

Use "Imprinting" To Reverse Desertification

By Jean Eisenhower

Some people, when they see the desert stripped of vegetation and the surface a barren crust, think it is the desert's natural condition. And when the rain hits that crust, "sheets" across it, and fills the gullies and washes, making the rivers rise to flood stage, they think it's a "natural" disaster. But, it's not.

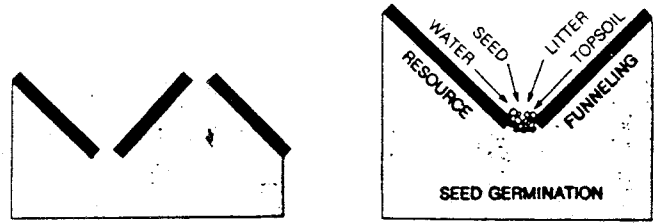
The vegetation of our Sonoran Desert has adapted over thousands of years to take advantage of the heavy rains when they fall. With natural vegetation intact, the ground can soak up the rain which is then held in the plants, evaporated, or percolated down to the aquifer to feed our springs and



streams. But stripped of vegetation by overgrazing, industry or development, the ground gets hard, smooth, and sealed, so a heavy rain has no chance of seeping in.

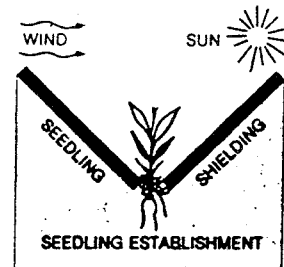
Bob Dixon, founder of the Imprinting Foundation, has developed both machinery and method to revegetate vast stretches of desert land by "imprinting." Dixon's machinery breaks the soil crust and creates impressions in the desert surface. This re-opens it to water infiltration and creates low places for the gathering of seed, litter, topsoil, and rainwater.

Dixon has performed revegetation miracles on "desertified" land, including overgrazed rangeland and land disturbed by industrial and urban developments.*



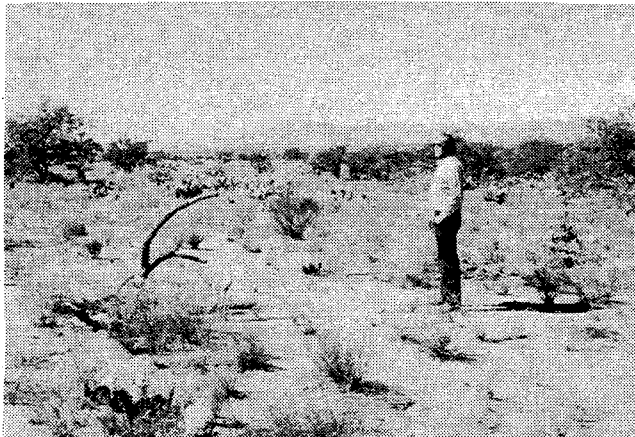
The major flood of 1983, experts agree, happened because most of the surface of our state has been stripped of vegetation. The Tucson area, for instance, used to be a grassland with lush riparian areas ringed with cottonwoods and inhabited by beaver. Without that vegetation, the water falling in southern Arizona gathered eventually into our few river systems, overflowed and cost us an estimated half billion dollars.

With Imprinting, we can revegetate the desert we've stripped, and avoid a repeat of that very costly flood. We can also stop the expensive loss of topsoil, return more water to the aquifer, control erosion and flooding, and provide more habitat for wildlife.



For more information, contact The Imprinting Foundation at 1231 East Big Rock Road, Tucson, AZ 85718, (602) 297-6165.

*Large acreages have been imprinted and revegetated in Arizona on the Bob Hopp Ranch near Tombstone; at Fort Huachuca; on the Falcon Valley Rail X Ranches near Oracle and Catalina; on the Agua Blanca Ranch in Avra Valley; around the Palo Verde Nuclear Plant; along the CAP canal; on City of Tucson abandoned irrigated land in Avra Valley; and along the reshaped Santa Cruz flood plain of the Continental Ranch, an urban development project near Tucson.



These photographs show the Falcon Valley land before imprinting and six weeks after seed germination.