

# Cephalocereus senilis

## Old Man Cactus



Old Man Cactus is a columnar succulent in the cactus family that spines that form fine white hairs are reminiscent of an old man. It is native to Mexico but becoming more challenging to find in its natural habitat.

The Old Man Cactus, botanical name *Cephalocereus senilis*, is a columnar cactus that can grow to be up to 50 feet tall. It is native to the Hidalgo region of Mexico, usually on mountainous landscapes.

These **tall cacti** take over 15 years to reach maturity, but they are being aggressively harvested from their natural habitat. So much so that wild specimens don't have a chance to reach maturity more often than not. It is an endangered species due to overcollection for the horticultural trade.

Old Man Cactus is a popular garden cactus and can be found in many homes and gardens.

It has a thick, solitary, sometimes branched trunk covered in soft, hair-like, white spines. These spines give the cactus the appearance of a wizened old man, hence the name. Interestingly enough, these are not the only spines on this cactus. A spikier and much more prickly variety of spines are also present; it's just that the long and soft spines cover them, so they're not visible from afar. Don't go touching the column without protection; you're likely to injure yourself.

The trunk greys with age and experiences drastic changes in its upper portion; the woolly, white hair becomes much denser around this area, they lose chlorophyll, and the areolas come closer together. This is all in preparation for the main event: the flowering. Take note that this only occurs in mature plants, and even then, it takes some time for the cactus to settle into its maturity. Flowers are nocturnal and appear one after another, not all at the same time. Fruits appear after a month of flowering.

