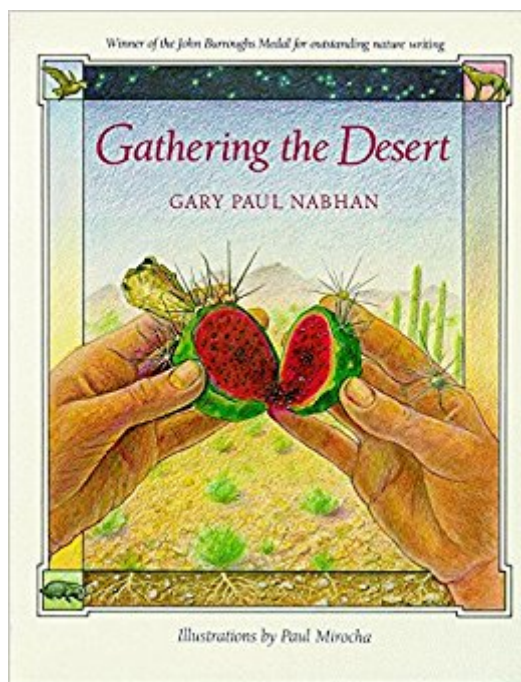


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# Gathering The Desert



## Synopsis

To the untrained eye, a desert is a wasteland that defies civilization; yet the desert has been home to native cultures for centuries and offers sustenance in its surprisingly wide range of plant life. Gary Paul Nabhan has combed the desert in search of plants forgotten by all but a handful of American Indians and Mexican Americans. In *Gathering the Desert* readers will discover that the bounty of the desert is much more than meets the eye—whether found in the luscious fruit of the stately organpipe cactus or in the lowly tepary bean. Nabhan has chosen a dozen of the more than 425 edible wild species found in the Sonoran Desert to demonstrate just how bountiful the land can be. From the red-hot chiltepinies of Mexico to the palms of Palm Springs, each plant exemplifies a symbolic or ecological relationship which people of this region have had with plants through history. Each chapter focuses on a particular plant and is accompanied by an original drawing by artist Paul Mirocha. Word and picture together create a total impression of plants and people as the book traces the turn of seasons in the desert.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Nabhan, a naturalist specializing in arid lands, seeks in this book to popularize his field. He believes a better informed general public would prevent abuse to long-standing desert ecology. With a judicious mixture of ethnobotany, folklore, history, sociology, and nutrition he creates a "persona" for 12 Sonoran Desert plants: the creosote bush, palm, mescal, sandfood, organpipe cactus, amaranth, tepary bean, chile, devil's claw, panicgrass, and wild gourds. The result is a series of essays that

are very readable and enlightening while remaining more scholarly than popular. Recommended for large public libraries as well as academic and special collections. Sondra Brunhumer, Western Michigan Univ. Libs., Kalamazoo Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Winner of the John Burroughs Medal "Fascinating reading for anyone interested in human ecology or ethnobotany . . . a splendid way to learn to love and save the deserts." "Natural History "Nabhan has chosen a dozen of the more than 425 edible wild species found in the desert to demonstrate just how bountiful the land can be. . . . A rich blend of scientific facts and observation." "Choice "The desert will never look the same once you've seen it through the eyes of Gary Paul Nabhan. . . . With the style of a storyteller and with accompanying drawings by Paul Mirocha, Nabhan shows that the desert is anything but barren." "Rodale's Organic Gardening "This gentle blend of history, scholarship and country yarns makes for a book that entertains while it teaches." "Whole Earth Review "If placed in the middle of this environment, how well would we fare? Nabhan becomes our guide. The empty baskets we bring to this book are gradually filled with seeds from each chapter. . . . A beautiful book." "Orion Nature Quarterly "A timely contribution. . . . Strongly recommend this book to all those interested in expanding their thoughts on desert culture and ecology." "Agriculture & Human Values "This a highly original book . . . reads like a novel. . . . The book is very accessible." "Cultural Dynamics "It should be noted that besides good reading, this book is as aesthetically pleasing as a basket made from Devil's Claw." "Mexico Journal

If you are looking for a reference on gathering desert plants for food or medicine this is not the book for you. It's filled with cute stories (some that seem to have any relevance to the book at all) and very little factual information. The sections on each plant just kind of wondered around with out any real plan in the writing. I can't understand how this book won any kind of award.

no problems

Wonderful book! Chapters on a dozen different low desert plants and their uses to (mostly) indigenous peoples. Half of these plants I grow in my garden, but I still very much enjoyed the descriptions of the cultural uses. Very well referenced also.

I actually read this when I lived in Tucson back in the mid-80's but since then have had to buy several more copies as gifts. The audience has been friends who live in the Arizona/Sonoran desert. The subject matter is people who truly live there - not people who live in cars and houses with air conditioning and sprinkled lawns, but the people who live out in the desert, in the 115 degree heat, with the unsavory wildlife and the prickly plant life - and who revel in it. Nabhan went out to live with these people, learn their stories, see the desert through their eyes, enjoy a hearty meal in the process, and tell us all about it. Because he happens to be a superb writer, the result is an engrossing picture of the beauty and sustainability of a landscape that most residents of southern Arizona prefer to shut out, bulldoze down, and hide from. If you enjoy the desert writings of Edward Abbey, Joseph Wood Krutch, or John C. Van Dyke, then you are apt to be glad you found Gary Nabhan.

great information

Good book, but not what I was expecting.

This is the book I go to first for info on how to use plants and stories about the plants - easy reading and very informative.

This is a pretty good book, well worth buying. It is especially geared to the Sonoran desert but has a couple of plants that are in the Chihuahuan desert also.

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