

Notocactus and allies

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From central-southern South America come members of genus *Notocactus*. In Greek, *noto-* means back or (bony) spine; the tubercled ribs may resemble the spine in your back. They are globular to low columnar with characteristically depressed centers, usually many ribs, and usually many fine spines. The profuse flowers tend to be yellow with red stigma lobes, and are borne on the upper "shoulders" of the plants in spring. Seed capsules retain the dried flower and are dry and papery when ripe. The seeds frequently fall next to the mother plant and germinate there.

Genus *Notocactus* comes mostly from grasslands with substantial summer and some winter rain. Like many grassland plants they don't do well in full sun in Phoenix, appreciate non-porous pots with some humus in the soil, and extra water. They also seem to appreciate more fertilizer than some cacti. They bloom young, prolifically, and easily if not kept dry in the winter. They set seed readily.

Botanists now lump *Notocactus* into *Parodia*. Hobbyists can still see differences: *Notocactus* tend to have finer spines, more regular ribs and bigger flowers. Other genera now lumped into *Parodia* include *Brasilicactus*, *Eriocactus*, *Malacocarpus*, and *Wigginsia*.