



CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO

# NATIVE PLANT ORDINANCE



*The City of Scottsdale, Arizona is situated within the Sonoran Desert and is shadowed by the McDowell Mountains. The Sonoran is one of four North American deserts. While the other deserts—the Mojave, Great Basin, and Chihuahuan—all extend into parts of Arizona, none are as dynamic a system as the Sonoran. Within the area of southwestern Arizona encompassed by the Sonoran there is considerable variation in vegetation and wildlife due to differences in temperature, elevation, and rainfall. The area that makes up Scottsdale is home to an abundant and diverse collection of desert plant species; many of which are unique to the region. The City of Scottsdale has determined that the presence of these unique natural resources contributes to the aesthetic and economic well being of the community.*

As part of their continuing efforts towards protecting specimen cacti and trees indigenous to the area, the City of Scottsdale adopted the Native Plant Ordinance (Ord. No. 2262 Section 7.500) in 1981. This forward-thinking set of regulations were established as a way to preserve the unique native character of the Sonoran Desert under a system of responsible community development. During the 1980's, a series of annexations doubled the City's land area, adding 96 square miles of essentially undeveloped desert. As the City's population grew, local officials realized development activity into these areas would be intensified. The broad language used in the ordinance led to conflicting interpretations, making it less effective and difficult to enforce. In 1989, the Native Plant Ordinance was amended to insure mature plants are not unnecessarily destroyed or removed. In March of 2000, the ordinance was

once again amended to ensure the long term protection of thousands of additional native plants. Considered to be landmark legislation, the ordinance has been used as a model by other cities hoping to provide similar protection for local flora.

Native vegetation plays a vital role in the dynamic system of the Sonoran Desert. Its presence helps to prevent erosion, provides food and shelter for desert wildlife, and acts to shade the desert floor and reflect urban heat. In addition, native vegetation requires less water and maintenance than non-indigenous plant materials. In most cases, salvaging existing plant material is more economical and achieves a natural desert appearance in a shorter amount of time.

Many desert trees and cacti are slow growing and can take decades to reach maturity. Factors such as the size, form, or location of certain mature specimen



*Blue Palo Verde*



*Saguaro*



*Mesquite*



*Foothill Palo Verde*

plants, such as the Saguaro or Ironwood tree, make finding a comparable nursery-grown plant for replacement difficult to impossible. Therefore, leaving such plants in place or salvaging them for incorporation into landscaping is beneficial both from a financial and feasible point-of-view. Native vegetation within the specified size requirements enhances the city's aesthetic appeal by conserving the mature desert habitat and providing unique scenic opportunities.

Under the Amended Native Plant Ordinance, any project which affects plants from the specified list is required to submit a native plant program detailing the existing location and proposed treatment of each protected plant impacted. Protected plants should, at the most optimal situation, remain in place. Those plants that must be moved are required to be salvaged

unless the applicant can demonstrate how conditions such as poor health or orientation make successful relocation impossible. Salvaged plants are to be replanted within the project.

Over 8,000 native plant permits have been issued, amounting to an estimated 350,000 protected plants salvaged since the implementation of the ordinance. Minimum size requirements necessary to meet protected plant status include 4 inch caliper or greater for trees and 3 feet tall or taller for cactus.

For more information please contact the City's Current Planning office at (480) 312-2500 or access the City's Native Plant website at [www.ScottsdaleAZ.gov/codes/nativeplant](http://www.ScottsdaleAZ.gov/codes/nativeplant)

#### TREES

*Whitethorn Acacia*  
*Catclaw Acacia*  
*Red Barberry*  
*Crucifixion Thorn*  
*Desert Hackberry*  
*Foothill Palo Verde*  
*Blue Palo Verde*  
*Desert Willow*  
*Juniper*  
*Ironwood*  
*Mesquite*

#### CACTI

*Saguaro*  
*Barrel*  
*Ocotillo*  
*Desert Night-Blooming Cereus*  
*Soaptree Yucca*



*Ocotillo*



*Barrel*

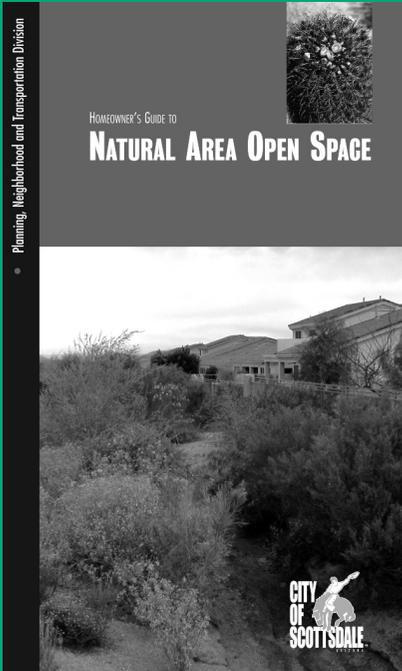
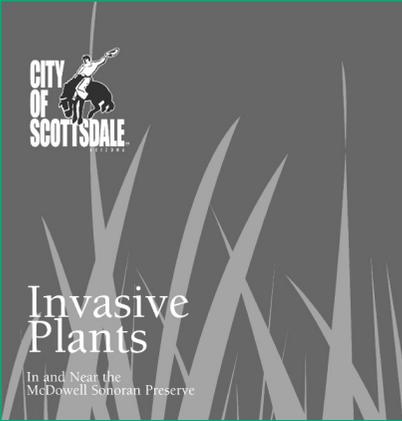


*Ironwood*



*Hackberry*

Other related brochures available at [www.ScottsdaleAZ.gov](http://www.ScottsdaleAZ.gov)



Planning, Neighborhood & Transportation

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