

Nature's Notebook Phenophase Photo Guide

Larrea tridentata creosote bush



Why Observe?

Species marked for inclusion in the *Nature's Notebook* monitoring program have been identified by scientists or natural resource managers as ecologically important for the Sonoran Desert region. Many Sonoran Desert species have not been observed nor studied as closely as other species in the United States. They are the standard bearer of the Sonoran Desert Region.

Tips for Identification

Creosote bush is a multi-stemmed, evergreen shrub generally growing no more than 12 feet tall. Its small, yellow, somewhat showy flowers have both male and female parts and are pollinated by insects or are occasionally self-pollinated. Creosote bush grows best in gravelly to sandy soils that are well-drained. It is highly drought-tolerant and can tolerate a wide range of temperatures (5 to 120 degrees Fahrenheit). Its typical habitats are valley plains, mesas, arroyos, alluvial fans, and gentle slopes of the southwest deserts.

Be aware there is variation from individual to individual within a species, so your plant may not look exactly like the one pictured. If you are uncertain whether or not a phenophase is occurring, report a "?" for its status until it becomes clear what you are observing after subsequent visits.



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Young leaves

One or more young, unfolded leaves are visible on the plant. A leaf is considered "young" and "unfolded" once its entire length has emerged from a breaking bud, stem node or growing stem tip, so that the leaf stalk (petiole) or leaf base is visible at its point of attachment to the stem, but before the leaf has reached full size or turned the darker green color or tougher texture of mature leaves on the plant. Do not include fully dried or dead leaves. For *Larrea tridentata*, young leaves are slightly more glossy than mature leaves.

Dionna Hatch.

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Flowers or flower buds

One or more fresh open or unopened flowers or flower buds are visible on the plant. Include flower buds or inflorescences that are swelling or expanding, but do not include those that are tightly closed and not actively growing (dormant). Also do not include wilted or dried flowers.

Dionna Hatch.

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Open flowers

One or more open, fresh flowers are visible on the plant. Flowers are considered "open" when the reproductive parts (male stamens or female pistils) are visible between or within unfolded or open flower parts (petals, floral tubes or sepals). Do not include wilted or dried flowers.

Dionna Hatch.

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Fruits

One or more fruits are visible on the plant. For *Larrea tridentata*, the fruit is capsule-like and fuzzy with white hairs, and changes from green to dark brown and splits apart into five sections.

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Ripe fruits

One or more ripe fruits are visible on the plant. For *Larrea tridentata*, a fruit is considered ripe when it has turned dark brown and has split into five sections.

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Phenophases not pictured: Recent fruit or seed drop