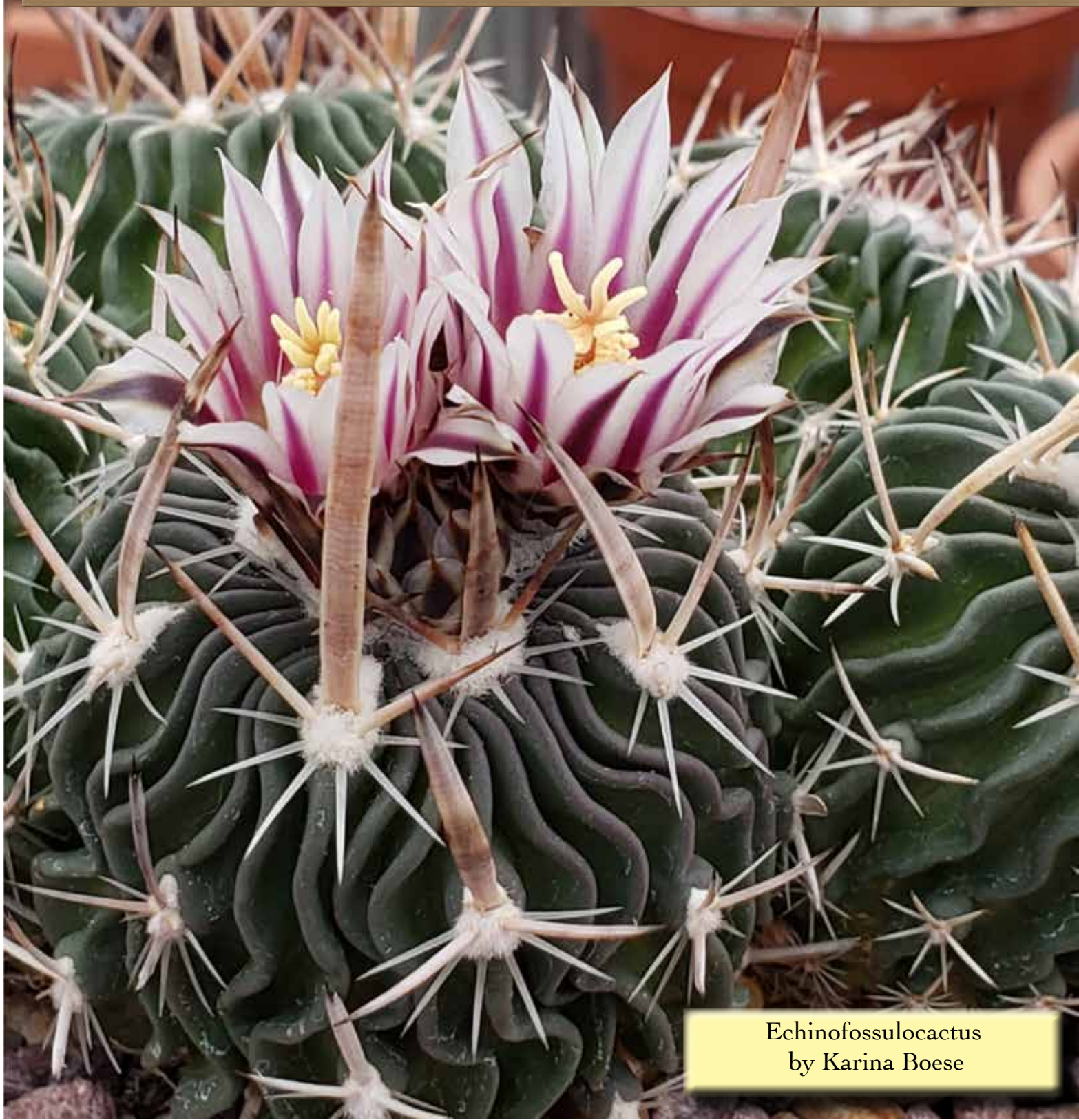


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Kaktos Komments

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



Echinofossulocactus
by Karina Boese



Houston Cactus and Succulent Society
Founded in 1963
Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America

Membership

Kathy Fewox

On July 28, 2021, HCSS held its first in-person meeting since February 2020. It was wonderful to see each other again, although the Zoom meetings we've had since May 2020 have been very enjoyable. Twelve members attended the meeting. We were joined by seven guests: Kellie Clark, Brian Harrison, Joy Li, Sara Ortiz, Wing Wong, Fatima Sabri, and one other person whose handwriting I can't decipher. Generous members donated three door prizes. A *Carnegiea gigantea*, donated by David Thomas, was won by Andrea Varesic. Josie Watts and Bruce Moffett donated two magazines, "A Gardener's Guide to Cacti and Succulents," and "Kaktusy 2003 Special 4," which were won by Teresa S. Garcia. Mario Rizo took home some lovely cactus napkins, which were donated by someone whose name I failed to write down.

Our meeting on August 25 was attended by sixteen members. Three guests also attended: Issam Sabri, Sara Ortiz, and Candy Vargas. There were three door prizes, a beautiful *euphorbia francoisii* won by Issam Sabri, and two books donated by Josie and Bruce. I was unfortunately unable to attend, as I was in Blanco at the time.

We also had a potting party at Andrea Varesic's home to prepare for the Show and Sale that was planned for September 11 and 12, but had to be postponed to a later date.

Please email any news of HCSS members and their families to Kathy Fewox at kathyfewox@aim.com.



Calendar:

September 8, 2021	7:00 pm Board Meeting via Zoom
September 22, 2021	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Program: Germinating and Cultivating <i>Echinopsis</i> from Seed by Wally Ward.
October 27, 2021	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Program: Preparing Plants for the Show by Josie Watts and Bruce Moffett.
November 1, 2021	Deadline for submitting articles for the KK.

Dear HCSS members,

It is with heavy heart that I inform you of the news that the Show and Sale scheduled in September has been postponed. Several vendors and members have expressed concern about Covid. It is hard to deny the seriousness of the Delta variant. Several emergency rooms are not just on drive by status, they are closed. St Luke's is closing some of its doctor's offices to reassign the doctors and nurses to ER's to treat the overload. The numbers for Harris county are worse than they were during the peak of the pandemic. I can't blame anyone for not wanting to take the risk. When I contacted the City of Houston, they stated there were no immediate plans to close the Multipurpose Centes and other facilities run by the city, it could not be ruled out.

After polling the Board of Directors and receiving input from the vendors, we made the difficult decision. Our plan is to monitor the situation, and to reschedule for November if circumstances allow. We will keep you posted.

Meanwhile, we had a wonderful fully masked meeting last night. Joseph Rodd presented his research on soil drainage with different amendmets and we all learned so much. We also enjoyed being together, and the plant exchange had some amazing offerings. Mario Rizo also did a wonderful show and tell about his efforts to propagate *Euphorbia francoisii* from leaf cuttings, and generously donated one of his beautiful plants as a door prize. And we got it all done by 9:00!

Sincerely,
Josie



Texas *Opuntia lindheimeri subarmata* with ripe cactus fruit

Tom Cardinal

September Cactus of the Month

Josie Watts

Species: *Mammillaria*

Subspecies: *decipens*

Var. *pialbescens*

Note: This plant was purchased from Joyce Hochtritt in Oklahoma. She carries many rare varieties of plants. I was not able to find 'pialbescens', only 'albescens'. I am assuming mine is a variety of *albescens* since it is similar, but not exactly like the pictures.

This plant originates from San Luis Potosi, Guanajuato, and Queretaro in Mexico. It grows at 1440-2150 meters above sea level in sun to part-shade. It grows in low densities across its range, in canyons and on rocky hills, generally in volcanic soils. It is often found under bushes and in association with other plant species, i.e., *opuntia* and *agave* varieties of the region.



It is caespitose, or forming mats or dense tufts/clumps. It tends to grow in large mounds with uneven growth, round or club-shaped, up to 6". It is slightly woolly, with 7-8 radial spines and 1-2 central spines. The petals of the flowers are white, with pale yellow centers. Mine blooms on and off throughout the year. I love the way the flowers emerge from between the thick spines. It also has a large, tuberous root system, hence the shape of the pot.

The plant grows rapidly, making dense clumps in a few years according to one source, and stays small and compact according to another. Mine is of the rapidly growing variety and I have rocks to support the growth. If I propagate it, I will try another in a rounder pot and let it lay on the soil like it probably does in habitat. I was unable to find photos of the plant in habitat. I tend to be afraid of cutting my plants up and might need assistance from David VanLangen, who knows no fear.

The plant can tolerate cold temperatures to 25*, but I would be hesitant to expose it in Houston because of our humidity. The worst problem mentioned is root rot, so excellent drainage is important. It can also get mealy bugs or scale. They recommend repotting every 3-5 yrs. in a porous mineral substrate without peat or other humus.

The plant is propagated from seeds or cuttings. Seeds germinate in 7-14 days and can be transplanted when they form rootlets. Cuttings must be allowed to dry, then put in coarse grit until roots form, usually 2-6 weeks.

My favorite thing about this plant is its coloration, with the white spines and wool, and the way the flowers emerge. It is also rewarding that it blooms so frequently. My least favorite thing is that it is such a rambunctious grower and doesn't look as neat and tidy as some of my other mamm's.

Sources:

Encyclopedia of Cacti. Cullman, W., Goetz, Z., and Groner, G. Portland, OR: Timber Press, 1986.

September Succulent of the Month

Bruce Moffett

Agave Americana Marginata

Agave americana var. *marginata* is an old cultivar of *Agave americana* (which is native to North America) and has beautiful yellow variegation on the outside margins of its leaves. Individuals can grow to about 10' in diameter with some of the outer leaves bending downward giving the plant an overall "relaxed" appearance. It is a dramatic large landscape or specimen plant, xeriscape, excellent in rock gardens, barrier plantings. Striking for large containers.

It has many common names including Variegated Century Plant, American Agave, and Maguey.

Leaves have spines on their margins and a long spine at the leaf end. Care must be taken to locate this plant away from foot traffic. When a plant blooms, it sends up a single erect flower stalk from the center of the leaf rosette; this spike can reach 30 feet tall. The flower stalk resembles a narrow pole with 2'-3' horizontal branches that hold the flowers spreading out at the top. 3-4 inch greenish-yellow flowers bloom sequentially in panicles at the branch ends.

A mature plant can grow to 4' - 6' in height and 8' - 10' in width.

It grows best in full sun and can tolerate extreme heat. If it is fairly dry it can handle low temperatures to 15 to 20°F. Extremely drought tolerant. Can take occasional irrigation in dry climates. It grows faster in summer with some additional irrigation.

Plant is monocarpic and dies after flowering. However the plant produces abundant seed after flowering. 'Pups' can be detached and replanted at any time. Plan for the plant's mature size and locate it carefully to allow for easy bi-annual maintenance. Remove pups, dead leaves and spine tips (as desired). The plant is deer and rodent resistant. The plant's sap can irritate skin – so do not trim with a chainsaw.



October Cactus of the Month

Karina Boese

Myrtillocactus GeometrizzansSpecies: *Myrtillocactus geometrizzans*Family: *Cactaceae*Genus: *Myrtillocactus*Order: *Caryophyllales*Common names: *Blue Candle, Bilberry Cactus, Whortleberry Cactus*

Myrtillocactus Geometrizzans was one of the cacti that I fell in love with at first sight. Perhaps because of their amazing blueish color, some look so simple yet elegant and they have more friendly looking spines compared to other common cacti available in our garden centers.

They are widespread from northern and central Mexico down to Oaxaca, including the Baja California Peninsula. In these native habitats when conditions are favorable, they can grow into huge highly branched candelabra-like tree cacti reaching heights of up to 16 feet. The flowers are greenish-white in color and very fragrant. The name *Myrtillocactus* comes from the Greek word: *myrtillus*, which means small blueberry. It refers to their small size fruits which resemble Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and True Myrtle (*Myrtus communis*). The fruit is edible and tasty. Some say it tastes like a marriage between fig and berries, very sweet!



Myrtillocactus geometrizzans f. cristata

They are being sold for consumption in their native land and often go by "Garambullo" in the local markets.

Myrtillocactus Geometrizzans is one of the popular species in cultivation, where young plants usually remain unbranched for many years. I have noticed since late last year, this cactus is now available at more nurseries in Houston and the surrounding area. Most of them are small size of course, but based on my experience so far, they are relatively simple to cultivate in Houston. I have had success with stem propagation. The cuttings, which grow quickly, need to be taken in the summer, when the temperature is high or the cuttings will not root. *Myrtillocactus Geometrizzans* are often used as grafting stock because of their fast growth rate. Houston has wet winters, be sure to keep this species where it will be dry and never below freezing. During the winter they will go dormant.

Another popular cultivar that has been saturating US market is the *fukurokuryuzinboku* (福祿竜神木). It is a cultivar from Japan that



M. geometrizaris cv. *Fukurokuryuzinboku*

takes on a peculiar monstrose form. Their ribs are plump and shaped like human breasts, therefore they are commonly known as “breast cactus”. Although I wish that everyone who is desperately looking for this cultivar, would take the time to learn the proper botanical name! It was named after Fukurokuju and Ryujin, two of the Seven Lucky Gods in Japanese mythology.

If I have not convinced you to get one of these so far, just go for a stroll in the local nursery and when you see one, I hope you will agree with me that their color and patterns are just mesmerizing!

Happy cactus-ing!

References:

<http://www.llifle.com/>

<https://apps.cals.arizona.edu/arboretum/taxon.aspx?id=991>

<https://worldofsucculents.com/>

October Succulent of the Month

Wally Ward

Name: *Haworthiopsis attenuata concolor*

Synonyms: *Haworthia attenuata concolor* M. Bruce Bayer has complained for years about the complexity and disputes arising from species and varietal names in *Haworthia*.

Common Names: Zebra Cactus (shares this common name with *Haworthiopsis fasciata*).

Habitat/Distribution: Endemic to Eastern Cape Province, South Africa; grows in “Valley Thickets” and particularly “Albany thickets” where plant species endemism is very high (see World Wildlife Fund article on Albany Thickets cited in References).

Description: Plant has rosettes of dark-green triangular leaves with white tubercles on both sides of the leaves forming zebra-like stripes on the outer leaf surfaces. *Haworthiopsis fasciata* has tubercles on only the outer leaf surfaces. The plant grows to about 4” high and produces offsets.

Cultivation/Growth: This is a popular and widely-cultivated *Haworthiopsis*. species that does very well on a windowsill with bright light. Some authorities claim it will do well in bright sun outdoors. I am more cautious with direct light. Well-draining soil is needed, and I recommend using a terra cotta pot to prevent overwatering. Feed in Spring and early Fall for a total of three times. Repot only in the spring.





Uses: This is one of many plants harvested as medicinal plants in Eastern Cape and is sold as a medicinal plant in stores and by street hawkers. It is over-harvested but is protected by law in South Africa. See World Wildlife Fund article on Albany Thickets in References.

Availability: This is one of the most widely-available *Haworthia* species. My own plant was wholesaled by Altman Plants in Vista, California and sold to me at retail in the Lowes on the North 610 Loop at Ella Blvd. A quick Internet search turns up many mail-order retail sources.

References: Bayer, M. Bruce.1999. *Haworthia Revisited: A Revision of the Genus*. Umdaus Press. Hatfield, South Africa.

Bayer, M. Bruce. 1999-2012. *Haworthia Updates: Thoughts and Observations on the Genus Haworthia*.Vol. 1-9. <https://haworthiaupdates.org/>

A.P. Dold and M.L. Cocks. 11/1/02. The Trade on Medicinal Plants in the Eastern Cape Province. *South African Journal of Science*, vol. 98, no. 11. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/145042649.pdf>

Albany Thickets. World Wildlife Fund. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/ecoregions/at1201>



CSSA Conservation Policy

Introduction

The prior Policy Statement was antiquated and dated back to an era when field collecting by hobbyist was not entirely discouraged. A new Statement was drafted that expressly discourages all field collection except for limited scientific studies, rescue operations, government sanctioned breeding programs and the like. The new Statement directly references and incorporates the IOS Code of Conduct. Important legislation (The America Endangered Species Act) and treaties (CITES) are expressly referenced. In short, the Conservation Policy Statement is taking a strong stand against the sale and showing of field collected plants.

Conservation Policy Statement

The Cactus and Succulent Society of America (CSSA) is the national organization for the study, education, and promotion of cacti and succulents. The popularity of cacti and succulents, their availability online, and their increased monetary value have critically endangered their populations in the wild. The conservation of these unique plants and their habitats is of critical concern.

Existing Policies and Guidelines

CSSA shall adhere to:

- All national and international guidelines, treaties, and laws regarding the protection of cacti, other succulents, and their habitats.
- The Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) treaty and the American Endangered Species Acts for both plants and animals.
- The International Organization for Succulent Plant Study (IOS) Code of Conduct.
- Specific conservation policies of the applicable State or other local jurisdictions.

CSSA Show and Sale Policies

- CSSA will not accept field collected plants in its competitive shows; plants in question will be evaluated by a review team upon entering.
- CSSA functions will not allow the sale, purchase, or promotion of habitat-collected plants.
- CSSA encourages its affiliate societies to adopt or incorporate CSSA Conservation Policies in developing their own missions and show and sale policies.

Commercial Selling

- CSSA endorses and promotes vendors which produce sale plants from seed, cuttings or other artificial means.
- CSSA discourages the use of nurseries and online vendors that sell field collected plants.

Legal Initiatives

- CSSA will work with our appropriate government agencies to modernize laws regarding the sale of plants

across international borders, especially for hybrids.

- CSSA will endorse and promote state laws and policies pertaining to the rescue of plants due to urban or agricultural encroachment.
 - CSSA will assist in the development of procedures to conserve and disseminate rescued plants.
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NEWS FROM THE CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY OF AMERICA (CSSA)

by Liliana Cracraft

Since its inception in 1929 and throughout the years, CSSA has advocated and promoted the conservation and habitat protection of cactus and succulent plants.

In an effort to educate, discourage, and eventually bring to an end the removal of live plants and seeds from their natural habitats, therefore, ensuring their place in our world, CSSA recently updated their Conservation Policy Statement. The new statement directly references and incorporates the International Organization for Succulent Plants Study (IOS) Code of Conduct, the America Endangered Species Act, and CITES, a multi-lateral treaty designed to protect endangered plants and animals.

We encourage you to become familiar with the Conservation Policy included in this issue, and now available in our website at: <http://hcsstex.org/conservation.html>

We are planning to have speakers on the topic of conservation in the future, provide information to the public at large during our Show and Sales, and thanks to Joseph Rodd, we'll have some beautiful bookmarkers available in the near future.

A big thank you to member Tom Cardinal for his generous donation to the CSSA Seed Depot. The shipment included seeds of *Astrophytum asterias*, *A. capricorne*, *A. myriostigma*, *A. ooibo* hybrid, *Echinopsis mirabilis* and *subdenduada*, *Mammillaria compressa* and *neojaponsis*, *Matucana madissoniorum*, *Melocactus bahiensis*, *conicus*, *curvispinum* and *savadorensis*, and *Parodia magnifica*.

Least but not last, CSSA continues to provide free bi-weekly webinars presented by experts in the field. Watch for the invitations in your email box.

Reprinted with permission from Cactus Corner News, Dec. 2010 (Fresno CSS)

PLANTING TIPS

By Sue Haffner

Ouch! A stab from a sharp cactus spine hurts, but the pain usually is temporary. Botanically, cactus spines are modified leaves, adapted to shade the plant from the desert sun. Look closely at a barrel cactus to see how its tightly laced spines create a nice lattice of shade for the tissue below. (They also insulate the plant's epidermis and collect condensed water vapor so that droplets run down the plant to the soil at the base.) The more naked the plant is that is, that its spines are few and far between the more protection you need to give it from the direct sun.

Cactus glochids can produce longer-- lasting discomfort; these fine, barbed bristles grow in tufts and often surround prickly pear or cholla spines. Some glochids aren't noticeable. Others provide attractive polka dots of color, such as the reddish-- brown glochids covering the deceptively named Cinnamon Bear or chenille prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia aciculata*). All it takes is a gentle brush against the plant for a clump of glochids to stick to skin or clothing. They break off easily, leaving minute fragments in the skin that cause irritation and pain. The common Bunny Ears (*O. microdasys*) is also a prime offender, as it looks so soft but leaves a lethal deposit of golden or red glochids as a calling card. The duration of a victim's discomfort depends on the number of glochids and skin sensitivity.

How do you remove glochids?

- Use tweezers (and a magnifying glass). Glochids are easier to grasp if you can see the affected area horizontally (i.e., hold your hand up to your eye and look across) rather than straight down.
- Spread household glue over the area, let it dry and peel off.
- Spread glue, press gauze on top, wait for it to dry, and remove.
- Press a piece of tape on the area and pull it off.
- If all else fails, shave the spines off. Yes, you'll leave the remnants under the skin but at least you won't have the spines sticking up and irritating you.

Avoid wearing regular gardening gloves when working with cacti, as they will not shield hands from spines or glochids, both of which poke through fabric or stick into leather. Once the gloves have picked up opuntia spines you'll just have to throw them away. Instead, choose heavy-- duty rubber gloves that provide a reasonable barrier against glochids. Garden gloves made with puncture-- resistant hardened resin are another option. Originally designed to safeguard health care workers against needle sticks, or industrial workers against chemical spills, these turn out to good protection against other pointy things. They are probably too stiff for general gardening purposes, but they can be a good investment if you do a lot of work around cacti. You can find them in hardware stores. (Look for Nitrile coated gloves.)

Cacti are deceptively heavy. If you need to transport an unpotted barrel or columnar cactus, place it on a sturdy tarp or piece of fabric and enlist an extra set of hands to help, carrying the plant in a sling. If you have to do it yourself, though, you can usually drag the plant from one place to another. Some growers have constructed ingenious means to help support and carry cacti.

Back when Mark Muradian used to bring his big gut-- buster cacti to our shows, he welded a two-man carrying device that was very efficient in getting those big plants in and out of the show venue. (Now he probably has to use it to transport his big gut buster sale pots all over the state!)

Columnar cacti cuttings: if you've taken cuttings of columnar cacti, don't leave them lying around for very long. If you do, you might find the growing end of the cutting is turning upwards, pretty much ruining the cutting. It would make more sense to stand the cuttings upright in a location out of the direct sun.

Although some cacti can grow to massive proportions, even a little old lady with a pruning saw can bring one down. The plants may look tough, but they're generally pretty soft.

Opuntia, maybe to make up for the annoying glochids, are quite easy to propagate. (Too easy, some may say.) Any pad or cholla joint will root; even the fruits will root. The pads don't even have to be propped upright. Just lying on the ground, the pad can put out roots from any areole. In fact, Opuntia in habitat are so efficient at vegetative propagation dropping pads and joints everywhere, latching onto passing animals for transport that many appear to have given up sexual reproduction altogether. Why go through all the bother of producing seeds when you can just detach a few pieces of yourself and get the same result. Jon Rebman, in his studies of Opuntia in the Southwest, has uncovered the many shenanigans these plants are resorting to: changing genders male flowers one year, female the next; producing neuter flowers, sometimes showing all three types on the same plant at the same time! It may be that the neuter blossoms are easier, less effortful for the plant to produce, as they possess no reproductive parts. (But, then, why bother blooming at all...? Questions, questions)

We may study our plants, claim that we know why they do what they do, and we can usually be right. But, then, the plant throws us a curve and we realize that we didn't know as much as we thought we did.

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