

September Cactus of the Month

David Van Langen

Mammilloidia candida

Mammilloidia (*Mammillaria*) *candida* is a small, round cactus, covered with dense spines that gives it the common name of snow ball cactus. It was formerly considered a *Mammillaria* but differences in seed structure and other things have led it to be in its own genera. This Mamm. has a wide range, covering most of North Eastern Mexico. It can be found in full sun but most seem to be found under desert scrub and grasses. Its habitat is rocky places such as limestone ridges and slopes in desert/desert scrub up to around 8,000 feet above sea level. It is found growing with very many cacti that can be found in West and South Texas.

It is said to reach a maximum height of nearly a foot and diameter of 6-8 inches. The green stems are almost completely covered by spines-- up to 120 per areole. The spines are usually white to pinkish in color. Most plants are single stemmed and there is one variety that is known to form clusters. The flowers form in a typical *Mammillaria* fashion by forming a ring around the top half of the plant but well below the new growth. The flowers are less than an inch across and can be white, yellowish or pinkish. Even though the flowers are not very large-- the ring of flowers makes for a pretty display!!!

This cute little cactus is considered a great plant for beginners but still needs to be protected from long spells of rain as the dense covering of spines will hold moisture and promote rot. Give it the usual cactus soil that is fast draining with just a little organic matter. On a personal note--- I fell in love with these plants a couple of years ago and to this date---- knock on wood---- I have not lost a single one !!! Most are planted in the Fake Desert and a few are still in the tiny pots they were sold in. This brutal summer from hell has not claimed any of them yet !!!

I highly recommend this cactus to everyone ! I have over a dozen but plan on buying more when the new shipments arrive next spring !!

