How to Grow a Saguaro (Sa-wah-roe)

The Saguaro Cactus
Carnegiea gigantea

The saguaro is probably the most famous cactus in the world. Almost everyone has heard about this majestic symbol of the desert.

If you would like to grow a saguaro cactus in your home or classroom, all you have to do is follow the instructions below, and be very patient.

NOTE: Make sure that your saguaros are not exposed to freezing temperatures or they may die. If you do not live in a warm place like the Sonoran Desert, it is probably best to grow them indoors.

Remember, saguaros grow very slowly; be patient, have fun and do not over-water them.

Growing Instructions

1) Pick a small to medium sized pot that has drainage holes in the bottom.

2) Fill the pot with soil that drains well, or buy a soil mixture that is specifically for cactus.

3) Using a sharp pencil, poke several small holes 1/8 inch deep into the soil. Space the holes at least 1 inch apart. Put one seed in each hole and lightly press a pinch of soil over each seed.

4) Cover the pot with clear plastic wrap and poke or cut several small holes in the wrap.

5) Place the pot in a warm, well-lit location, but make sure that the pot does not receive direct sunlight.

6) Keep the pot covered with clear plastic wrap for 4 to 6 weeks. Moisten the soil about every 10 days. Do not over-water!

7) After removing the clear plastic wrap, you will only need to water about once per month. Do not over-water!

8) In about 1 to 2 years, you can transplant each saguaro to its own individual pot. They should be about 1 inch tall.
Saguaro blossoms appear at night during May and June. After pollination, each flower develops into a 1-2 ounce fruit. The fruits ripen in July, and each holds more than 2,000 tiny seeds! After ripening, the saguaro seeds fall to the ground, or are deposited by birds. If a seed falls in a favorable place, it may sprout and grow.

Saguaro cacti normally live for 150 - 200 years. Death may come by freezing, lightning, wind, old age or vandalism. After its first year, the seedling's highly variable growth is controlled by the amount of water in the soil.

The first arm on a saguaro usually appears when the plant is 65-70 years old. The first blossoms appear when the saguaro is 35-40 years old. If a saguaro seedling is to survive, it needs the protection of a "nurse plant".

Saguaro cacti normally live for 150 - 200 years. Death may come by freezing, lightning, wind, old age or vandalism.

After its first year, the seedling's highly variable growth is controlled by the amount of water in the soil.