



# Friends of SNOW CANYON

## What's That Plant??

**Blackbrush is a desert shrub that dominates over three million acres in the southwestern United States.** It occurs primarily in the transition zone between the cold desert of the Great Basin and the warmer Mojave Desert. This species forms vast, pure stands across the desert floor and on scrubby slopes.

### Look For...

**Foliage:** The linear leaves are small (3/8") and arranged in opposite pairs. During periods of severe drought, plants may go into dormancy and drop most of their leaves. So, they may be nearly leafless for much of the year and resemble a pile of sticks!

**Flowers:** Triggered by spring rains, flowers appear in late spring. They have four yellowish sepals and many yellow stamens. Four petals may occur but they are usually absent so the sepals take their place to attract pollinators. The flowers are atypical of other members of the Rose Family.



**Fruit:** It is a small, one-seeded achene, which is typical of the Rose Family. Seed formation occurs only in years of abundant precipitation. Two good moisture years in succession are required for a successful seed crop.

Kangaroo rats are the main dispersers of the seed. Blackbrush provides critical habitat and food for many rodents and birds. Deer and bighorn sheep will also browse this plant in the winter.



**Habit:** This plant is most easily recognized by its habit. It is a low, rounded shrub with a characteristic pattern of intricate branches. The stems are very dense and often have a small spine at the tip. The Latin name *ramosissima* means "many branched".

The common name Blackbrush comes from the color of the older stems which are gray, but darken to black with age or when wet.

### Blackbrush

*Coleogyne ramosissima*  
Rosaceae — Rose Family



A stand of Blackbrush along the Gila Trail