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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



Ancistrocactus wrightii
by David Van Langen

From the editor**Karla Halpaap-Wood**

I hope you enjoy this issue of the KK.

I want to thank everyone who contributed with their articles or pictures.

Membership**Kathy Fewox**

The March 27, meeting of HCSS was attended by eighteen members. Also attending were repeat guests Ana Maria McDonald and Victor M. Newton. Many nice door prizes were given away. Liliana Cracraft donated a cactus notepad, which was won by Cindy Gray. Dave Thomas donated four door prizes: two Kalanchoe Beharensis plants, which were claimed by July Olson and Mike Cracraft; a variegated leaf cutting, won by Bruce Moffett; and several issues of "Cactus and Succulent Journal," which went home with David Van Langen.

Severe thunderstorms threatened to make our April 24 meeting a washout, but twenty brave members ignored the weather forecast and attended. We had a good meeting (despite lightning and rain outside), and by the time the meeting ended most of the rain had moved on to the east of Houston. We gave away five wonderful door prizes. Josie Watts and Bruce Moffett donated a Sansevieria of unknown species, which was claimed by Phyllis McEuen. Paul Stricklin brought in a Haworthia, species unknown, which went home with Imtiaz Bangee. Paul also donated a Mammillaria, won by Milton Pierson. Sarai Ramirez donated two Haworthias, also of unknown species, which were won by Rolando Ontiveros and someone else (I don't know who, because I failed to mark it down).

Last month I erroneously spelled Sarai Ramirez's name "Sara." I'm so sorry, Sarai!

HCSS has a new member. Joining by mail is Elvia Flores. Welcome to the club, Elvia!

Please email any news of HCSS members and their families to Kathy Fewox at kathyfewox@aim.com, or July Olson at saint.juniper@gmail.com.

Calendar:

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| May 22, 2019 | 7:30 pm Membership Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. Program: "Arizona Cactus Odyssey." by David Van Langen |
| June 26, 2019 | 7:30 pm Membership Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. Program: CSSA 2015 Convention video by Joe Stead "Propagating Plants and Cultivating Friendships." |
| July 1, 2019 | Deadline for submitting articles for the KK. |

May Cactus of the Month

Kathleen Canty

Pilosocereus pachycladus ssp *pachycladus*
F. Ritter 1979

Latin names: Piloso (hairy), cereus (waxy candle), pachy (thick), cladus (branching).

Synonyms: Facheiro (means Fighter in Portuguese), Facheiro Azul (Blue Fighter), Mandacaru de Facho (Faucet)

Common Names: *P. azureus*, *P. splendidus*, *P. superbus*, *P. cyaneus*.

Habitat / Distribution: Zone 11 near the equator in Bahia and Minas Gerais, Brazil south of 10° south latitude at elevations of 50-100 m (164 to 328 ft).

Description: usually treelike (6.6 to 33 ft or more). 5-12 stems erect, gray-green to blue-green, glaucous, smooth (2.2 to 4.3 in) in diameter. Broad ribs 5-19, transverse folds visible at the stem tips. Spines translucent, golden yellow, becoming gray. Long central spines 1-12, ascending to erect (to 1.2 in) long easily distinguished from the radials. Radial spines 8-18, flattened against the stem surface, (0.2-0.6 in) long. Fertile portions slightly differentiated. Flower-bearing areoles subapical on one of more ribs and densely hairy on areoles that bear flowers. Flower buds acute or obtuse and dark magenta. Flowers extremely variable, (1.6 to 2.8 in) long, (0.9-1.8 in) in diameter, white or pale pink, funnel-shaped and opening at night and continuing the next day. Flowers are only seen in mature specimens at least 1 m tall. Fruits reddish-purple, depressed globose, dehiscent by lateral slits, pulp magenta. Distribution: common and widely distributed in northeastern Brazil. Two subspecies are recognized: ssp *P. pachycladus pernambucoensis* which is located north of 10° south latitude.

Availability/Distribution: common and widely distributed in northeastern Brazil. Cites: IUCN Red List – least concern though numbers are decreasing primarily due to encroaching agriculture. There is at least one large protected area.

Cultivation: Two phases of growth – juvenile and adult. Pollination by bats. Although growth is slow, it is possible to increase the speed by providing an adequate amount of water, warmth and ½ strength all-purpose liquid fertilizer during the active growing season. The plant likes a sunny position and full sun during the summer. If grown indoors, provide 4-6 hours of more of direct morning or afternoon sun. It should be watered regularly in summer and kept drier in winter. Provide good drainage when grown in pots and use a porous, slightly acidic potting medium (pumice, vulcanite and perlite). It can be grown outdoors in frost-free climates but needs to be kept above 12°C (53.6 °F) and dry in winter. It can tolerate temperatures to 0-5°C (32-41°F) for short periods if kept very dry and ventilated (from www.LLIFLE.com)

Propagation: seeds and cuttings.

Remarks / Comments: The color is a gorgeous silvery sky blue (one of the bluest of the columnar cacti) and has an elegant growth habit resembling a miniature Saguaro. Typically, the genus *Pilosocereus* develops a pseudocephalium, but in *P. pachycladus*, this fertile area is not well differentiated from the rest of the plant.

Warnings: Do not use fatty products such as horticultural oil, neem oil, mineral oil and insecticidal soaps that can fade and ruin the characteristic blue coloration of the epidermis. Also, be very careful when repotting or handling and take precaution not to scrub or scratch the blue areas as the color will never return.



My experience: I bought this plant a few years ago from a guy selling cactus at an art show in Fayetteville, TX. The silvery sky blue color was irresistible, and I took it home with me. The seller cautioned against touching the blue portion of the plant. The recommended repotting schedule is every two years and thus I am due to repot.

References: Anderson, Edward F. 2001. *The Cactus Family*. Portland, Oregon: Timber Press. 575, 583-584. The online cactus identification guide was also very helpful and can be accessed at www.cactiguide.com. Another excellent source of information is LLIFLE (Encyclopedia of Living Forms) <http://www.llifle.com> and specifically this URL: www.llifle.com/Encyclopedia/CACTI/Family/Cactaceae/16443/Pilosocereus_pachycladus.

May Succulent of the Month

Wally Ward

NAME: *Stapelia pearsonii*.

SYNONYMS: *Gonostemon pearsonii*.

COMMON NAMES: None except general common names for Stapeliads such as "carrion flower" or "starfish flower."

HABITAT/DISTRIBUTION: Endemic to the Great Karas mountains of Southern Namibia; the southern part of Namibia is the driest part of the country. This plant grows in stony, often steep, ground in granitic gravel among scattered, low shrubs. On higher slopes it grows on shale. These plants are found at 4,000-6,000 feet above sea level.



DESCRIPTION: Stapeliads are known generally as African starfish flowers or carrion flowers, the latter because many species produce the scent of rotting meat from their flowers to attract flies as pollinators. *S. pearsonii* is a low, erect, perennial succulent. I chose it for the May 2019 Succulent of Month following upon the April 2019 HCSS program by Jerry Poelmann on plants of Southern Namibia. *S. pearsonii* forms clumps of branching stems around 2-6 inches in diameter. The plant is shortly pubescent, i.e., covered with very short, soft hair. There are 20-80 stems on a mature plant (but not my pot-grown specimen), gray-green in color, with darker green and purple between the angles. The stems bear leaf rudiments that are 0.5 to 1.0 mm long. Flowers are borne on one inflorescence per stem, one to six flowers per inflorescence (my plant has produced no flowers). Flowering time in Namibia is March-May. The flowers are star-shaped and deep red, 1.5-2 inches in diameter.

CULTIVATION/GROWTH: This plant does well with partial shade mixed with a few hours of direct sun. The stems turn deep purple-red with excessive light. I use a very lean mix of mostly perlite with this plant. The high altitude at which this plant grows suggests it is cold tolerant in its dry wintertime habitat. Here in Houston inside the Loop I maintain the plant outside almost year-round, including during warmer winter weather under roof with minimal moisture. With Stapeliads it is always advisable to determine when the dry season is in habitat so as to know when to be parsimonious with water. Generally Namibia is driest in May-October (end of summer through end of winter in Southern Hemisphere). So *S. pearsonii* should not be watered much at all in the Northern-Hemisphere winter.

AVAILABILITY: I could find no offering of *S. pearsonii* online. It is considered scarce in habitat but not endangered with between 4-6 populations and locations; succulent collecting could be a threat but is not confirmed as such. I obtained my specimen from the HCSS Exchange Table at the 5/22/13 HCSS meeting.

REMARKS/COMMENTS: I have had no problems growing this plant over the last six years. My goal is to attend to the plant to bring about flowering.

REFERENCES:

LOOTS, S. 2005. Red Data Book of Namibian Plants. Southern Africa Botanical Diversity Network Report No. 38. SABOT. Pretoria and Windhoek.

BRUYNS, P.V. 2014. The Apocynaceae of Namibia. *Strelitzia* 34. South African Biological Diversity Institute (SANBI). Pretoria.

HAM, ANTHONY. Namibia Travel Guide/Weather & Climate--Namibia



June Cactus of the Month

David Van Langen

Mammillaria lasiacantha

Mammillaria lasiacantha is a small cactus of the Chihuahuan Desert. It is fairly common in its range but often overlooked. One reason is because of its small size. The typical *M. lasiacantha* is less than 1 inch in height, depending on locality. The body is made up of many small tubercles and is covered by many more short, white and lacey spines that are soft to the touch. The body of the plant is seldom visible as the spines cover it almost completely. This also gives reason to a couple of the common names- Golf Ball Cactus and Lace Spined Cactus. While most plants are a single stem, many will produce and offset or two and every now and then a nice cluster can form.



The habitat of *Mamm lasiacantha* is widespread throughout northern Mexico and into the states of Texas and New Mexico. In Texas it is found in most of the Trans Pecos and grows up into south central New Mexico. It is almost always found on limestone hillsides, desert scrub and ledges between 1,200 ft up to around 7,000 ft elevation. It seems the higher elevation and northern plants are very short in body while some in the lower Big Bend can grow to almost 2 inches tall.

The flowers of this cactus are small as expected but quite pretty ! They are about 1/2 of an inch wide and open fully until they lay flat on the plant. The color is white or cream and usually have a defined midstripe of green, yellow, tan, pink, pale purple, or reddish. They can begin to bud and bloom as early as January and continue through March. There are often several blooming at a time to create a nice ring of flowers. The fruits that follow are small thin chili shaped pods of red and the seeds are black.

Cultivation--not easy here ! A very loose mineral mix is essential. I use a lot of crushed limestone rock and gravel along with pumice or something similar. I also add a small amount of limestone based soil that I collect while travelling. I never add peat or packaged potting mix. Only water sparingly when DRY ! I repeat -- CULTIVATION DIFFICULT ! Not easy here in the muddy humid part of Texas. The same dense spines that protect it from the sun and prevent it from losing moisture in the dry desert can be the death of them here--they hold moisture like they are intended to do !! If watered or allowed to get wet during a rainy muggy spell here in Houston- there is a great chance that it will show signs of "passing away" by the next day. The white spines turn yellowish brown and by then all you can do is look at old pictures and remember them in their glory !! *Mammilaria lasiacantha* is not easy to find in the trade. They grow slow and with the risk of sudden death I suppose few growers spend time to raise them. If you get a chance to get one-- do it as long as you can provide it with the care it needs . Otherwise let some one else kill it !!!

Cheers !



Graptopetalum Paraguayense

Name: Graptopetalum Paraguayense

Synonyms: Byrnesia weinbergii, Cotyledon paraguayensis, Echeveria weinbergii, Sedum weinbergii
Common Name: Ghost Plant

Family: Crassulaceae

Subfamily: Sedoideae

Genus: Graptopetalum

Habitat/Distribution: Native to Mexico (Tamaulipas)

This is from a cluster of Graptopetalum Paraguense from my home.



Description (Stem, Flower): Perennial, with up to 6 inch rosettes, triangular, pointed, with fleshy leaves. The leaves range in color from a grey to purple. In mid- spring, star-shaped white flowers rise up on flower stalks. It has a white/grey powder on its outer layer that protects it from the sun.

Cultivation/Growth: Very Low Maintenance planting, Graptopetalum are very forgiving and will grow in most soil and can survive long periods of drought. They thrive in sunlight, I have some that face the morning sun, and I have some that get afternoon sun, they both do well. The best soil for them is one that drains well, which for me is 75% potting soil and 25% perlite. Be careful when handling any Graptopetalum they can readily detach. If any of the leaves detach put them back back in the soil and see how fast new ones grow out of the leaf. If I need to add them to an arrangement for a gift, I snap a long cutting off and let it callus

for about a week before I add it to the soil. In a hurry I have gotten away with snapping them off and adding them right back in the soil, but that can be risky especially if the soil is wet or if it becomes wet too soon, the clipping may rot. I water my large cluster of Graptopetalum Paraguayense once a week.

My Experience: I'm very proud to say that my first succulent plant was the Graptopetalum paraguayensis, this is the succulent that led to all my succulent and cacti obsession. My mother was kind enough to give me some cuttings after I mentioned to her that I had come across the most interesting plant. I said "A cute thick rosette plant with leaves that are thick" she knew exactly what I was talking about. That was 12 years ago, and Im still enjoying them and have grown many more since then. I have made many indoor and outdoor arrangements using Graptopetalums. You have to make sure you put them in container that has weight. They are top heavy, so if you add them to a light container, they will fall over. The Graptopetalum paraguayensis is my go to succulent for people who want to get started growing succulents.

Reference: <https://worldofsucculents.com/graptopetalum-paraguayense-mother-of-pearl-plant-ghost-plant/>



At my home, front yard, in long plastic



At my home, arrangement I made for a party planter, two type of Graptopetalums. Ghost Plant and California Sunset



At my home, front yard planter



At my job, Downtown Houston, window sill

Field Trip

Josie Watts

The club had a field trip to Simonton, TX to visit the Fred Reyes Nursery on April 30, 2019. In attendance were Cindy Gray, Kathy Fewox, July Olson, Pinké Neck, Milton Pierson, Wally Ward, and Josie Watts. It was a great place and the prices and selection were phenomenal. No one came away empty handed. They had many of the more common cacti and succulents that we are familiar with, but they also had many unusual plants that never grace the doors of the big box stores. It was fun, reasonably priced, and very educational. Our visit was followed by lunch at Antonie's Restaurant, which is a favorite haunt for the locals and no, it was not a chain! Thanks to Pinke for the suggestion and for providing the map. This will definitely be a place to revisit!





The CSSA Annual Show and Sale is scheduled for June 29 and 30, 2019, at the Huntington Gardens.

The CSSA biennial convention will take place in San Luis Obispo, CA, on July 17-20, 2019. Check out their website www.cssaconvention.com to see the speakers list, field trips, and to make reservations.

Potting Party

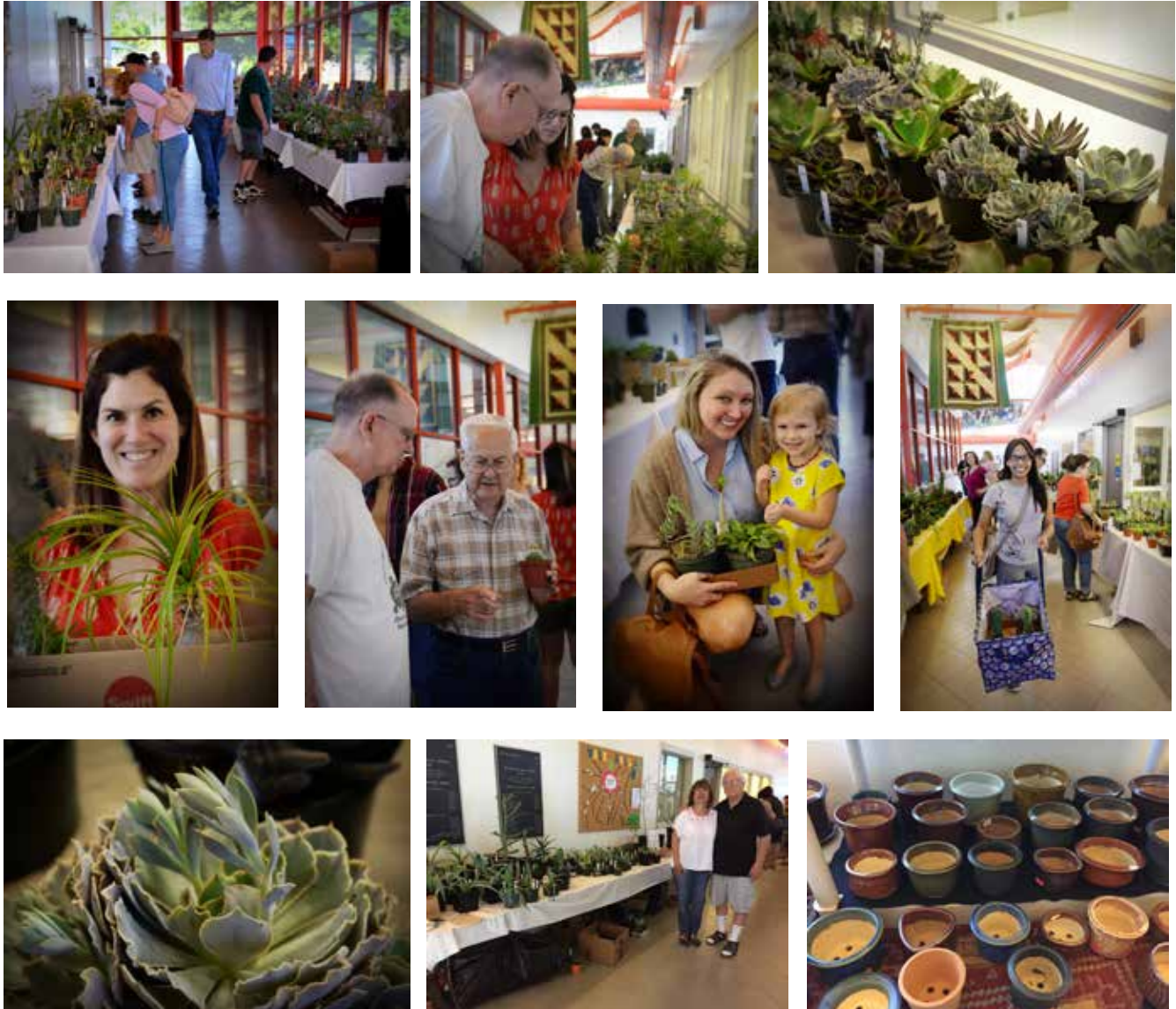
Bruce Moffett and Josie Watts hosted a potting party at their home on Saturday, April 20. We potted lots of plants, and were treated to a tour of Bruce and Josie's fabulous yard and greenhouse. We also gorged ourselves on Bruce's delicious burgers, plus lots of chips and dips. It was a wonderful afternoon. Thanks so much to Josie and Bruce for welcoming us into their home!

Kathy Fewox



Spring Sale

The Spring Sale took place May 4 and 5 and was a success with some of the vendors selling out early.



Photos by Gloria Stamper and Karla Halpaap-Wood

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