

HOME

TUCSON

MAGAZINE

**OUTDOOR
LIVING
AT ITS BEST**

**WORLD OF
WINE**

**THE AIA
HOME TOUR**

**IN PRAISE OF
EUPHORBIA**



PARADISE IN PATAGONIA

THE GENUS EUPHORBIA is such a big family of plants that there is room for relatives as diverse as the giant candleabra tree (*Euphorbia ingens*)—in its native Swaziland, a fast-growing 50-foot-tall tree—and the familiar poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*), our well-known holiday plant from Mexico. With more than 8,000 species ranging in size from annual wildflowers to large trees, euphorbias may leave gardeners wondering where to begin. All euphorbias have a milky sap, which causes an allergic reaction in some people, and many of the plants come from the African continent. The following seven are some of the best bets for Southern Arizona.

⑦ UNUSUAL & EYE-CATCHING PLANTS FOR TUCSON GARDENS

EUPHORBIA

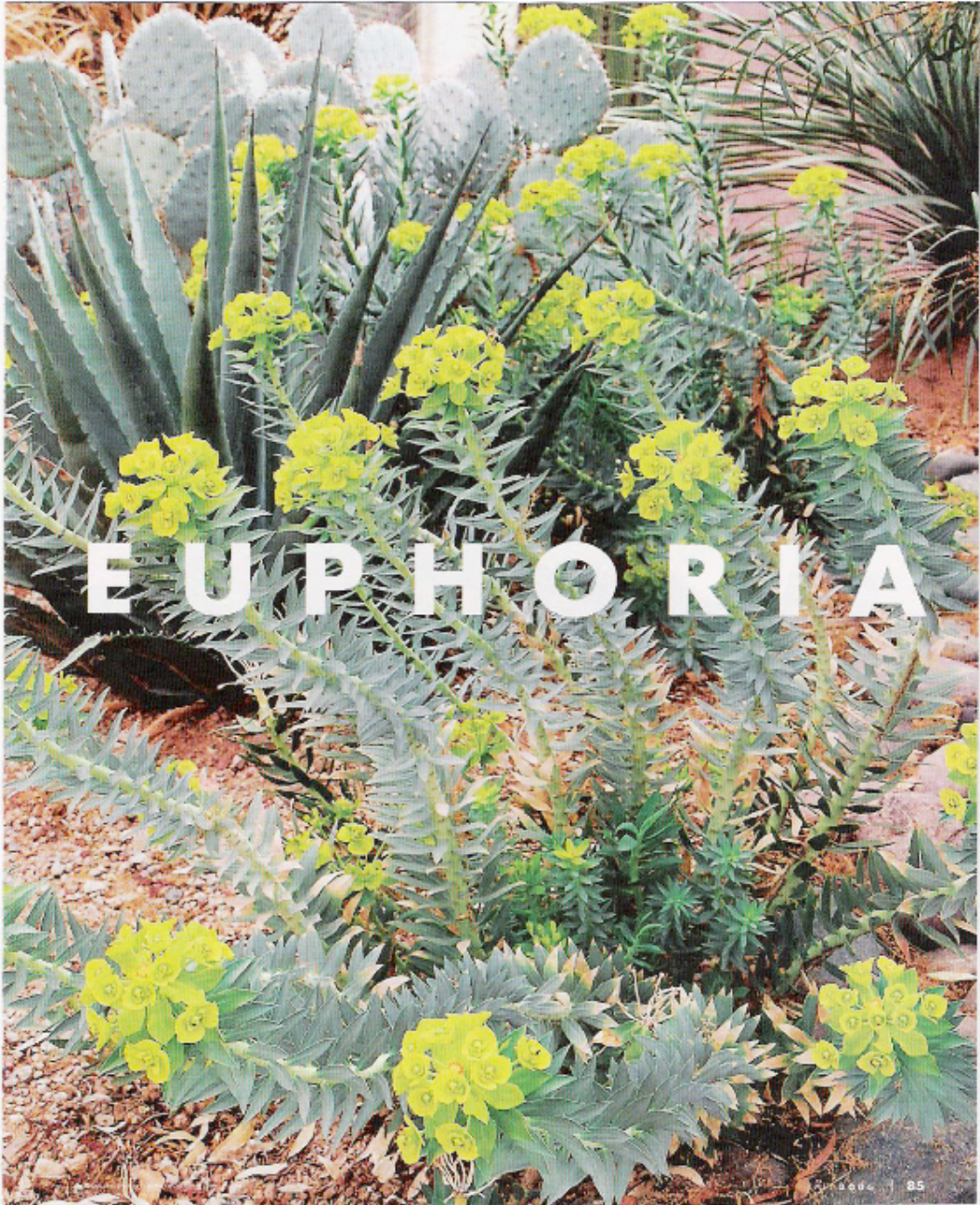
WRITTEN & PHOTOGRAPHED BY **SCOTT CALHOUN**

{ EUPHORBIA RIGIDA }

GOPHER PLANT



For fans of the color claretouse, the gopher plant's spring bloom brings pure bliss. The yellow-green bracts suspended over silver leaves make an irresistible combination. Unlike the baseball plant, gopher plants can be planted directly in the ground in Tucson, however, gopher plants prefer sandy or rocky, well-drained soil and may not survive in heavy, wet soils. The Gopher plant tolerates heat and can be left alone even in hot southern exposures where it will grow, bloom, and reseed itself. Blue-flowering wildflowers such as desert bluebells and Gooding's verbena make handsome pairings with the gopher plant.



✦ EUPHORBIA MILII ✦
CROWN OF THORNS



Often compared to a big, thorny octopus, the crown of thorns has branches that undulate and curve like tentacles tipped with fire-red suction cups. The little cup-shaped bracts are sticky and indeed have encouraged growers to breed this plant for both bract color and size. In fact, hundreds of dwarf crowns of thorns grace medians of the Disneyland parking lot, adding to an "under-the-sea" ambience. In Tucson, crown of thorns must remain confined to patios and containers because of its inability to tolerate cold and sun. It does make a very fine container plant, and when sited under a covered porch it is a resilient plant. At Tucson Botanical Gardens, a venerable specimen nestled under a north-facing porch produces a dazzling summer show of red bracts and lives happily with little care.





↑ EUPHORBIA RESINIFERA ↓
MOROCCAN MOUND



If the thought of cobalt blue Marrakech courtyards jammed with strange succulents sets your heart racing, the Moroccan mound is a plant for you. True to its name, the Moroccan mound grows in a pretty, symmetrical shape, and its beautiful pale-green four-sided arms contrast nicely against bright-colored walls. Another tough landscape plant, Moroccan mound grows well in poor desert soils, blooming in a line of small, chartreuse bracts in late spring. Because of its symmetrical shape, it also makes a smart choice for pots in both contemporary and formal gardens.



{ EUPHORBIA ESCULENTA }
MEDUSA'S HEAD



Widely appreciated for its serpentine appearance, Medusa's head makes a fine choice for Tucson gardens. Although the stems do appear vaguely snake-like, the plant actually looks more like a well-behaved roseate than a twisting wig of vipers. Storing water in a large underground caudex, Medusa's head can be planted directly in the ground in Tucson, although during hard frosts protection might be needed. In contrast to Moroccan mound and gopher plant, Medusa's head boasts medium green, rather than gray or silver, serpentine branches.

OME

http://thevenoguano.com



✓ EUPHORBIA OBESA }
BASEBALL PLANT



This round, fat plant is so spherical and bald that it has been compared to a stone, a sea urchin, and, of course, its namesake—a baseball. It is hard to imagine a plant any more globe-like. The plant ranges from a sage green to gray green in color and has a stout enough appearance to justify the species half of its scientific name, *obesa*, meaning obese. Latitudinal bands that recall stretch marks on a very pregnant woman's stomach enhance the plant's round profile. The plant appears barely able to contain its own girth. Prized by gardeners around the globe for its unusual shape, it makes a very fine potted plant in Tucson, especially when planted in shallow, brightly glazed containers.

AWARD WINNING DESIGN

"I've decorated two homes through Contents Interiors, with completely different styles—I enjoyed the process and the results. We enjoy our furnishings and everyone says our great room is warm & inviting."

—Judy

Sara Smith
Award Winning Designer

All you need,
one great Contents.

Contents INTERIORS
 the extraordinary for your home
 520 881 6900
 3401 E. Ft. Lowell Rd.
 P.O. BOX 6405 TUCSON, AZ 85711

www.contentsinteriors.com

{ EUPHORBIA ANTISYPHILITICA }

CANDELILLA



Of the seven euphorbias noted in this article, candelilla is unquestionably the toughest. Hailing from the thin, calcareous soils of west Texas and New Mexico, it is impervious to soil type and drought, and will even withstand years of root-bound neglect in a pot. Although tough, candelilla is hardly hard on the eyes. Like a dwarf slipper plant, candelilla bears stems that rise up like lit blue-gray pencils and are both handsome and architectural. The plant earned its common name (*candelilla* is Spanish for small candle) because it can be rendered into a wax. Following spring and summer rains, candelilla produces clusters of small pink flowers up and down its stems. Since candelilla reaches a height of only 18 inches and is usually less than two feet wide, it makes a wise choice for small gardens.

M-DESIGN AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY AT SILVER SCREEN SOLUTIONS



**SILVER
SCREEN**
SOLUTIONS

SOUTHERN ARIZONA'S
LEADER IN HIGH-END HOME
AUDIO AND VISUAL
EQUIPMENT AND
INSTALLATION

520.888.9629 • 3901 N. ORACLE RD., TUCSON, AZ 85705
LOCATED IN THE ISLAND OF ESCAPE

escape
home resort products

EUPHORBIA
HETEROPHYLLA

WILD POINSETTIA

The holiday poinsettia was brought into cultivation in the United States by Joel Robert Poinsett, the US ambassador to Mexico. Although wild poinsettia has not achieved the popularity of the holiday plant, its diminutive size (only 10–18 inches high) and more subtle flowers make it a perfect fit for both wildflower gardens and small shady spots.

Like its well-known Christmas cousin, wild euphorbia produces little yellow flowers that hover slightly above showy red bracts (the bracts on this plant are often erroneously referred to as the flowers). A native of southeast Arizona south into tropical America, wild poinsettia does best with a little shade and extra water in lower desert regions such as Tucson. Throughout the warm months, wild poinsettia will reward you with profuse flowers and bracts. Wild poinsettia looks particularly snappy next to small water or rock features. Barring severe frost, wild poinsettia will live for many years. One word of caution: If planted in a damp area wild poinsettia will reseed robustly, yielding a large crop of seedlings.



Scott Calhoun is a Tucson-based freelance writer and garden designer with a penchant for chardonnay. His favorite euphorbia is *Norwegian myrtle*.

EUPHORBIA WATERING & CARE

OUTDOOR CONTAINER PLANTS Water once a week April through October. If regular monsoon rains occur in the summer, do not water until fall, after the rains have stopped. Water less frequently as the weather cools. For example, you should water twice a month in the autumn and once a month in the winter. Fertilize euphorbias with a high-phosphate/low-nitrogen fertilizer at half strength once a month, March through August. Do not fertilize after August.

IN-GROUND PLANTS The larger the plant, the less supplemental watering will be necessary. From April through October, one-gallon plants will do well with deep watering twice a month, assuming that the soil drains well. No watering is recommended during the summer rainy season or during the cool winter months. Fertilizing with a high phosphate, low nitrogen fertilizer once in spring and once in early summer will help keep your euphorbias growing at their full potential.

Remodeling?

We offer the best of both worlds.



Kathy Lyle, designer

Kathy Niato, builder

www.interiortrendsllc.com

DESIGNER *creativity* BUILDER *precision*

Plan your remodeling project with a team that offers outstanding design, construction expertise, and a commitment to delighting clients.



the kathys of

interior
trends
INDUSTRIAL & RESIDENTIAL
529.8459