

## Tohono Chul Park Greenhouse

7366 North Paseo del Norte – Tucson, AZ 85704 – 520-544-7922

[www.tohonochulpark.org](http://www.tohonochulpark.org)

### CACTI IN THE GROUND

**Planting** – Most native soils are adequate for cacti. Improved cactus growth is possible with the use of a soil such as Desert Bloom (1/3 – 1/4" or smaller red decomposed granite, 1/3 sand and 1/3 Marana top soil) available locally at Bob's Material Supply.

*Alicocha cactus blooms in the spring*



**Site Selection** – Choose a site with adequate surface drainage and with the appropriate exposure for the cactus you are planting. Be careful to acclimate your plant. Greenhouse plants have not been grown in full sun and are likely to sunburn without adequate protection. Cover the succulent with shade cloth that allows only about 50% of the sunlight through. Three layers of cheese cloth will also work. The time it takes for a plant to acclimate depends on the time of the year. It is best to plan on covering the plant 2-4 weeks in the spring and fall, up to 8 weeks in summer and 2-8 weeks in winter. See **Temperature**.

**The Hole** -- At a minimum, the hole should be a foot deep and a foot wide, but bigger is better. A large hole facilitates root growth and water absorption.

**Water** – newly planted cacti required supplemental water the first year. When temperatures are above 90°F, plants may be watered weekly. When temperatures are above 100°F, water twice weekly. A good rule is to let the soil dry out between watering. One way to water is to use a one gallon plastic jug with a lid. Punch 2 holes near the top and fills with water; add ¼ teaspoon soluble 15-30-15 fertilizer and cap. Tip the jug over next to the plant to release the water slowly. When daytime highs are below 80°F, or if it has been raining, reduce the frequency of watering – every 2 weeks in spring and fall and every 2-4 weeks in the winter. Do not fertilize at this time.

**Temperature** – When temperatures drop to freezing or below, cover the growing tips of the cactus with paper bags or cloth sheets (never plastic) to prevent frost damage.

**Fertilizer** – Cacti will do fine without it, but fertilizer can be used in moderation during the growing season, once or twice per month. See **Water** above.

**Transplanting** – Best done when plants are actively growing in the warm weather. Carefully dig up cactus and gently remove soil from around the roots. Place the plant in a shady spot for about a week until the roots dry out. Replant the cactus using the soil mix suggested above, adding gravel or decomposed granite to the top of the soil as a mulch – this will help retain moisture in the soil. Water well to settle.