

***Sclerocactus mesae-verdae* (Boissevain ex Hill & Salisbury) L. Benson**  
**Mesa Verde Cactus**

**Family:** Cactaceae

**Synonyms:** *Coloradoa mesae-verdae* Boissevain ex Hill & Salisbury

**NESL Status:** G2

**Federal Status:** Listed Threatened (44 FR 62471 62474)

**Plant Description:** Stems are mostly solitary, sometimes in clusters, oval to depressed-globose, 3 – 11 cm long, up to 10 cm in diameter; ribs 13 – 17; central spines absent or rarely one; radial spines 7 – 13, straw-colored, spreading, 6 – 13 cm long; flowers yellowish-cream to pinkish, 1 – 3 cm wide, 1 – 3.5 cm long; fruits tan at maturity. Flowering occurs from beginning of April to early May.

**Similar Species:** *Sclerocactus parviflorus* ssp. *intermedius* has strongly hooked central spines and pink-purple flowers.

**Habitat:** Salt-desert scrub communities, typically in the Fruitland and Mancos shale formations, but also in the Menefee Formation overlaying Mancos shale. It is most frequently found on the tops of hills or benches and along slopes. Known populations occur between 4900 to 5500ft.

**General Distribution:** San Juan Co, NM, and adjacent Montezuma Co, CO.

**Navajo Nation Distribution:** Colorado border south to near Naschitti, NM.

**Potential Navajo Nation Distribution:** Within the known distribution to the north, south, and west. The eastern limits are still unclear.

**Survey Period:** Surveys are only acceptable during the flowering & fruiting period from April through May. Suitable habitat can be identified year round.

**Avoidance:** A 200 ft buffer zone is recommended to avoid disturbance; may be more or less, depending on slope, size, and nature of the project.

**Comments:** This species has been severely impacted by drought and subsequent predation by insects. Population levels have declined to an all-time low between 2002 and 2004.

**References:**

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- USDI Bureau of Land Management. 1995. The Farmington District Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive Plant Field Guide. Prepared by Ecosphere Environmental Services, Inc., Farmington, NM.
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. 1984. Mesa Verde Cactus (*Sclerocactus mesae-verdae*) recovery plan. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office, Albuquerque, NM.



*Sclerocactus mesae-verdae*

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*Sclerocactus mesae-verdae* habitat

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