

*Piipaash name: **that** (pronounced like: thought...but uttered quickly)*
*O'Odham name: **hanam** (pronounced like: HA-num)*
*Common English name: **cholla, buckhorn cholla***

Locally, cholla buds are usually ready to be picked in late March or early April. Below are a few pics to help you identify the cholla plant and buds, as they are ready to be picked:

Figure 1 shows the bud as it is just beginning to develop. When you see it like this, you know that buds are on their way.



Figure 1

Figure 2 shows further development of the bud. It's getting there, but it's not ready yet.



Figure 2

Figure 3 shows buds that are ready! These buds would eventually become flowers if left on the plant. When the buds are ready to be picked the tip of the flower is just visible (the red part), but it is still tightly closed.



Figure 3

Figure 4 shows a bud that has opened into a flower. Too late to be picked.



Figure 4

Figure 5 shows the buds as they appear on a whole plant. Can you see them all?



Figure 5

Figure 6 shows the buds as they are picked. The easiest way is to use a pair of tongs. Just grab them and give them a little twist. They come off easily. Stand upwind when you pick so the fine thorns do not land on you. A plastic bucket comes in handy for gathering.



Figure 6

Figure 7 shows several buds in a basket. Of course, you can use a bucket or whatever is handy.



Figure 7

Figure 8 shows a basket full of nature's finest. It looks like a lot now, but why they dry out, they'll shrink to around 1/4 their original size.



Figure 8

For long time storage, the buds need to be cooked then dried out. They can be blanched in hot water, but the traditional method is roasting them in a pit. They should be cooked to the consistency of cooked asparagus. Some people de-thorn the buds prior to cooking, others will do it after cooking. Today, the easiest method of de-thorning is to make a frame and attach a metal screen to it, the kind used for a screen door. Toss the buds back and forth over the screen until all the thorns fall off. Clean them in an isolated area because the thousands of thorns will fall to the ground beneath and cause

you misery if they get on you. After cooking and de-thorning, the buds should be allowed to thoroughly dry. Once dried, they can be stored indefinitely. When you want to eat them later, simply rehydrate them in water and cook again. They can be eaten alone, but most people find them most desirable in a stew or salad.

Cholla buds are very nutritious, containing more calcium than milk. They are low on the glycemic index scale and contribute to the regulation of blood sugars. They were once a staple food for the O'odham and Piipaash. We encourage you to join us in picking them when they are ready or pick on your own. A number of recipes can be found on-line. You can also contact the Huhugam Ki Museum or Community Garden staff for additional information.

Enjoy!