

Ariocarpus

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Named by Scheidweiller in 1838, Ariocarpus is a genus of some eight species from northeastern Mexico. One, *A. fissuratus*, extends into Texas. Dr. Ted Anderson of the Desert Botanical Garden was an expert on this genus and named several species and subspecies.

At one time or another plants now known as Lophophora, Obregonia, Ortegocactus, Pelecyphora, and Strombocactus were included here. Botanists are still uncertain of close relationships between Ariocarpus and other cacti.

All are extremely succulent with very thick taproots. They tend to occur in microenvironments of only one kind of substrate, exposure, and climate, so are usually thought rare. When the proper conditions occur, they are numerous though very hard to see until one develops the proper search image. Then they may be noticed everywhere.

They bloom in the fall with the onset of cool night temperatures. The diurnal flowers only open fully in full sun. Flower color ranges from white to yellow to pink in various species and individuals of any species may have flowers with petals variously fringed, pointed, rounded, broad, or narrow.

They are not hard to grow if one remembers their habitats. Many grow hidden flat against the rock or covered with gravel on hilltops composed of fractured rock with no shrubs for shade (*A. fissuratus*, *retusus*, *trigonus*); *A. agavoides* grows under trees and shrubs; *A. kotschoubeyanus* grows in the mud bed of a normally dry lake, underwater after rains. Once one is in a region where they occur, if one sees the proper substrate, they will usually be found.

Excellent drainage is a must. Over watering will kill them. *A. fissuratus* in Big Bend Park may get rain once or twice yearly, if that. Yet, they flourish. I let mine dry completely before watering; the ones from exposed habitats I don't water more than monthly, if that. Mine bloom each year. I use granite grit for soil, zero organic material. I have read of people watering and fertilizing weekly, but their plants compared to mine look like typical American children in the 21st century compared to typical American children in the 1950s.

They are not hard from seed, just slow growers.