has no true foliage; the body of the plant is wholly comprised of a spiny grayish green stem which is prominently ribbed.

This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and should never be pruned except to remove any dieback, as it tends not to take pruning well. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Chilean Cactus is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Chilean Cactus will grow to be about 20 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 3 feet. It is often grown as either a solitary specimen or in combination with other complementary plants as part of a garden composition. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live to a ripe old age of 100 years or more; think of this as a heritage perennial for future generations!

This plant should only be grown in full sunlight. It prefers dry to average moisture levels with very well-drained soil, and will often die in standing water. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for a low-water garden or xeriscape application. Like most succulents and cacti, this plant prefers to grow in poor soils and should therefore never be fertilized. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is not originally from North America. It can be propagated by division.

Chilean Cactus is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.