

VOL. 54  
No. 5

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2017

# Kaktos Komments

a bimonthly publication of the Houston Cactus and Succulent Society  
to promote the study of cacti and other succulents



*Edithcolea grandis*  
by Karla Halpaap-Wood

## From the editor

What an exciting and terrifying past week Harvey brought us. We will all gain some knowledge how much water our plants can take, and I am hoping for some member's reports for the next KK.

Karla Halpaap-Wood

## Membership

Kathy Fewox

Twenty-two members attended the July 26th meeting of HCSS. Among that number was new member Erin Eckert. Welcome to HCSS, Erin! Joining us were three guests, Kimberly Merchant, Troy Merchant, and Teresa S. Garcia. Troy and Kimberly donated an African hosta bulb with plant attached, which we gave to new member Erin Eckert.

On August 23rd our meeting was attended by twenty-two members. We also had four guests: Annie Backhaus, Teresa S. Garcia, Sasha Rios, and Jorge Rios. Milton Pierson donated two nice cuttings of something big and sticky, which were given away to the first person who wanted them. I failed to note the name, but I believe it was one of our guests. I apologize to everyone concerned for doing such a bad job of note-taking.

HCSS member Tom Cardinal very generously gave Mercer Arboretum some *Agave americana variegata* plants to replace the ones they lost in the Tax Day flood.

Agnes Chadick celebrated her 92nd birthday on July 31st. Happy birthday, Agnes!

On August 26-27, Hurricane Harvey brought rain and destruction to Houston, bringing the city to a halt in many ways, and for many days. I know Richard Holland's house flooded, and I suspect many other HCSS members were impacted by the storm. I was spending the night of the 26th in my mother's home in Meyerland when I had my own Harvey adventure.

Mom's house, built in 1961, had never flooded. I knew Harvey was a rainmaker, but I honestly wasn't that worried until the rains went on unrelentingly. By 9 or 10 o'clock, I knew we were in trouble. The water was much higher than it had been on the Memorial Day flood of 2015 or the Tax Day flood of 2016.

I had stayed up all Saturday night, putting things up high. There was no way I could sleep with all that rain coming down, anyway. At 6:30 in the morning I realized water was coming in at the back door. Then water was coming in from all directions – seemingly through the walls and bubbling up from the floor -- and within

### Calendar:

Sept 13	7:30 pm Board Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center.
Sept 27	7:30 pm Membership Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center.
Oct 7-8	TACSS at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center
Oct 25	7:30 pm Membership Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center.

minutes all the floor was covered. It went from nothing to 4 inches in no time, and got up to about 14 inches before a brief stop on the rain halted its upwards progress. I kept carrying things up to the attic, trying to protect as much as I could.

At 1 p.m. Josie Watts called to say people in Meyerland were being rescued, but you had to either climb on your roof and flag down a helicopter, or call one of the rescue hotline numbers. I immediately started calling the hotline numbers, but all my efforts to reach the hotline ended in instant busy signals. The water in my yard at the time was thigh-high, and our street looked like a raging river. My cell phone was almost out of charge, and I finally gave up trying to call the hotline, since I wanted to save as much charge as I could for one last call out.

I made several attempts to flag down a chopper from my driveway, but they didn't appear to see me. I finally gave up, and decided to make myself a little nest in the attic where I could sit at the top of the stairs and watch the water downstairs rise. I took up a lantern, some water, snacks, magazines, and a bag of dry clothes. (I know, they say to get on the roof and not in the attic, but it was raining again and there is no way to get on the roof even in good weather.)

At 4 o'clock I was putting some things in the attic, when I heard my neighbor Herb yelling outside at about the same level as I was. I realized he and his wife Suzy must be on their roof, so I hurried down to the room closest to their house, opened the window and yelled to him, "Are you being rescued?" He replied, "I am. Do you want to be rescued?" I sure did, so I grabbed a bag of stuff I'd already gotten ready, waded through the water to his pickup truck parked next to his house, and climbed up in the bed.

In a few minutes, a Coast Guard helicopter came and hovered over us. A hunky young guy in a bright red shorty wetsuit was lowered down and helped me onto my neighbors' roof. Then the crew in the helicopter lowered down a basket and, one at a time, hauled me, Suzy, and Herb up into the chopper. They rescued 2 more people (I later found out they had been in Friendswood), and off we flew to Ellington Field and the National Guard headquarters. Then a bunch of us were bused to the shelter at George R Brown Convention Center, where we stayed overnight. The Red Cross and volunteers did a great job of handing everything. The next morning (Monday), Suzy, Herb and I were offered shelter in the home of Teya, a friend of a friend of Suzy's who has a home in the Rice Military area. We gladly accepted. We spent Monday night there, and Tuesday morning when the freeways were passable, Teya took us back to our side of town.

Mom's home is pretty much destroyed. I'm just glad she didn't live to see this. It would have broken her heart to see her home and all her possessions ruined. I feel lucky to have been rescued, and I'm grateful for the things that didn't get destroyed in the flood.

The neighborhood has been overrun with volunteers. Church and school groups have come into our homes and worked incredibly hard. They remind me of ants, or busy bees. They've carried out heavy furniture, removed Sheetrock, carried out soggy carpet and insulation. Kind people have driven through the neighborhood, handing out bottled water and food.

Hurricane Harvey was a terrible experience, but it has shown me that people are willing to help in whatever way they can, and I feel much better about the future of humankind than I did before the storm.

As always, please send any news of HCSS members and their families to [kathyfewox@aim.com](mailto:kathyfewox@aim.com).



## September Cactus of the Month

Paul Stricklin

### Claret Cup *Echinocereus triglochidatus*

(kingcup cactus, Mojave mound cactus, and many more nick names)

Endemic to Oaxaca Mexico spreading across Chihuahua, Coahuila de Zaragoza, Sonora - Mexico into Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. A cactus with many varieties:

One variety, var. *arizonicus*, is federally listed as an endangered species in the United States. It is limited to the intersection of Arizona and New Mexico in the United States with Mexico. This variety is sometimes included within *Echinocereus coccineus*.

*Echinocereus triglochidiatus* var. *arizonicus* Arizona hedgehog cactus (Endangered)

*Echinocereus triglochidiatus* var. *melanacanthus* Black-Spine claret-cup hedgehog (Salvage restricted)

*Echinocereus triglochidiatus* var. *neomexicanus* Mexican claret-cup hedgehog (Salvage restricted)

Blossom Orange to Red from April to June on mature plants – 5 to 10 years old.

Fruits (green to yellow-green, pink or rarely red) forming 2 to 2.5 months after flowering are edible

Growth Pattern:

Mounding with single or multiple “stems” reaching 12 in height and up to 500 “stems covering over 48 inches. Individual stems may reach 12 x 6 inches. Spination is highly variable ranging from very few to 8 to 12 per areole.

Populations can be found in a wide range of habitats: from the upper edge of the Mojave Desert, to low desert, rocky slopes, scrub, coniferous forests, igneous and calcareous rock outcrops and cliffs. Found most often in shady areas at elevations ranging from 500 to 11,000 ft.

This plant and it’s many varieties are readily available in the nursery trade, especially on line with many sources listing multiple varieties.



## October Cactus of the Month

Daryl Rebrovich

Family: Cactaceae

Genus: Pachycereus

Species: marginatus

Common Name: Mexican Fence Post Cactus, Organo and Organ pipe cactus

*Pachycereus marginatus* or Mexican Fence post is a columnar, dark green, upright cactus. Some sources call it a slow growing cactus some fast but, my own personal experience is that the new arm buds grow reasonably fast the first three or four years. I have seen over 16" a year in new arm buds. The main trunk does grow slow once it hits a height of about 6 -7 feet as do the arms at that height. New arm buds develop nearly always at the base. The 3 - 7 inch in diameter columns have 5 - 7 ribs, that are pleated (accordion like) with 2-3 inches wide pleats. The outer edge is margin ed with very short whitish spines. Cuttings are sometimes used to create fences because of its short spines and picket like appearance.

The plant is native throughout Hidalgo, Querétaro, Guanajuato and Oaxaca, Mexico and may be found in valleys to hillsides in a variety of soils. Flowers are said to be small and red/pinkish. Mine has not bloomed for me yet. Propagation is from seed or cuttings.

Care is easy and the plant likes full sun. I have had mine for about 5 years and it started out at about 4-4.5 ft. column. I have removed 2 or 3 small arm buds that looked about the size of a 6" pot Bishops cap (*Astrophytum myriostigma*) which they resemble at this size. They will take more water in the hot Houston weather than some other cacti. Mine survived the past winter with just a blanket for protection. Other winters I have used a PVC tripod with plastic in a T P style to protect from too much rain and cold. Mild winters I used nothing. With good drainage it does well in Houston provided you are willing to give it some protection in the wet or cold winters.



## October Succulent of the Month

Karla Halpaap-Wood

### *Ceropegia stapeliiformis*

Family: ASCLEPIADACEAE

common names: Snake creeper, Serpent *Ceropegia*

Origin: South Africa and Swaziland

**Description:** Stems look like a stapelia, but they grow much longer. Flowers are singular, with petals cut in 5 sections, fringed with hairs. It's a low growing succulent, stems can grow up to a meter long, especially in hot humid areas. Stems are 1-2 cm thick, blotched green in color. They will root where they touch the ground. It has only rudimentary leaves at growing tips.

**Flowers:** 5-10 cm long and twining from the thin tapering ends of the shoots, dark purple or brownish, outside white and hairy. The buds have an interesting structure greatly resembling slender lanterns.

**Blooming season** is described as spring and early summer, mine blooms more late summer.

**Cultivation:** *Ceropegia stapeliiformis* is a xerophytic plant adapted to dry soils, that can be grown in greenhouses with other succulents, but it can also be grown on window-sills. During the growing period it requires heat, light and watering.



**Growth rate:** It is a relatively rapidly growing and easily flowering species that will make clumps given the best conditions.

**Soils:** It likes very porous mineral cactus mix soil, pH 7,5 to 8,5 (mildly alkaline), but can become too elongated if compost is too rich.

**Repotting:** This plant needs plenty of space for its roots, repotting should be done every other year or when the it has outgrown its pot. Use pot with good drainage.

**Watering:** It needs regular watering, especially during the hottest summer days; provide also some light watering if the green house temperatures in winter are elevated. Either too much or not enough watering can induce rot.

**Fertilization:** Likes high potassium fertilizer in summer.

**Frost Tolerance:** It is best to avoid freezing temperatures (minimum 5° C). In the rest period no high atmospheric humidity, which is difficult to achieve in Houston.

**Sun Exposure:** Best for half-shade but grows well in full sun and shade too. Tends to bronze in strong light, which encourages flowering.



Propagation: Seeds and cuttings. The downwards growing stick-like branches root easily in regular well drained Cactus mix. Cuttings will root only in hot weather. Cuttings must be kept very dry to root. Seeds germinate readily if they are sown when fresh.

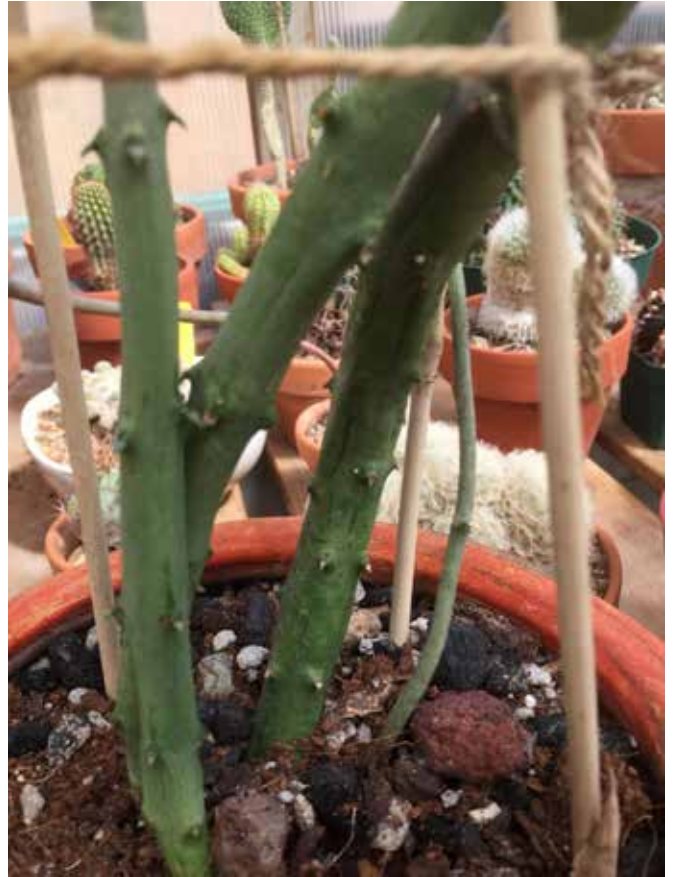
Plant is supposedly difficult to grow, sometime a plant that formerly grew very well, suddenly dies off. But this 'dying' is a quite normal part of the life cycle in this species.

I bought this plant from Dave Thomas, it was just a stick and did nothing for a few month. Then a second shoot appeared next to it and grew very long, covering all the other plants next to it, and started to bloom. This long end I broke off at the end of the season, but it did not make side shoots, just stopped growing. Then the next year another new shoot appeared from the root and also grew very long. Buds and blooms started in August.

The flowers of this plant are most interesting.

#### Bibliography

[http://www.llifle.com/Encyclopedia/SUCCULENTS/Family/Asclepiadaceae/22160/Ceropegia\\_stapeliiformis](http://www.llifle.com/Encyclopedia/SUCCULENTS/Family/Asclepiadaceae/22160/Ceropegia_stapeliiformis)



**INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT ECHEVERIAS****LILIANA CRACRAFT**

The genus *Echeveria* was named in honor of Atanasio Echeverría y Godoy, an 18th-century botanical artist from México. He accompanied Spanish botanist Martin de Sessé y Lacasta and Mexican naturalist Mariano Mociño Suárez de Figueroa in their expedition through México entitled “Royal Botanical Expedition of the New Spain,” which began around 1791. The goal of this expeditions was to compile a great inventory of fauna and flora of the country.

Because of political instability caused by the Napoleonic Wars, the project was not completed. However, Echeverría y Godoy was able to draw illustration of about 200 plants and some animals. A great number of Echeverría’s drawings are preserved at the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, located in Pittsburgh.

*Echeveria* is a large genus of succulents in the Crassulaceae family. They are native from México and north-western South America.

There are approximately 154 species of *Echeverias* ; 85% or 130 species are from México.

*Echeverias* are considered by many as the most attractive of all succulent plants.

A large number of species are given the common name of “Hen and Chicks.” These include *E. elegans*, *E. perellegans*, *E. imbricate*, *E. glaucometallica*, *E. pumila*, *E. glauca* var. *pumila*, *E. secunda* var. *pumila*.

*Echeveria shaviana* is commonly known as Mexican Hens.

Most species grow in the shade and can take some frost. All the species are drought-resistant, but they grow better with regular deep watering and fertilizing. Hybrids tend to be less accommodating about their growing conditions, and are less tolerant to frost. *Echeverias* can be propagated with offsets, leaf cuttings, and if they are not hybrids, by seeds. Offsets provide the easier way to propagate them.

Most species lose their lower leaves in winter. Depending on the level of humidity, these leaves are fertile ground for fungus that can then attack the plant. It is better to remove them regularly. Another consequence is that after a couple of years the plants look untidy. It is much better to re-root the main rosette(s) and keep the rest of the plant for propagation.

*Echeverias* have been extensively bred and hybridized.

A detailed map highlighting most of the *Echeverias* in México can be downloaded at [www.plantalia.com.mx/recursos](http://www.plantalia.com.mx/recursos)



Photo Credit: Santos Canales, Ixtapa de la Sal, México



## COOKING WITH CACTUS

## LILIANA CRACRAFT

The nutritional value of the prickly pear cactus pads varies according to the species, growing conditions, season, age of the plant, and harvesting conditions. In general, the pads are about 90% water, with significant amount of vitamin C and beta carotene. They are good sources of fiber, and contain very little carbohydrates. Here is a delicious and healthy recipe.

### CHICKEN YUCATAN

2 or 3 raw, cleaned prickly pear pads  
 3 ½ pounds chicken breasts  
 ½ cup flour, seasoned with salt & pepper  
 2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
 2 tablespoons butter  
 1 medium onion, thinly sliced  
 2 garlic cloves, minced  
 1 small can of frozen, concentrated orange juice  
 Juice of 2 limes  
 2-3 cups hot cooked rice  
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro or parsley  
 2 more limes, cut in slices or wedges  
 Optional - ¼ cup chopped green chiles, and ⅓ cup pine nuts.



Cut prickly pear pads into strips about ½ inch wide. Cook in boiling water with salt for about 15 minutes, or roast them in a 375-degree oven for about 20 minutes.

Wipe the chicken breasts dry and cut in large slices. Dust lightly with seasoned flour. Heat the oil and butter together in a large skillet. Add the chicken pieces, browning quickly on both sides. Add the onion and garlic and continue cooking for 5 minutes. Add the orange juice concentrate and lime juice, turning chicken to distribute the sauce.

Reduce heat, cover the pan, and simmer gently for 10 min., adding a little water if the sauce becomes dry. Remove the cover, add the chiles, pine nuts, and the prickly pear strips. Re-cover and continue cooking until the chicken is done.

Serve over hot rice and sprinkle with chopped cilantro or parsley and additional pine nuts. Place lime (or orange) slices around the edges.

*-Adapted from the Prickly Pear Cookbook by Carolyn Niethammer, 2004. Photo by Robin Stancliff.*

## The Migration of The Cactus Shack

by Cactus Boy

In 2016 the plan was to sell our Houston house, rent it back for awhile, quit the job, go on Cobra Insurance, buy a house in Georgetown, Texas and move there. So it was. I had to stay at my job until damn near our actual moving date of September 29, but officially “retired” at that time. We had the house in Houston since 1991 so getting out entailed two or three selling events and other disengagements. We found a moving company that agreed to move the plant collection even though it took a second truck. I went to half-price boxes and bought 40 24”X24” boxes to box up the smaller plants. My friend Craig Hamilton came over and saved my life when he helped me box plants all day in the rip-roaring Houston weather.

In the photos you’ll see three shots of the pack-up there in Houston. The boxes in the shadehouse with plants in them and sadly, the old shadehouse empty with rusted shelves, etc. Then a few plants out at the curb. All these did find a new home somewhere. Our Houston house is no longer. Progress has its price I guess.

In Georgetown we bought a house on .25 acres with a big, treeless backyard. The poor moving crew handed 35 of the boxes over the fence and I lined them up along the fenceline.

We moved the two 4’X8’ cold frames so I had a temporary home for the little plants. The larger plants went along another fenceline. The amazing thing is that the plants made the trip 98% intact. Craig and I did them proud and the movers did a great job.

The photos pretty much show the process. The flowering Arios were in the coldframes after the move.

Many other plants also flowered. I’ll share the development of the greenhouse area in my next article.











Echinopsis blooms after the rain

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