

AQUALORICA BUSH

- ▶ **Height:** Up to 5ft
- ▶ **Classification:** Eccentric plants
- ▶ **Life expectancy:** 30 years



The aqualorica bush is a relatively large bush that produces succulent leaves and lives in semi-desert areas. It is named for the Latin words for 'water' - aqua - and 'coat' - lorica. This is essentially a description of these bushes as having 'water coats' - meaning their generous, moisture-filled leaves.

Physiology

Aqualoricas grow at the edges of arid terrain. They don't survive well in full desert but can tolerate hotter and drier temperatures than most plants. A few minor colour variations occur but the variety is not drastic (see left).



They store water in their leaves, and because of this, they attract a lot of animal species, who visit these bushes to eat the leaves. The plant discourages this by giving its leaves a potent bitter, citrus taste. Most animals can only tolerate one to three mouthfuls of this before they have to give up, but it's enough to help most animals survive.

The leaves vary in appearance from species to species, with some being more translucent than others. This gives some of these bushes a truly stunning effect.

Like all eccentric plants it produces cones, and these also attract animals. As these bushes essentially serve as 'solid water-holes', they attract herbivores, which in turn attracts carnivores. The small animals that eat the seeds within the cones will almost always drag them away to eat them elsewhere, which helps the plant to spread its seed.

Medical Conditions

There are no current medical conditions associated with the aqualorica bush.

Geographical Distribution

This bush grows in semi-arid locations, and is mostly found at the edges of deserts.

Position in Ecosystem

Aqualorica provides a small but reliable amount of food and drink to many species. The bitter, sour flavour of its leaves generally discourages animals from wetter environments, so it is almost exclusively the animals that live in the desert that will tolerate eating its leaves.

History

The mukash are beginning to influence the evolutionary path of the aqualorica by favouring the use of the least-bitter species. While they have not begun to make a deliberate effort at planting their own aqualorica groves (perhaps due to this plant being mostly a spice for them; mukash harvest their own water so do not need aqualorica bushes for hydration purposes), they may begin to do so, soon.

Culture

Aqualorica has a small but clear place in Kaleidan culture, particularly mukash and kassulam culture.

Food

Spade-footed mukash like to use the leaves in cooking, in small amounts. While they have barely begun the process of agricultural farming, most tribes know where the least-bitter bushes are and harvest leaves from there. One of the most popular dishes is toasted tassey seeds with aqualorica leaf-juice. The salt in the tassey seeds helps disguise the bitterness in the leaf, leaving the sour flavour to lift the flavour of the seeds.



Thicker leaves, like the ones on the right, tend to have a milder flavour.

Economy

The leaves of this plant offer a limited place in Kaleida's economy. Their hydration value and flavour makes them valuable; their bitterness and harsh effects on the stomach make them valuable only in small quantities. Overall, in areas with a hot, harsh climate, aqualorica leaves can make the difference between life and death, so they remain valuable. When tourism to Kaleida began, they developed new value as attractive plants to see as part of a wildlife and nature holiday.

The seeds within the cones are also a viable source of food, but inconvenient to gather. If the cones are collected and carried elsewhere then they are bulky; if the collector breaks them to collect the seeds, then they risk sitting out in the sub-desert sun to do so, which makes this an unenviable task.

Money / Trading System

While there are no records of aqualorica leaves being used routinely in trade, they are an easy to pick and easily transportable source of water and flavour, so make a fairly popular trading item, especially as one individual may pick a relatively large quantity and use them to trade with multiple individuals - aqualorica leaves are generally only consumed in small amounts, so a harvest of 20 leaves may easily be used in four or five separate trades.

Medicine

Aqualorica leaves can make a diner sick if they eat too many due to their very strong flavour.

Credits

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~Hayley, The Character Consultancy