

Growth, Grit and Grace

Can I tell you
I am Miss *Opuntia Humifusa*
Yellow prickly pear flower
Born in the radiant Arizonian desert

Can I tell you
I am magnetic and powerful
My bright petals are heart shaped, stamens in a spiral
I blossom in May and July

Can I tell you
My clusters bloom in multiples
A dazzling show of color display
Beauty and joy intertwined

Can I tell you
I produce an abundance of pollen and nectar
Attracting native bees and hummingbirds to support
the entire food chain and natural ecosystem

Can I tell you
I am a sun lover, thriving in high temperatures
Direct me to the bright nourishing rays
Countless happy hours go by

But
lately
the weather has been changing
Confusing the ways we grow
Hot summers begin in April
When pollinators are not yet in tow

Premature buds falling
moving us to monochrome
My petals are drying
They are now fewer and smaller at home

I try to conserve any water
with my waxy coat
reflecting radiation and timing my pollen release
on the right note

But I am still suffering from heat stress
I don't want to turn brown
Each hot night brings new challenges to my rest
Roasting without recovery, waiting for cooldowns

Can I tell you
Although I struggle, I want to keep our planet healthy
Increasing biodiversity with my seeds
To sustain this desert biome

Can I tell you
My heart yearns to be generous and warm
Feeding the insects, reptiles and mammals
My rich energy is a source for desert life

Can I tell you
I am incredibly resilient
Changing colors to invite more pollinators while aging
Supported by moisture in my plant's pads

Can I tell you
I am Grit and Grace
Hoping to breathe free
And be victorious in our climate change