

One in a series.....from my sacred gardens

Ferocactus

Ferocactus wislizeni, the fishhook barrel cactus, also called Arizona barrel cactus, candy barrel cactus, and Southwestern barrel cactus, is a species of flowering plant in the cactus family Cactaceae, native to northern Mexico and the southern United States. It is a ball-shaped cactus eventually growing to a cylindrical shape, with spiny ribs and red or yellow flowers in late summer.

Ferocactus cylindraceus (formerly *F. acanthodes*)

There is no pronounced difference between its central and radial spines, but central ones are much stouter, curved, ridged, and sometimes hooked. Sonoran and Mojave deserts of southern California, southern Arizona, southern Nevada, and southwestern Utah. Height: 4-8 feet Spines: Dense, light yellow to bright red flowers: appearing in July and August

Ferocactus wislizeni

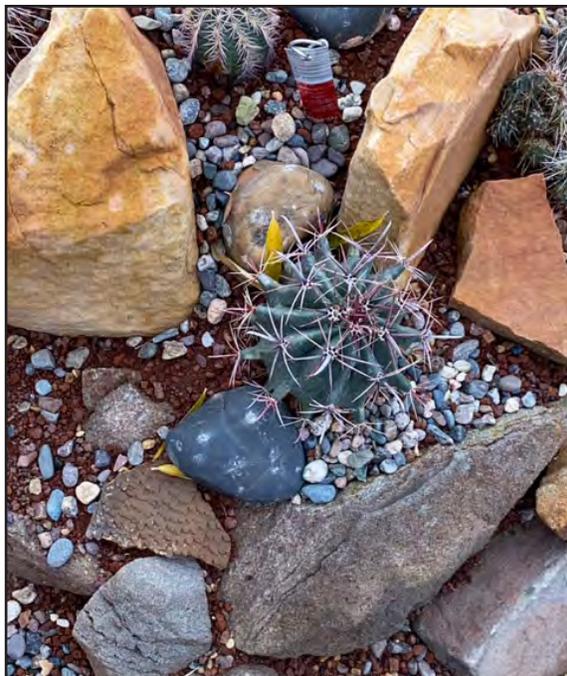
When I first moved to the Arizona northland I thought the ferocactus genus sadly seemed out of my growing zone which is usually about 7a (most years).

I'd known that my brother had collected years earlier a small *F. wislizeni* on one of his many trips coming back from Phoenix. This prize was found at a somewhat high elevation and it'd since wintered over through some rather low temperatures in the ground. He admitted that the first few years he'd covered it and then finally just decided to let it make it or not. Traveling over to his rather large plant collection last year I walked by what is now a 3' high and wide specimen and right away I had a very bad case of cactus envy. A remarkably large cacti that had survived the cold (so far) I whispered to myself! Somehow I'd forgot he'd had it.

So, later that summer armed with a vague idea of his collection site I drove myself south and proceeded to locate two candidates. The largest one proved to be too large for me to lift from a deep ditch where it had rolled into. I should have brought a tarp to capture it and then I wouldn't of had to worry about its myriad sharp protection. Best not to arm wrestle one of these bad boys. The name *fero* in Latin means fierce, and you'd learn a particularly painful lesson attempting to hoist one of these guys four feet au naturel into the back of a Jeep (at that size they are surprisingly heavy). A few weeks later Jay helped me retrieve it from that deep ditch.

In Phoenix and Tucson these barrel cacti are as common as muck but, until I saw that one in Jay's garden (I suspect it was the only one that far north). We're blessed with many cold hardy cactus that are much more attractive primarily because of their larger sized blooms. Any of these bold upright barrel cacti command a great deal more visual attention compared to their nearby smaller brethren like Escobaria, Echinocerus, Opuntias, etceteras.

I've placed outside this year a few of the larger *F. wislizeni's* seedlings that are now three years old—to see if they will survive. The seed came from a Colorado collector and I'm just going to have to surmise that they will have the cold hearty characteristics that my other larger Fero's have or I'll have mush in the spring.



In my greenhouse I have lots of both type of fero's to try in the following years...





Ferocactus cylindraceus (formerly *F. acanthodes*)

Having accepted the fact that at least one *Ferocactus* species could survive in my garden, I was completely taken aback when my brother Jay came to my house late one night with a number of new victims for me to consider. Two of them were *Ferocactus cylindraceus* from northwest Arizona. Jay had seen and heard of an example in Flagstaff (which is another thousand feet higher than my current abode) and decided to look for them while traveling to Las Vegas.

So far *F. cylindraceus* has passed a winter here at -9... so a good chance that I now have a couple of Fero species that will continue to grace my Yucca Gardens.

These smaller *F. cylindraceus* (shown to the left) will need another year or two to be sacrificed to the plant gods to see if they're large enough to attempt to weather it outside.





... heavily armored and some of those large spines have a light pink color, the *F. cylindraceus* adds a delightful contrast to many of my other nearby cacti.



Ferocactus wislizeni looks great in and out of bloom (shown following page).





Ferocactus cylindraceus (formerly *F. acanthodes*) showing its dominant appearance at the top of my berm. Simply fantastic!!

