

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5325

As Passed Senate, March 3, 2025

Title: An act relating to designating the state cactus.

Brief Description: Designating the state cactus.

Sponsors: Senators Warnick, Nobles, Riccelli, Shewmake and Valdez.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Affairs & Elections: 2/04/25, 2/07/25 [DP].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 3/3/25, 48-1.

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designates the Columbia Plateau cactus as the state cactus.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL AFFAIRS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Valdez, Chair; Krishnadasan, Vice Chair; Wilson, J., Ranking Member; Fortunato, Hasegawa, Kauffman, McCune, Riccelli and Short.

Staff: Danielle Creech (786-7412)

Background: The *Pediocactus nigrispinus*, more commonly known as the basalt cactus, snowball cactus, hedgehog cactus, or Columbia Plateau cactus, is found east of the Cascades Crest in big sagebrush and lower montane dry habitats throughout Central to Eastern Washington and Central to Northeastern Oregon, extending into the dry western regions of Idaho. This cactus exhibits a diverse color range, varying from green to grayish-blue and in the spring, they sprout bright pink, magenta or yellowish-green colored flowers

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near the apex of each stem. Initially spherical, the plant transforms into an egg-shaped, densely spiny configuration as it matures. The Columbia Plateau cactus reaches heights between 5 and 30 centimeters and diameters spanning 5 to 15 centimeters. This cactus is characterized by a dense arrangement of 6 to 12 central spines measuring 15 to 35 millimeters in length and showcasing colors ranging from brown to reddish, nearly black.

Summary of Bill: The Columbia Plateau cactus is designated as the official cactus of the state of Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Washington State is called the Evergreen State officially or unofficially, but we have a lot of areas that are desert, high desert, and which includes cactus. Designating the state cactus, and this one in particular, will draw attention and appreciation to vulnerable plants and niche habitats and provide an example of the diverse ecologies of Washington State. Most folks are not aware that we have cactus native to Washington State. The basalt cactus lives in only four counties east of the mountains. At higher elevations, it's a fragile habitat and a fragile plant in those habitats. This is the only ball cactus in the state of Washington. It grows very, very slowly and it lives up to 80 years. This cactus is a conservation concern in Washington because of its limited distribution and the threat to its populations by rangeland wildfires, which have become frequent and expansive in the last couple decades. In fact, the iconic shrub-steppe habitat is only 20 percent of its original size. For four weeks each year, this cactus blooms and each flower opens and closes for three or four days. This helps farmers because the basalt cactus attracts so many pollinators, such as honey bees.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Judy Warnick, Prime Sponsor; Adam Fyall, Benton County; Evelyn Williams, Discovery Lab; Vienna Borquez, Discovery Lab of Ellensburg; Ceyla Petrina; Nellie Parker; Ron Bockelman; Luke Romano-Moon; Ava Maddox; John Williams, Discovery Lab.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.