



*A project of the Chicago Botanic Garden*

## BUDBURST FOR FAMILIES

**Title:** Crazy Cactus Adventure

**Age Group:** 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **Purpose:**

- **Why?** Noticing how desert plants are alike and different uses observation skills that are general STEM skills and reveals the diversity of plants. Children benefit from exposure to a variety of different plants because it builds appreciation for biodiversity and wonder of nature.
- **How?** Take a walk and look for the funniest cactus shape you can find. How do you think it got that way?
- **What?** An easy, active scavenger hunt for crazy-looking cactus that showcase the adaptability of desert plants.

### **Steps:**

1. You can do this activity on a short walk around the block, or on a longer more remote hike.
2. Before you go on your adventure, make sure you are prepared for the weather. In the desert, sunscreen, water, a hat, and closed-toed shoes are all a good idea. A camera would also be fun to bring.
3. As you walk, look for any plant you find interesting. Maybe one is growing sideways, instead of straight up. Or two plants that are very close together might merge together higher up. Take a moment to wonder what the plant was responding to when it started to grow that way. For example, look at these two teddy bear cholla cacti – one is growing straight up, and the other is leaning sideways. Do you see why?



4. If you find a really crazy cactus, take a picture! In the Sonoran Desert, the most fun plant to look for is the saguaro cactus. They grow incredibly slowly, and the bigger ones can be 200 years old! Here are a few of my favorites from my neighborhood:



5. The saguaro cactus inspired this treasure hunt, but different plants all over the country respond to environmental stressors, often in ways we can see based on their growth patterns. Go see what you can find in your own backyard!

**If you want to learn more**, go here:

<http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/sciencefacts/plants/cactus.html>