

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT  
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

**Plant Abstract**

**Element Code:** PDCAC0A040

**Data Sensitivity:** Yes

**CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE**

**NAME:** *Mammillaria lasiacantha* Engelm.

**COMMON NAME:** false button cactus, lace-spine nipple-cactus, lacespine nipple cactus, small pincushion cactus, golfball cactus, golf ball pincushion, Biznaga de espinas pubescentes [Spanish]

**SYNONYMS:** *Mammillaria lasiacantha* Engelm. var. *denudata* Engelm.; *Cactus lasiacanthus* Kuntze; *Neomammillaria lasiacantha* (Engelm.) Britton & Rose

**FAMILY:** Cactaceae

**AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION:** Engelmann, Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences 3: 261. 1856.

**TYPE LOCALITY:** USA, Texas, Pecos River.

**TYPE SPECIMEN:** HT: US-01110798. A.C.V. Schott s.n., May 1855. The International Plant Name Index (IPNI, accessed 7/6/2005) reports the type collected by C. Wright s.n., and deposited at MO.

**TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS:** Species *lasiacantha* is 1 of 16 species in the genus *Mammillaria*.

**DESCRIPTION:** Small perennial succulent plant nearly hidden in the soil; the small white dome protrudes only a little above the ground. The roots are diffuse, upper portion not enlarged. Stems 1 to 3, depressed-spheric to short cylindric, 2-3.5 x 2-4 cm (0.8-1.4 x 0.8-1.6 in), firm; tubercles 3-6 x 2-3 mm; axils without evident hairs; cortex and pith not mucilaginous; latex clear or slightly milky, sporadic, only in outer cortex. White or very pale pink spines, commonly 40-60(-90) per areole, obscuring the stem, in several undifferentiated series but equally thin, straight, 0.6-5.0 x 0.1 mm long. The spines are often minutely tipped pinkish brown, innocuous, bristlelike, glabrous to plumose, all interpreted as radial, innermost spines shortest; no central spine. The longer spines are acicular, nearly circular in section, white-pubescent or glabrous. Flowers measure 0.9-1.5 x 0.8-1.3 cm when fully expanded. The outermost tepal margins are entire (or minutely and irregularly lacerate); inner tepals are white or cream, usually with sharply defined midstripes of green, yellow, tan, pink, pale purple, or reddish, 4.5-8 x 1.5-2.7 mm; stigma lobes yellow or pale yellow-green to green, 0.3-1 mm. Filaments are yellowish, the anthers yellow, oblong-ovate, and the style is greenish-white. The fruit is red, fleshy but thin-walled, drying and shriveling upon maturity; cylindroid to clavate, 10-20 x 4-8 mm. Seeds black, reticulate-pitted, longer than broad, about 1+ mm long. (Benson 1981, 1982; FNA 1993+).

**AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION:** According to Benson (1981), “This species is confused with *Epithelantha micromeres*. In that species the flowers are produced on newly forming tubercles at the apex of the stem, rather than in a circle at some distance from it. In *Epithelantha* the new spines form a conspicuous tuft at the apex of the stem, but each disarticulates in the middle leaving a short stump. Consequently the areas away from the growing point are covered by short spines.”

According to FNA (1993+), “Adults of *Mammillaria lasiacantha* usually have glabrous spines, but in some populations all plants may retain plumose spines at maturity. *Epithelantha* species and immature plants of *Coryphantha vivipara* var. *neomexicana* often are misidentified as adults of *M. lasiacantha*, especially from El Paso, Texas, westward (where *M. lasiacantha* is rare). *Mammillaria lasiacantha* is remarkable for its disjunction to one site in Sonora, Mexico, far to the west of its usual range.”

**ILLUSTRATIONS:** Color photo (Malcolm Pym, 2000-2001, [http://www.cactus-specialist.fsworld.co.uk/mammillaria\\_lasiacantha.htm](http://www.cactus-specialist.fsworld.co.uk/mammillaria_lasiacantha.htm))  
Color photo of flower and plant (Philippe Faucon, 1998-2000, <http://www.desert-tropicals.com/>)  
Color photo of plant in bloom (<http://www.cactuseum.com/>)  
B&W line drawing of plant and parts (Benson, 1982: fig. 913)  
Color photo of type specimen (MO, in [http://mobot.mobot.org/cgi-bin/search\\_vast](http://mobot.mobot.org/cgi-bin/search_vast))  
Color photo (<http://npsnm.unm.edu/merchandise/cactus.htm>)  
Color photo (in [http://www.desert-tropicals.com/Plants/Cactaceae/Mammillaria\\_lasiacantha.html](http://www.desert-tropicals.com/Plants/Cactaceae/Mammillaria_lasiacantha.html))  
Color photo (Hugo De Cock, in <http://www.mammillarias.net> 2003-2004)  
Color photos (Josef Matousek, in <http://www.mammillarias.net> 2003-2004)  
Color photo (Norman Dennis, in <http://www.mammillarias.net> 2003-2004)

**TOTAL RANGE:** Arizona, southeast New Mexico, and southwest Texas, into Mexico (Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Nuevo León, San Luis Potosí, Sonora, Zacatecas).

**RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA:** Reported, but not confirmed. Reported near Sonoita, on the Santa Cruz-Cochise county line, by Alan Blackburn, but no specimens found (Benson, 1981).

## **SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS**

**GROWTH FORM:** Perennial succulent shrub/subshrub.

**PHENOLOGY:** Flowering (Jan-)Feb-Mar; fruiting Jun-Aug.

**BIOLOGY:** This plant shrinks into the ground and is inconspicuous during drought, but with extra moisture, they swell to resemble half buried golf balls, made more visible by small delicate flowers.

**HABITAT:** Rocky, limestone hills, gravelly slopes, and tablelands in Chihuahuan desert scrub.

**ELEVATION:** 3,000 to 4,300 feet (915-1312 m); FNA (1993+) reports elevation between 500-1800(-2100) m [1,639-5,902(6,885) ft].

**EXPOSURE:** All.

**SUBSTRATE:** Limestone soils.

**PLANT COMMUNITY:** Chihuahuan Desert Scrub, and desert grasslands, with *Agave lechuguilla*.

**POPULATION HISTORY AND TRENDS:** Unknown.

### **SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION**

**ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS:** None  
**STATE STATUS:** Salvage Restricted (ARS, ANPL 1999)  
**OTHER STATUS:** None

**MANAGEMENT FACTORS:** As with most cacti, this species is subject to horticultural collecting.

**PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN:**

**SUGGESTED PROJECTS:**

**LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:**

### **SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION**

#### **REFERENCES:**

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**MAJOR KNOWLEDGEABLE INDIVIDUALS:****ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

The name *Mammillaria* comes from the Latin for “nipple”, because the areolas (structures carrying the spines) are carried by nipple like structures instead of being organized in ribs like many other cacti. Another significant difference is that the flowers are not coming from the areola, but from the area at the juncture of 2 tubercles. (Faucon, 1998-2001 in <http://www.desert-tropicals.com>).

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