

# *Echinocereus coccineus* var *rosei* in Doña Ana County, New Mexico



▼▲ *Echinocereus coccineus* var *rosei* growing near Dripping Springs Road.



**E***chinocereus coccineus* var *rosei* is a common and relatively robust hedgehog cactus found throughout much of Doña Ana County, New Mexico, as well as El Paso and Hudspeth Counties, Texas. Its flower color is brilliant crimson, hence the specific and varietal epithets. *Echinocereus coccineus* is unusual for the genus in being dioecious. That is, individual



▲ Organ Mountains viewed from Baylor Canyon Road just before it ends at Dripping Springs Road. All photos were taken the evening of 1 May 2005.

plants are either female or male, a relatively rare condition among cacti.

*Echinocereus coccineus* var *rosei* is usually found on very gently sloping alluvial deposits, although I have occasionally seen it on steeper slopes. Many specimens can be found in the alluvial deposit that descends vertically 400 meters from the western flank of the Organ Mountains horizontally over roughly 12 kilometers to the town of Las Cruces.

A great place to look for this species is along the unpaved portions of Dripping Springs Road, which has an eastern terminus at Dripping Springs and turns into University Drive at the Las Cruces city limits. Within a dozen meters of Dripping Springs Road you can see hundreds of these plants, although they can be somewhat cryptic when not in flower. They vary from small, single-stemmed plants up to plants with two dozen large stems. Many of the mature plants in this large alluvial deposit to the east of Las

Cruces seemed to be flowering simultaneously on 1 May 2005. Although, admittedly, it would be much harder to notice specimens that were not in flower! With five and six flowers per stem being common, large clumps of *Echinocereus coccineus* var *rosei* can be impressive. ♦

▼ *Ferocactus wislizeni* and single-stemmed *Echinocereus coccineus* var *rosei*. The barrel cacti are roughly a half meter in diameter.

