

***Opuntia whipplei* Engelmann & Bigelow **var. multigeniculata** (Clokey) L. Benson****BLUE DIAMOND CHOLLA****FAMILY:** *Cactaceae*, the cactus family.**SYNONYMS:** *Opuntia multigeniculata**Cylindropuntia multigeniculata**Opuntia X multigeniculata**Opuntia abyssii* (?)**STATUS:****Heritage Program SENSITIVE LIST, ranks: G4? T1 S1****USFWS/ESA:** CANDIDATE for listing. **STATE OF NEVADA:** FULLY PROTECTED. **BLM:** Special Status Species. **USFS:** none. **NNNPS:** THREATENED. **CITES:** Appendix II.**POPULATION CENSUS:** **3 occurrences mapped** at 1.0 km (0.6 mi) separation, **OR 10 occurrences mapped** at 0.16 km (0.1 mi) separation; total estimated **individuals unknown**, total estimated **area unknown**. **TREND:** unknown.**IMPACTS AND MAJOR THREATS:** Impacted by tailings burial and possible habitat loss from an adjacent gypsum mine, most of the population is now under public protective management, still vulnerable to horticultural and hobby collecting, fugitive dust along mine access road.**INVENTORY EFFORT:** Surveys are substantially complete within the known range, but other potential habitat may yet occur in other calcareous mountain ranges of southern Nevada. Most recent entered survey 1991, average year of last survey 1991. **Years since last entered survey** (percent of mapped records at various survey ages): **6-10 yrs:** 100%.**LAND MANAGEMENT** in decreasing predominance: U. S. Bureau of Land Management, private lands (?).**RANGE:** Clark County, Nevada. Apparently endemic to the Blue Diamond Hills of the Spring Mountains. Maximum **range dimension 3.6 km (2.2 mi)** excluding most disjunct record.**ELEVATIONS RECORDED:** 3585-4250 feet (1093-1295 meters).**HABITAT:** Dry, open carbonate ledges, crevices, and rocky colluvium on gentle to steep slopes of all aspects, but predominantly on northerly exposures, canyon walls, or other cooler or more protected exposures, in close proximity to overlying gypsum beds up-slope, and associated with numerous other succulent and shrub species of the creosote bush and blackbrush vegetation zones.**PHENOLOGY:** flowering late-spring. Range of most frequent **survey months:** May.**LIFE-FORM AND HABIT:** shrubby long-lived cactus.**DESCRIPTION:** Low, compact cactus; plants low shrubs or less commonly mat-forming, mainly 10-60 cm tall or more, with short, thick spiny joints. Flowers June-July.**PHOTOGRAPHS:** Benson (1982), Morefield (1992), Weixelman and Atwood (1990); Nevada Natural Heritage Program images web page (1998-present), slide collection (1986-present), and files.**ILLUSTRATIONS:** Mazingo and Williams (1980), Weixelman and Atwood (1990).**OTHER GENERAL REFERENCES** (listed separately): Clokey (1951), Kearney and Peebles (1960), Welsh et al. (1993).**SPECIFIC REFERENCES:**Chatterley, M. 1982. Status report for *Opuntia whipplei* var. *multigeniculata*. Orem, Utah: EPS, Inc., prepared for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon.Clokey, I. W. 1943. Notes on the flora of the Charleston Mountains, Clark County, Nevada. V. *Cactaceae*. *Madroño* 7: 67-76.Morefield, J. D. 1992. Status report for *Opuntia whipplei* Engelmann and Bigelow var. *multigeniculata* (Clokey) L. Benson. Carson City: Nevada Natural Heritage Program, prepared for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reno.

WESTEC Services, Inc. 1980. Las Vegas District chipmunk management guide. Reno: prepared for the U. S. Forest Service. 41 pages.

**OF FURTHER INTEREST:** Considered by some workers to be of hybrid origin, but not yet with convincing evidence. If so, it appears to have stabilized into an independently reproducing population. In the field, it appears to be a distinct species (*Opuntia multigeniculata*) closely related to *O. whipplei*, the nearest occurrence of which is in far eastern Lincoln County, Nevada.