Cactaceae
The Cactus Family

97 genera
1,400 species

- Some species (ex: “peyote”) contain hallucinogenic substances and are used locally by Native Americans.

Reduced Phylogeny of Required Families

Distribution:
Family is endemic to the New World, distributed from the tropics to temperate regions. Most species are found in arid zones or seasonally dry regions.

Economic Uses:
- Fruits (tunas) and stems (nopales) of Opuntia and some other genera are eaten.
- Many species grown as ornamentals.
- Some plants are used for hedging, while wood-like skeletons can be used for rustic furniture and carving.

Characteristic features:
- Spiny stem succulents; trees, shrubs, globular forms, vines, epiphytes, and geophytes.
- CAM metabolism.
- Lateral shoots reduced to areoles, associated with a spine or spine cluster; reduced in subfamily Opuntioideae to glochids.
- Flowers: tepals numerous, often highly colored, spirally arranged; stamens numerous; 3 to many carpels in an inferior ovary.
- Fruit: a berry.

References for further inquiry: