Welcome to Saguaro National Monument

Welcome to the desert in Saguaro National Monument! This park is named after the tallest plant that grows here.

Take a look around. Do you see any saguaros? This kind of cactus can live over 150 years, grow to 50 feet tall and weigh 6 tons.

Now see if you can find any other kinds of cactus. How are they like the saguaros? The barrel cactus and prickly pear cactus are much smaller but they also have thick stems to store water during the long times without rain. Cactus plants have thorns instead of leaves. Their thorns lose less water than leaves, and can even help shade the plant from the strong sun.

Do you see any plant that is not a cactus? Some desert shrubs also grow here. Cactus or not, most desert plants have a big root system that either spreads wide to gather rainfall quickly when it comes, or grows deep to reach far down to the water table.
Weather Report

What’s the weather like in Tucson, Arizona?

SUMMER
Here’s the forecast for a typical day in July:
The high this afternoon will be 105° F. Temperatures will drop to 74° F. during the night. No rain is expected this week.

WINTER
Here’s the forecast for a typical December day:
Our high today will be 64° F. The low tonight will be 40° F. No rain is expected.

ANNUAL RAINFALL
The average amount of rain and snow that falls during a year is 12 inches.
**ANSWER KEY: What lives Here?**

DIVERSITY OF LIFE: Plants Alike and Different

**BOREAL FOREST**
Conifer trees are alike:
All conifer trees make seeds in cones. Most conifers have needles or scales instead of leaves. They may keep their needles for several years before they drop off.

Conifer trees differ:
The shapes of the tree, the bark, the shape and size of the cones and the length of the needles differ among different kinds of conifers. Some conifers have evergreen needles; others have needles that drop off every fall.

**EASTERN DECIDUOUS FOREST**
Deciduous trees are alike:
They drop their leaves in the fall and grow new leaves each spring.

Deciduous trees differ:
The shapes of the leaves, the bark, the flowers, the fruit and the shapes of the trees differ among different kinds of deciduous trees.

**PRAIRIE**
Prairie grasses are alike:
Prairie grasses have long, narrow leaves and flexible stems. Their seeds are small.

Prairie grasses differ:
Prairie grasses differ in how tall the plants grow, and in the shape of the seed heads they produce.

**DESERT**
Cactus plants are alike:
Cacti have thick, juicy stems. They have thorns instead of leaves, and their flowers are often big and fragrant.

Cactus plants differ:
Cacti differ in the color of their flowers, the size and number of thorns they produce, and the height and shape of the plant.
WHAT LIVES HERE? Cactus
TUCSON, ARIZONA—Saguaro National Monument, Desert

Many of the plants in a desert belong to the CACTUS family. These plants have big flowers that are often pollinated by bats or other desert creatures that are out at night when it is cooler. Can you see any other ways that cactus plants are alike? Now can you see any ways they are different?