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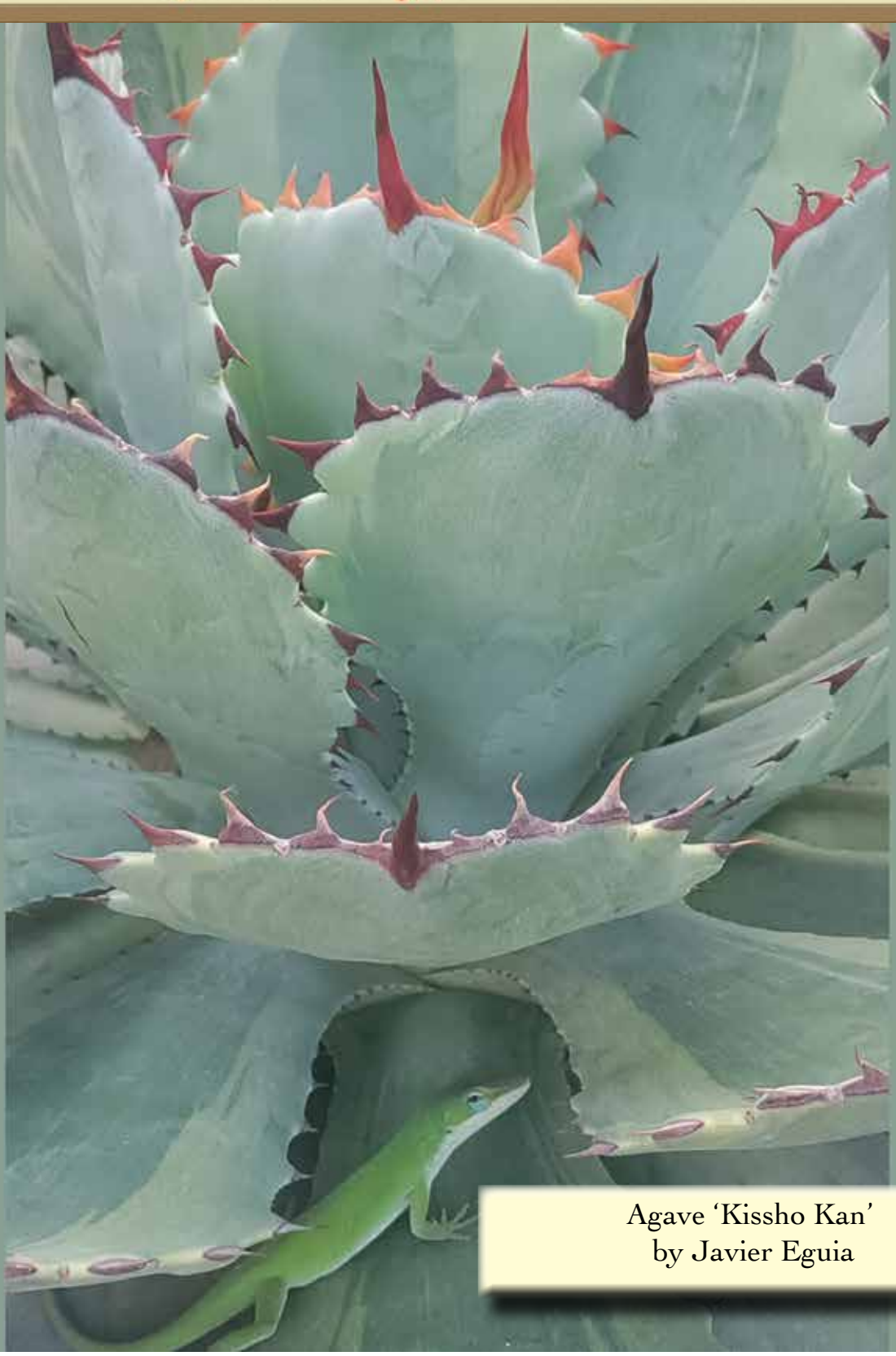
No. 1

January - February 2025

Kaktos Komments

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



Agave 'Kissho Kan'
by Javier Eguia

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

From the Editor — Karla Halpaap-Wood

Happy New Year! Hoping for another successful and exciting year for our club.

From this year on the KK will only be distributed electronically. Printing and mailing far exceeded the membership fee. The format will stay the same, so if you want it printed ask Imtiaz and he can bill you directly, or you can use any printshop of your choice.

Officers and committee chairs for 2025

President - Andrea Varesic
First Vice President - Echo Pang
Second Vice President - Vicki Treybig
Recording Secretary - Alex Zabula
Tresurer - Karina Boese

Affiliate Director - Liliana Cracraft
Conservation - Joseph Rodd
Education and Analyzation - Sabrina Kamioka
Historian - Kristi Schmidt
Membership - Sara Ortiz
Special Events - John Weistroffer
Webmaster - Sarai Ramirez
Ways and Means - Eddie Novak
KK editor - Karla Halpaap-Wood

Calendar:

January 8, 2025	7:00 pm Board Meeting via Zoom
January 22, 2025	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Program: "10 Plants" by Richard Stamper
February 26, 2025	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Program: "A Leather-Like Product Developed from the Prickly Pear Cactus" by Karla Halpaap-Wood
March 1, 2025	Deadline for submitting articles for the KK.

2025 President's Message

Happy new year to all of our club members!

It has been a privilege being your president in 2024. Our membership has continued to grow both numerically and in participation.

2024 was an active year for our club. We had a spring sale in May and a show and sale in September. Both had surpassed the previous years in physical size and monetary benefits to the club. The fall show and sale presentation was elevated by new table covers and runners. Our club joined the other clubs in Texas for a field guided trip to Big Bend National Park.

Socially, we continued with an open garden party invitation to our membership and local field trips.

Our monthly meetings featured an wide array of speakers and a hands on grafting seminar. We also had our first crossover event/meeting with the Bromeliad Society of Houston.

I look forward to another year of cactus fun with you all.

A big thank you to all the members who so graciously volunteer and work for the benefit of our club.

Sincerely, Andrea Varesic

Membership **Sara Ortiz**

On November 20, 2024 we met at the Metropolitan Multiservice Center. We had a joint meeting with Bromeliad Society. There were 52 members in attendance from both societies. The program "Collecting Adventures with Linda Cathcart" was presented by Dennis Cathcart.
The Cactus of the Month, Ferocactus glaucescens cv. Split Rock, was given by Andrea Varesic. The succulent of the month, Agave potatorum, was given by Vicki Treybig.

We had such a fun time exploring cacti and bromeliads together in this meeting! It was great to see everyone enjoying themselves, and thanks to both organizations, we even had a bunch of wonderful prizes to share. The saying "the more, the merrier" couldn't be more true! It gave us the chance to chat, meet new faces, and make some fantastic new friends!

Dear friends, Happy New Year!

I hope that in the past 2024, you did not only enrich your plant knowledge at HCSS, but also gained the joy of planting and precious friendships.

Last November, HCSS and BSH held a joint meeting. The guest speaker Dennis Cathcart took everyone through time and space for more than 30 years. Following him and his wife's footsteps, we visited mountains and valleys in Central and South America where Bromeliads are abundant. The simplicity and hospitality of the locals was touching to see, and we were surprised to find that some cacti that we thought lived in the desert (such as some Melocactus, Discocactus and Espostoa) and Bromeliads from the rainforest dwell in the same habitat in nature.

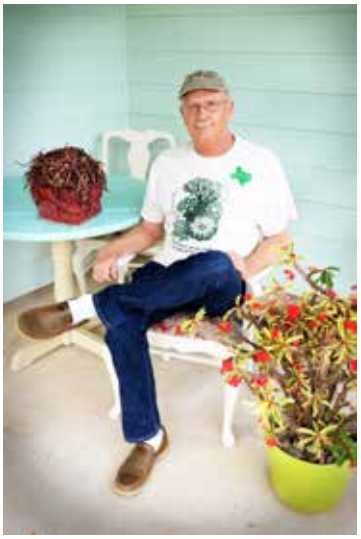
In 2024, HCSS offered a total of 10 educational programs with different topics, covering habitat, cultivation and culture for cacti and succulents. Experts and members shared insights on appreciating cacti and succulents globally and provided tips for successful cultivation. All of our 2024 programs can be reviewed on the HCSS YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/@HoustonCactusSucculentSociety

January: "Strange Mesembs" by Steven Brack
February: "The most famous genus of all- Astrophytums" by Gierayl Clepper
March: "Southern New Mexico to west Texas habitats" by Echo Pang
April: "Understanding drainage: Practical data for effective potting mixes" by Joseph Rodd
May: "Succulent Asclepiadaceae" by Philip Richards
June: "Pulque: Drink of the Gods" by Liliana Rodrguez
August: "Grafting Cactus" by Echo Pang and Joseph Rodd
September: "Unique Cacti of Cochise County, Arizona" by Rob Romero
October: "Caudiciforms: Fockea, Pachys, Staging & Pottery" by Robert Feldman
November: "Collecting Adventures with Linda Cathcart" by Dennis Cathcart (HCSS BSH joint program)

Let's look forward to an even more exciting 2025!

Yours,
Echo Pang
HCSS First Vice president

Upcoming Programs



This January, we will welcome Richard "Cactus Boy" Stamper to give us his wonderful lecture. He is the proprietor of The Cactus Shack in Georgetown, Texas, a member of TACSS, CSSA and a lifetime member of HCSS and ACSS. Richard spent 32 years in the Texas Green Industry managing Garden Centers, then selling landscaping material before "retiring" in 2016. Richard's continuing compulsion/obsession with plant life is evidenced by his favorite saying: "You can take the Boy out of the Nursery, but you can't take the Nursery out of the Boy." His presentation will be called "10 Plants". You have guessed that he would like to "Show and Tell"? Well, he would have a power point of about 10 plants from several genera. He would present a few photos of each with text including classification, cultivation, etc. You bet if you guess he will be bringing the subject plants to show and tell. Better yet, there will be plants brought by Richard available for sale after the meeting!

February program will be "A Leather-Like Product Developed from the Prickly Pear Cactus" presented by Karla Halpaap-Wood, HCSS member and KK editor.

This presentation will give an overview of how this new faux leather is produced and its uses.

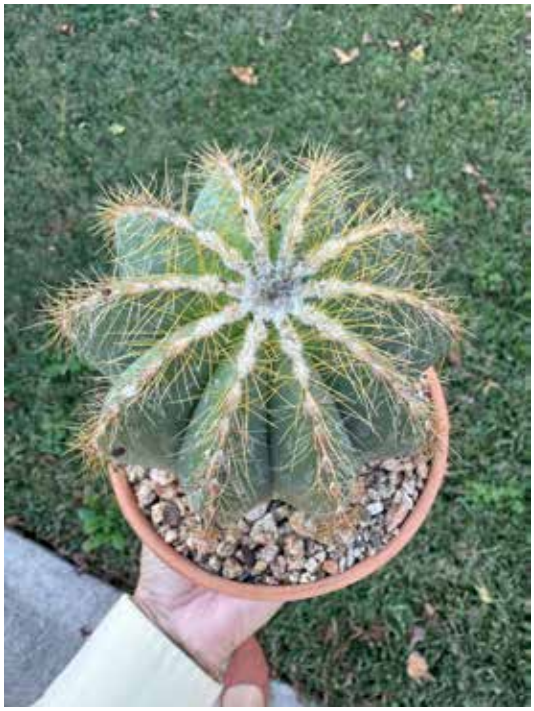
Karla is a HCSS member since 20 years, but became interested in cacti much earlier, when she first came to live in Texas 50 years ago and saw these plants grow in nature. Her educational background is in biochemistry. These products are made for her, combining cacti with chemistry. As a hobby she uses her sewing skills to make bags out of cactus leather.

There will be samples to look at or purchase.

January Cactus of the Month

Sarai Ramirez

Parodia Magnifica



SYNONYMS:

- *Eriocactus magnificus*
- *Notocactus magnificus*

COMMON NAME(S):

- Magnificent Cactus
- Ballon Cactus
- Ball Cactus
- Golden Ball Cactus

HABITAT/DISTRIBUTION:

- Parodias are native to South America, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil, specifically found in the dry, semi-arid regions of South America.
- Typically grows in rocky or sandy soil in hot, dry climates at elevations between 400–1,200 meters above sea level.

DESCRIPTION (STEM, FLOWERS, FRUITS):

- Stem: The cactus has a spherical, globular shape, typically reaching up to 20–30 cm in height and diameter. The stem is green, with distinct, prominent ribs and dense spines.
- Spines: It features golden-yellow, radial spines that can be quite dense and can give the cactus a fuzzy or woolly appearance.
- Flowers: The flowers of *Parodia magnifica* are large, vibrant, and often yellow or orange, blooming from the crown of the cactus. They usually appear in late spring or early summer.
- Fruits: The fruit is typically small, red, and round. It contains seeds and is edible but not commonly eaten.

CULTIVATION/GROWTH:

- *Parodia magnifica* thrives in well-draining, sandy or rocky soil with a neutral to slightly acidic pH. It prefers bright light but can tolerate some shade, especially in hotter climates.
- Watering should be done sparingly, especially in the winter months when the plant is dormant. Overwatering can lead to root rot.
- It grows slowly, and when kept in optimal conditions, can live for many years.
- It is often propagated by seed or by cutting off offsets, which it readily produces.

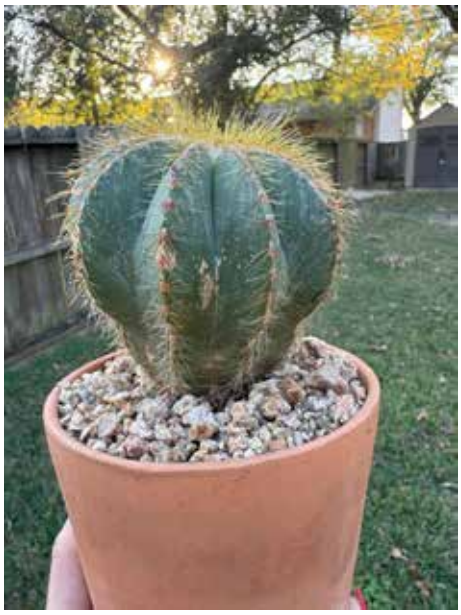
AVAILABILITY :

Parodia magnifica is commonly available in nurseries, particularly those that specialize in cacti or succulents. It is often found in both home gardens and botanical collections.

REMARKS/COMMENTS/MY EXPERIENCE:

For the past year, I have had the privilege of caring for my *Parodia magnifica*, a magnificent cactus that truly

captivates me with its striking beauty. Its slender, golden spines create a dazzling visual spectacle, glimmering in the light and giving the plant an almost ethereal quality. I sometime pet it, its spines are not harsh.



I acquired this lovely specimen from mountaincrestgarden.com, a reputable website celebrated for its range of cacti and succulents. Despite my limited experience with these hardy plants, I am filled with optimism. With diligent care and the right environment, I am confident that my *Parodia magnifica* will not only survive but will thrive, becoming a vibrant centerpiece in my growing collection.

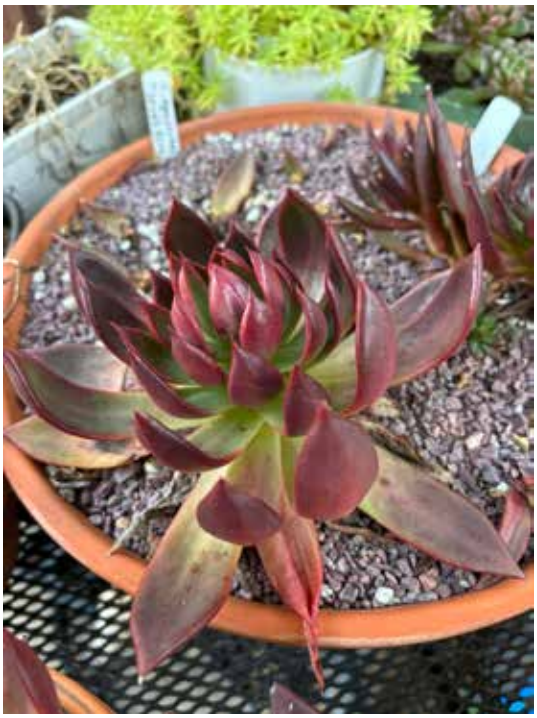
REFERENCES:

- *The Cactus Family* by Edward F. Anderson
- *Cacti and Succulents* by Miles Anderson
- Cactus & Succulent Society of America: Parodia species guide

January Succulent of the Month

Tequesta Wiggings

Echeveria agavoides 'Love's Fire'



Inventor - O'Connell, Renee (Escondido, CA, US)
US Patent PP31095 (Nov. 19, 2019)
Patent assigned to Altman Specialty Plants, Inc. (Vista, CA, US)

DESCRIPTION (STEM, FLOWERS, FRUITS):
The plant is known for rapid, robust growth and improve resistance to fungal diseases, brought on by overwatering. The plant offsets freely, producing attractive, cluster foliage, is bright red during cooler months, and distinctively red during the rest of the year.

CULTIVATION/GROWTH:
This fairly new cultivar is the product of plant breeding program at Altman Specialty Plants. It originated from a self pollination of a parent proprietary unpatented cultivar known as *Echeveria agavoides* 'Rubra' hybrid "A". The cultivar was reproduced at the commercial greenhouse by vegetative offsets, and has produced at least seven generations, and shown that the cultivar is stable and reproduce true to type.

'Love's Fire' displays upswept rosettes of longer, more slender leaves compared to other *Echeveria agavoides* cultivars, grows faster than many other cultivars and is more robust. It is favorable for commercial propagation due to its larger size and free production of offsets. It is green in shade, red year round with sun exposure. It is fire red during cooler months. The red coloring is intensified with drought, bright light or cooler weather.

AVAILABILITY:
The cultivar is not easily found and is unfortunately not one of the ones listed as available directly from Altman.

Since it is one of my favorites, I asked Altman and also hunt for it. I have found that it is included in their "Assorted Succulents" rosette pint-sized pot tray, sold at Home Depot, usually a few available in the spring.

REMARKS/COMMENTS/MY EXPERIENCE:
I have a bowl of 'Love's Fire' mostly protected from rain that has not performed nearly as well this bowl that sit exposed to more rain and more sun. The plant with more exposure is bigger, better formed, better coloring.

REFERENCES:
U.S. patent PP31,095 P2
Altman Plants reference material

Photo by Tequesta B. Wiggins

February Cactus of the Month — Liliana Cracraft

Melocactus curvispinus subs. *curvispinus*

INTRODUCTION:

Melocactus is one of several cephalium-bearing cacti, very popular among cactophiles. Those cacti producing cephalia show a major difference between juvenile and mature forms. The juvenile phase of growth is non-reproductive and the plants looks like normal globose cacti. The second, or adult phase, results in a radical change in appearance through the production of the cephalium, which is a mass of areoles that produce the reproductive structures: flowers and fruits. Pollination occurs by hummingbirds or insects in some species.

SYNONYMS:

Overall, all *Melocactus* are also named Turk's cap. For this plant, there are over 27 synonyms including *M. crassicostatus, M. delessertianus, M. guatemalensis, M. guitartii, M. maxoni* and more. In México its common name is Viznaga de Dulce.

HABITAT/DISTRIBUTION:

Melocactus curvispinus has a widespread distribution in México, Central America, Colombia and western Venezuela up to 1500 meters of altitude. This cactus has been divided into several subspecies especially by hobbyists, but only 3 have been considered as valid: *curvispinus, caesius*, and *dawsonii*. Subspecies *curvispinus* has a widespread distribution in México, Central America, Colombia and western Venezuela up to 1500 meters of altitude. Subspecies *caesius* can be found in the Caribbean, coastal areas of Colombia and Venezuela, at an altitude up to 700 meters, and subspecies *dawsonii*, is only found in the Mexican state of Jalisco.

DESCRIPTION

M. curvispinum sbsp *curvispinum* is usually solitary and highly variable in shape. The stem is depressed globular to short cylindrical, light to dark green and somewhat glaucous (gray bluish). It can measure 6-30 cm (2.4-12 in) tall, and 8-27 cm (3.1-11 in) in diameter.

Ribs: This plant can have 10-16 ribs sharp and sometimes tuberculated.

Areoles and spines: The areoles are slightly sunken in the notches of the ribs, and the spines color is dirty white to almost black, and their shape is more or less curved. The central spine is erect and measures 15-22 mm long (0.6-2 in). Sometimes it is absent. The plant may have 6-11 radial spines curving backwards and measuring 3-42 mm (up to 1.7 in) long. However, our plant does not have curved spines.

Cephalium: It is a brightly colored structure of wool and bristles at the growing tip of the cactus. In the case of *M. curvispinum sbsp curvispinum*, the cephalium color is white and later gray with many reddish-brown bristles.

Flowers: They grow from the cephalium and are dark pinkish magenta, measuring 18-43 mm (0.7-1.7 in) long. It has been described that this plant blooms from spring to summer and the flowers open early to midafternoon. However, our plant has bloomed and produced fruit as late as November.

Fruits: are club-shaped, bright red and paler towards the base. They measure 16-60 mm (0.6-2.4 mm) long and contain hundreds of seeds. They remain on the cephalium for a couple of days, and then they fall.

CULTIVATION/GROWTH:

The soil mix should be porous and dry quickly, and the plant prefers very bright light. Aim to give it at least 6 hr. of direct sunlight each day. As a result of their tropical origin, they need a fair amount of water, but the soil must be allowed to dry before watering again. Aim to water when the top 2-3 in of soil are dry. Fertilize in the spring and summer using a cactus fertilizer but dilute it to ½ strength before applying it. Melocactus rests from October to April, and can't stand cold, or even fairly cool temperatures, so it is very important to keep it above 8-12°C (46-54°F) at all times. They also prefer to be watered in the winter unlike other cacti, at least once a month. Do not fertilize in the winter.

PROPAGATION:

This cactus is propagated exclusively by seeds. They can be sown during February-March in sandy, light, porous soil. Cover the germinating tray with a glass or plastic cover to prevent the seeds from drying out. Germination is most successful at a temperature of 18 to 22° C (64-72°F).

REMARKS/COMMENTS/MY EXPERIENCE

This subspecies has never been presented as Cactus of the Month in our club. This is the first time. After killing other Melocactus, I have been very careful with this one, which we purchased in Austin in 2018, already with a cephalium. It is a plant that makes me very happy with constant flowers and many seed pods. I am also delighted that a baby cactus is growing in the same pot. Additionally, I'm successfully growing many from seeds.

REFERENCES:

Anderson. E. The Cactus Family. 2001. Timber Press Inc.

The Encyclopedia of Cacti. https://www.llifle.com

Succulent Alley. https://succulentalley.com

February Succulent of the Month

Mike Cracraft

Dendrosycios socotrana Balf.

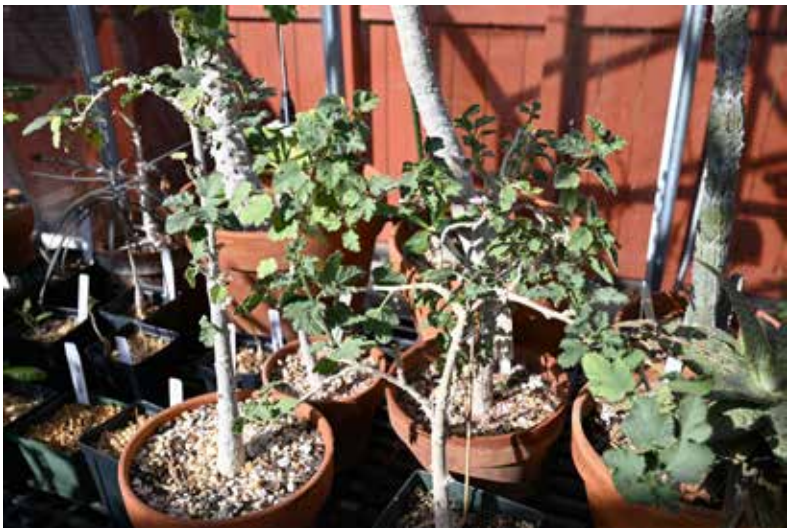
HABITAT/DISTRIBUTION
Endemic to the Island of Socotra (Yemen), Arabian Sea. Widely distributed on the Island.

DESCRIPTION/GROWTH
A bottle shaped tree when mature. In habitat it can reach a height of 20 feet with a diameter of 5 feet with hanging branches. The leaves are oval to round with spiked edges and hairy, rough leaves. This plant is in the cucumber family (Concurbitaceae). This plant grows very slowly and requires weekly watering during summer. Use a light fertilizer every other watering which will help with new leaves. It should be grown in bright light and be protected from freezing in winter. The leaves will turn brown and drop after several weeks but new leaves will appear on the same stem in a short period of time. Careful observation of its growth habit is necessary to be successful.

MY EXPERIENCE
I got my first plant from the CSSA International Succulent Introductions in the late 1990's. Subsequently I grew several specimens from seeds obtained from the UC Davis Botanic Garden.

AVAILABILITY
Seeds or small plants may be available from specialist nurseries here or in Europe. Doing a search on the internet may yield some results.

REFERENCES
Ethnoflora of the Soqotra Archipelago, Miller & Miranda, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, 2004
Flora of the Arabian Peninsula and Socotra, Vol.1, Miller & Cope, Edinburgh University Press, 1996



WRITING PLANT NAMES By Sue Hakala

Reprinted with permission from the newsletter of the Central Arizona Cactus and Succulent Society, *Central Spine* July 2024

This article is intended to be a brief overview of the principles used in botanical nomenclature, helping both amateurs and professionals correctly write plants' names. Writing plant names correctly is crucial in botanical science, horticulture and gardening. Proper plant naming ensures clear communication and accurate identification of plants.

Botanical nomenclature is the formal system for naming plants. It follows a set of internationally agreed upon rules, primarily governed by the International Code of Nomenclature (ICN). The ICN ensures that each plant species has a unique and universally accepted name, facilitating global scientific communication. (1)

Think of every plant as having a first and last name: genus and species. It's just like you—*Homo sapiens*. In addition, like us, some plants have more than a first and last name.

It's easy to remember how to write botanical names if you keep a few simple rules in mind.

- A **genus** name is the first name and is always capitalized and italicized, like *Ferocactus, Mammillaria* and *Lithops*. (2) If you can't italicize a botanical name, underline it. Plants in a genus are closely related, sharing a most recent common ancestor and common characteristics, such as all *Mammillaria* have tubercles.

- A **species** name, or specific epithet, (remember it as the second name) is always italicized but never capitalized: *Ferocactus chrysacanthus, Mammillaria petterssonii* and *Lithops schwantesii*. When you don't know the species, write "sp." for the species name like *Ferocactus* sp. Written as sp., it is never italicized.

- A **subspecies** is distinctly different from the normal species, usually based on an isolated geographical location in nature where the subspecies evolved independently. These plants do not interbreed and are written as "subsp." and not capitalized or italicized, such as *Mammillaria petterssonii* subsp. *apozolensis*.

- **Variety** names are given when a mutation occurs in nature. Variety names are a rank lower than subspecies, but higher than forma. (3) Seedlings grown from a variety will have the same unique characteristic of the parent plant, but will somehow be different. Variety is written "var." and never capitalized or italicized, such as *Mammillaria petterssonii* subsp. *apozolensis* var. *saltensis* or *Agave parryi* var. *truncata*. (4)

- **Cultivar** is short for cultivated variety. A cultivar is a cultivated plant that humans have selected for desired traits and which retains those traits when propagated. Methods used to propagate cultivars include division, root and stem cuttings, offsets, grafting, tissue culture, or carefully controlled seed production. Most cultivars arise from deliberate human manipulation, but some originate from wild plants that have distinctive characteristics. (5) Cultivar is written as "cv." and is never capitalized or italicized, such as *Sansevieria trifasciata* cv. 'Silver Cloud.' The cultivar name is always capitalized, not italicized, and written with single quotes like 'Silver Cloud.'

- **Hybrid** is used for a plant that is the result of a cross between two unrelated plants (either wild or cultivated) and often done artificially by humans transferring pollen from one plant to another to produce unique qualities. A hybrid is written as an "x," not capitalized or italicized, like *Austrocylindropuntia vestita* x*Opuntia subulata*. If it precedes the genus, it denotes an intergeneric hybrid (coming from two different genera) and is written x*Graptoveria*. If the "x" precedes the hybrid name, it denotes the cross of species in the same genus, such as *Crassula* x'Morgan's Pink,' a hybrid of two *Crassula* species. The hybrid name is always capitalized, never italicized, and written with single quotes around it like 'Morgan's Pink.' There is no space after the "x".

- **Forma** refers to minor differences within a species, often one characteristic, like flower color. It is never capitalized or italicized and written as "forma" or "f.," like *Mammillaria spinosissima* f. *rubrispina*.

- There are other adjectives that can be used in plant names, like cristate (or crest or cristata), monstrose and variegate. They are never capitalized or italicized, such as *Mammillaria spinosissima* f. *rubrispina* cristata.(6)

- If a plant name has letters and numbers after it, like *Sansevieria ballyi* FKH 432, that just means that the plant is identified, temporarily, by the person's initials who found it and their field collection number. A proper identification has not yet been made. When it has, a genus and species name, etc., will be given to it.

Look at your own plant names and be sure they are written correctly. It'll give you great practice, and pretty soon you won't even think about how to write them. You'll just do it.

If you're ever in doubt, two great searchable online resources are the International Plant Names Index (www.ipni.org) and Plants of the World Online (https://powo.science.kew.org/).

Keep in mind that not all publications, nurseries, websites, and growers go by the rules. Sometimes the scientific name may be underlined or appear in bold. Don't be concerned about what others do; you now know how to do it correctly.

In summary:

Genus: *Mammillaria* sp.

Species: *Mammillaria pettersonii*

Subspecies: *Mammillaria pettersonii* subsp. *apozolensis*

Variety: *Mammillaria pettersonii* subsp. *apozolensis* var. *saltensis*

Cultivar: *Sansevieria trifasciata* cv. 'Silver Cloud'

Hybrid: *Crassula* x'Morgan's Pink' or x*Graptoveria*

Forma: *Stenocereus hollianus* f. cristata

Not so hard after all.

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1 For more information, here is a link to the Code, https://www.iapt-taxon.org/nomen/main.php.

2 Except writing about plants in general, and you want to use the plural for a well know genus, in which case it can be lower case and not italicized, as in "aloes" or "mammillarias."

3 Variety used to be more commonly used than subspecies, but since the late 1980s that has changed. Since then, many taxa at the rank of variety have been renamed as subspecies. For more information, https://www.iapt-taxon.org/nomen/pages/main/art_4.html?zoom_highlight=variety

4 Additional information can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Variety_(botany).

5 Additional information can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultivar.

6 These designations are not accepted by botanists.

A very big thank you goes to Scott McMahon, former Cactaceae collections manager at Desert Botanical Garden, and Peter Breslin, editor of the Cactus and Succulent Society of America's *Cactus and Succulent Journal* and *Haseltonia*, who offered suggestions for this article. *The International Code of Botanical Nomenclature*, prepared and edited by W. Greuter, et al., was also consulted, in addition to the other noted texts and websites.

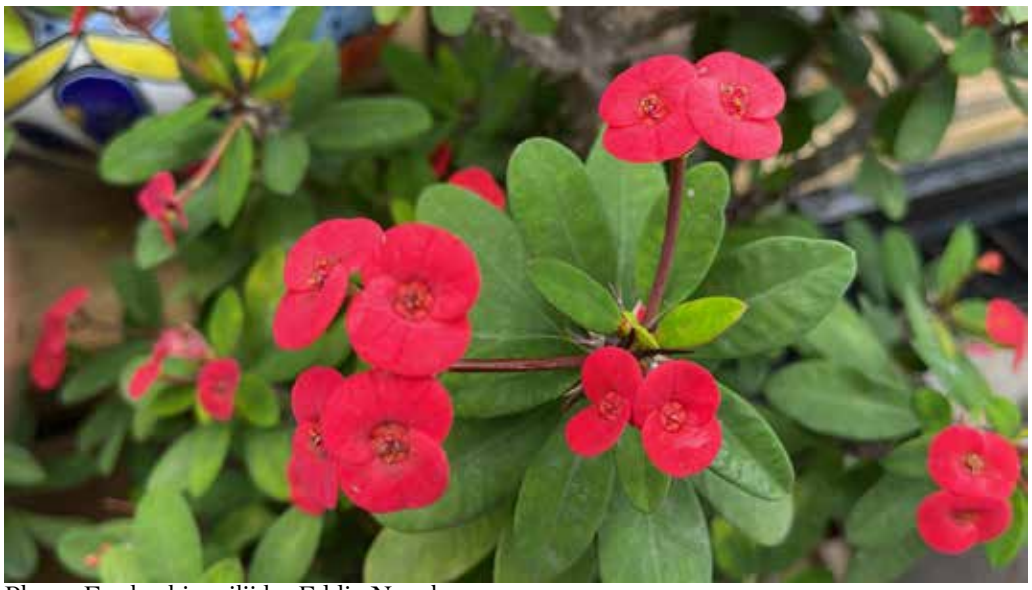
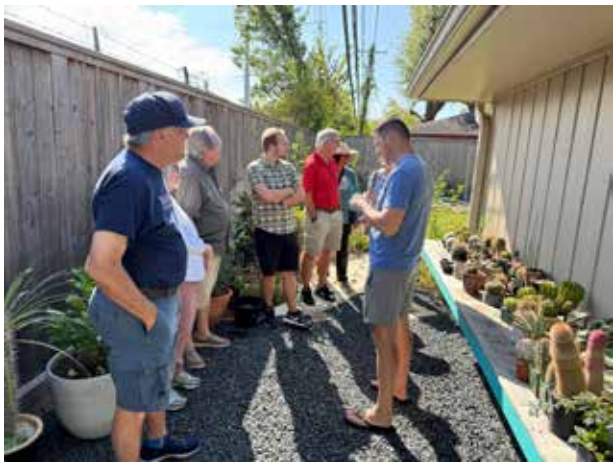
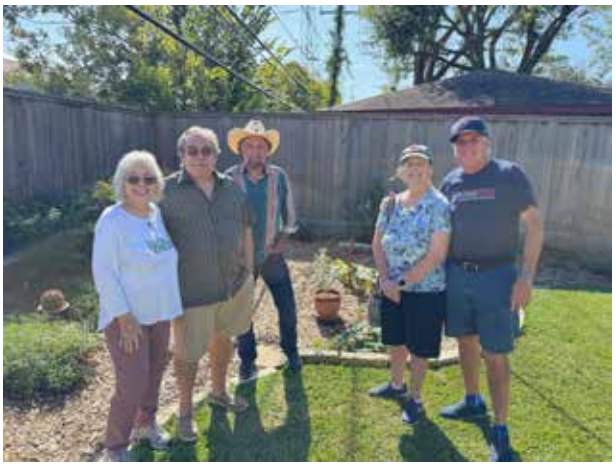
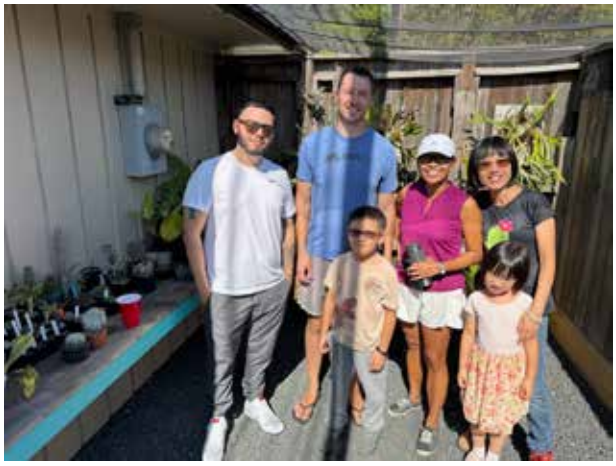


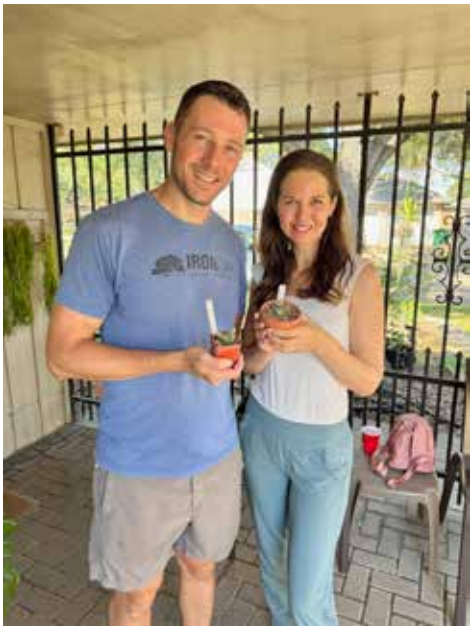
Photo: Euphorbia milii by Eddie Novak

John's Open Yard, November 11th

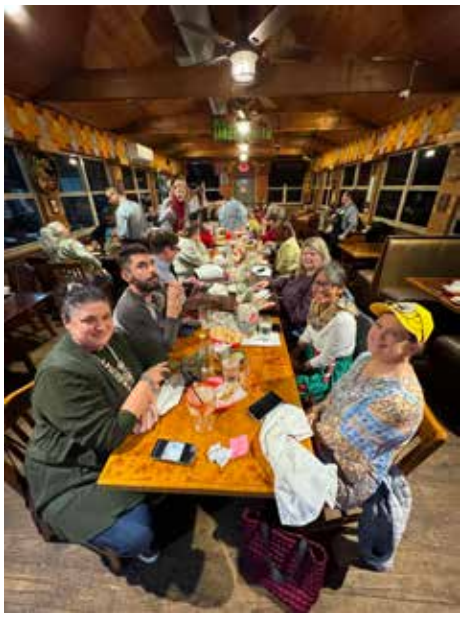


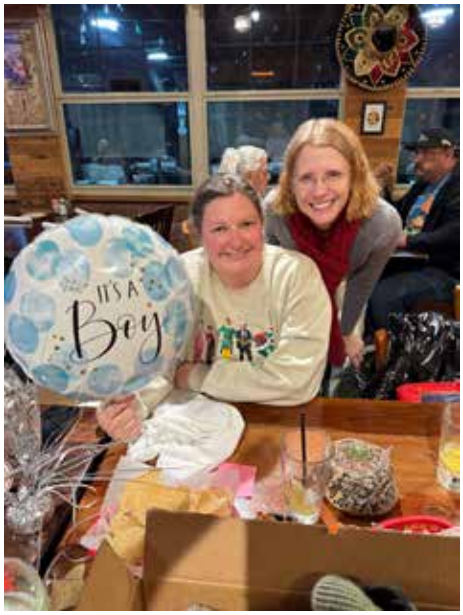






Christmas Party,
Installation of new officers and
Baby Shower for HCSS member Jennifer
December 11th at Teotihuacan Mexican Cafe





TIME TO RENEW YOUR ANNUAL HCSS MEMBERSHIP DUES

Your Membership Renewal is due on January 1st. It's $20 for Individual, $25 for Family and $5 for Student. You can bring your check payable to HCSS to the next meeting, send payment through Zelle at hcsstreasurer@gmail.com (include your name and Membership Dues for 2025). Please advice if you have a new email address, address or phone number. New members please complete the membership form (http://www.hcsstex.org/HCSSmembership.pdf) and email to membership4hcss@gmail.com if using Zelle. Members who have not paid by January 30th will be dropped from Membership and will not be included in the Yearbook.

HCSS Leadership and Contact Info

President: Andrea Varesic
First Vice President: Echo Pang
Second Vice President: Vicki Treybig
Recording Secretary: Alexander Zabula
Treasurer: Karina Boese
KK editor: Karla Halpaap-Wood
Webmaster: Sarai Ramirez

Membership: Sara Ortiz
Education: Sabrina Kamioka
Ways and Means: Eddie Novak
CSSA affiliate: Liliana Cracraft

Contact email: hcsspresident@hcsstex.org