# MONSOON SUMMER...REJUVENATION

**THE WINDS ARE SHIFTING,** blowing from the southeast and the Gulf of California rather than the west. Traditionally, our summer rains begin around Independence Day – how appropriate since providing about half our annual allotment, they help guarantee our freedom from drought, and their thunder and lightning rival any pyrotechnics! Each afternoon the desert air heats up, rises, cools and builds clouds over the Catalinas, but no rain yet. The little spadefoot toad waits too, waits for the combination of sound and moisture that signals it is time to emerge from underground for another short summer of love.

COUCH'S SPADEFOOT TOAD - 2-3 inches

SONORAN DESERT TOAD - 7 1/2 inches plus

**COYOTE AND JAVELINA** scat show the telltale signs of an abundance of prickly pear fruit. The greedy mammals seem unconcerned by the needle-sharp spines protecting the ripening fruit.

Vitamin C and calcium-packed, prickly pear fruit is a sweet treat!

**THIS "SECOND" SUMMER,** unique to the Arizona Upland, is marked by lower temperatures, higher humidity and precipitation measuring in full inches rather than mere tenths. For six to ten weeks from July to mid-September, these rains mean explosive plant growth. Summer wildflowers — Arizona poppy, sacred datura, scarlet creeper and *Amoreuxia* — carpet the desert floor, and a wide variety of heat-loving plants — ocotillo, barrel cactus and devil's claw — flower. But it is the distinctive smell of rain-soaked creosote that tells us it's monsoon.
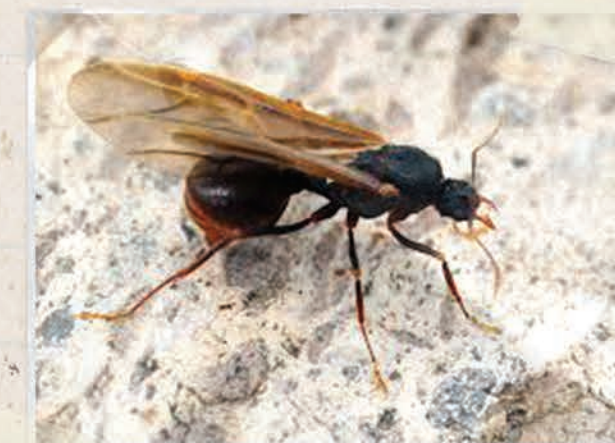
Smells like rain!

**AND THOSE FALLEN SAGUARO FRUIT** and "pooped out" seeds leftover from June? Summer rains trigger germination, and new saguaros begin their long, long lives as tiny, succulent nubs hidden in leaf litter and gravel.

Adult saguaro with tiny saguaro sprout for scale comparison.
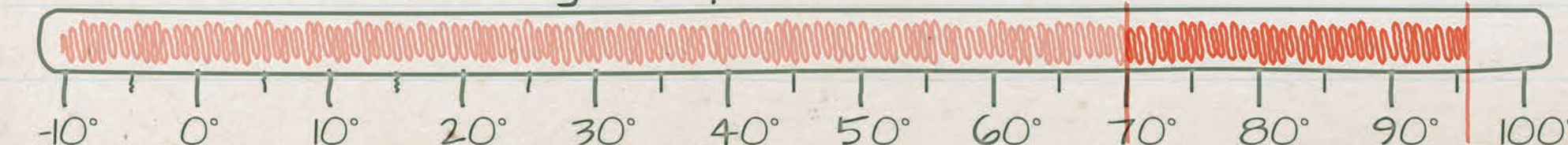
### WHIRLING DERVISHES

Summer rains prompt leafcutter, and other ant species, to grow temporary wings and take to the skies in nuptial flights. Homeless queens, followed by hundreds of suitors, will mate before selecting the right location for a new colony.

*Acromyrmex versicolor* | male leafcutter ant with wings

Monsoon Summer Avg. Temperature - 70°F (21°C) to 96°F (36°C)

-10°  0°  10°  20°  30°  40°  50°  60°  70°  80°  90°  100°

Average Precipitation 6.08" (154.4 mm)

8"
6"
4"
2"
0"