



AKTOS OMMENTS

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

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Ariocarpus Fissuratus
by John Weistroffer



Houston Cactus and Succulent Society

Founded in 1963

Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America

Table of Contents

Membership Update/CSSA News.....	Page 3
Cacti and Succulents of the Month.....	Pages 4-9
The Goldilocks Zone of Cactus & Succulents: Finding the “Just Right” Balance for Healthy Plants by Jennifer Peskey.....	Pages 9-11
Garden Assistants of the Month.....	Pages 12-13

Calendar

September 2nd, 2026	7:00 pm Board Meeting via Zoom
September 23rd, 2026	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Program: TBD
September 24-25th, 2026	Fall Show and Sale at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center 9:00 am – 5:00 pm: September 24 th 9:00 am – 3:00 pm: September 25 th
October 17th – 18th, 2026	TACSS Fall Seminar: Hosted by NTCSS in Plano, TX (see below)
October 28th, 2026	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Program: Growing Cactus and Succulents from Seed with Jacob Martin
November 1st, 2026	Deadline to submit articles for the KK



Texas Association of Cactus and Succulent Societies Fall Seminar Registration is Now Open!

The North Texas Cactus and Succulent Society will be hosting TACSS 2026 Fall Seminar in Plano! This **FREE** event will take place October 17th and 18th and will include presentations, plant auctions, greenhouse tours and a plant sale! A full agenda can be found [online](#).

[Click here to register!](#)

Membership**Sara Ortiz**

On July 22nd, 2026, thirty-one members and two guests attended our membership meeting at the Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. In celebration of the Houston Cactus and Succulent Society's 63rd anniversary, members gathered for a special potluck dinner. Everyone brought dishes to share, creating a wonderful variety of food and a warm, welcoming atmosphere. The evening gave members a chance to relax, visit with one another, enjoy a delicious meal, and spend time together beyond the usual meeting activities. There was plenty of conversation, laughter, and camaraderie, making the celebration a particularly enjoyable and memorable gathering for the Society. For July, Pat Hudnall presented the Cactus of the Month, *Rhipsalis cereuscula*, and Katherine Millsap presented the Succulent of the Month, *Dudleya albiflora* (White-Flower Liveforever).

On August 26th, 2026, thirty-two members and one guest attended our membership meeting at the Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. The evening featured a Cactus Game Night & Plant Exchange, providing a fun and interactive change of pace from the Society's traditional educational programs. Members enjoyed spending time together, participating in the evening's activities, exchanging plants, and sharing their enthusiasm for cacti and succulents in a relaxed and friendly setting. For August, John Weistroffer presented the Cactus of the Month, *Astrophytum Myriostigma* cv. 'Koh-yo' and Lauren Morris presented the Succulent of the Month, *Crassula perfoliata* var. *minor*.

CSSA News**Liliana Cracraft**

Dear HCSS Members,

For a number of years, I have had the privilege to serve as the CSSA Affiliate Representative. This is a very rewarding position because the Cactus and Succulent Society of America, Inc. values its affiliate clubs as essential partners in promoting education, conservation, research, and appreciation of cacti and succulents. Affiliate Representatives play a vital role in maintaining strong communication between CSSA and local clubs.

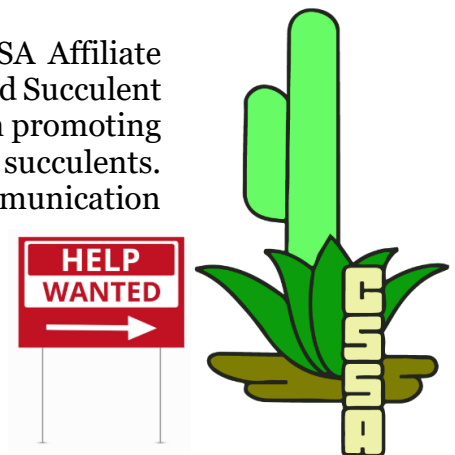
If you are interested in serving in this capacity next year, please contact our president, Andrea Varesic at: avaresic@att.net

Role and Responsibilities of the Affiliate Representative

Each affiliate club designates an Affiliate Representative to serve as the primary liaison between the club and CSSA. Affiliate Representatives are responsible for:

- Serving as the official communication link between CSSA and the affiliate club
- Sharing important announcements, deadlines, and opportunities from CSSA with club members.
- Ensuring the club's contact information (public and private) remains current with CSSA
- Submitting annual renewal materials and any required documentation on time
- Informing CSSA of changes in club officers or contact information
- Encouraging club participation in CSSA programs and initiatives
- Promoting CSSA membership among club members

Strong communication ensures that affiliate clubs receive the full benefit of their relationship with CSSA.



Cylindropuntia bigelovii

Teddy Bear Cholla - a common name for the notorious *Cylindropuntia bigelovii*. Some call it by many other names I can't repeat. I have called it all of them and more. This is one of the most common chollas that grow in the Lower Desert of western Arizona into California, the southern tip of Nevada and south into Mexico. It inhabits desert areas below 3,000 ft down to Death Valley elevations. Under good conditions, this plant can dominate the landscape and sometimes forms what is called a "Cholla Forest". And it is a forbidden forest to say the least!

Teddy bear cholla forms trunks, most plants single and some multiple, as high as 5 ft or better. The round cigar shaped segments are covered with yellow to whitish spines which conceal most of the skin of the plant. The small flowers are yellow to greenish and are mostly infertile. For the most part reproduction is by fallen segments that root easily.

Old stems are covered completely by a mass of spines that darken with age. These spines are barbed and covered with a thin sheath which makes removal extremely difficult and very painful. The cluster of spines will often remain in the skin when the stem is pulled off and then the sheath will be left inside the skin after the individual spine is removed. This process can result in a new arrangement of multiple compound adjectives. These plants



usually look good in form even as they age. Because fallen segments are common, it only takes a slight brush to have it snag onto skin or clothing as the stems turn loose too easily.



In habitat, *Cylindropuntia bigelovii* might be the only shade available for miles and also provides a nesting place for desert birds, since "real" trees are not always to be found. Many young plants utilize the shade as a nursery, including the giant saguaro, *Mammillaria grahamii* and several of the hedgehog type of *Echinocereus*. Teddy bear cholla seems to flourish in almost every situation available, be it in Creasote Flats to rocky lava fields on steep slopes as to where its close cousin, chain fruit cholla – *Cylindropuntia fulgida* seems to prefer flatter terrain and gentle slopes. There is really no good reason in the world for many people to actually like this plant. It is not to be handled!! Even walking can be dangerous when there are a lot of these

chollas around. The fallen stems attack your feet and boots without being provoked and will try to stay with you the rest of the day. BUT as with so much of nature, something beautiful can be squeezed out of something with no positive attributes at all. *Cylindropuntia bigelovii* is one of those plants to me. But ain't they all!!

Photo References:

- David Van Langen's habitat photos
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flowering_teddy_bear_cholla_319.JPG
- <https://www.gardendesign.com/succulents/cholla-cacti.html>
- https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cylindropuntia_bigelovii.jpg

September Succulent of the Month

Sara Ortiz

***Hoya wayetii* Variegated: A Hoya That Changes Throughout the Year**

Hoya wayetii is a tropical *Hoya* native to the Philippines, particularly the island of Luzon. In nature, it grows as an epiphyte or lithophyte in humid tropical environments. The variegated form is especially beautiful because of its long, narrow leaves in shades of green, cream and yellow.

One of the things that makes this *Hoya* so interesting is that its appearance can change throughout the year. New growth may show beautiful pink or reddish tones, and brighter light can intensify the coloration along the leaves and margins. As the leaves mature, their colors gradually change, so the plant provides interest even when it is not flowering.

Light, Water & Potting Mix: *Hoya wayetii* Variegated enjoys bright, filtered light. Some gentle morning sun can be beneficial, but strong afternoon sun may scorch the lighter variegated portions of the leaves. Good drainage is very important. *Hoyas* naturally grow with plenty of air around their roots, so a loose, chunky mix works especially well. Cactus or succulent soil combined with orchid bark and perlite provides both drainage and aeration. When watering, I prefer to water thoroughly and then allow the potting mix to partially dry before watering again. The goal is not to keep the roots constantly wet. During hot weather the plant may need water more frequently, while during cooler months it generally dries more slowly and needs less.

Fertilizer: During the active growing season, a balanced fertilizer at a diluted strength can be used regularly to encourage healthy vines and foliage. As with watering, more is not necessarily better. A light, consistent feeding during active growth is usually preferable to applying a very strong concentration at once.

Flowers: When mature, *Hoya wayetii* produces beautiful clusters, or umbels, of small star-shaped flowers. The blooms are generally deep reddish to burgundy with lighter centers and have an interesting slightly fuzzy appearance. And remember one important *Hoya* rule: don't cut off the flower peduncles after blooming! *Hoyas* can produce flowers again from those same spurs.



How It Has Grown for Me: I have had my *Hoya wayetii* Variegated for about one year, and so far she seems very happy living under a tree, where she receives plenty of bright, filtered light. My potting mix is approximately 1/3 cactus soil, 1/3 orchid bark and 1/3 perlite. It has worked very well for me because the mix drains quickly while still providing some moisture and plenty of air around the roots. I water her thoroughly and then wait until the mix has started to dry before watering again. During the growing season, I also fertilize lightly to support new growth.

She has changed quite a bit throughout the year, producing new leaves and different shades of color as the seasons and light conditions change. After a year with me, she still hasn't bloomed—but she continues to grow happily. Now I am patiently waiting to see those beautiful burgundy flowers for the first time. Hopefully this will be her year!

Sources:

- Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew – Plants of the World Online; International Plant Names Index (IPNI); Co's Digital Flora of the Philippines; Aurigue, F.B. (2013), *A Collection of Philippine Hoyas and their Culture*.

October Cactus of the Month

Liliana Cracraft

Rebutia fiebrigii

Synonyms: *Aylosteria fiebrigii*, *Echinocactus fiebrigii*, *Echinorebutia fiebrigii*

Common Names: Orange Crown Cactus, Flame Crown

Habitat: Native to Bolivia (Chuquisaca, Tarija, Cochabamba, Salta, Jujuy, Potosí, Santa Cruz). This cactus can be found in shrublands, in high, dry, rocky grasslands in valleys and rocky slopes of the Andes in fully exposed sites and in cliffs near rivers and riverbeds. *Rebutia* is an abundant species, and the population is stable because it is not exposed to any major threat. It is relatively pest-resistant in optimal culture conditions. USDA hardiness zones 9b to 11b: from 25 °F (–3.9 °C) to 50 °F (+10 °C).

DESCRIPTION: Solitary, slow-growing plants, occasionally clustering. Body globular to oval.

Stems: Roundish to slightly elongated, depressed at the top, to 2.4 in. high, glossy green, flat, covered by distinctive tubercles similar to a *Mammillaria* that are easy to see through the small spines. It grows quite close to the ground and offsets only with age. It would appear that in cultivation they grow larger and cluster more vigorously than in habitat.

Ribs: About 18 rows, straight to spirally arranged tuberculate.

Tubercles: Up to 5 mm high conical.

Areoles: Rather large, elliptical, and white.

Spines: 30-40, all more or less similar, the 2-5 central ones slightly larger (2.5 in.) variously bristly. Radial spines, bristle-like, light to dark brown, erect, needle-like, up to 0.8 in long.

Flowers: produced halfway up the stem, yellow to orange, to 1.4 in. in size. Most cacti produce flowers from the "areoles" at the very top (the apex) of the plant. However, *Rebutia* species are famous among collectors for their "basal blooming," meaning that their flowers erupt from the bottom of the plant. The literature mentions that the flowers remain open up to 6 days, but in my plant, the flowers only last one day.

Fruits: tiny, spherical, berry-like, about 0.2 inches (0.5 cm) in diameter, greenish brown to purplish, hidden among the spines, and containing dark brown to black seeds.



Cultivation: This plant can be grown without too much trouble. Their water and light requirements are typical for many cacti species, including a cooling period in the winter to promote better blooming. Watering should be done carefully, allowing the plant to almost dry out between waterings. The cactus mustn't be exposed to prolonged dampness or sitting in water. Fertilize during the growing season for the best results.

Soil: This species is easy to cultivate in a very open mineral mix with at least 50% sand or pumice grit and a pH slightly on the acidic side.

Repotting: They are small container size plants and prefer deep pots and good drainage to accommodate their tap roots, but they are rot prone because of the sensitivity to excess of watering. They will occupy a small pot comfortably, and eventually remain a manageable sized house plant. It is better that they are repotted regularly. Repotting will increase the number and size of stems, and will increase the number of flowers produced. Repot yearly until they reach about 100 mm in size, then every two or three years will suffice. Repotting is best done at the end of winter, but can be done at other times too. Do not water for a couple of weeks after repotting to reduce risk of root rot via broken roots. A layer of 'pea' gravel at the bottom of the pot improves drainage. A layer of decorative gravel as a top dressing helps prevent the caking of the potting mix, which decreases the rate of water absorption. It also keeps the perlite and pumice from blowing everywhere and looks nice.

Watering: It requires full sun or light shade and careful watering to keep plant compact, and maintains strong and dense spines. Allow the pot to dry out between waterings. Keep dry in winter at a minimum temperature of 0°C. It tends to rot if too wet. The plants can be placed outdoors in April but protected from rain and direct sunlight. Water them thoroughly when placed out, and again in two weeks, and again in one week. After one month the plants are ready to be placed out in full sun and full rain for the summer.

Fertilization: Feed with a high potassium fertilizer in summer.

Propagation: Offsets, seeds. Seeds germinate in 7-14 days at 21-27° C in spring or summer. Gradually remove the cover as soon the plants are well rooted (1-2 weeks) and keep ventilated. No full sun for young plants! The seedlings should not be disturbed until they are well rooted, after which they can be planted separately in small pots. To make a cutting twist off a branch and permit it to dry out a couple of weeks, lay it on the soil and insert the stem end partially into the soil. Try to keep the cutting somewhat upright so that the roots are able to grow downward. **Note:** It would appear that in cultivation they grow larger and cluster more vigorously than in habitat.

My Experience: I don't remember where or when I got this plant. It is recommended that you keep a diary for your plants, to keep track of the purchase date and place, the blooming times, the repotting dates, and other interesting facts.

References:

Anderson, E. The Cactus Family. 2001. Timber Press, Inc. Portland, Oregon. Cullman, Gotz and Groner. 1986. The Encyclopedia of Cacti. Timber Press, Inc. Portland, Oregon

October Succulent of the Month

Mike Cracraft



Euphorbia caducifolia

The part “caduci” of the species name refers to the rapid falling off of the small leaves and flower structure as the plant grows.

Habitat and Location:

This succulent is limited to the Thar Desert spanning northeastern Pakistan into the Rajasthan district of western India. The terrain contains numerous rocky and sandy low hills and some sand dunes.

Description: In habitat, *E. caducifolia* is typically a branching bush with growth up to 10 feet in height and 30 feet in width. A very big shrub! With cultivation and pruning and enough care, it can grow almost tree-like, well over 10 feet high. As it grows it has small oval leaves 3 to 5 inches and the flowers are very small like many euphorbias. The branches will be about 1 inch in diameter and can curve and elongate upwards to several feet in length. The literature mentions that it is used medicinally as a topical for wounds and some other applications, but I personally would not recommend this.

Cultivation: Growing this species is quite easy. I have never seen any seeds from our plants but they can provide many cuttings. To help root these you can use a readily available rooting compound available at home and garden stores, although this is not necessary.

This plant, like many euphorbias, has a white and irritating latex sap. You don't want to get this on your skin and most of all, in your eyes, so protect yourself accordingly when taking cuttings. Plant the cutting in a well-draining potting mix with a good amount of aggregate to promote drainage. Then place the pot in a saucer and fill the saucer with water. Be patient. The roots should start forming within 2 to 3 weeks. Of course, you'll want to do this in the warmer times of the year. When you start seeing light green growth at the tips you know that it's actively growing. Start watering from the top as you would any of your succulents. In winter you must protect it from freezes! Otherwise, you know what happens.

Availability: You can probably find numerous vendors on the internet and I believe Arid Lands Nursery in Tucson has cuttings available.

References:

- Euphorbia Journal, Vol. 7, Strawberry Press 1991.
- M. Bhandari, Flora of the Indian Desert, MPS Repros, 1995.
- Various internet sites.



The Goldilocks Zone of Cactus & Succulents: Finding the “Just Right” Balance for Healthy Plants by Jennifer Peskey

About 3 years ago I started collecting cactus and succulents from local nurseries and big box stores. I thought any bag labeled cactus and succulent soil was the perfect mix with a little bit of perlite but I couldn't understand why my cactus were rotting. So my next solution to the problem was to water them once a month if that. But I was still having cactus rot or they just weren't growing big and didn't look great.

After a year trying to grow on my own, I joined the Houston Cactus and Succulent Society. After listening to many presentations and asking questions I now understand that cacti and succulents aren't these plants you can forget about. They can be delicate plants that need to be babied to grow.

During one of HCSS sales I interviewed several vendors and Dave Thomas' response stuck with me and has helped me grow my modest collection of cactus and succulents (my definition of modest may vary). Mr. Thomas mentioned thinking about the type of pot used, size of pot, watering, soil, and position

when growing cactus and succulents. He goes on to mention you can do everything correctly but 1 wrong mistake like too large of a pot, can cause the plant to die.

If growing cactus and succulents is about finding that “just right” balance, then where do we start? For me, one of the biggest lessons was realizing that the pot is more than just something that holds the plant. The type of pot, the size of the pot, and even where that pot sits can all affect how quickly the soil dries and how happy the roots are. Before we start talking about soil and watering, let's start with something we often overlook: the pot itself.

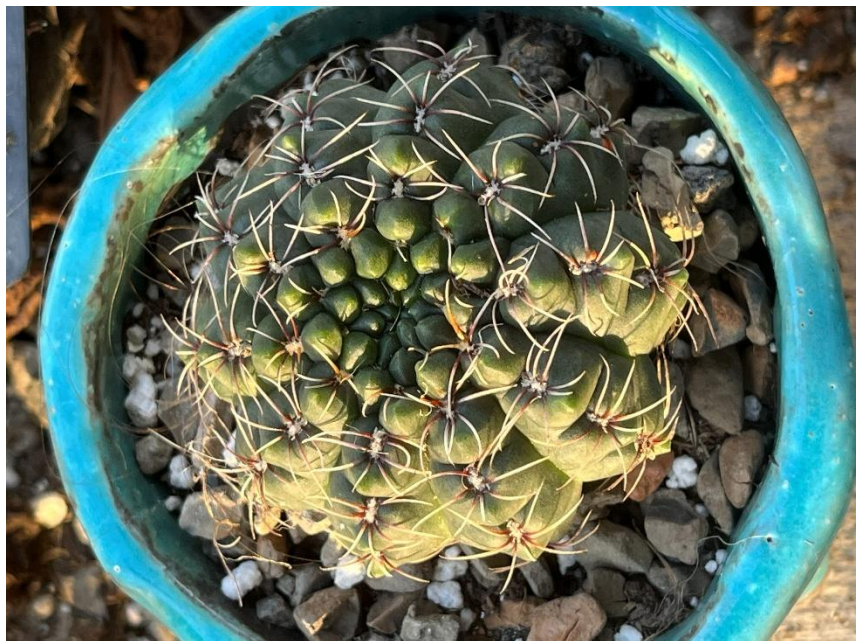


I am sure most people use clay, glazed pots, plastic pots, concrete, and 3D-printed pots. I have been seeing more 3D-printed pots at events and online. Clay pots (terracotta) are porous and moisture evaporates more quickly but the downside to them is they compete with water and you might have to water more. Plastic pots are cheap and don't pull moisture from the soil so you don't have to water as much. From my experience in the hot Texas sun plastic pots dry out quickly from the top but the bottom stays damp if your soil is very inorganic. Glazed pots just look nice! We have some amazing potters at the HCSS sale but because of the glaze the pot cannot “breathe” so the soil stays wet longer. Concrete pots aren't that common but they are slightly porous and they can alter the pH of your potting soil over time because concrete is naturally alkaline. The last pot is 3D printed pots. As more people get 3D printers I see these pots becoming very popular since you can create different shapes and characters out of them. However, did you know bacteria can be trapped in the layers of the pot making it hard to sterilize the pot. They also do not “breathe”

so soil stays wet longer and depending on what type of filament used they can warp in intense heat. I would say they might be a good inside pot or in a shaded outdoor area here in Houston.

Let's move on to pot size and why it is so important to have the right size. A pot too large holds more water in the soil and since the cactus is small it doesn't have a large root system to drink. If the pot stays wet too long let's say a week the roots begin to suffocate and eventually root rot happens. Did you also know in a huge pot a plant will divert all its energy underground to create a massive root system? Now if a pot is too small you have the issue of too many roots to drink all the water so the plant can dehydrate. If the cactus is root bound it will stop growing because it cannot expand to find new nutrients.

Now I know some are wondering what's the best size pot to use? The width of the pot should be about 1-2 inches between



the edge of the pot and the cactus. Now some cactus have a deep tap root and will need a taller pot. Sunlight is the next part that Mr. Thomas mentions. Morning sun is better than afternoon sun. Afternoon sun tends to be harsher and yes your cactus and succulents can burn. I tend to water my plants in full sun more than the ones in the shade but my soil mix is almost all inorganic. This is also where knowing your plants light requirements comes into play. Did you know a lot of caudex plants need shade on their caudex to prevent sunburn and stress, but their leaves need full sunlight?



Now, the million-dollar question is what is the best soil to use? You can watch a bunch of videos on Youtube and read posts on social media about soil for cactus and succulents and everyone has something different to say. Even at different programs HCSS has had presenters mention different soil mixes. There are so many cactus and succulent soils for sale and sadly I cannot tell you what soil to use. I suggest playing around with different types of soil and adding different components to it. Your soil will depend on the pot you use and the amount of light it receives. I am on my second year playing with soil mixes and still haven't found that perfect mix. Some of my cactus and succulents do great in mainly inorganic mix and others I have to add more organic material. My suggestion is try a soil mix and watch how your plants respond to it.

The last thing to discuss is watering because in my opinion everything I mentioned above controls how often and how much you water. Plants in terracotta pots will need to be watered more since it pulls moisture from the soil. Plants that are in full sun will need to be watered more than one in shade or in the house. If you pay attention to your plants signs you will know when you need to water them.

After years of mistakes and successes I have realized that growing cactus and succulents is really an art. Once you have all the pieces right, your cactus and succulents will thrive but this means you need to be watching them to determine if they are happy or not. If they look stressed maybe try moving them into a shaded area or if they look like they are stretching try moving them into more sunlight. Pay attention to changes in the plant instead of simply following a calendar. Eventually you will find that perfect spot and they will grow. The more plants you grow, the more you begin to recognize what they are telling you. You start noticing when something isn't quite right before the plant becomes seriously stressed. That, to me, is the fun of collecting cactus and succulents. You're not just keeping a plant alive. You're learning how to grow it. And sometimes, after all the experimenting with soil, watering, pot size, pot type, and position, you finally get everything just right.

That's the Goldilocks zone.

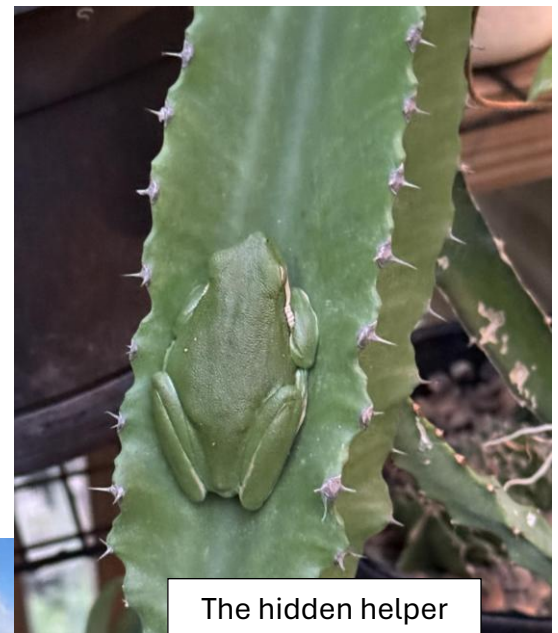
GARDEN ASSISTANTS OF THE MONTH



Molly – Measurement Technician
(Supervisor: Teresa)



Chappa – Garden Security
(Supervisor: Karina)



The hidden helper
(Supervisor: Susan)



Butch – Quality Control Analyst
(Supervisor: Carson)



The Lizard Lobby
(Supervisor: Kristi)



Loss prevention lizard
(Supervisor: Naomi)



Houston Cactus and Succulent Society

2026 Fall Show & Sale

<i>Friday</i> September 25th 9-5pm	<i>Saturday</i> September 26th 9-3pm
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Metropolitan Multi-Service Center
1475 West Gray St, Houston, TX 77019



HCSS Leadership and Contact Info

President: Andrea Varesic
First Vice President: John Weistroffer
Second Vice President: Vicki Treybig
Recording Secretary: Alexander Zabula
Treasurer: Karla Halpaap-Wood
KK editor: Lauren Morris
Webmaster: Sarai Ramirez
Membership: Sara Ortiz

Education: Sabrina Kamioka
Ways and Means: Eddie Novak
CSSA and TACSS affiliate: Liliana Cracraft
New Member Coordinator: Teresa Lynn
Podlipny-Kirk
Historian: Kristi Schmidt
Contact email: hcsscontact1@gmail.com