Sheathed Cholla

Cylindropuntia tunicata

Height: 18 inches

Spread: 24 inches

Sunlight: ○

Hardiness Zone: 7b

Other Names: Thistle Cholla, syn. Opuntia tunicata

Group/Class: Cylindropuntia

Description:

A variable, shrubby cactus featuring unique, stem-like, cylindrical growth instead of the usual pads; stems topped with striking yellow flowers in spring, followed by greenish-yellow fruits; covered in sharp white spines, so site and handle carefully

Features & Attributes

Sheathed Cholla is a small succulent evergreen plant. It is a member of the cactus family, which are grown primarily for their characteristic shapes, their interesting features and textures, and their high tolerance for hot, dry growing environments. As an 'opuntiad' type of cactus, it doesn't actually have leaves, but rather modified succulent stems that comprise the bulk of the plant, and which are designed to retain water for long periods of time. This particular cactus is valued for its mounded habit of growth on a plant consisting of long, narrow spiny grayish green segmented stems that form 'branches' which spread out from a central base. This plant features showy yellow cup-shaped flowers at the ends of the branches from late spring to early summer.



Sheathed Cholla
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



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Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Planting & Growing

When grown indoors, Sheathed Cholla can be expected to grow to be about 18 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 24 inches. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 20 years. This houseplant requires direct sun for optimal performance, and should therefore be situated in a room that gets bright sunlight for a good part of the day; it is not a good choice for rooms lit only by artificial light. This is a unique plant in that it requires extremely dry, well-drained soil, and it will die if left in standing water for any length of time - in fact it will suffer if it is over-watered. The soil should be allowed to go completely dry to the touch an inch or two deep for prolonged periods, and it may only need watering once every few weeks. Be aware that your particular watering schedule may vary depending on its location in the room, the pot size, plant size and other conditions; if in doubt, ask one of our experts in the store for advice. Like most succulents and cacti, it prefers to grow in poor soils and should therefore never be fertilized. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in sandy soil. Contact the store for specific recommendations on pre-mixed potting soil for this plant.

There are many factors that will affect the ultimate height, spread and overall performance of a plant when grown indoors; among them, the size of the pot it's growing in, the amount of light it receives, watering frequency, the pruning regimen and repotting schedule. Use the information described here as a guideline only; individual performance can and will vary. Please contact the store to speak with one of our experts if you are interested in further details concerning recommendations on pot size, watering, pruning, repotting, etc.