

Arizona Native Plant Law: What You Need to Know

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(A) Desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*) is a salvage assessed protected plant. (B) San Francisco Peaks groundsel (*Senecio franciscanus*) is a highly safeguarded protected plant. (C) Honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) is in both salvage assessed and harvest restricted. (D) Soaptree yucca (*Yucca elata*) is one of the many salvage restricted protected plants.

Arizona is home to a wide diversity of native plants. There are around 3,350 species of flowering plants and ferns known to be growing without cultivation in the state. Some species are scattered widely throughout the state, while others occur only locally and are adapted to particular conditions within a certain habitat zone.

What a lot of people don't realize is that many of Arizona's native plants are protected by law. These protected plants may not be removed from any lands, whether private or public, without the permission of the land owner and a permit from the Arizona Department of Agriculture. While land owners do have the right to remove native plants on their land, there is a process that must be followed. Protected species notification must be given to the Arizona Department of Agriculture and a permit must be issued prior to removal.

The Arizona native plant law was enacted to protect rare plant species and to protect some species from being over harvested. There are four Protected Native Plant Categories:

1. Highly Safeguarded – This group of plants is threatened for survival or are in danger of extinction. Protection includes not only the plants themselves, but their plant parts such as fruits, seeds and cuttings. A few

of the species that are in this category are saguaro, Arizona willow, and some of the agaves and cacti.

2. Salvage Restricted – This large group of plants are subject to damage and vandalism. This is a large list of species with 44 plant families represented, the largest being numerous species of cacti.
3. Salvage Assessed – This much smaller group of plants have enough value if salvaged to support the cost of salvaging. This list includes the desert willow, palo verde, ironwood, smoke tree and several mesquite species.
4. Harvest Restricted – Also a smaller group, these plants are protected due to the fact that they are subject to excessive harvesting because of the intrinsic value of products made with their wood or fiber. Included in this group are bear grass, yucca, ironwood and mesquite.

To learn more about the Arizona native plant law, procedures for obtaining a permit for plant removal, transporting native plants, and to view the specific species listed under the above protections, visit the Arizona Department of Agriculture's website at <http://www.azda.gov/ESD/nativeplants.htm>.