



# Friends of SNOW CANYON

## What's That Plant???

You are never far away from a **Creosote Bush** when you are in the Mojave Desert. It is the most prominent plant species of this desert ecosystem. Washington County is where the Mojave Desert reaches the northern edge of its range. So the next time you are in Snow Canyon, look for this plant to determine how far the Mojave habitat extends up into the canyon.

### Creosote Bush

*Larrea tridentata* (Zygophyllaceae Family)



### Creosote Bush

#### *A Fascinating and Unique Plant...*

- ***It is one of the oldest living plants.*** Stands of Creosote Bush in California and Arizona have been determined to be over 11,000 years old, predating redwoods!
- ***Over the years it has adapted to survive in the hot and dry desert.*** Its deep root system allows it to outcompete many other plants for precious soil moisture. Creosote Bush can live up to two years with no water by shedding its leaves and even branches!
- ***It is an "early riser" and faces the morning sun.*** The leaves open their stomata to photosynthesize only in the morning when the humidity is highest to minimize water loss. To maximize the amount of morning sun, Creosote plants are oriented to the southeast.
- ***It has a unique, aromatic smell, especially after a good rain.*** The entire plant exhibits a characteristic odor of creosote, from which the common name is derived.
- ***The flowers provide pollen and nectar to 22 species of bees.*** The leaves are unpalatable to wildlife, but rodents, birds and reptiles use the plant for shelter.
- ***Creosote Bush has a complex chemical composition.*** It has been extensively studied and used medicinally in many different ways.

### Look For...

- ***Foliage:*** Small, resinous, evergreen leaves with a waxy coating.
- ***Flowers:*** Yellow with 5 petals, about an inch wide occurring in the spring.
- ***Fruit:*** Small, white fuzzy capsule.
- ***Habit:*** Woody shrub growing up to 10 feet tall with an interesting branching habit.

