San Diego Barrel Cactus

Ferocactus viridescens



San Diego Barrel Cactus
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 12 inches

Spread: 18 inches

Sunlight:

Hardiness Zone: 9

Other Names: Coast Barrel Cactus, Echinocactus lecontei

Description:

A blue-green barrel shaped cactus displaying prominent ribs, adorned with red spines that mature to gray; pale yellow flowers with red stripes from late spring to summer on mature specimens in full sun; forms colonies, and becomes wider than tall with age

Ornamental Features

San Diego Barrel 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 distinctive barrel shape, and usually grows as a single spiny ribbed bluish-green stem. This plant has buttery yellow cup-shaped flowers with red stripes held atop the stems from early spring to late summer, which are interesting on close inspection.

Landscape Attributes

San Diego Barrel Cactus is a small succulent evergreen plant with a characteristic upright barrel shape. 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 bluish-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. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Insects
- Spiny

San Diego Barrel Cactus is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- Rock/Alpine Gardens
- General Garden Use
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

San Diego Barrel Cactus will grow to be about 12 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 18 inches. 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 for 40 years or more.

This plant should only be grown in full sunlight. It requires an extremely dry, well-drained growing location, and will usually 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 pH, but grows best in sandy soils, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is native to parts of North America. It can be propagated by division.

San Diego Barrel Cactus is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. It is often used as a 'filler' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination, providing a mass of flowers and foliage against which the thriller plants stand out. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.