

## Landscapes, Albuquerque Style

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**Summary:** We have appealing natural features to inspire great landscapes; forget ideas from wet places

On a recent spring morning, I basked in the breeze to get inspired. At our courtyard gate, a hummingbird buzzed by, our plantings stirring my senses; that continued hiking each rocky slope beyond.

Is there an appropriate style for Albuquerque landscapes? The answer lies in what makes our uplands and valley each great. Some regional cities have created their own styles; Albuquerque needs to create its own design styles, based on regional patterns, good design principles, and signature plants.

### Albuquerque, the Un-Desert

The first time I saw the sandy hills dotted with junipers, granite boulders and evergreen oaks along the Sandias, and desert arroyos with scattered desert willows, I was impressed. Yet area developments ignore those features. Wouldn't it be easier to enjoy our brilliant sun and the landscapes it nourishes?

### Yo quiero reality

Take a close look at the truly natural areas nearby, and you will notice incredible beauty.

Albuquerque lies in the Chihuahuan Desert ecoregion, a mix of desert grassland and shrubs, with influences from the Colorado Plateau and Southern Plains. Outlying edges of the city lie in the Arizona-New Mexico Mountain ecoregion (milder Mexican or Madrean, not cooler Rocky Mountain parts).

By embracing your ecoregion and its plant associations, most anyone can design a great landscape.

Cover the ground plane using materials that native soils are derived from; organic mulches are inappropriate, except fine textured types used in an enclosed, oasis of leafy plantings; bark chunks are foreign everywhere. Most native plantings look and grow best with fine-textured gravel or crusher fines of neutral tones; they are used to heat, too. For vast areas, revegetate with native seeding and plants and retain existing plantings, exposing native soil texture. Draw attention to the space, not the ground.

### Just the plants, man!

Here are just a few native plants, requiring little irrigation, that shout "Albuquerque":

#### **Trees & Skyline Accents:**

NETLEAF HACKBERRY / *Celtis reticulata*  
HAIRY MTN. MAHOGANY / *Cercocarpus breviflorus*  
ARIZONA WALNUT / *Juglans major*  
ONESEED JUNIPER / *Juniperus monosperma*  
SCREWBEAN MESQUITE / *Prosopis pubescens*  
WESTERN HONEY MESQUITE / *Prosopis torreyana*  
DESERT LIVE OAK / *Quercus turbinella*  
SOAPTREE YUCCA / *Yucca elata*

#### **Accents:**

TREE CHOLLA / *Cylindropuntia imbricata*  
CHRISTMAS CHOLLA / *Cylindropuntia leptocaulis*  
STRAWBERRY HEDGEHOG / *Echinocereus fendleri*  
CLARET CUP / *Echinocereus triglochidiatus*  
BEARGRASS / *Nolina texana*  
DESERT PRICKLY PEAR / *Opuntia engelmannii*  
PURPLE PRICKLY PEAR / *Opuntia macrocentra*  
BANANA YUCCA / *Yucca baccata*

#### **Shrubs & Vines:**

BEEBRUSH / *Aloysia wrightii*  
SAND SAGEBRUSH / *Artemisia filifolia*  
FOURWING SALTBUSH / *Atriplex canescens*  
GREEN MORMON TEA / *Ephedra viridis*  
CREOSOTE BUSH / *Larrea tridentata*  
BROOM DALEA / *Psoralea scoparium*  
LITTLELEAF SUMAC / *Rhus microphylla*  
THREELEAF SUMAC / *Rhus trilobata*

#### **Groundcovers, Perennials & Grasses:**

PRAIRIE SAGE / *Artemisia ludoviciana*  
DESERT MARIGOLD / *Baileya multiradiata*  
CHOCOLATE FLOWER / *Berlandiera lyrata*  
SIDEOATS GRAMA / *Bouteloua curtipendula*  
BLACKFOOT DAISY / *Melampodium leucanthum*  
BUSH MUHLEY / *Muhlenbergia porteri*  
MARIOLA / *Parthenium incanum*  
PURPLE VERBENA / *Verbena wrightii*