
WHIPTAIL

in the Xeriscape Garden

A common resident of the Xeriscape Garden, the **Western Whiptail** (*Aspidosceles tigris*) is a long, thin lizard that may approach 1 foot in length. The lizard is tan to greenish or yellowish-brown with some color variations between individuals. It may have lighter stripes with gray to black spots or lines. The tail is gray to grayish-green in adults, bright blue in the juveniles.

If you get a close look at the whiptail, notice the scales across the body. These scales provide protection from predators and waterloss. A former genus name, *Cnemidophorus*, actually means armored legs.

Whiptails forage for food across the desert floor. They eat small insects, spiders, other reptiles and some plant material. The whiptail digs burrows to find prey underground and for protection.



Photo by P. Garrett



RANGE:

California, eastern Oregon, southern Idaho, south to west Texas and Mexico.

FAST FACTS

- There are 6 species of whiptail in the United States.
- The whiptail locates its prey via sight, smell or taste.
- Whiptails are diurnal, meaning they are active during daytime.
- In late spring or early summer, whiptails lay clutches of 1-6 eggs.
- Some whiptail species reproduce via parthenogenesis (females produce viable eggs that are not fertilized), and are comprised of all female members.
- The eggs hatch within 60-75 days.
- The whiptail is capable of losing its tail when attacked by predators. The tail is “dropped” in hope that it will distract the predator long enough for the lizard to escape. A new tail is regrown over the next few weeks.

The Arboretum at UNLV serves the campus, the community, and the region through displays of flora adaptable to southern Nevada, the Mojave Desert, and other arid regions. The plant collection supports teaching and research, enhances campus beauty, and fosters awareness of plants in the human environment.

Photo by P. Garrett

