

Carlink Ranch

A Cactus Story



Andy and Stefanie Smallhouse of Redington, Arizona are the jacks of all trades. In addition to raising cattle on their ranch, they also farm a variety of crops, and are partners in a mesquite lumber business. In 2009, with the suggestion from a friend, the Smallhouse Family began their newest business: cactus.

Did you know that you cannot harvest cactus off state or public lands? That's right! So, if you see a cactus on your weekend hike, be sure to leave it where it is. Cactus can only be harvested off private land. There is a high demand for cactus and the Smallhouse Family is working hard to fill that demand. Today, the family cares for over 80,000 cacti in the greenhouse and the field. This does not count the cactus that are on the rangeland; those are too many to count!

The Smallhouse Family grows their cactus from seed and harvests mature cactus from the rangeland. Those on the rangeland are usually between 3 and 8 feet tall and can be up to 25 years old. The cactus in the greenhouse will take 10-12 years to grow to 3 feet. It takes a lot of attention to grow cactus from seed until they are about 1 foot tall. They are susceptible to all sorts of bugs and molds. They are also sensitive to soil watering rates.

Growing cactus is a family affair! Andy and Stefanie's son Johnny (11) and daughter Hannah (14) help transplant the very small fingerlings into bigger pots and help with watering schedules when they are not in school. However, the biggest job they have with the cacti is pulling weeds!

Stefanie's favorite part about growing cactus is knowing that someday they will grow very big and stately for others to enjoy. Their cacti are sold throughout the state, but most often go to Tucson and Phoenix.



Young cactus in the greenhouse.



Cacti are transplanted into pots and then the field.



The cactus in front of the State Capitol came from the ranch.