



Creosote Bush (*Larrea tridentata*)

Known as one of the largest desert plants, the creosote has been in existence for thousands of years. There are three types of creosote shrubs in North America. The difference between them is several chromosomes that altered adaptation to their extreme environments.

Description: Creosote bushes display small, resin coated evergreen leaves and vibrant yellow flowers. Flowers grow almost all year round and fruit is fuzzy and white. Resin from its leaves produces a strong scent, especially after rainfall. Although this shrub doesn't require a lot of water, it is able to grow up to 13 feet tall and 10 feet wide. Leaves will fold to protect itself from the sun during droughts. In extreme cases of drought the shrub will shed its leaves and stay dormant until rainfall occurs.

Location: Creosote is distributed throughout 35 to 46 million acres across the Mojave, Sonoran, and Chihuahuan deserts. Successful growth occurs at 5,000 feet elevation or lower. Flat, well-drained sandy desert regions provide an ideal habitat for creosote growth.



Uses: Historically known as a multi-use medication and natural healer, indigenous people used creosote for dozens of illnesses. An antimicrobial, creosote is beneficial for healing cuts and infection. Sundried leaves were used for herbal teas. Charcoal remnants were once used for tattoo decoration. Prolonged exposure could cause toxicity.

Scientists studied creosote after discovering plentiful health benefits and discovered a ring of the shrub in Lucerne Valley, California. In this ring is an estimated 11,000 year old creosote and possibly the oldest living organism on earth.

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