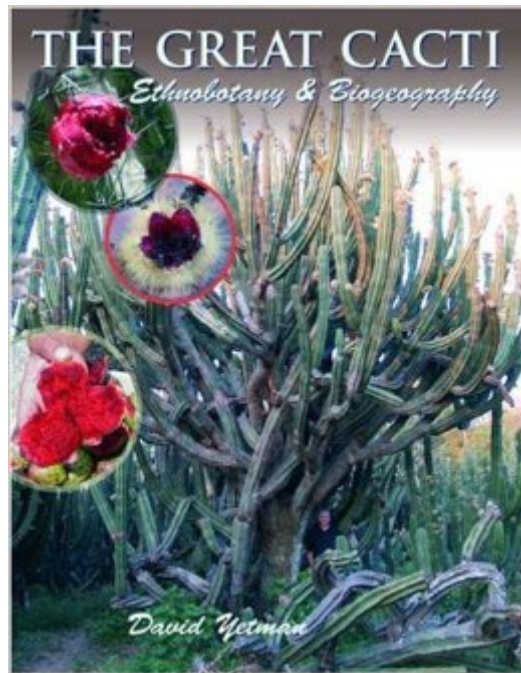


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# The Great Cacti: Ethnobotany And Biogeography (Southwest Center Series)



## Synopsis

Towering over deserts, arid scrublands, and dry tropical forests, giant cacti grow throughout the Americas, from the United States to Argentina—often in rough terrain and on barren, parched soils, places inhospitable to people. But as David Yetman shows, many of these tall plants have contributed significantly to human survival. Yetman has been fascinated by columnar cacti for most of his life and now brings years of study and reflection to a wide-ranging and handsomely illustrated book. Drawing on his close association with the GuarijÃ- os, Mayos, and Seris of Mexico—peoples for whom such cacti have been indispensable to survival—he offers surprising evidence of the importance of these plants in human cultures. The Great Cacti reviews the more than one hundred species of columnar cacti, with detailed discussions of some 75 that have been the most beneficial to humans or are most spectacular. Focusing particularly on northwestern Mexico and the southwestern United States, Yetman examines the role of each species in human society, describing how cacti have provided food, shelter, medicine, even religiously significant hallucinogens. Taking readers to the exotic sites where these cacti are found—from sea-level deserts to frigid Andean heights—Yetman shows that the great cacti have facilitated the development of native culture in hostile environments, yielding their products with no tending necessary. Enhanced by over 300 superb color photos, The Great Cacti is both a personal and scientific overview of sahuessos, soberbios, and other towering flora that flourish where few other plants grow—and that foster human life in otherwise impossible places.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Are you tired of reading about cacti for the kitchen counter or window sill? If so, then this is the book you want. Only true giants are represented here, and Dr. Yetman did a top-notch job. Wonderful photos of HUGE cacti throughout the book. He also gives maps showing which areas to find these wonderful giants if you ever decide to go for a cactus run. He talks much about the many uses of each cacti in the region by the locals, and it's pretty interesting. These cacti are used for food, shelter, medicines, building materials, etc. I have many cacti books and this is my favorite because I'm more interested in the type of cacti you can sink your teeth into. The book shows pretty much only columnar cactus, but a couple of others are briefly shown, and they are all from Mexico and South America. Many pics show people standing in front of them and when you notice the person you realize how big the cactus is... and some are just amazing (zoom in on the front cover to see the guy standing beneath the cactus). And yes, he sometimes gets technical about the cacti...number of ribs, color of flowers, etc., but he mostly is concerned with the area the plants are located, the "hot spots", and their uses. But even just the pics alone make this book worth while. If you want a book to identify all different kinds of cacti, big and small, this is not the book for you. But if you just want to read about and view some real big cacti, you won't regret buying this book.

I was a little apprehensive on the price for this coffee table book but it delivered with an immense number of species, location maps, local uses and abundant color photographs. The author's writing style was enjoyable to read and did not get bogged down with excessive botanical nomenclature. I was glad I purchased it and I would rate this a "must have" for any cactiphile's library.

It's a beautiful book for pictures and text and pretty in-depth for a coffee table book. Great gift for anyone who loves cacti who doesn't already have it! And great gift to oneself, as in the case of selfish me.

Wonderful book right up my alley. I am interested in the ethnobotany of the largest columnar cacti, especially those species that have served humans (and have been cared for by humans) for centuries. Great pictures and text by a scientist who understands both plants and humans. My only wish is that David Yetman had more time in his travel schedule to visit more species of cacti (especially in South America) and cover them in this book. One of the best books out there for folks interested in arid lands ethnobotany and permaculture.

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