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Kaktos Komments

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



Mammillaria prolifera
by Karla Halpaap-Wood

From the editor

Karla Halpaap-Wood

A new year for HCSS. If I can express a wish it's that more members actively participate. Be interested in the management of the club by coming to board meetings or taking a committee position. Bring plants for Show and Tell or extras for the exchange table. Enter plants in the Show. If you can't come to the meetings, you can still participate by writing an article for the KK or sending in pictures.

Membership**Kathy Fewox**

The HCSS meeting of November 28, 2018 was attended by twenty-two members. We were joined by guest Amanda Reynolds. Two very nice door prizes were donated by generous members. Josie Watts and Bruce Moffett brought in a *Notocactus magnificus*, which was won by Richard Holland. Suzanne Siegel took home a *Kalanchoe baharensis*, donated by Dave Thomas.

We had a fairly small but happy group attending the annual holiday party, held at Riva's Italian Restaurant on December 2. Present were Josie Watts, Bruce Moffett, Cindy Gray, July Olson, Mary McConnell, David Van Langen and his wife Jennie, Dick and Phyllis McEuen, Suzanne Siegel and her husband (whose name I unfortunately didn't get), and myself. If I have forgotten anyone, I apologize. As always at Riva's during the Christmas season, there were lots of lights and other decorations to contribute to the festive mood. Our table was decorated with cactus and succulent centerpieces, made of individually potted plants, and everyone attending got to take home a plant.

I am still attempting to move to Blanco. So far, my efforts at getting cabinet work done and new floors installed have been unsuccessful. If my inability to find willing carpenters continues, I may have to settle for a kitchen with only four working drawers and carpet that looks like something out of a horror movie. For now, I split my time between Houston and Blanco.

I believe I have found my successor as Membership Chairperson, or at least a willing helper. July Olson volunteered at the October meeting. She seems perfectly suited to the task! I hope she doesn't have a change of heart. (Note to July: If you do develop cold feet, please don't let that keep you from attending the meetings. I will understand!).

Please send news of HCSS members or their families to kathyfewox@aim.com

Calendar:

January 9, 2019	7:30 pm Board Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center.
January 23, 2019	7:30 pm Membership Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. Program: "Cactus 101: Back to Basics." by Josie Watts
February 27, 2019	7:30 pm Membership Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. Program: "Unique and Odd Succulents: Aren't They All?" by Craig Hamilton
March 1, 2019	Deadline for submitting articles for the KK.

January Cactus of the Month

Richard Holland

ASTROPHYTUM MYRIOSTIGMA

COMMON NAME: Bishop's Miter

HABITAT: Northeastern and Central Mexico. They inhabit sunny south and east slopes on lime formations.

HEIGHT: 6-12 inches, USDA zones 9a: to 11: Flowers Bright Yellow: Soil pH: 6.1 to 7.5, Hardy to 20 deg. F.

CULTIVATION: Light shade to full sun. Average water needs. Keep dry when temperature is below 40 deg, F. Fast drainage is needed to prevent root rot. A long-term, slow-release fertilizer should be added to the potting mixture. The plants should be checked in the spring. If the roots are tightly packed in the present pot, the plant should be repotted in a larger one. Otherwise, replace the plant in its original pot with fresh potting mixture. New plants may need up to six years to flower.

PROPAGATION: Plants can be propagated only from seed which is sown during the spring. Scions do not root easily.

REFERENCES:

WWW.PLANTSRESCUE.COM/TAG/BISHOPS-MITER-CACTUS/

<https://davesgarden.com/guides/pf/go/130816/>



January Succulent of the Month**Paul Strickliu**

Aloe Zanzibar, *Aloe zanzibarica* similar to *Aloe juvenna*, *Aloe concinna*.

An aloe with many names and similar looking hybrids.

Zanzibar Aloe (Narrow-leafed Tiger Tooth), native to Kenya Africa, tends to grow in a star shaped columns (rosettes) up to 3 inches across. This aloe can tolerate a wide range of light from light shade to full sun. Coloring shifts to reddish as the light intensity increases.

An easily grown plant and looks nice planted in baskets or in a rock wall or just in a well-drained pot. The taller columns tend to curve over. Tall Spikes of tubular orange blossoms occasionally form in late summer. The plant forms multiple columns easily forming dense clumps providing good ground cover up to 2 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet across. Water occasionally in hot weather, avoid over watering. The plant can withstand some winter rain if well drained.

A similar aloe, called climbing aloe (*Aloe ciliaris*), provide a rapidly growing counter point with smoother darker green leaves. Just a start to collecting multiple easily grown plants with a wide range of shapes, sizes, forms, and colors.



February Cactus of the Month
Jeff Boggan

- **NAME:** *Copiapoa tenuissima*



- **SYNONYMS:** *Copiapoa humilis* subs. *tenuissima*, *Copiapoa hypogaea* subs. *tenuissima*
 - **HABITAT/DISTRIBUTION:** Chile near Antofagasta, in the mountains facing the ocean. Relies mostly on the moisture from the Pacific Ocean humidity. The plant has a deep tap root which allows it to survive harsh climate and browsing animals. The soil is very rocky and porous.
 - **DESCRIPTION:** This cactus begins producing a deep tap root as a seedling. It forms a globular stem about 2-1/2 to 3 inches in diameter. Mature specimens will begin to produce additional branches from the tap root. They will gradually create a small clump of heads. The plants flesh is dark green to purple depending on exposure to the sun and wind.
The blooming season is from September through February, (spring through summer in the Southern Hemisphere). The flowers are yellow and about 1-1/2 to 2 inches in diameter. The fruit turns reddish to purple with a wooly base.
 - **CULTIVATION/GROWTH:** This is a very hearty plant and can endure deep neglect so long that it has a well-established tap root. It needs a porous soil, so the tap root does not rot. This plant should be kept in a greenhouse or indoors on a southern facing window sill, (in the Northern Hemisphere). There are crested and monstrose forms which are typically grafted.
Use rain water if possible because of its slightly acid PH and lack of alkaline carbonates that are present in tap water. The slight acidity helps to breakdown the soil and release the minerals and nutrients.
- PROPAGATION:** Seeds are the best method if you have the time. You can also root the branch cuttings or graft them.
- **AVAILABILITY:** *Copiapoa tenuissima* seeds and specimens are available from cactus nurseries that are in arid climates. Mesa Gardens, Miles2Go, Cactus Data Plants, and Paul's Desert are a few notable growers that

sometimes carry this species. They are sometimes available at your local nurseries, Home Depot and Lowes. eBay is an alternative place to shop for one. Be sure that you only order during the warmer months of the year.

• REFERENCES:

1. Copiapoa tenuissima - http://www.llifle.com/Encyclopedia/CACTI/Family/Cactaceae/1138/Copiapoa_tenuissima
2. Copiapoa tenuissima f. monstruosa horticulture http://www.llifle.com/Encyclopedia/CACTI/Family/Cactaceae/25363/Copiapoa_tenuissima_f_monstruosa
3. Copiapoa tenuissima - http://www.cactus-art.biz/schede/COPIAPOA/Copiapoa_tenuissima/Copiapoa_tenuissima/Copipoa_tenuissima.htm
4. Cactus and Alkalinity – Elton Roberts - <http://ralph.cs.cf.ac.uk/Cacti/Cactus%20and%20Alkalinity.pdf>

February Succulent of the Month

Ron Chadick

Orbea decaisneana* subsp. *hesperidum

NAME:

Orbea decaisneana subsp. *hesperidum*

SYNONYMS:

Caralluma hesperidum, *Angolluma hesperidum*, *Caralluma decaisneana* subsp. *hesperidum*, *Pachycymbium decaisneanum* subsp. *hesperidum*

COMMON NAME:

“I don’t know” Seriously I asked at the place I bought it and they said “I don’t know”. Everybody I have asked says “I don’t know” No common name noted but best name I can find is *Caralluma hesperidum*

HABITAT/DISTRIBUTION:

Orbea decaisneana subs. *hesperidum* is the Moroccan form of the very widely distributed *Orbea decaisneana*. This variety grows along the coast of Morocco especially 100 miles inland. Documentation is poor but it is implied that it may be suffering it may be threatened by genetic erosion. This species is poisonous and is



found growing out in the open since it is not eaten by animals and livestock. Also various genetic variations native to Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso and Sudan.

DESCRIPTION:

Structure: slender, cylindrical stems, slightly angled with conical protuberance, apically tapering, whitish green, grey-green, marbled or spotted with brown to purple.

Leaves: Rudimentary at tubercle apex; stipular denticles absent.

Flowers: Bisexual, 5 petals, fetid smell, 15-20 mm diameter. Most common color is purple but mine is orange. Blooming season summer to autumn

Fruit: Typical twin seed horns (follicles), narrowly fusiform, acute and generally do not appear until a year later.

Seeds: a bundle of pappi

CULTIVATION/GROWTH:

This plant is relatively easy to grow. Most require minimal watering (with some fertilizer) during the growing season and complete withdrawal of water during the winter months. A minimum winter temperature of 50°F recommended, providing that plants are kept absolutely dry. A heated growing bench or incubator may help delicate plants to get through the colder months. Some live under shrubs in habitat and prefer light shade rather than full sun. A granular well drained potting medium is essential, and clay pots are advisable. Some growers prefer a mineral-only compost to minimize the chance of fungal attack on the roots. Fungal attack often occurs as a result of damage to stems by insects. Watering with a good systemic insecticide would help to keep plants healthy.

The easiest way to propagate *Caralluma hesperidum* is using stems which break off easily. The stems, when put in contact with soil or potting medium, should root freely.

AVAILABILITY:

Not real common but a grower in California supplies a plant shop named Enchanted Forest where I obtained these.

REMARKS/COMMENTS/MY EXPERIENCE:

Learned a lot doing this report. They have been out in the rain and cold too much.

REFERENCES:

Most of the information from World of Succulents website.



Printed with permission from Matt Buckingham who gave a program for HCSS in April of last year. <https://mattbuckinghamphotography.com>

A Naturalist's Journey My Quest for Biodiversity

APRIL 24, 2018 BY MATTBUCKINGHAMPHOTOGRAPHY

The Biodiversity of the Rio Grande Valley Part 3: Las Estrellas del Sur



It was of the utmost importance that we keep our eyes firmly fixed on the ground – scanning among the stones and parched earth. Important, because we were in the realm of the Star Cactus (*Astrophytum asterias*), a very rare, Federally Endangered cactus of the Tamaulipan Thornscrub. The plants themselves are often flush with the ground, look like little more than some stone or anomaly in the soil. Their flowers, however, announce their presence to the world in spectacular fashion. Carolina and I had looked for the Star Cactus in 2017 during a trip with my family. While we found several plants, we did not have the good fortune to find them in bloom. This year, however, would be different.

This year we were visiting with our good friends James and Erin Childress. Having developed a search image during our previous trip, I began noticing a few plants scattered about. My attention was soon diverted, however, when James and I spotted the brilliant magenta blooms of a group of Fitch's Hedgehog Cactus. It was in that moment, as we admired a very different cactus, that Carolina called out that she had found one in flower. Barely able to contain my excitement, I rushed to her. It soon became evident that we had timed this visit perfectly, as the floor of the Tamaulipan Thornscrub before me was decorated with dozens of bright yellow and orange blooms.



Though few known populations exist, where it does occur the Star Cactus can be quite abundant. Today most of the state's populations are protected and some are thriving. We would be telling a very different story, however, if it weren't for The Nature Conservancy in Texas. Through the acquisition of land and partnerships with private landowners, The Nature Conservancy has ensured that *Astrophytum asterias* will not disappear from our state's diverse flora. In all, the Nature Conservancy through their Las Estrellas Conservation Cooperative has been able to protect over 2,500 acres of Star Cactus habitat, providing safe refuge for thousands of individuals.

Though it is promising, these successes do not mean that the Star Cactus does not still face threats to its existence. While speaking with Sonia Najera, Grasslands Program Manager of the Nature Conservancy in Texas, she informed me that continued development adjacent to protected land is threatening *A. asterias* populations that have no protection. *A. asterias* is also under threat from poachers who may collect plants for its popularity in cultivation, and for its resemblance to Peyote, which is extensively collected for its psychoactive properties.



Despite the many threats that they face, I am optimistic for the future of the Star Cactus in Texas, thanks in large part to the Nature Conservancy and dedicated professionals like Sonia.

The day we spent among Las Estrellas in bloom was really the experience of a lifetime. We observed and photographed so many spectacular plants in bloom that it was nearly impossible trying to narrow them down to decide what to post. Below is a small selection of favorites from an unforgettable day in the field.





COOKING WITH CACTUS

LILIANA CRACRAFT

Nopales Rellenos (Stuffed Nopales)

Ingredients

- 3 whole cactus pads (nopales)
- 4 Roma tomatoes
- 1 onion
- 1 jalapeño pepper
- 3 cloves garlic
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- ¼ teaspoon cumin
- ⅓ cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ½ cube chicken bouillon
- 1 tomatillo husk
- ½ tablespoon salt
- 4 whole eggs - Separate the egg whites and yolks
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup of oil (for frying)
- ⅓ lb. Monterey Jack Cheese, or Oaxaca Cheese



PREPARATION

To prepare the cactus, hold by the end and use a scrub brush to lightly scrub off the thorns or glochids. Flip and repeat on other side. Set aside. Cut the “stem/butt” end off of cactus, and continue to cut around the outside edge of the pads. Cut each pad horizontally, in half.

Place tomato, onion, jalapeno, garlic cloves and oil onto a foil wrapped pan, and place into oven on broil until skins are blistered. About 20 minutes. Another option to char the skin is to hold them over a lit burner on a gas oven, turning until the skins are charred. Grilling will also work for this. After the skins are charred remove pan from oven and fold some tin foil over the pan and seal the contents inside it for about 10 minutes (making a packet). At this point, the tomato and jalapeño skins should just peel right off. Once skins are removed, place all of the veggies into a blender with cumin, water, salt, pepper and chicken bouillon. Blend until smooth. Set aside.

Bring water to boil, add tomatillo husk, a dash of salt and the cactus pads. Simmer until cactus is tender, about 45 minutes. Drain water and discard husk.

Beat egg whites with a whisk until stiff. Continue beating and slowly incorporate the egg yolks. Set aside.

Place flour into dish big enough to dredge each cactus. Heat skillet with oil for frying.

Place the cactus paddles of same size together. Take slices of cheese and place onto one piece of cactus, make sure it's not sticking out the side. Place matching sized piece of cactus on top (like a sandwich). Carefully hold it together and dredge it in the flour, making sure the flour sticks by rubbing it into the cactus leaves. Then dip the cactus into egg mixture, cover all sides well. You may use a fork and spoon and carefully transfer this into the hot oil. Fry until golden brown, flipping only once – about 7-9 minutes on each side. Once golden brown remove from oil and let drain on paper towels. Continue until all are done.

Place tomato salsa mixture onto a plate and place cactus on top. Serve with tortillas and decorate with sour cream.

Winter Blooms



Kleinia obesa



Euphorbia millii



Mammillaria spinosissima cv. Un Pico

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