

GREEN VALLEY NEWS AND SUN

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Fighting cactus ... one spine at a time

Eventually folks who live in the Sonoran Desert will get attacked by a cactus if they venture where cactus grow.

Talk of the Town
 REGINA FORD



Take it from me, loyal readers, it hurts like you-know-what. I recently stumbled backward into a cactus while trying to take a photo of someone's interesting garden landscape.

In order to get a good angle, I stepped behind their garden wall that separated their yard from the wild desert. The rest is history. Oh, I still managed to get the photo but it wasn't exactly in focus. Sigh!

About four cactus spines were lodged in my thigh, just below my backside. They had gone right through my jeans. I can laugh about it now, but at the time I thought I was going to keel over. The pain was far greater than my embarrassment.

The homeowner had to drive me to the clinic because I couldn't sit down in the car to drive myself. There I was, lying on my stomach in the homeowner's SUV until we arrived at the clinic where I had the spines removed.



A FOREST OF SPINY CHOLLA can be a challenge for desert hikers.

The physician's assistant had to cut through my jeans. Luckily, I had an extra pair in my car. I always carry extra clothes in my trunk. You never know when you are going to lose your pants. Anyway, it seems I'm not the only Bozo who has ever gone head-to-head, or in my case, backside-to-backside with a cactus.

I've learned that some cacti are worse than others.

The teddy bear cholla is not as cuddly as it looks. Teddy bear cholla are a distinctive cactus with spines so densely packed it almost looks fuzzy. Wrong adjective.

Cholla have some of the

most painful of barbs. Really pay attention when you are walking in a cholla cactus forest. They stick to shoes as well as everything else and the spine can work its way into your shoe's sole.

Worse yet, if you walk by a jumping cholla cactus and one needle snags you, the entire pod (also called a joint) with loads of spines will detach. When this happens you will have multiple spines in your skin at once, and that's a painful prickly problem.

The standard first aid for cholla joint removal is the

old comb trick.

•Don't even think about removing it with your hands. Insert the teeth of a comb between the cholla joint and the skin. Leave enough of the comb exposed so that you can grip it. Holding the exposed portion of the comb, flip the cactus joint away from the body. Be careful not to flip the cactus on another person. Even if you don't need a comb for your hair, a long, strong comb should be standard equipment on a desert hike.

•Another useful item is a pocket tool with pliers and

tweezers. These can be used to grip embedded spines broken off from the cactus. Cholla also have tiny hair-like spines called glochids. These embed quickly in almost any contact with the plant. They are difficult to see and are annoying but usually not too painful. Glochids can be removed with tweezers or by applying duct tape over the spines and then pulling it off.

Take heed. If you fall into a batch of cholla, you might have to go to the emergency room to get treatment.

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KENNETH HALEY PHOTO

THE GREEN VALLEY ELKS LODGE No. 2592 installed officers for 2010-11: Back row from left: John Culver (5th year trustee), Raymond Austin (lodge treasurer), Susan Anderson (esteemed lecturing knight), Antwon Saunders (lodge esquire), Robert Berry (lodge tiler) and Tamara Kahrimanis (lodge organist). Front row from left: Louis Fish (lodge chaplain), Carol Sturdevant (esteemed loyal knight), Arturo Gabaldon (exalted ruler), Thomas Curran (lodge secretary) and Cheryl Ponzo (esteemed leading knight).



JERRY SCHULTZ PHOTO

JUDY AND FRIENDS, the Just for Fun Singers, filled the halls at Santa Rita Nursing and Rehabilitation Center with Irish melodies during their weekly sing-along for center residents. From left: Chuck Taylor, Geri Correll, J.D. Barnes, Amy Johnson, Annie Coutcher, accompanist Judy Verwys, Nancy Gunn, Karen Newland, Carol June Schultz and Rachel Hamill.

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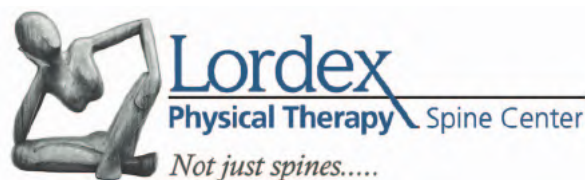
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