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JULY-AUGUST 2025

# Kaktos Komments

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



*Euphorbia godana*  
by Jared Petker



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

**From the Editor****Karla Halpaap-Wood**

From this edition on the format of the KK is slightly different reflecting the all electronic format.

I want to thank Jared Petker from the San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society for letting us use one of his articles, and all our members who contributed to this edition.

**Membership****Sara Ortiz**

On May 28, 2025, a meeting was held at the Metropolitan Multiservice Center, attended by twenty-five members and three guests. Robert Perez presented the program titled "Growing Cacti Indoors." David Van Langen introduced the Cactus of the Month, *Coryphantha sulcata*, while Jason Chretien presented the Succulent of the Month, *Euphorbia ramena*.

We had a fantastic time, thanks to the door prizes and raffle plants generously donated by our members. A big thank you to everyone who contributed! As always, the door prizes and raffles provided a wonderful opportunity to expand our cactus collection.

At the June 25th meeting we had 31 members and 2 guests. Two members had just recently joined and came for the first time. David Van Langen gave the program "Backroads of Southern Arizona". Cactus of the Month was presented by Jennifer Peskey about *Mammillaria bocasana*, and Succulent of the Month *Frerea indica* by Karla Halpaap-Wood.

**Calendar:**

<b>July 2, 2025</b>	7:00 pm Board Meeting via Zoom
<b>July 20, 2025</b>	12:30 pm Social Outing: Spikes and Bites, pay your own way lunch at Cochinita & co (5420 Lawndale St. #500, Houston, TX 77023)
<b>July 23, 2025</b>	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Anniversary pot luck dinner
<b>August 23, 2025</b>	5-6:30pm Social Outing: Salud! An Introduction to Tequila & Mezcal (\$20) - Total Wine & More West University (2617 W. Holcombe Blvd , Houston, TX 77025)
<b>August 27, 2025</b>	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Program: "Judging Show Plants" by Josie Watts and other HCSS members
<b>September 1, 2025</b>	Deadline for submitting articles for the KK.
<b>October 18, 2025</b>	TACSS seminar, Mercer Arboretum

## Visit to Mercer Arboretum

June 24, 2025



Jacob shows us the greenhouses.



And lunch for Eddie's birthday afterwards.

## July Cactus of the Month

John Weistroffer

### *Copiapoa hypogaea* – “The Atacama Gremlin”

*Copiapoa hypogaea* looks like a spiny ground gremlin... It's ugly, but awesome!

My favorite thing about hypogaea is the wiry black spines growing from strangely textured skin, richly layered with colors - cryptic and weird.

In the wild hypogaea grows low to the ground, and like peyote or *Astrophytum asterias*, can retract below the surface of the soil during drought – which is frequent, or constant, in the Atacama. Like other *Copiapoa* species hypogaea is clumping and with time will grow side pups around it's base.

This was the first *Copiapoa* I ever acquired. Surprisingly, I bought it from Buchanan's!

Hypogaea's colors come in a spectrum from gold to brown, grey to bronze with highlights of purple and red. There's a 'Lizard Skin' variety that's extra weird with skin that's extra wrinkly. Hypogaea is quite variable; and I continue to look for attractive colors and forms.

It produces white woolly tufting at the top center from which bloom small yellow flowers. These bloom during summertime and they're open from morning to evening. They're easily pollinated if you have a couple genetically distinct plants and each pollinated flower produces a fruit with dozens of tiny seeds.

I've had the best success growing this species in Rabbit Hill potting soil in a non-porous pot. They need a surprisingly deep container – one that seems too big for the plant. Despite its small appearance hypogaea has a large carrot-like taproot below the surface, similar to *Lophophora* or *Ariocarpus*. I initially tried growing hypogaea in a terra cotta pot and also in gritty mix media but both caused it to dry out too fast and the plant didn't thrive.

My hypogaea get full direct sun all morning then bright shade the rest of the day. It's been my experience that some period of direct sun is necessary for this species (and most cactus). This light stress, with unfiltered UV, is needed to develop the colors and protective stress pigments that we admire as well as for proper growth and shape.



I don't fertilize it. Hypogaea grows very slowly by nature and has low nutrient needs. My plants get what they need from the soil and Houston tap water. Fertilization with too much nitrogen supports excessive vegetative growth that is unnatural and unattractive - and appealing to insect pests.

Water hypogaea only when it gets soft to the squeeze – otherwise, let the Atacama Gremlin suffer and wilt under the Texas sun – it likes it that way.



developing fruit



'Lizard Skin'

## July Succulent of the Month

Kristi Schmidt

**Name:** *Agave victoriae-reginae*

**Common Names:** Queen Victoria Agave, Royal Agave, or Queen Victoria Century Plant

The specific epithet given this plant by the English gardener and botanist Thomas Moore honors his Queen Victoria (Alexandrina Victoria), Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland 1837-1901.

**Family:** Agavaceae (now Asparagaceae)

**Origin:** Mexico (North America)

*Agave victoriae-reginae* is scattered in the Chihuahuan Desert from 4,000 to 5,000 feet in elevation. Near Saltillo, Coahuila along the road to Monterey and another well-known location is in Huasteca Canyon, just outside the city of Monterey, Mexico.

### Description:

A slow-growing, compact agave forming small clumps up to 1 foot tall and 2 feet wide. It has smooth, spineless, deep green rigid leaves with white-edged margins, that almost appear to be hand-painted, and a small terminal spine.

It is a stunning accent plant that draws attention due to its regal elegance, perfectly symmetrical shape.

### Cultivation:

This plant does well in Houston. It tolerates full sun even during the hottest months of the year. It does not skip a beat during freeze events either. It thrives in arid environments, but requires well draining soil.

Plant in full sun or light shade; needs little to no water in gardens and is hardy to at least 10°F. Ideal for gardens or containers.

It is one of the easiest agave plants to grow in Houston, simply plant it and forget it. Zero worry, zero maintenance.

### Propagation:

The market is flooded with many Queen Victoria varieties. Some rarely produce offsets and other are extremely prolific. This allows for easy growth and expansion by removing and replanting offsets.

The coloring can vary from light green to darker green, yellow or white variegation.

There are many variations of this plant on the market.

**Natural Variation:** Even in the wild, this species exhibits variation in leaf count, shape, size, and the prominence of white markings.

**Cultivars and Hybrids:** Plant breeders and tissue culture labs have developed many cultivars and hybrids, emphasizing desirable traits like unique variegation or compact size. For instance, some popular variegated cultivars include 'Porcupine', 'Golden Surprise', 'Kazo Bana', 'Lemonade', 'Kizan', 'Tora Fu', 'White Rhino',



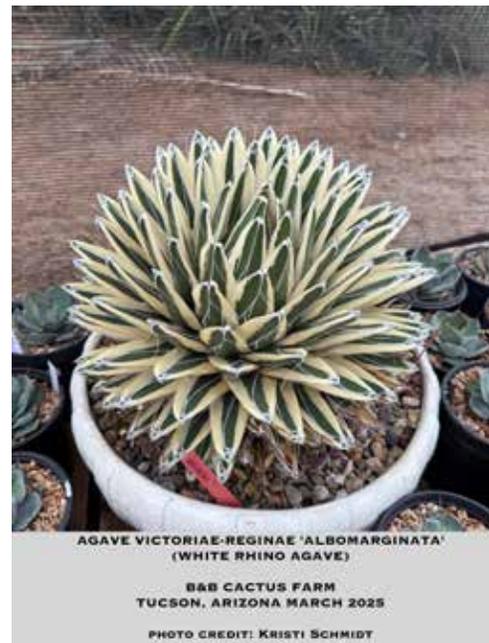
PHOTO CREDIT: KRISTI SCHMIDT

and 'Sun King'.

**Clonal Variants:** You might also encounter different clonal variants of the same cultivar, leading to subtle differences in appearance.

**References:**

- [https://www.smgrowers.com/products/plants/plantdisplay.asp?plant\\_id=3523](https://www.smgrowers.com/products/plants/plantdisplay.asp?plant_id=3523)
- <https://planetdesert.com/products/queen-victoria-agave-victoriae-reginae-1>



## August Cactus of the Month

Robert Perez

### *Homalocephala texensis* Ayanami

#### *Homalocephala Texensis:*

This is the species name for the Texas Horse Crippler, a barrel cactus native to the Chihuahuan Desert. It's characterized by its flattened shape, strong spines, and ability to grow hidden in grasses.

#### Ayanami:

In the context of Japanese-cultivated cacti, "ayanami" can refer to a normal *Echinocactus texensis*, or more commonly, a crested or variegated cultivar of this species.

#### Crested and Variegated Forms:

"Crested" refers to a growth pattern where the cactus develops a wavy, fan-like shape instead of its typical round form. "Variegated" describes cacti with patches or stripes of different colors (often green and yellow) on their stems.



#### Cultivation:

*Homalocephala texensis*, including its ayanami forms, are often cultivated in well-draining mineral soil with good sunlight. They are relatively cold-hardy but need to be kept dry in the winter. Variegated forms are sometimes grafted onto other cacti for better growth.

## August Succulent of the Month

Sara Ortiz

### *Hoya kerrii*

Hoyas come in all sorts of shapes, sizes, and colors, but let's talk about the charming *Hoya kerrii*! With its thick, heart-shaped leaves, this little beauty is often referred to as the sweetheart vine or Valentine's hoya. They capture hearts, especially around Valentine's Day!

When conditions are just right, mature *Hoya kerrii* plants can surprise you in the summer with fragrant, miniature star-shaped flowers. You might see all green leaves or ones with a warm creamy white edge in varieties like 'Variegata.' Fun fact: you can even propagate just a single heart-shaped leaf! Please place it in well-draining soil, provide moderate watering, and locate it in a cozy spot with bright, indirect light.

#### Choosing Your *Hoya kerrii*

If you're looking for a *Hoya kerrii*, it's essential to note that many stores sell single-leaf plants. While they're cute, they typically won't grow into a whole plant. For a thriving sweetheart, it's best to choose one with a well-rooted stem and at least two leaves. This knowledge will ensure you make the best choice for your plant collection.



**\*\*Common Names:\*\*** *Hoya kerrii*, sweetheart Hoya

**\*\*Plant Type:\*\*** Vine, succulent

**\*\*Mature Size:\*\*** Up to 13 ft. long

**\*\*Sun Exposure:\*\*** Full

**\*\*Soil Type:\*\*** Well-draining

**\*\*Bloom Time:\*\*** Spring and summer

**\*\*Hardiness Zones:\*\*** 11 (USDA)

#### Care Tips

Caring for your *Hoya kerrii* is relatively easy! They love plenty of sunlight, a sprinkle of water here and there, and well-draining soil. These adorable plants thrive on a bit of neglect, so find a sunny spot and water them every few weeks. Don't fret if they seem slow to grow; keep giving them love and light, and they'll come around eventually!

**\*\*Light:\*\*** Aim for a place with several hours of bright sunlight each day. A cozy west- or south-facing window works wonders!

**\*\*Soil:\*\*** Use a mix of potting soil, perlite, orchid bark, and sand to enhance drainage.

**\*\*Water:\*\*** Allow the soil to dry out completely between waterings. Check those leaves—if they're still plump, they don't need water yet!

**\*\*Temperature & Humidity:\*\*** They prefer a warm environment, so keep them between 60°F and 80°F. If you can provide them with a bit of extra humidity, such as in a bathroom or kitchen, they'll love it!

**\*\*Fertilizer:\*\*** Although they don't require a lot, regular feeding with a bit of fertilizer can help them grow. In the spring and summer, apply a balanced fertilizer to them about once a month.

With some simple care, your *Hoya kerrii* will blossom into a delightful and heartwarming addition to your home. Enjoy your plant parenting journey!

**Sources:**

How to Grow and Care for Hoya Kerrii Heart: Plant Care Guide

<https://succulentsbox.com/blogs/blog/how-to-care-for-hoya-kerrii-heart?srsltid=AfmBOoo3sIIIdAf7g4pUr-KIDLcxQkbhomKh3jy3lNgLyoyY3e0EP0H3pFH>

Hoya Kerrii Variegated

[https://planetdesert.com/products/hoya-kerrii-variegated-sweetheart-hoya-trailing-vines?srsltid=AfmBOoo-qviHIfGcrykAGO1yKBb\\_IMKrwqu4VgbpGNNCDQJcqsXXe\\_YYh](https://planetdesert.com/products/hoya-kerrii-variegated-sweetheart-hoya-trailing-vines?srsltid=AfmBOoo-qviHIfGcrykAGO1yKBb_IMKrwqu4VgbpGNNCDQJcqsXXe_YYh)

How to Grow and Care for Hoya Kerrii

<https://www.thespruce.com/hoya-kerri-care-guide-5222015>



## CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY OF AMERICA (CSSA) NEWS LILIANA CRACRAFT

The Photo Contest 2025 had 52 entries, and the winners were announced at the Annual Members meeting held on June 21, 2025. They were:



- 1st Place: Richard Schreiber – *Puya raimondii*.  
Full-page or cover feature in the Cactus and Succulent Journal and \$250
- 2nd Place: Jaan Lepson – *Stapelia surrecta*  
Half-page feature in the Journal and \$150
- 3rd Place: Jim Carlblom – *Trichocereus*
- Honorable Mention #1: Jaan Lepson – *Monanthes wilpretii*
- Honorable Mention #2: Jeffrey Hagenah - *Boophone disticha*

All will get publication in the Journal + \$100 each

You can see the winning photos in the latest TTP issue at: “To The Point” – Summer 2025 – Cactus and Succulent Society of America

Additionally, CSSA will like to organize a forum for those interested in photography.

Participants can receive feedback and discuss ways to improve their photography. If this interests you, please send an email to: [cactusandsucculent-society@gmail.com](mailto:cactusandsucculent-society@gmail.com)

The 2025 Convention in San Diego and was a success with 366 attendees plus vendors. The 2027 Convention will take place in Tucson, AZ.

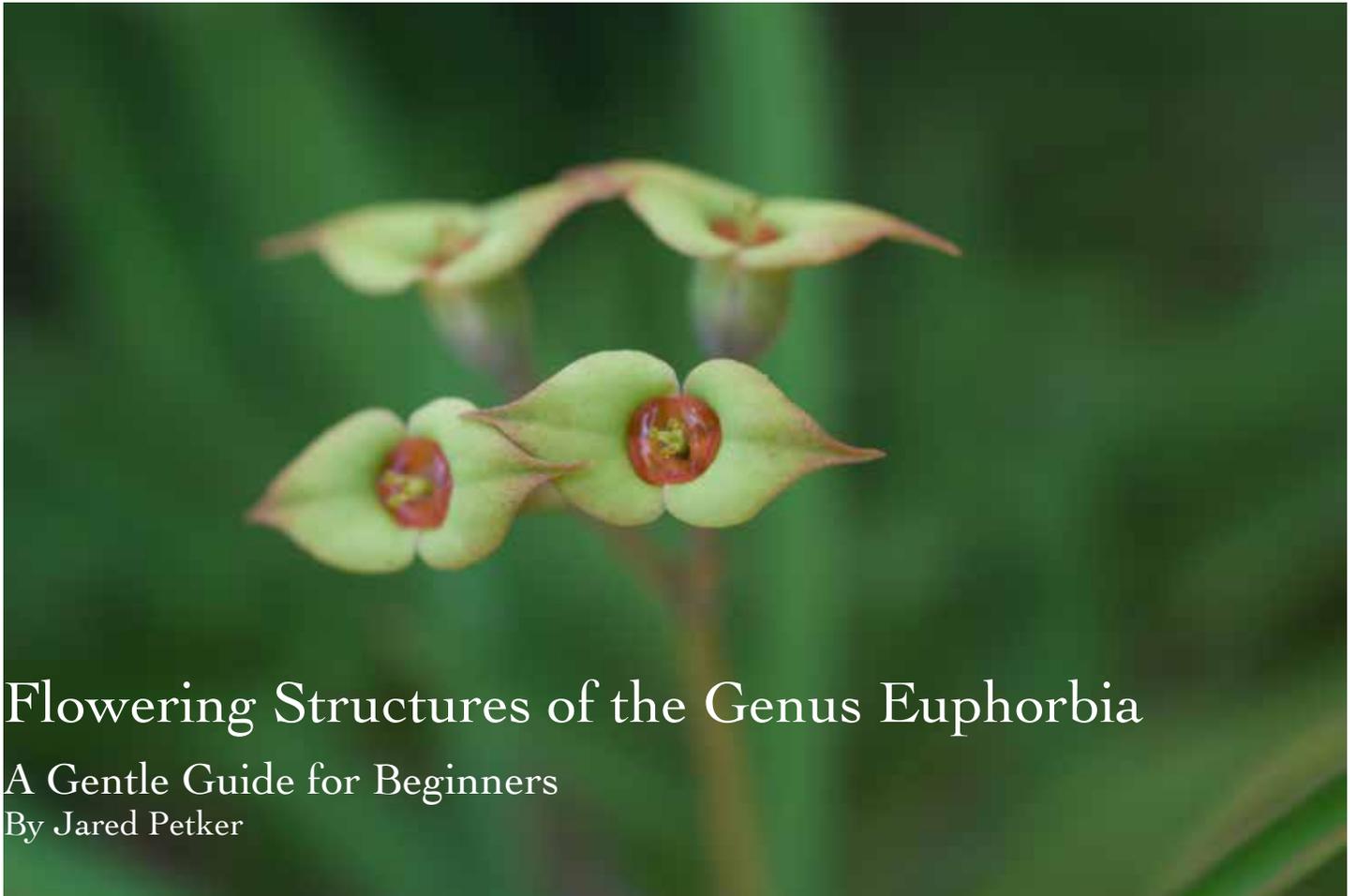
CSSA currently has 59 affiliated clubs and will allocate \$10,000 to fund grants for the development and implementation of educational programs or events aimed at engaging and inspiring the next generation of C&S enthusiasts. These programs or events can be conducted in partnership with elementary school, high school, or college students.

The Conservation and the Research Committees, led by Irwin Lightstone and Phuc Hyunh respectively, are also accepting proposals for relevant projects to be conducted in the U.S. or anywhere else in the world.

It was also reported that CSSA will continue to award an Educational Plaque once a year for the Best Educational Display shown during the annual shows. One plaque per club.

And remember, the basic membership to join CSSA is only \$20. Please let me know if you need additional information about membership, or the available grants.

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## Flowering Structures of the Genus Euphorbia

### A Gentle Guide for Beginners

By Jared Petker

*Euphorbia genoudiana* is a Madagascan *E. milli* like thorny shrub. *E. genoudiana* is sometimes confused with *Euphorbia gottlebei*, but is easily distinguished from *E. gottlebei* due to its green cyathophylls compared to the red cyathophylls of *E. gottlebei*.

My first Euphorbia ever was *Euphorbia genoudiana*—quite the handsome Madagascan spiny shrub. I was fascinated by its little green flowers spread out from its dainty flower stalks, clustered in pairs of 2 and 4, with sunkissed petal tips and a ruby red center. I'd see a set of 3 little green sticks poking out of the center of the flower, and after a few days, a few more sticks with yellow dusty tops surrounding the initial cluster of 3. After a bit more time passed, I'd see these three-lobed, green, and trapezoid-esque fruits springing out of the center of the flowers. Finally, the little fruits would dry out and fling seeds in every direction. This went on for a while through late spring, and I soon learned that those stunning green petals weren't really petals, the dainty flower stalks leading up to them weren't actually flower stalks, and well, the flowers weren't flowers either. It was a lot to take in.

### Where there are Euphorbia, there are cyathia!

We all have at least one Euphorbia in our collection. If you're like me, you started hoarding them left and right after your first one. And if you've begun to collect even a few of the thousands of species of Euphorbia, then you've likely discovered the morphological variance within the genus to be one of its most fascinating and enthralling qualities. Euphorbia can be spiny, spherical, tree-like, blue, columnar, smooth, green, clumping, medusoid-shaped, shrub-like, a mix of several of these traits, and more!

Euphorbia even found a way to have just as highly varying and unique features in their flowering structures. They contain a flowering system that is not found anywhere else within the plant kingdom in its cup-like container, known as a “cyathium”. What we see in the pentagon-like shaped purple structures and painted yellow centers in the picture of *Euphorbia horrida* are in fact a crown of cyathia (plural for cyathium). And what are those little specks of bright yellow? Yeah, those are the flowers! In this case, male flowers!

*Euphorbia horrida* is a large clumping South African plant with many varieties found in habitat, and hybridized heavily in cultivation. *E. horrida* is dioecious and requires a male and female plant for pollination. It is very easily hybridized with other similar dioecious species of Euphorbia. I’ve personally had success hybridizing *E. horrida* with *Euphorbia polygona*, *Euphorbia meloformis*, and *Euphorbia tubiglans*.

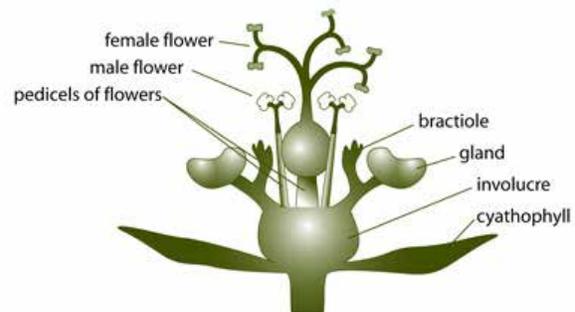
These two bits of information are all we need to start understanding why Euphorbia flowering parts are unique. Euphorbia have reduced their flowers down to a miniscule size and have developed a “false-flower” (also known as a pseudanthium) in the form of the before-mentioned cyathium. Before diving into all the pretty pictures of cyathia spanning across the genus Euphorbia, let’s dive a bit deeper into the cyathium itself, and learn more about this unique structure.

In the diagram, we see a vertical cross-section of a Euphorbia cyathium. At the base of the cyathium we see the involucre, a cup-like structure, surrounded by some cyathophylls. The cyathophylls can look like the petals of a standard flower but are actually modified leaves, and provide a superficially showy appearance for many species of Euphorbia. In the photo of *Euphorbia spirosticha* (formerly *Euphorbia decaryi* var. *spirosticha*) we can see the hidden involucre is surrounded by a pair of pointy, triangular-shaped, light pinkish-tan cyathophylls.

*Euphorbia spirosticha* is a stoloniferous Euphorbia found in Madagascar. *E. spirosticha* is quite slow growing, with what ends up looking like



*Euphorbia horrida*



Parts of a stylized *Euphorbia* cyathium

Diagram of a Euphorbia cyathium. Moller, A., & Becker, R. (2019). Field Guide to the Succulent Euphorbias of Southern Africa (pp. 14-15). Briza.



*Euphorbia spirosticha*

nearly hooded cyathia, as well as handsome, yet crinkly, green-to-purple stressed leaves.

Above the involucre are the nectar glands of the cyathia. Four to five glands are usually found to form a ring around the top of the involucre. These glands can come in a ton of different shapes, and colors, and at times have appendages which help create a wide variety of visually enticing shapes to be enthralled by. As you might have guessed, the nectar glands surrounding the involucre help attract pollinators to the plant. The *E. spirosticha* in the picture can be seen with yellow-green glands which are quite diminutive in size and simple in shape. In contrast, a cyathium of *Euphorbia monteiroi* has deep burgundy nectar glands and finger-like appendages reaching out from them. Also notable are the pair of green bracts, not cyathophylls in this case, sitting several millimeters below the involucre. The bracts seen here are modified leaves, similar to cyathophylls, however are not actually considered a part of the cyathium.

And now to the actual flowers. The flowers on Euphorbia are diminutive in size compared to the cyathium. The female flower typically emerge first in Euphorbia which are bi-sexual—more on that shortly! In the *E. monteiroi* photo, we can see the standard three-pronged female flower emerging from the apex of the involucre. In the case of *E. monteiroi*, the female flower is the same burgundy color as the involucre and glands. However, that matching colorway isn't always standard. In the next picture is a *Euphorbia pentops* cyathium with a yellow-green female flower standing out of a reddish involucre with green nectar glands surrounded by quite stunning finger-like appendages. The three-pronged nature of the female flower of *E. pentops* is much less pronounced than in *E. monteiroi* and more “squished” together. The size and shape of the female flower in Euphorbia can vary in morphology, just like Euphorbia themselves.

The female flowers of Euphorbia would be quite lonely without male counterparts, and so of course they exist! Male flowers of Euphorbia typically emerge a bit after the female flower has matured, and come to form as a grouping of very tiny little male flowers perched on top of a stalk, called the pedicel. The male flower itself will produce pollen once they've matured, which can itself come in a variety of colors. In the picture on next page we can see a grouping of cyathia on *Euphorbia* sp. 'Greyton', littered with male flowers, housing bountiful amounts of yellow pollen needed to pollinate the female flowers if you'd like any shot at producing seed pods, seeds, and offspring. The glands here are full with nectar, elliptical in shape, and unadorned of appendages.



*Euphorbia monteiroi* var *ramosa* is a Southern African Euphorbia which generally presents as a single, spineless, and erect main stem, emitting foot-long peduncles, topped with the beautiful burgundy colored cyathial parts seen above.



*Euphorbia pentops* is a medusoid Euphorbia from Namaqualand. Its name is derived from meaning the “Euphorbia with five eyes”, pointedly alluding to the green spots on its nectar glands. The plant pictured is from the collection of Peter Walkowiak.

## Dioecious vs Monoecious Euphorbia, and the need for genetically distinct clones

An interesting characteristic of Euphorbia, is that not all Euphorbia have both male and female flowers appearing on the same plant. Some Euphorbia are monoecious, and do indeed have male flowers which emerge after the female flower has matured. Many of the Euphorbia shown so far are monoecious, such as *E. monteiroi*, *E. spirosticha*, and *E. genoudiana*. However, some Euphorbia, like the *E. horrida* pictured on page 13, are actually dioecious, meaning that female and male flowers are found on separate plants. When a Euphorbia is dioecious, you'll need both a male and female plant to properly pollinate the female plant with the pollen from the male plant. *Euphorbia tubiglans*, is another example of a dioecious Euphorbia. *E. tubiglans* can be seen with dainty little bits of orange nectar exuding from its glands and long oval-shaped cyathophylls.



*Euphorbia* sp. 'Greyton' is a peculiar Euphorbia collected from around Greyton on the western cape of South Africa. It somewhat resembles both *Euphorbia groenewaldii* and *Euphorbia tortirama*—though I've noticed it to have much chunkier branches and stouter tubercles than these two similar friends.



*Euphorbia tubiglans* is small shrub-like Euphorbia found in rocky slopes and other bushes around Jansenville and the Eastern Cape of South Africa. Its nectar glands are folded into tube-like structures, hence its name, *E. tubiglans*. This photo is actually of *E. jansenvillensis*, which shares a similar gland structure



*Euphorbia triaculeata*

A final point to note is that some Euphorbia require, or at minimum much prefer, genetically distinct clones to promote further diversity in their offspring.

*Euphorbia triaculeata* a spiny, shrub-like plant from Somalia, with beautiful golden yellow cyathia. *E. triaculeata* is allegedly self-fertile, however, I've not been able to acquire seed from my extremely free-flowering plants, all from the

same origin. Trial and error has me believing a genetically distinct partner would help the pollination process along.

While figuring out if a *Euphorbia* in your collection is dioecious or monoecious is relatively straightforward after seeing it flower, knowing if your plant prefers a genetically distinct clone or is able to self-pollinate is a bit more tough. Many monoecious *Euphorbia* self-pollinate quite freely, such as the *E. genoudiana* shown at the beginning of this article. Others may be able to self-pollinate if lucky, but prefer a genetically distinct clone for better results. Short of trial and error, you may need to research whether your plant requires a genetically distinct clone if you're aiming for successful pollination.

### Photo Gallery



*Euphorbia clava* presents with a single large main stem with long peduncles leading to beautiful green and stress-purple tinted cyathia. *E. clava* is found on the eastern cape of South Africa, commonly known as the “club-shaped euphorbia”.



*Euphorbia adenensis* (formerly *Euphorbia balsamifera* ssp. *adenensis*, and from the Canary Islands) with a friendly bee lending a helping hand.



*Euphorbia actinoclada*, found in Somalia and borders with Ethiopia and Kenya, has amazing multicolored cyathia with goldenrod glands, tinged with strawberry red from a bit of sun-stress, along with a strawberry colored involucre and pedicels leading to more goldenrod in the pollen of the male flowers.



*Euphorbia bupleurifolia* is a dioecious *Euphorbia* found in Southern Africa. While most *E. bupleurifolia* in cultivation are mainly above ground, in habitat, many *E. bupleurifolia* are found barely peeking out of the ground with their leaves and inflorescence mainly on display. The plant pictured is from the collection of Al Klein.



*Euphorbia richardiae* is seen here with rich reddish purple cyathia and unadorned glands at different stages of maturity. The plant pictured is from the collection of Al Klein.



*Euphorbia micracantha*, found on the Eastern Cape of South Africa, provides a challenge for a photographer sans a pricey macro-lens (such as myself). While its name calls out its tiny spines, its cyathia are notably tiny as well, and only 2-4mm wide.

## References

- [1] Bruyns, P. V. (2022). *Euphorbia in Southern Africa, Volume 1*. Springer.  
 [2] Moller, A., & Becker, R. (2019). *Field Guide to the Succulent Euphorbias of Southern Africa*. Briza.

### HCSS Leadership and Contact Info

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