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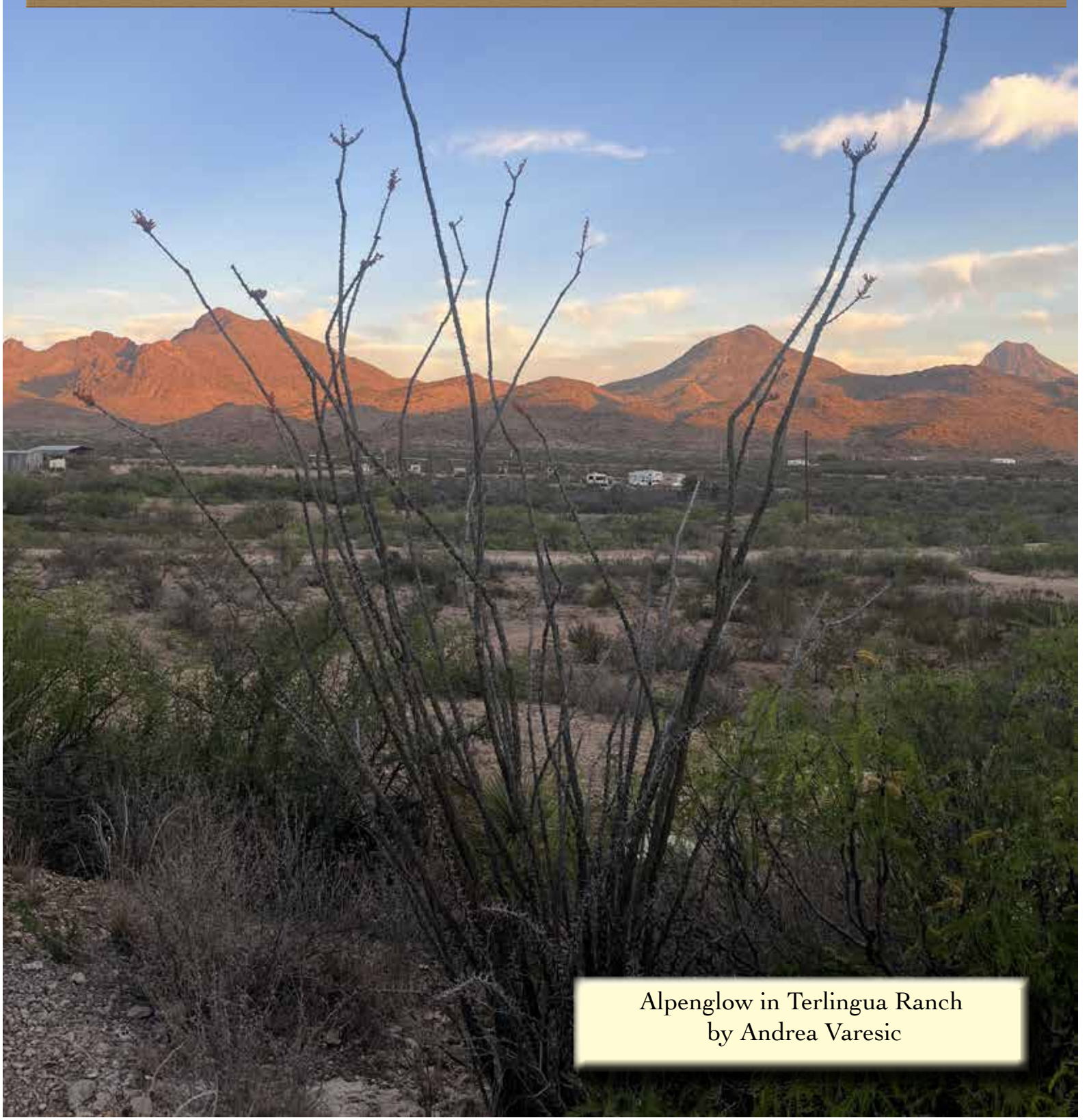
May-June 2024

Kaktos Komments

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



Alpenglow in Terlingua Ranch
by Andrea Varesic

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

Membership — Sara Ortiz

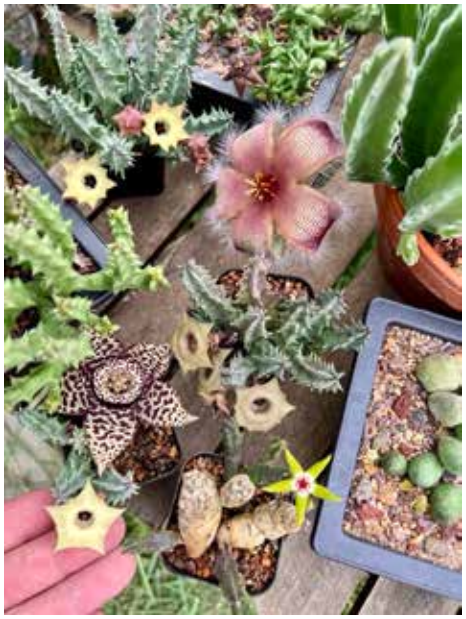
On March 27, 2024, HCSS met at the Metropolitan Multiservice Center.
There were 36 members in attendance, one guest and 3 members joined us on Zoom.
Program "New Mexico and Texas Desert Habitats (Part II): South NM and West TX, " Are hard-to-grow desert plants hard to grow in Houston? by Echo Pang. March's Cactus of the Month, Mammillaria mazalanensis was presented by Josie Watts. The succulent of the month, Euphorbia neriifolia, was presented by Bruce Moffett.
Many door prizes (potted plants, agave pups, and a journal) were donated and won by attending members.

On April 24, 2024, HCSS met at the Metropolitan Multiservice Center.
There were 40 members in attendance, 3 guests and 11 members joined us on Zoom.
Program "Drainage: Practical Data for Effective Potting Mixes," explaining the science behind water retention in soils by Joseph Rodd. April's Cactus of the Month, Echinopsis lageniformis, was presented by Jose Jimenez. The succulent of the month, Euphorbia pseudotrinervis Bruyns, will be presented by Andrea Varesic.
Many door prizes (potted plants, agave pups, and t-shirts) were donated and won by attending members.
The Club shirts were distributed and announcements were made to all members to volunteer in support of our spring sale.

Calendar:

May 8, 2024	7:00 pm Board Meeting via Zoom
May 10-11, 2024	Spring Sale, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center
May 22, 2024	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Program: "Succulent Asclepiadaceae" by Philip Richards
June 26, 2024	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Program: "Pulque, the Drink of the Gods" by Liliana Cracraft
July 1, 2024	Deadline for submitting articles for the KK.

Upcoming programs:



May 22nd , "Succulent Asclepiadaceae - My Journey with These Stinky Starry Succulents" by Philip Richards, PhD in Chemistry (Organic Synthesis) at University of Cape Town.

"This is my first presentation ever on succulents. I'm going to tell you how I became interested in succulents and specifically asclepiads. I will also talk about the stapeliads that I have encountered in nature as well as many that I have cultivated, sharing photos that I have taken over the years. I will also share my growing tips on these amazing plants.

I was born in England, moved to South Africa as a child, and was transferred to the USA five years ago with my wife and two boys. I have always had an interest in science and nature so went on to become a chemist for my career and grow succulents as a hobby. I got into the hobby at age 12 and now more than three decades later and I'm still growing them, now specializing in the Stapeliads. During the Covid pandemic I started an online Etsy shop called "Thirst for Succulents" "—Philip Richards.

June 26th , "Pulque: Drink of the Gods" by Dr. Liliana Cracraft, HCSS Publicity and CSSA affiliate

Pulque (obtained from some Agave plants), is the most ancient drink of México, consumed for more than 2000 years. This lecture illustrates its origins, botanical aspects, and religious uses.

Short bio:

Liliana R. Cracraft is from Monterrey, México moved to Houston in 1983. She is an active member of the Houston Cactus and Succulents Society, and the Cactus and Succulents Society of America (CSSA). She has a tremendous interest and pride in Hispanic culture and her Mexican heritage. Her interest in cacti and succulents combined with her involvement in health care, extended to a membership to the Texas Cactus Council. She has taught a popular "Cooking with Cactus" class, and regularly lectures on many topics including the important roles that cacti have played in the lives of Mexican people, the history of tequila & mezcal, prehispanic Mexican Food, the traditional Mexican dishes for Christmas and Lent, and many others. Liliana is a retired medical educator, researcher and administrator at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston where she taught microbiology and infectious diseases to medical students and students from the school of public health.

May Succulent of the Month

James Troyer

NAME: ***Albuca bracteate***, First discovered in 1794 by Carl Peter Thunberg

SYNONYMS: Ornithogalum longebracteatum, Fenelonia bracteata

COMMON NAME(S): False Sea Onion, Pregnant Onion, Sea Onion, German Onion

HABITAT/DISTRIBUTION: From the coastal regions of the Southern Cape in South Africa to KwaZulu-Natal, the range also stretches inland towards the foothills of the Drakensberg mountains and extends extensively northward into tropical East Africa

DESCRIPTION: This is an above-ground, large bulbous plant with long, strappy leaves that can measure over 2ft long. Flowering usually happens during the winter and spring. Blooms are white with a faint fragrance.

CULTIVATION/GROWTH: Hardy to USDA zones of 9a-10b, prefers a well-draining, airy mix with watering after a slight drying cycle. If you want the plant to go dormant, reduce watering, and it will utilize the moisture and nutrients and leaves and remain dormant until you start watering it again.

AVAILABILITY: Common

MY EXPERIENCE: I have had my original pregnant onion since 2019. It has produced so many babies over the years and I have been able to share them with so many of my friends. I have never had any issues with the plant. I used to induce dormancy when I first got the plant, but this year, I allowed it to keep growing through winter, and it has given me over 7 bloom spikes this spring. Be careful when trimming leaves or diving the roots or taking the "skin" off the bulbs. The substance it leaks out can be irritating.

REFERENCES

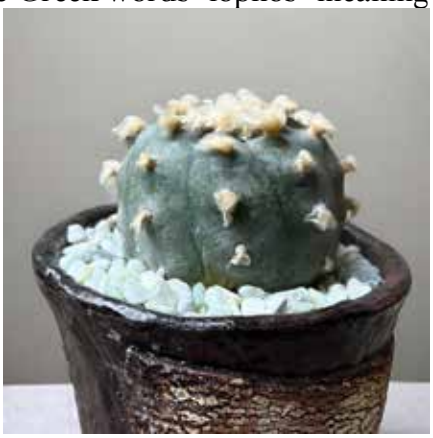
"Fenelonia bracteata" Text available under a CC-BY-SA Creative Commons Attribution License. www.llifle.com 14 Nov. 2005. 22 Apr 2024. </Encyclopedia/BULBS/Family/Hyacinthaceae/19752/Fenelonia_bracteata>

Photos by James Troyer

May Cactus of the Month

Michael Carrier and Sam Rose

LOPHOPHORA GENUS

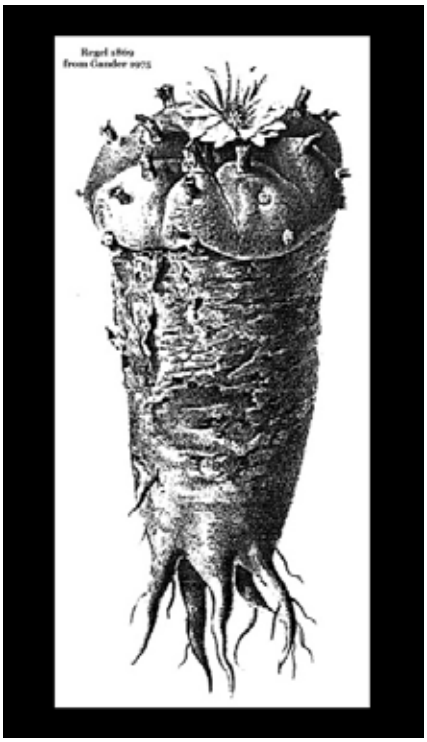


NAME: Lophophora, commonly known as Peyote, derives its name from the Greek words "lophos" meaning crest and "phoreo" meaning to bear. This name refers to the plant's distinctive appearance, characterized by a central crown or button-like structure atop its body. Originally named *Echinocactus williamsii* in 1845, it has been renamed as *Lophophora williamsii* in 1896. Since then, most of the world's experts agree that six actual Lophophora species currently exist: *L. Williamsii, L. Diffusa, L. Fricii, L. Jourdaniana, L. Koehresii*, and recently noticed, *L. Alberto-vojtechii*

HABITAT: All Lophophora species are native to arid regions of Mexico and southwestern Texas.

DESCRIPTION: Lophophora is a genus of small, spineless cactus with rounded or oval-shaped stems that resemble buttons or discs. All lophophora species possess core traits such as the button-shaped stem with tubercles, and a carrot shaped tap root.

While there are differences in body appearance between the six recognized species, the differences are often slight enough to be mistaken for other plants in the genus. During the blooming season, the plant produces stunning flowers, and the color of the bloom is believed to be the only true way to visually determine the specific species of Lophophora from each other.



This illustration from 1869 shows the elongated carrot shaped tap root in proportion to the head of the plant. Interestingly, this publication marked the third time that an illustration of peyote appeared in print

Below is a brief description of each recognized Lophophora species and some of their notable differences:

1. *L. williamsii*
   The flower is a pale pink. Unlike all other species of Lophophora, *L. williamsii* is the only one that contains the hallucinative substance mescaline/peyote.
2. *L. diffusa*
   Usually has a smoother look with less defined ribs and a white flower.
3. *L. fricii*
   Body color tends to be more gray than other species of Lophophora. The epidermis features large protuberances, and the flower is a dark pink.
4. *L. jourdaniana*
   The flower is a vibrant pink with darker pink stripes.
5. *L. koehresii*
   Usually a dark green, commonly has more pronounced substructure and a white flower with pale pink stripes
6. *L. alberto-vojtechii* - "the littlest loph"most recently discovered in Mexico in the early 2000's. The flower is white with dark pink stripes. It presently appears to lack any deep analysis.

CULTIVATION/GROWTH: The species are extremely slow growing, sometimes taking up to thirty years to reach flowering age at about the size of a golf ball. In nature, these buttons are usually found under the protection of other desert shrubs or between rocks. They thrive with little water, and in cultivation should

be planted in a very mineral rich soil that drains quickly and does not retain moisture.

AVAILABILITY:

Lophophora williamsii has been endangered in habitat due to poaching and reckless harvesting practices. They are easy to grow from seed, and all forms of Lophophora with the exception of williamsii are legal to grow and sell in the United States.

A 2011 study of various Lophophora specimens identified that some specimens contained mescaline, and others did not. This study clarified that there are multiple distinct species of Lophophora in addition to

L. williamsii.

REFERENCES:

- Trout's Notes, https://troutsnotes.com/loph-featured-page/
- Aragane et al. 2011, Peyote identification on the basis of differences in morphology, mescaline content, and trnL/trnF sequence between Lophophora williamsii and L. diffusa

Editor's note:
The peyote cactus, Lophophora williamsii, is presently classified as a Schedule 1 Controlled Substance in the USA, with the exemption for use by the Native American Church. Regulations about the use differ in the different states with California being the strictest, where no lophophora species is legal. HCSS does not promote sale of controversial plants.

June Cactus of the Month — Griffin Saeger

Pelecyphora macromeris (2022)

Synonyms: Mammillaria macromeris (1848), Corypantha macromeris (1868), Lepidocoryphantha macromeris (1942)

• Common Names: Nipple Beehive Cactus, Big Nipple Cory-Cactus, flabby pincushion cactus, big needle cactus, Long Mamma, Doña ana

• Description:

Pelecyphora macromeris is a short, cluster-forming cactus. It has a soft blue-green body covered in elongated tubercles [1,3]. Individual bodies rarely exceed 6 inches in length [1,3]. The number of spines can vary widely among individuals, with 2 to 8 dark brown central spines and 9 to 15 white radial spines [1,3]. Clusters can be sparsely covered with the bodies clearly visible up to a dense, bristly appearance. Clusters tend to have a domed appearance and can grow 3 feet wide or larger [3].

P. macromeris flowers have the familiar conical cactus flower shape, similar to astrophytum flowers [5]. Their thin, shiny petals can range from pink to purple, surrounding a fluffy yellow center [5]. They are said to bloom in the afternoon and are short-lived, with some reporting a bloom of only one day [5]. Large clusters can pro-


My personal specimen

duce dozens of blooms simultaneously. The flowers give way to an inconspicuous bulbous fruit that can range from pale to dark green [1,5]. The fruit is indehiscent, meaning it does not split open on its own to disperse its seeds, depending on deterioration or being dispersed by animals [4].

• Habitat and Distribution:

Pelecyphora macromeris's native habitat is the Chihuahuan Desert. Its northernmost limits stretch into southern New Mexico and west Texas in the USA down through Chihuahua, Coahuila, San Luis Potosí and Tamaulipas in Mexico [3]. P. macromeris is seen most often in rocky and gravelly soils but can also be found in clay or very sandy soil [3]. It tends to prefer partial shade, but can survive out in the open [1]. Nurse plants are the most common source of shade, but they are also seen next to large rocks and boulders or on gently sloping hillsides [1]. The Chihuahuan desert is home to many suitable nurse shrubs and trees, such as acacia, mesquite, cape honeysuckle, saltbush, shrubby senna, and mountain laurel, among others [2].

Natural Habitat photos:

Photo Credit: Steve Collins via inaturalist

https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/199675526

Photo Credit: Mani Samei via iNaturalist

https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/181076513

• Cultivation and Growth:

Pelecyphora macromeris is not suited for outdoor growing year-round in Houston due to its sensitivity to frequent rain and its inability to survive a hard freeze [7]. It is not recommended to be exposed to temperatures below 41 degrees fahrenheit for long periods [7]. *P. Macromeris* will enter a dormant state in temperatures between 50 to 60 degrees fahrenheit. Allowing it to enter dormancy helps encourage flowering in subsequent seasons [7]. In Houston's climate, it is important to provide partial shade during the hottest months to pre-

vent sunburn. A 50% shade cloth has been sufficient protection in my experience, while still providing enough sunlight for good health.

They are adapted for a variety of poor and rocky soils in their natural habitat, so they are not too picky when it comes to potting mixes. A well-draining and fast drying mix is ideal for preventing root rot, with sites recommending 25% or more inorganic in the mix [6]. I have been using 25% perlite, 25% coarse sand, 10% decomposed granite and 40% fox farm ocean forest or Buchanan's life below potting mix with a 1 inch layer of gravel on the bottom of the pot. I also use a small gravel as top dressing. Allowing the soil to completely dry between waterings is key [6,7]. As with most cacti and succulents, pots must have drainage holes, and saucers are not recommended. Weekly watering is sufficient during the warm months, with no watering in winter if keeping it dormant [6,7]. I kept mine under a grow lamp during winter and continued to water it as normal.

Propagation can be achieved by seed or cuttings [7]. Cuttings need to be full heads in order to take, and an attached multi-head group is even more likely to survive [7]. Rooting hormone is recommended [7]. Like most cacti, allow the cuts to scab over for a week, and then place in dry soil mix to root. For seed propagation, Giromagi cacti and succulent nursery recommends sandy loam soil and high humidity until seedlings are ready to transfer to the fast-draining mix [7].

• Availability: *P. macromeris* can be found online from some specialty retailers but is not widely available at big box stores or common nurseries. I purchased mine from the HCSS fall sale in 2023.

• My Thoughts and Experience:

I love this cactus for its soft, round, and organic appearance. It is amazing to me how all the heads in the clusters naturally weave together so closely, yet rarely look squashed or deformed. They have vibrant pink and purple flowers which are quite large considering the size of the individual heads. It is very impressive to see a large cluster with dozens of blooms at once.

After purchasing the plant I replanted it to a decorative pot using my standard mix and applied a gravel top dressing. It has been a very slow grower, but it is a beautiful specimen and it has been very hassle-free. I water it sparingly and keep it outdoors under 50% shade cloth or indoors under a grow light in the wintertime. As the weather has warmed up, I have noticed some new growth erupting from one of the tubercles. Seems like a great start to the growing season.

During the repot I took several cuttings for propagation. They all rooted easily at first, but they all eventually succumbed to some type of odd rot or fungal infection. I think I will try again some day with a rockier soil mix for the cuttings. Rooting can be quick and easy in warm weather, but the small pups can be a bit finicky, so watch them closely.

• References:

1. https://www.americansouthwest.net/plants/cacti/coryphantha-macromeris.html
2. https://elpasodesertblooms.org/listplants.php?index=26&plantindex=40
3. https://www.llifle.com/Encyclopedia/CACTI/Family/Cactaceae/10268/Coryphantha_macromeris
4. https://garden.org/plants/view/125810/Nipple-Beehive-Cactus-Pelecyphora-macromeris-subsp-macromeris/
5. Brian Loflin, Shirley Loflin. Texas Cacti. Texas A&M University Press, 2009.
6. https://www.consultaplantas.com/index.php/en/care-plants-from-a-to-c/1926-coryphantha-macromeris-or-big-needle-cactus-care-and-growing
7. https://www.giromagicactusandsucculents.com/coryphantha-macromeris/

June Succulent of the Month — Laurin Lindsey

Sansevieria 'Cleopatra'

I love Sansevieria plants. They grow well in my 1905 Victorian home. We have no direct light and limited filtered light, which they are suited. Last count we have 8 of various varieties. They are supposed to help with oxygen in bedrooms at night and are super low maintenance. I love the leaves of plants more than the flowers and while they can flower it is short lived or rare in my experience. Sansevieria and many of my succulents are native to Africa, Madagascar and southern Asia and spend most of the year outside. My featured plant has been with us for a year. It seems happy in our downstairs shower room near the window.

Sansevieria 'Cleopatra'

Common Name(s) - Snake Plant

Family: Asparagaceae

Subfamily: Crassuloideae

Genus: Sansevieria

Description

Sansevieria 'Cleopatra' is a beautiful slow-growing succulent with an intricate pattern on its leaves which grow in a perfect rosette.

Hardiness - USDA hardiness zones 10b to 11b: from 35 °F (+1.7 °C) to 50 °F (+10 °C).

Growth rate and Care

Prefers moderately bright or filtered light. Said to tolerate low light like most Sansevierias. Brighter light brings out the colors in the leaves. Water only when the soil completely dries out. Then give it a good soaking and let drain. Wants less water during winter. Fertilize lightly once a month thru summer. Feed the plant once every three weeks throughout the summer.

Origin

Sansevieria 'Cleopatra' is an Indonesian hybrid. It is thought to result from a cross between Sansevieria 'Phupramorn Delight' and Sansevieria rhodesiana or Sansevieria pearsonii.

March and April Program Highlights, one program was on habitat and the other on cultivation. These two programs connected nature to our hobby, and science to practice.

On March 27th, Echo Pang, HCSS 1st VP took members on a virtual trip to "Desert Habitats from South New Mexico to West Texas" through her presentation.

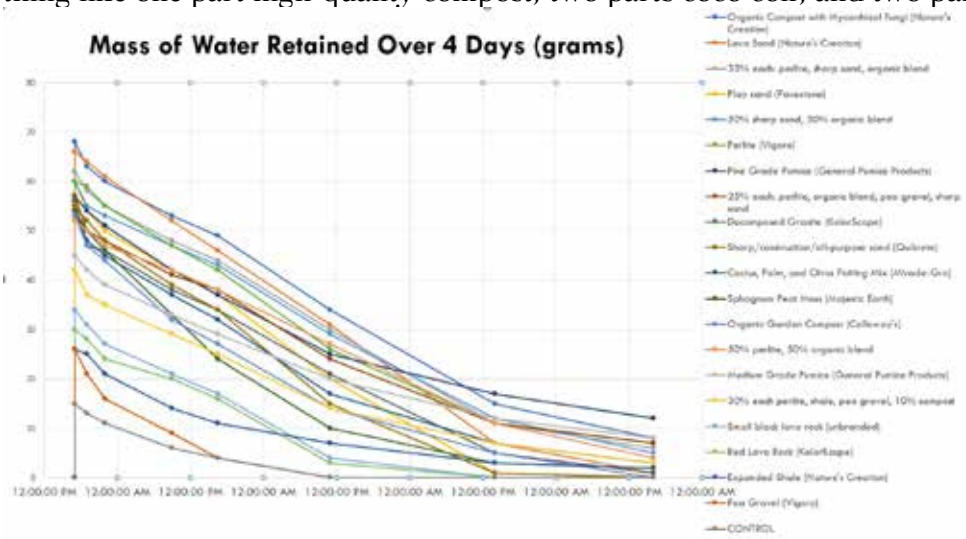
Echo began her presentation with the unique geology at the Valley of Fire lava flow in Carrizozo, followed by the giant white sand king cup cactus raced against the moving sand dunes, and an introduction of many Texas native cacti such as Ariocarupus fissuratus, Epithelantha micromeris, Homalocephala texensis, etc. living on limestone outcrop habitats.

Echo would like the audience to understand that cultivation of plants is based on habitat. Habitat is an ecosystem supported by plants. Plants adapt to the climate and live upon the geology. When it comes to growing desert plants, consider the following factors: a patch of land can become a desert because mountain ranges block much of the rainfall. With higher elevation and lower air pressure, desert habitats are windy and the evaporation is fast. The days are warm and sunny, but the moving air and low humidity can prevent things from getting toasty hot under the sun, and things dry up quickly after the rain. Temperature difference is often huge from day to night. Understanding these differences is essential when it comes to your decision on plant choices, placement, soil mixture, watering requirements and winter management.

On April 24th, Joseph Rodd, HCSS Conservation Chair presented a program about soil science, titled "Understanding Drainage: Practical Data for Effective Potting Mixes"

Joseph discussed the science of water retention in potting media. He brought samples of a dozen soil ingredients, presented the results of his experiment on drying rates of different materials, and provided members an opportunity to test their soils' water retention after the meeting.

Joseph's presentation encouraged everyone to experiment with making their own potting mixes. This lets you save money, reduce your environmental impact by avoiding peat, and tailor your soils to your plants, growing conditions, and gardening habits. Everyone's needs are different, but a decent starting place might be something like one part high-quality compost, two parts coco coir, and two parts perlite.



If you want your mixes to dry more quickly, the biggest factor is making them less absorbent in the first place. When you water, capillary action traps moisture inside pots indefinitely – until it is taken up by plants or evaporates. The fewer fine particles you use, the less water your potting media will absorb and the sooner it will dry out. So sift the dust out of your materials, experiment with including larger particles like expanded shale, and reduce the amount of compost and other fine particles that you include.

Stay tuned for 2024 HCSS monthly Educational Programs! All of our past programs can be found on our YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoIYGHVNVqa-5RycD27AdobA

April was busy with special events. Besides the trip to Big Bend Tom Cardinal had an open Garden and we had a potting party to get ready for the May Sale.

And lunch afterwards.

Drimia dolomitica by Richard "Cactus Boy" Stamper

This is an African bulb-type succulent. I got this at the 2015 CSSA convention in Claremont CA. I keep it with an amalgamated collection of Haworthia, Gasteria, and others under 60% shade in the winter and about 80% in the summer. I water it with the others about once a week or so. It is currently planted in akadama clay. Obviously it is small and, for me, slow growing. *D. dolomitica* takes about a two month break over December and January when it disappears underground. The bloom lasts a week or two, not one or two days as described below.

This plant is also seen as *Drimiopsis dolomitica*. The broad spectrum of related plants is constantly being renamed, lumped and split, so I'm going with the label it came with. The photo with the flower stock is the only in-focus shot of the bloom I could get.

The following information is from Wikipedia…
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drimia#cite_note-WCSP_304938-1

Drimia is a genus of African, south European and south Asian flowering plants. In the APG IV classification system, it is placed in the family Asparagaceae, subfamily Scilloideae (formerly the family Hyacinthaceae[2]). When broadly circumscribed, the genus includes a number of other genera previously treated separately, including *Litanthus, Rhodocodon, Schizobasis* and *Urginea*.[1]

Description

Drimia species are usually deciduous, more rarely evergreen, growing from bulbs. The bulbs may be underground or occur on or near the surface. Each bulb has one to several leaves that are often dry by the time the flowers open. The inflorescence is in the form of a raceme, with one to many flowers. At least the lower inflorescence bracts have spurs (a characteristic of the tribe Urgineeae). The individual flowers generally last for only one to two days and have white to yellowish green or brown tepals that are either free or joined into a basal tube. The tepals often have a darker central keel. After fertilization, an ovoid capsule forms with several seeds in each locule. The seeds are black and winged.[3]

Distribution and habitat

The broadly defined genus has about one hundred species found in Africa, including Madagascar, the Mediterranean area and Asia. About half of all the species occur in southern Africa, where species diversity is greatest in semi-arid regions with winter rainfall. *Drimia* generally is found in regions with seasonal dryness.[3]



JARDIN DE PIEDRAS LILIANA CRACRAFT

In 2003, Sergio Niebla Alvarez, an engineer, started a cactus garden in a small (2.4 acres) parcel behind his house with some potted cactus he had. This garden is located at Kilometer 12 of the Federal Free Road between Ciudad Victoria in the state of, Tamaulipas, and Monterrey, Nuevo León, in México. In his own words, Mr. Niebla wanted to create a space to interact with plants and observe their interactions with insects, wildlife, the wind, the rain, the fog, the moon and the stars.

He created some artificial hills using dirt from a creek located nearby, and obtained many interesting rocks to create his garden to include many types of cacti, Nolinas, Yuccas, and Agaves. By 2008, he was already working on the fourth section of the garden.

By 2009, the land, now called Jardin De Piedras (rocks garden), already included many species including *Astropythum ornatum, A. myriostigma, Ariocarpus retusus, Acanthocreus tetragonus, Coryphanta erecta, Echinocactus texensis, Hechtia glomerata, Mammillaria plumosa, M. heyderi, Agave lechugilla, Agave americana, Stenocereus griseus, Cylindropuntia imbricata* and many more. Additionally trees and plants for the region are part of this garden. They have served as habitat, refuge, and a site for the reproduction of birds, spiders and many other insects, small snakes, lizards, and rabbits.

In 2017, I came across a series of slides available on Flicker, and I contacted Mr. Niebla asking his permission to use his slides for a presentation to HCSS. He graciously accepted, and I have been in touch with him ever since.

Jardin de Piedras is open to the public any day of the week, and there is no charge for visiting this beautiful place. Many school groups visit the garden, and Mr. Niebla provides educational workshops free of charge including how to grow cacti from seeds.

Mr. Niebla volunteering work has created some interest among botanists and naturalists. In 2005, a new species of Turbinicarpus, *T. niebla*, was named in his honor

http://www.llifle.com/Encyclopedia/CACTI/Family/Cactaceae/19549/Turbinicarpus_nieblae.

Additionally the Botanic Gardens Conservation International https://gardensearch.bgci.org/garden/6718 has recognized Mr. Niebla for his efforts on conservation, education, and research.

Another worthy cause taken care of by Mr. Niebla and his volunteers, and without support from Ciudad Victoria, is the maintenance and beautification of a traffic circle that includes a bronze statue representing the typical cowboy attire of the State of Tamaulipas. In July 2022, a local newspaper reported on the decay and neglected status of the statue and the plants surrounding it. Thanks to Mr. Niebla and his volunteer friends, this roundabout now looks great.

Mr Niebla continues to delight nature lovers with regular photo publications that include not only the beautiful plants in his garden, but also all the insects and wildlife that the plants have attracted on Flicker (http://www.flickr.com/photos/22048801@N03/) and iNaturalist, an on-line social network of people sharing biodiversity information to help each other learn about nature.

The most recent recognition of Mr. Niebla's work occurred last year when an electronic book about Mexico and its Gardens, ISBN 978-607-59896-0-0 (pages 354-361) was published.

Mr. Niebla is one of the 2024 recipients of our Club's annual donations.

Big Bend Trip

Andrea Varesic

The HCSS joined TACSS and clubs from Fort Worth, Dallas, Waco, Austin and San Antonio on a guided field trip to Big Bend National Park from April 11-15th. Thirty cactus enthusiasts were in attendance, including nine members from our club.

We all arrived in Alpine in the afternoon of the 11th. A welcome dinner was organized by TACSS at the Spicewood Bar and Restaurant.

On Friday we were all invited for a private tour of the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute in Fort Davis. We were graciously greeted by Lisa Gordon, the Executive Director. Our guided tour, given by Joy, included the gardens and their incredible blooming greenhouse. We had a tasty box lunch on the back patio of the institute with our new cactus friends. In the afternoon our group made their way to Terilingua, the gateway to BBNP. Many participants lodged at the Terilingua Ranch Lodge and ate dinner at the Bad Rabbit Restaurant.

On Saturday our group met at Panther Junction in BBNP. Our first cactus finding expedition was a sporty off-road five mile drive up Old Ore Rd. to Ernst Tinaja. Ernst Tinaja consists of a one mile hike into a limestone canyon to see the three pools, which hold water year round. Along the cliffs we looked for cacti, found giant clam fossils in the stones and enjoyed the orange striations of the cliffs. We ate our lunches and the group split up to explore the park or to further search for cacti. In the evening we all convened in Terilingua at the Starlight Cafe for dinner and live music.

On Sunday we once again met at Panther Junction. From there we proceeded to Dog Canyon Trail. Along the trail we saw many cacti in their desert glory. We then left the park and drove to the Black Gap Wildlife Management Area. Along 385, we stopped and climbed hills to find a large number of *Ariocarpus fissuratus*. Our next stop was the Stillman Ranch and Store. Next to the store is the museum of Hallie Stillman, which some of us toured. Hallie was an incredible frontier lady, who in her 100 years saw BBNP come into existence. She rode with the posse that chased Poncho Villa back into Mexico. Once again the large group split up into smaller groups to either continue to look for cacti or to tour the park. We all convened back at the Terilingua Ranch for our last night. The Milky Way magic was on display both evenings of our stay.

Big Bend is an incredible National Park! We came for the cacti and they certainly did not disappoint. It was a privilege to be guided by experts and to meet our fellow Texas club members. We were probably never more than two feet away from a cactus. A couple of members even had a close and personal interaction with a cholla. The hoodoos, the many mountains, Santa Elena Canyon and the Chisos

Basin were all stunning. We were guided by Steven Lovecky and Michael Rupe, who are both experts and shared their love of the BBNP and its cacti with us. A special thank you to both of them for their hard work and effort in putting this trip together for us. It was truly memorable! I am grateful for the experience and the new cactus friends I made along the way. BBNP will see me again!

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