

Rescuing Ocotillo Canes

by Steve Watts, March 2021

The TCSS rescue program prefers to transplant intact plants when possible. However, circumstances occur when ocotillo specimens are too large to move or the team has insufficient time to take all plants at a rescue site.

In these situations, it is more desirable to take canes as cuttings as opposed to leaving them to bulldozers.

- The canes can be cut with heavy pruning loppers or a reciprocal saw.
- Cuttings are bundled 15 to a bundle and require a \$1 native plant permit tag.
- You may cut them to any length that you can transport, but each bundle of 15 cuttings (any length) requires a tag.
- The cuttings (canes) may root if planted but they do not develop into a complete multi-stem ocotillo. They always remain a leafy stick (rooted cutting).

Here are examples of how to use the canes in your southwest garden.

The iconic ocotillo “living fence” is a row of canes bound together with wire and planted a few inches into the soil. The canes leaf out when sprinkled with water either from rain or by misting them with a hose.



Cane fence panels are often used to create a uniquely southwest privacy barrier for patios and sitting areas.



Use panels as a backdrop to showcase Talavera pottery or large plants





Panels for gates, fences, shade structure roofing are generally wired together using baling wire that can be purchased at any hardware store.





Hide metal storage sheds, trash cans, rainwater tanks, or potting work areas behind an ocotillo façade or gate.

You might build a small barrio garden secluded by an ocotillo privacy wall. In Tucson, barrio gardens traditionally created an intimate space for quiet time surrounded by items that had special meaning to the garden's creator.



This barrio garden uses cane fencing as a separation barrier.



Cut individual canes to whatever size will fit in your vehicle.



Use either heavy duty pruning loppers or a reciprocal saw.



A X-shaped support is helpful when tying the cane bundle.

