The best way to keep captive animals healthy is to mimic their natural environment. By landscaping your tortoise habitat to mimic the Sonoran Desert, you will allow your tortoise to follow its instincts, season to season, in meeting its nutritional needs. Many nonnative landscape plants are invasive in our desert. These invaders are threatening wild tortoises by crowding out their favorite plants and fueling intense fires that tortoises and native desert plants cannot survive.

Getting Started
The key to a successful natural tortoise habitat is space. We recommend at least 324 square feet (approx. 18 ft by 18 ft). You will need enough room to try a variety of food plants and to follow its instincts, season to season, in meeting its nutritional needs. Many non-native landscape plants are invasive in our desert. These invaders are threatening wild tortoises by crowding out their favorite plants and fueling intense fires that tortoises and native desert plants cannot survive.

Nutritional Needs
Native grasses are higher in fiber than most leafy plants and an important part of an adult tortoise diet. Younger tortoises need the extra proteins available from leafy plants.

Plant Care
New plants should be protected from your tortoise for several weeks while they become established. Try planting in the fall after your tortoise has stopped eating for the winter. The fall is also the best time to sow spring wildflower seeds such as lupine and penstemon. New plants should be protected from your tortoise for several weeks while they become established. Try planting in the fall after your tortoise has stopped eating for the winter. The fall is also the best time to sow spring wildflower seeds such as lupine and penstemon.

Native Plants for Southwestern Landscapes
Edited by Judy Mielke
Arizona Game and Fish Department
Second Printing 2008

Where to Get Native Plants
- Check aznps.org and click on Sources for Native Plants
- Buy native seeds or collect them from your friends
- Ask for native plants at your favorite plant retailer
- Transplant volunteer plants from around your yard

Resources
Visit the desert tortoise native plant demonstration garden at the Arizona Game and Fish Department office in Tucson, open 8-5, Mon-Fri 550 N. Craywood Rd.
Plants of Arizona by Anne Orth Epple
The Sonoran Desert Tortoise: Natural History, Biology and Conservation Edited by Tom Van Devender
Native Plants for Southwestern Landscapes by Judy Mielke
Desert Tortoise Adoption Program Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
www.desertmuseum.org/programs/dtp.php
Care of Captive Desert Tortoise Arizona Game and Fish Department
www.azgfd.gov/tortoises
The Wildlife-friendly Garden Arizona Game and Fish Department
www.azgfd.gov/w_c/landscaping_wildlife_southern_arizona.htm
Answering Questions about Desert Tortoises www.deserttortoise.org/answeringquestions/
Plants of the Sonoran Desert
Native plants of the Sonoran Desert are perfectly adapted to our climate and offer superior nutrition for the captive desert tortoise.

By landscaping your tortoise habitat to mimic the Sonoran Desert, you will allow your tortoise to follow its instincts, season to season, in meeting its nutritional needs. Many nonnative landscape plants are invasive in our desert. These invaders are threatening wild tortoises by crowding out their favorite plants and fueling intense fires that tortoises and native desert plants cannot survive.

Nutritional Needs
Native grasses are higher in fiber than most leafy plants and an important part of an adult tortoise diet. Younger tortoises need the extra proteins available from leafy plants.

Plant Care
New plants should be protected from your tortoise for several weeks while they become established. Try planting in the fall after your tortoise has stopped eating for the winter. The fall is also the best time to sow spring wildflower seeds such as lupine and penstemon. New plants should be protected from your tortoise for several weeks while they become established. Try planting in the fall after your tortoise has stopped eating for the winter. The fall is also the best time to sow spring wildflower seeds such as lupine and penstemon.

Native Plants for Southwestern Landscapes
Edited by Judy Mielke
Arizona Game and Fish Department
Second Printing 2008

Where to Get Native Plants
- Check aznps.org and click on Sources for Native Plants
- Buy native seeds or collect them from your friends
- Ask for native plants at your favorite plant retailer
- Transplant volunteer plants from around your yard

Resources
Visit the desert tortoise native plant demonstration garden at the Arizona Game and Fish Department office in Tucson, open 8-5, Mon-Fri 550 N. Craywood Rd.
Plants of Arizona by Anne Orth Epple
The Sonoran Desert Tortoise: Natural History, Biology and Conservation Edited by Tom Van Devender
Native Plants for Southwestern Landscapes by Judy Mielke
Desert Tortoise Adoption Program Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
www.desertmuseum.org/programs/dtp.php
Care of Captive Desert Tortoise Arizona Game and Fish Department
www.azgfd.gov/tortoises
The Wildlife-friendly Garden Arizona Game and Fish Department
www.azgfd.gov/w_c/landscaping_wildlife_southern_arizona.htm
Answering Questions about Desert Tortoises www.deserttortoise.org/answeringquestions/
Plants of the Sonoran Desert
Native plants of the Sonoran Desert are perfectly adapted to our climate and offer superior nutrition for the captive desert tortoise.

By landscaping your tortoise habitat to mimic the Sonoran Desert, you will allow your tortoise to follow its instincts, season to season, in meeting its nutritional needs. Many nonnative landscape plants are invasive in our desert. These invaders are threatening wild tortoises by crowding out their favorite plants and fueling intense fires that tortoises and native desert plants cannot survive.

Nutritional Needs
Native grasses are higher in fiber than most leafy plants and an important part of an adult tortoise diet. Younger tortoises need the extra proteins available from leafy plants.

Plant Care
New plants should be protected from your tortoise for several weeks while they become established. Try planting in the fall after your tortoise has stopped eating for the winter. The fall is also the best time to sow spring wildflower seeds such as lupine and penstemon. New plants should be protected from your tortoise for several weeks while they become established. Try planting in the fall after your tortoise has stopped eating for the winter. The fall is also the best time to sow spring wildflower seeds such as lupine and penstemon.

Native Plants for Southwestern Landscapes
Edited by Judy Mielke
Arizona Game and Fish Department
Second Printing 2008

Where to Get Native Plants
- Check aznps.org and click on Sources for Native Plants
- Buy native seeds or collect them from your friends
- Ask for native plants at your favorite plant retailer
- Transplant volunteer plants from around your yard

Resources
Visit the desert tortoise native plant demonstration garden at the Arizona Game and Fish Department office in Tucson, open 8-5, Mon-Fri 550 N. Craywood Rd.
Plants of Arizona by Anne Orth Epple
The Sonoran Desert Tortoise: Natural History, Biology and Conservation Edited by Tom Van Devender
Native Plants for Southwestern Landscapes by Judy Mielke
Desert Tortoise Adoption Program Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
www.desertmuseum.org/programs/dtp.php
Care of Captive Desert Tortoise Arizona Game and Fish Department
www.azgfd.gov/tortoises
The Wildlife-friendly Garden Arizona Game and Fish Department
www.azgfd.gov/w_c/landscaping_wildlife_southern_arizona.htm
Answering Questions about Desert Tortoises www.deserttortoise.org/answeringquestions/
Plants of the Sonoran Desert
Native plants of the Sonoran Desert are perfectly adapted to our climate and offer superior nutrition for the captive desert tortoise.
Native trees provide shade for plants and tortoises. Many trees have seeds, fruit or flowers that tortoises need to supplement their diet. Consider planting a shade tree like the desert willow that drops most of its leaves in the winter to let plenty of sun through for spring shrubs and wildflowers.

Cacti can be dangerous to a tortoise in an enclosure where the animal will continually bump into it. We recommend cacti be planted outside of the enclosure where the fruit and flowers can be harvested and offered to the tortoise. Replicate wild conditions by only offering prickly pear fruit to your tortoise.

The two primary seasons for annuals are spring and summer. Spring annuals do most of their growing in late winter through early spring when your tortoise is not eating. This can make for a lush food source for your tortoise as it emerges from its den but these plants will fade fast with the increasing temperatures of late spring. Summer annuals are usually triggered by temperatures of late spring.

Grasses are nutritionally important for adult tortoises. Rama del toro is an annual that grows like a weed in many yards. Native grasses are nutritionally important for young tortoises. These plants are usually hearty and will live for many years.

Many wildflowers are short-lived annuals. Some common native wildflowers like spikering and spurge are considered weeds by many people. These are usually vigorous plants and can be your best choice for planting in the enclosure. Due to their fast growth and adaptability, they can take a lot of abuse from a hungry tortoise.

Arizona Native Plants Suitable for Sonoran Desert Tortoise Diet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Life Cycle</th>
<th>Sunlight</th>
<th>Watering Frequency</th>
<th>Growing Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rama del toro</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Sun/shade</td>
<td>Full sun</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desert senna</td>
<td>Perennial</td>
<td>Full sun</td>
<td>Part sun</td>
<td>Fast growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer poppy</td>
<td>Summer annual</td>
<td>Full sun</td>
<td>Part sun</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver puffs</td>
<td>Summer annual</td>
<td>Full sun</td>
<td>Part sun</td>
<td>Slow growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owl’s clover</td>
<td>Spring annual</td>
<td>Full sun</td>
<td>Part sun</td>
<td>Slow growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowy four o’Clock, Mirabilis multiflora</td>
<td>Summer annual</td>
<td>Sun/shade</td>
<td>Full sun</td>
<td>Fast growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desert poppy</td>
<td>Summer annual</td>
<td>Full sun</td>
<td>Part sun</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogpeach</td>
<td>Summer annual</td>
<td>Full sun</td>
<td>Part sun</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black pug</td>
<td>Summer annual</td>
<td>Full sun</td>
<td>Part sun</td>
<td>Slow growing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annual: Plants come up from seed each year. Plant seeds of Spring annuals in the Fall/Winter. Small shrubs: Plants persist all year. Some are long lived and some live only a few years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Life Cycle</th>
<th>Sunlight</th>
<th>Watering Frequency</th>
<th>Growing Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona honeysuckle</td>
<td>Perennial</td>
<td>Full sun</td>
<td>Part sun</td>
<td>Fast growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona grape hyacinth</td>
<td>Perennial</td>
<td>Full sun</td>
<td>Part sun</td>
<td>Fast growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona grasses</td>
<td>Perennial</td>
<td>Full sun</td>
<td>Part sun</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona hollyhock</td>
<td>Perennial</td>
<td>Full sun</td>
<td>Part sun</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Large shrubs:

- Arizona hollyhock: Fast growing, full sun, part shade
- Arizona grape hyacinth: Fast growing, full sun, part shade
- Arizona honeysuckle: Fast growing, full sun, part shade
- Arizona hollyhock: Fast growing, full sun, part shade

Medium to large shrubs:

- Arizona hollyhock: Fast growing, full sun, part shade
- Arizona grape hyacinth: Fast growing, full sun, part shade
- Arizona honeysuckle: Fast growing, full sun, part shade
- Arizona hollyhock: Fast growing, full sun, part shade

Small shrubs:

- Arizona hollyhock: Fast growing, full sun, part shade
- Arizona grape hyacinth: Fast growing, full sun, part shade
- Arizona honeysuckle: Fast growing, full sun, part shade
- Arizona hollyhock: Fast growing, full sun, part shade

Perennials: Plants persist all year. Some are long lived and some live only a few years.

- Arizona hollyhock: Fast growing, full sun, part shade
- Arizona grape hyacinth: Fast growing, full sun, part shade
- Arizona honeysuckle: Fast growing, full sun, part shade
- Arizona hollyhock: Fast growing, full sun, part shade

Annual: Plants come up from seed each year. Plant seeds of Spring annuals in the Fall/Winter.