

VOL. 55
No. 3

MAY-JUNE 2018

Kaktos Komments

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



Mammillaria Ginsa Maru
by Rachel McKellar

Membership

Kathy Fewox

The HCSS meeting scheduled for March 28, 2018 was canceled earlier that day due to predicted torrential thunderstorms and possible flooding throughout Houston. After our experience with Hurricane Harvey, I'm sure none of us wanted to risk being caught in high water, so canceling the meeting was a good call.

Our April 25, 2018 meeting was attended by twenty-three members, including two new members who joined at the meeting. Please welcome Angeles and Edward Rojas to the club! Also attending the meeting were three guests: Carolina Paez, Lynne Schafer, and Suzanne Siegel. Several members donated some wonderful door prizes. Dave Thomas brought in a Euphorbia "Briar Patch," which was quickly snapped up by Milton Pierson. Karla Halpaap-Wood provided a very nice Golden Barrel cactus pup, which went home with Cindy Gray. Liliana Cracraft donated a set of beautiful beaded cactus coasters, which was won by Imtiaz Bangee. Cindy Gray was extra generous – she brought in two Gasteraloe "Green Ice" plants, which went home with Karla Halpaap-Wood and Edward Rojas. Cindy also donated two Huernia scheideriana plants, which were won by Ray Gonzalez and Bruce Moffett.

It is my sad duty to report the loss of Paul Stricklin's mother, Rae Milton, who passed away on March 24, 2018. Rae was also a long-time member of HCSS. Our thoughts and prayers are with Paul and their family.

As always, please send any news of HCSS members and their families to kathyfewox@gmail.com.



Senecio stapelioides

Calendar:

May 9, 2018	7:30 pm Board Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center.
May 12-13, 2018	Spring Sale at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 9am-5pm each day
May 23, 2018	7:30 pm Membership Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. "Big Bend Succulents from the 2008 Field Trip" by Wally
June 2-3, 2018	Field trip to Georgetown, TX and Inks Lake State Park-
June 27, 2018	7:30 pm Membership Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center.

An interesting article from
CENTRAL OKLAHOMA CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY
November 2017

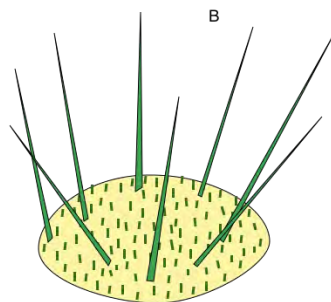
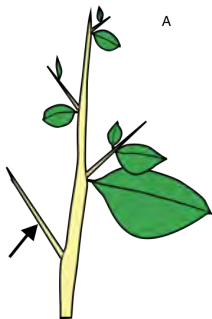


Spines and Thorns by Rosario Douglas

A common question about cactus and other succulents is related to the confusion associated with differentiating spines from thorns. Most people are familiar with spines as structures present in cacti. Of course not all spines are the same. The color, size and shape of a spine can be very variable depending on the type of cacti. Things get complicated when people point at a Euphorbia or other thorn-bearing succulent and call it a cactus. A common statement would be “oh but it has spines so it is a cactus”. Of course at this point we would point out that those are not spines but thorns and that the only spine-bearing succulents are cacti. Unfortunately, the difference between spines and thorns is hard to explain unless we approach the subject from a botanical perspective.

Spines and thorns, while similar in appearance, have different origins. Thorns are modified branches or stems that arise from buds (see figure A). Once leaves fall the modified stem that remains is technically a thorn. Spines, on the other hand, are modified leaves or parts of leaves that are produced from specialized structures called areoles (see figure B), that are only found in cacti.

For reasons that are not very well known, cacti are the only succulents that bear spines.



A. Stem morphology type thorn. Simpson (2005) Plant Systematics.

B. Cactus areoles; shoot (yellow), spines (green) and glochids (also spines, green and little).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thorns,_spines,_and_prickles

It is interesting to note that the presence of thorns or spines is believed to have multiple functions, one being a type of defense mechanism that protects the plants from plant-eating animals. The second function is that of providing shade for the growing part of the plant, thus protecting this sensible area from excessively high temperatures. This appears to be the case with cacti like the Saguaro.

This information may help, but it may still be confusing to cactophiles new to this hobby to differentiate between cacti and cacti look-alike succulents. My best advice is to approach this problem as if you were learning to read. You start slow and begin to recognize shapes of letters and then you begin to associate the letters with the sounds and so on. Basically the more familiar you become with succulents of all kinds, cacti included, the easier it will be for you to identify cacti from

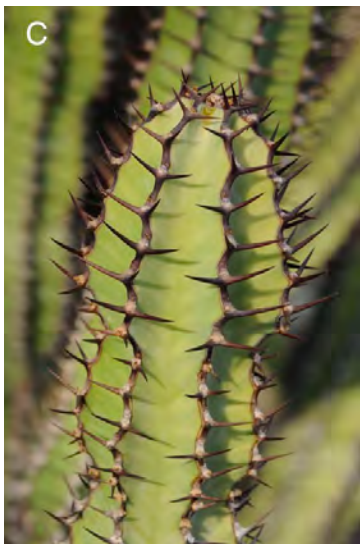




other succulents that look like cacti. The best way to do this is by reading about succulents, looking at photos and live succulents of all types, going to shows and nurseries and growing your own succulents.

A tip to remember is that succulents in the genus *Euphorbia* (a genus in the very large Euphorbiaceae family) are often mistaken by cacti (Cactaceae family). There are hundreds of succulent *Euphorbias*, but they all have very small flowers and the plant secretes a milky sap when punctured. These two characteristics are not found in cacti.

The similarity of thorn-bearing succulents to spine-bearing cacti (also succulents) is a great example of convergent evolution, a phenomena that is evident in some plants and animals that occur in similar environments in widely separated locations (e.g. deserts of Africa versus the deserts of the Americas). As the topic of convergent evolution is easily a subject for a different botanical article, we shall stop here for now.



- A. *Ancistrocactus* sps. a cactus Photo by Mike Douglas
- B. *Stenocereus eruca* a cactus Photo by Mike Douglas
- C. *Euphorbia* sps. Photo by Mike Douglas
- D. *Euphorbia aeruginosa*. Wikipedia Commons.

May Cactus of the Month

Wally Ward

NAME: *Melocactus deinacanthus* Buining and Brederoo 1973

SYNONYMS: None (was only described as a species in 1973)

COMMON NAME: Wonderfully-Bristled Turk's-Head Cactus

HABITAT/DISTRIBUTION: Endemic to Bahia State in Northeastern Brazil; allegedly hundreds of thousands of individuals are scattered in fragmented habitat consisting of 800 square kilometers, or about 300 square miles; found on gneissic (a type of metamorphosed igneous rock) inselbergs (isolated rock hills, knobs or ridges rising from a plain) or in caatingaa (xeric (i.e., dry) scrubland with small, thorny, deciduous trees) constituting about 10% of Brazilian territory.

DESCRIPTION: Stem is more cylindrical than typical *Melocactus* species; the long, shaggy, strong, radial spines point downward; mature specimens bear a terminal, ruddy cephalium (a highly-modified part of the stem in which ribs are lost, areoles crowded close together, very bristly and wooly to protect flower buds and immature fruit) that is white in the center; emerging from the cephalium are small, bright-red flowers that attract hummingbirds as pollinators; crested cephalia have been reported; white fruit; grows to about 14 inches tall and a width of approximately 10 inches; around 10-12 sharp-edged ribs; lives at altitudes in habitat of 450 to 600 meters (about 1470-1970 feet) above sea level; has a weak root system.

CULTIVATION/GROWTH: I easily grew this plant from seed obtained from Mesa Garden by mail order and sowed in 2005; minimum recommended winter temperature is 46-54 degrees F; favorable summer temperatures are around 65-70 degrees F; appears to thrive in Houston heat and humidity with partial sun; the literature warns that roots are weak and that the plant will take awhile to recover from transplantation; a lean soil mix is very important; long, dry periods are harmful to this tropical cactus.

AVAILABILITY: Seeds from Mesa Garden, catalog no. 974.4 in the retail-seed section of the online catalog.

REMARKS: This plant is on the IUCN Red List because of limited range, about 800 sq. kilometers (309 square miles) and threatened by agriculture, a dam, and the burgeoning population of Bahia State, Brazil (25 million people). This cactus is also on Appendix I of CITES (critically endangered), notwithstanding large numbers of individuals and a number of subpopulations.



Cactus and Succulent Journal 77(2):82-89. 2005
[https://doi.org/10.2985/0007-9367\(2005\)77\[82:TMOGCB\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.2985/0007-9367(2005)77[82:TMOGCB]2.0.CO;2)

PIERRE J BRAUN and EDDIE ESTEVES PEREIRA
 © 2005 This is an Open Access article: verbatim copying and redistribution of this article are permitted in all media for any purpose, provided this notice is preserved along with the article's original URL.

REFERENCES:

1. Braune, Pierre J. and Pereira, Eddie Esteves. The Melocacti of Chapala Grande, Brazil and the Conservation Status of Melocactus deinacanthus. Cactus & Succulent Journal, March 2005, pp. 82-89.
 2. Melocactus deinacanthus - IUCN Red List
 3. Melocactus deinacanthus CITES
-

COOKING WITH CACTUS: JICAMA & TUNAS SALAD

LILIANA CRACRAFT

Here is an easy recipe to impress your friends with a beautiful dish. Preparation time is only 30 minutes, and serves 6.

INGREDIENTS

- One large jicama root
- 4 red tunas
- ½ lb. fresh green beans
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lime juice
- 1 tablespoon of chopped fresh mint leaves
- 1 pomegranate



PREPARATION

- Peel and cut the jicama in long slices.
- Peel the tunas (carefully using thongs and gardener's gloves since the skin has many small glochids), and slice them crosswise.
- Steam the beans for about 3 minutes. Place them in cold water, preferably iced, to preserve the bright, green color.
- Place these ingredients in a salad bowl, and add the olive oil, lime juice and the chopped mint.
- Decorate with pomegranate seeds.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT TUNAS

Prickly pears, sometimes called cactus fruits, have a pleasantly sweet taste with a hint of tartness. The fruit, which can range in color from pale green to vibrant red, is commonly consumed in Mexico and also grows in the United States. Prickly pear makes a welcome addition to healthful drinks, and its rich vitamin, mineral and fiber content means it adds nutritional value to your diet.



May Succulent of the Month

Craig Hamilton

Plant Name – *Euphorbia francoisii*

Family – Euphorbiaceae

Genus – *Euphorbia*

Species – *Francoisii*

Description – small caudiciform (up to 10 inches) with multi-shaped and colored leaves. The leaves are usually grey to green with the amount of sun giving them red highlights. The caudex is usually raised and displayed with older plants.

Origin – Southern Madagascar, subtropical to tropical dry climate

Temperature – I keep mine above 40 degrees. Cold and damp are a dangerous combination

Light – morning sun to partial shade; more sun = more color

Water – let it dry out between waterings

Propagation – seed, branch & leaf; and in that order for quality and ease

Thailand has fallen in love with this plant and are creating incredibly unique hybrids



June Cactus of the Month**Josie Watts**

Family: Cactaceae
Genus: Mammillaria
Species: Magnimama

This cactus is endemic to Mexico and covers a wide range, even endemic to Mexico University in Mexico City. It grows in volcanic rock. It is not considered threatened, and is classified as "least concern" due to its wide range and abundance. It grows at elevations of 100 to 2,700 meters.

It is globose with milky sap. It reaches a height of 15.30 cm and a diameter of 13 cm. Initially it is solitary, but forms clumps as it matures. Tubercles are 4-sided and the axils have white wool, but not so dense as to allow the green to show through. The literature states that there are 2-5 or 3-6 radial spines, depending on the source. They are quite variable and unequal. Flowers are pink or cream-colored with deep red veins. It blooms mid-spring, and resultant fruits are dark red and club shaped with dark brown seed inside.

I have had my plant since October, 2017, at which time it was purchased from the TACSS auction. It is doing well in a traditional cactus mix in my greenhouse. It remains there because I have found no information about cold tolerance. It is also a safer place due to our humidity. The plant has required little extra care and appears to be a happy camper.

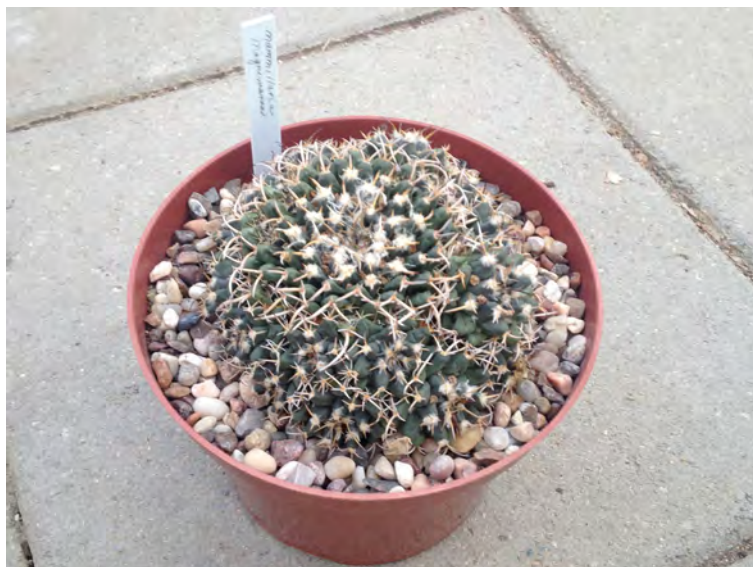
References:

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species website

Wikipedia.org

Cullmann, W., Gotz, E., and Groner, G. The Encyclopedia of Cacti. Portland, Oregon: Timber Press, 1987.

Riha, J. and Subik, R. The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Cacti and Other Succulents. Seacacus, NJ: Chartwell Books, 1981.



June Succulent of the Month**Bruce Moffett***Agave bracteosa*

Agave bracteosa is a species of agave sometimes known as spider agave or squid agave. It is native to the Sierra Madre Oriental of Mexico, in the states of Tamaulipas, Coahuila and Nuevo León. It is found on limestone cliffs between 3,000' and 5,500' in elevation although some grown near the coast. There they are often found growing with pines and *Agave victoriae-reginae*

Small among the agaves, its green succulent leaves are long and lanceolate, 12" to 20" long and ½" to 1" wide at the base. They have minute serrations (teeth) along the margins, but no teeth nor spine at the end. The leaves have a tendency to curl somewhat, in a fashion reminiscent of the octopus agave *A. vilmoriniana*. The inflorescence spike is also short at 4' to 5', and its upper third is densely covered with white or pale yellow flowers. The flowers are distinctive in that tepals arise from a disk-shaped receptacle rather than the usual tube. The stamens are quite long.

The growing conditions are typical of many agaves. They are cold tolerant to 10 to 15°F when dry and the heat tolerance is listed as "very high". Light requirements are part sun inland (to prevent yellowing of leaves) to full sun near the coast. They are very drought tolerant, but needs some irrigation in hot inland climates.

They can be propagated from offshoots or from seeds. This is a slow growing smaller agave. It is a unique agave with spineless recurving and pliable leaves so it can be planted near paths and pedestrian traffic. This plant needs well draining soil. Keep it dry in winter in the cooler zones of its hardiness range. It resembles a puya or similar bromeliad in many aspects. This species is more adaptable to light and moisture than most agaves. It is semi-monocarpic so the plant does not always die after flowering. Its white flowers are held on striking unbranched candelabra-like 4 to 6 foot flower spikes. Initially solitary but eventually spreading into a large colony by offshoots.

References for some text and picture

Engelmann, Georg, *Garden Chronicles* 2:18, 776, fig 138, 139. 1882.

Howard Scott Gentry, *Agaves of Continental North America* (University of Arizona Press, 1982) pp. 91-93



A Curse for the Agavaphile

Bruce Moffett

Many of you know that my favorite succulents are agaves and I have collected and grown them for years. An agavaphile (lover of agaves) finds a big problem with them. You get them, grow them and about the time they reach their full growth and beauty they put on an amazing show of flowering and die.

Years ago I had an agave *neomexicana* that we collected in New Mexico. It was probably the most perfect agave I have ever had. The form was great, not a single mark or broken leaf. I was sure it could win best of show at the Show and Sale. Alas, about 3 months before the show the bloom stalk came up. I always wished it would have bloomed about a week before the show. I know it would have won. The bloom was beautiful but I have always wished I still had it. I have had *neomexicanas* since then but none matched that first one.

One time I tried to stop the blooming. I had an *Agave desmetiana* that was planted in the ground in our greenhouse. It was beautiful and had been there for about 5 or 6 years. One day the bloom stalk started coming up. I knew the bloom stalk would be too tall and would hit the roof of the greenhouse. Also, the agave was too big to dig up and move. I wondered "if I cut off the bloom stalk would it stop growing and save the plant". When it was about 4' tall I cut it off as deep into the plant as I could and just laid it on the floor of the greenhouse. To my amazement the bloom stalk on the floor kept growing. Within a few days the tip of the stalk turned up and grew about another 18" before it stopped. No, it did not save the plant and the stalk actually stopped growing before it bloomed.

Last Thursday Josie and I went into our greenhouse to get some plants to repot. As we went in Josie said "oh no" and pointed at my large agave *victoria-reginae*. This is my favorite. I don't know when or where I got it but I have had it for years and repotted it several times as it grew. Before it got too heavy to load in the truck I brought it to the Show and Sale as a show and tell. The bloom stalk was just starting and only about few inches tall. I moved it out of the greenhouse to the front of the house so it could grow to its full height. My feelings are really mixed between losing my favorite and seeing what the bloom will be like.

Nothing I can do will stop it so I am going to make the most of it and try to record the process day by day. I hope you will find it interesting.





Spring Flowers

Karla Halpaap-Wood



Astrophytum myriostigma



Echinopsis



Trichocereus



Trichocereus



Echinopsis

HCSS Leadership and Contact Info:

President: Josie Watts, josiewatts@mindspring.com
First Vice President: Wally Ward, wtw3arb@aol.com
Second Vice President: Cindy Gray, grayco60@hotmail.com
Recording Secretary: Rachel McKellar, rachelmckellar7@gmail.com
Treasurer: Bruce Moffett, bmoффett@mindspring.com
KK editor: Karla Halpaap-Wood, khalpaap@me.com

KK publisher: Imtiaz Bangee, imbangee@yahoo.com
Webmaster: Karla Halpaap-Wood, khalpaap@me.com
Membership: Kathy Fewox, kathyfewox@gmail.com
Education: Richard Holland, roholland@att.net
Show Chairman: Rolando Ontiveros, rolandoontiveros@outlook.com