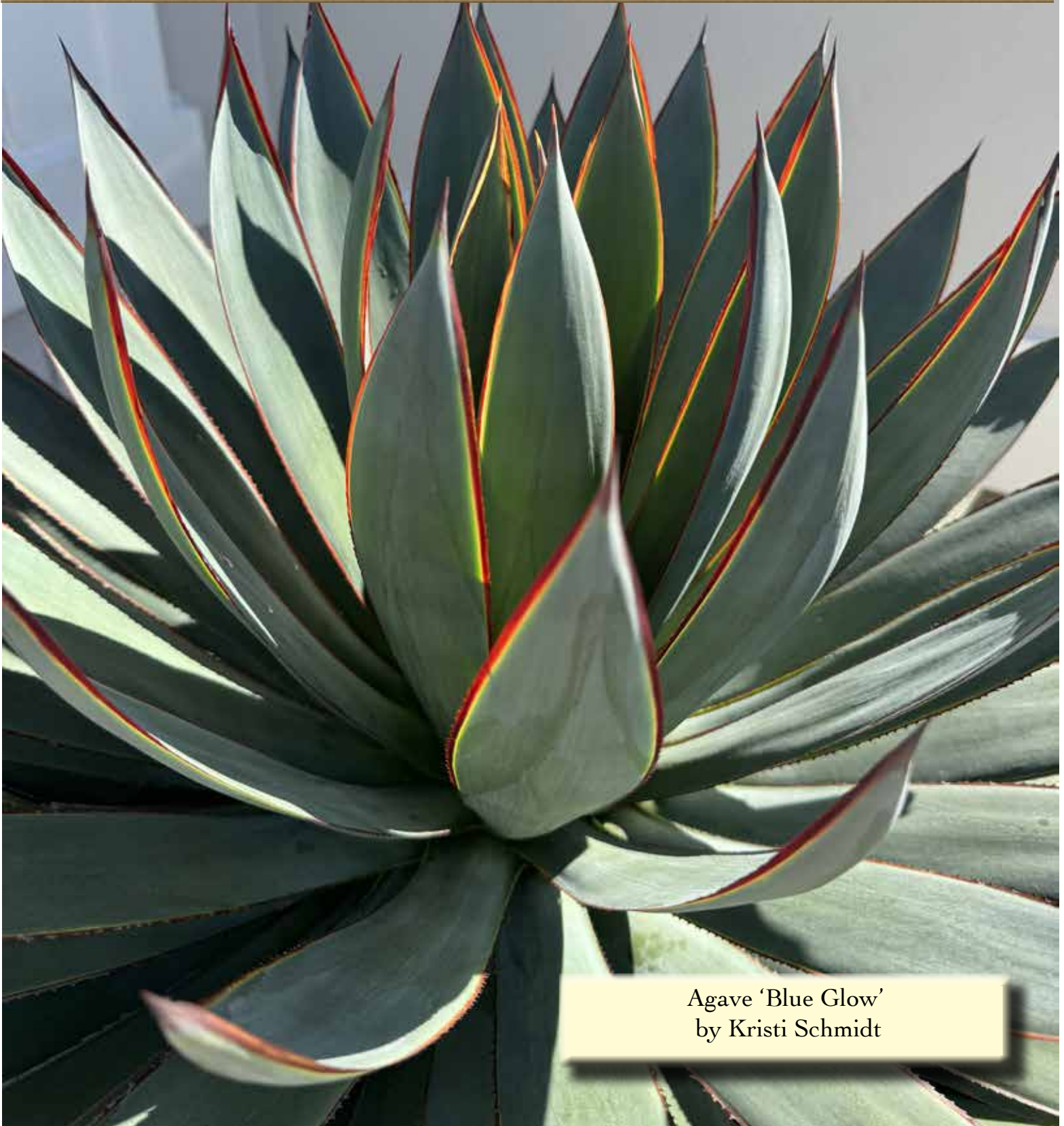


JULY-AUGUST 2024

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Kaktos Komments

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



Agave 'Blue Glow'
by Kristi Schmidt



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

Membership

Andrea Varesic and Sara Ortiz

On May 22, 2024, HCSS met at the Metropolitan Multipurpose Center. There were 34 members in attendance, one guest and five members, who joined us on zoom the program was given by Phillip Richards from Louisiana via zoom. It was titled, " Succulent Asclepiadaceae - My Journey with These Stinky Starry Succulents ".

The succulent of the month was given by James Troyer, *Albuca bracteata*. The Cactus of the month, *Lophophora* genus, was presented by Michael Carrier and Sam Rose.

We had five plants, as a door prize, and a large table, full of leftover cacti and succulents from the Sale. There were three boxes of books given to the membership. They were generously donated by the estate of Mrs. Evans, one of the HCSS founding members, and her granddaughter Mc Kenzie.

On June 26, 2024, HCSS met at the Metropolitan Multiservice Center.

There were 35 members in attendance, 7 guests, and 4 members joined us on Zoom. Program: "Pulque, the Drink of the Gods" by Liliana Cracraft. June's Cactus of the Month, *Pelecypora macromeris* was presented by Griffin Saeger. The succulent of the month, *Sansevieria 'Cleopatra'* was written by Laurin Lindsey.

Lots of door prizes were donated and won by members. Former president Don R James and Griffin Saeger generously donated his remaining plants and pots. Griffin is moving out of State. We wish him good luck!

Calendar:

July 10, 2024	7:00 pm Board Meeting via Zoom
July 24, 2024	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Anniversary pot luck dinner
August 28, 2024	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Program: Grafting cactus by Joseph Rodd and Echo Pang
September 1, 2024	Deadline for submitting articles for the KK.
September 6-7, 2024	HCSS Show and Sale, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center

May and June Program Highlights

Exploring Succulent Asclepiadaceae with Philip Richards

In our **May** meeting, Philip Richards captivated our members with an insightful Zoom presentation on succulent Asclepiadaceae, a group he has specialised in over the 35 years that he has grown succulents.

Succulent asclepiadaceae include stapeliads and ceropegias, plants that are known for their diverse and distinctive blooms. Philip detailed their distribution, unique characteristics, intricate lifecycle, and the fascinating process of pollination, accompanied by photos from habitat and his own collection. Practical advice on cultivation, including optimal growing conditions and tips to combat pests and diseases, rounded out the session, offering valuable insights for enthusiasts of these plants.



Pulque, the Drinks of the Gods, program by Liliana Cracraft in June.

Pulque is the oldest fermented beverage in the Americas. It was originally believed that it began to be consumed in Central México about 1000 A.D., but an excavation in Cholula, Puebla in 1968 discovered a Pulque Drinking Mural, that was dated from 200-300 A.D.

Pulque is obtained from the fermented sap of several large agaves, growing in cold, dry climates and high altitude. These include *A. salmiana*, *A. mapisaga*, *A. atrovirens*, *A. ferox*, *A. hookeri*, *A. americana*, and *A. mexicana*. These plants bloom after 10-12 years in cultivation. Right before the growth of the flowering stalk, the plants get “castrated” and let in repose for 2-4 months for a scar to be formed. After the plant rests, the scar is reopened and the liquid called Aguamiel (or honey water) can be collected twice a day to drink it fresh, or leave it in the core of the plant to get fermented by bacteria and yeast, living in the core of the plant. More than 30 microorganisms have been described to play a role in the process. The average agave will yield 2-8 liter per day, and will remain in production for 4-6 Months.

Pulque played a very important religious role among the Aztecs and other Mesoamerican groups, survived

colonial times when México was dominated by Spain, and wars of independence and revolution. It continues to be produced in central México, but the fermentation takes place now in large wooden vats called “tinacales”. Several attempts have been made to bottle this drink, but according to the experts, its flavor is not the same as when it’s fresh.

Pulque continues to be served in “Pulquerias” around Mexico City, and although the number of establishments has declined, there is now a new interest in this ancient drink among young people.



Upcoming Programs

Echo Pang

Looking forward to July and August! Summer will be full of fun events and programs with HCSS.

In July we will be celebrating the 61st anniversary of HCSS. There will be no educational program at the HCSS membership meeting on July 24th, but we will get together for a fun potluck and gift exchange. There will be presentations for Cactus and Succulent of the Month.



Educational Program for August: Grafting Cactus by Echo Pang (HCSS 1st VP) and Joseph Rodd (HCSS Conservation Chair)

On August 28th, a seminar about grafting cactus will be presented by our own Echo Pang and Joseph Rodd during our membership meeting. There will be a presentation followed by a hands-on session. The presentation will discuss the purpose and pros and cons about grafting cactus; introduce a couple of commonly used rootstocks; and demonstrate techniques to perform a general cactus grafting and a more advanced micro-grafting of tiny seedlings. Members can participate in the hands-on session and create their own grafting piece to take home. Plants and supplies will be provided by

HCSS. Sign-up for participation is required. A sign-up sheet will be distributed to the membership on July’s membership meeting and afterwards through email. Deadline to sign up is by 15th of August.

July Cactus of the Month**Cindy Barraza****Name:** *Cereus peruvianus* f. *spiralis***Common Name:** Peruvian apple cactus twisted, Twisted cactus

Cereus is a name applied to those that are ribbed columnar plants, this genus has 33 different species, they are large tree-like columnar plant with 4-10 well defined ribs, large areoles, and moderate, stout spines.

Habitat/Distribution: Native to Peru, and other parts of South America desert growing.

Description (Stem, Flowers, Fruits): Flower between the months of June to August flowers are white, they are nocturnal and fragrant.

Cultivation/Growth: Full to Part Sun

Easy culture but not cold tolerant make sure they are not exposed to freezing temperatures. Make sure they are kept dry during winter.

They need a well-draining soil mix.

Grows 5-15 feet height and 4 inches wide, fast grower.

Availability: Home Depot and cactus stores,

Remarks/Comments: It twists as it grows, fast grower, needs plenty of space for their roots.

References:

<https://www.cactiguide.com/cactus/?genus=Cereus&species=peruvianus>

http://www.llifl.com/Encyclopedia/CACTI/Family/Cactaceae/11161/Cereus_peruvianus_f._spirale



July Succulent of the Month

Sara Ortiz

Plumeria (Frangipani)

Plumeria is a genus of eleven species of shrubs and small trees in the dogbane family (Apocynaceae) native to tropical America from Brazil to Mexico and the Caribbean. There are hundreds of named varieties. The different species have distinct forms and growth habits. Plumeria has widely spaced, thick, succulent but brittle branches with thin gray bark and a milky sap that can irritate the eyes and cause dermatitis in susceptible individuals.

Plumeria (Frangipani) is an easy-to-grow tree that flowers from April through November when planted in a full-sun environment. The five rounded overlapping petals may be broad to narrowly oval. Flower colors include pink, red, white, yellow, or pastel colors. The flowers are very fragrant, with hints of jasmine, citrus, and gardenia. Since they are pollinated by night-flying sphinx moths, the flowers begin to release their fragrance in the evening, but they can still have a lovely floral scent at other times.

Frangipani Care

Frangipani loves full sun but can also grow in partial shade. Its blooms are best when grown in full sun. It grows well in most soil types if it drains well to prevent root rot. It needs moderate to regular watering to thrive. Frangipani grows well in hot weather and humid conditions in the tropical south. Plant it in TS Zones 10-11 (USDA). It will not tolerate cold temperatures, so do not plant it in areas where temperatures could dip below freezing.



Common Pests & Plant Diseases

Few insects and diseases affect frangipani. The most common, a fungus called plumeria rust, causes orange pustules on the undersides of leaves. Leaves then develop black blotches and drop prematurely. Control rust by promptly removing and throwing away any diseased leaves. Then, spray healthy foliage with Neem oil.

Remarks/Comments /My experience:

Almost all plumerias experience an annual dormant period lasting one to several months, during which they drop their leaves. I uproot my plumerias and bring them indoors around Thanksgiving when nights cool in the fall. I remove all leaves and trim them to make them easier to handle. Water or light is only needed once I take them out in spring.

References

Gowen, Z. (2023, March 3). How to grow and care for Frangipani. Southern Living. <https://www.southern-living.com/frangipani-7187548>

Hassani, N. (2024, February 22). How to grow and care for plumeria flowers. The Spruce. <https://www.thespruce.com/plumeria-growing-guide-8580286>

<https://www.hortzone.com/blog/most-fragrant-flowers/>

Plumeria – Wisconsin Horticulture. <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/plumeria/>

What is another name for Plumeria? - Succulents Addiction. <https://succulentsaddiction.com/what-is-another-name-for-plumeria-b3567bb1/>

August Cactus of the Month

Liliana Cracraft

NOTOCACTUS (PARODIA) SCHLOSSERI

SYNONYMS

Parodia schlosseri

Notocactus erubescens schlosseri

HABITAT/DISTRIBUTION

Native to Southern Uruguay.

HISTORY

This member of the *Cactaceae* family was given this name after the German cactus explorer who collected it in Uruguay, Hugo Schlosser. This plant was for many years known only by its collection number: Schlosser 51. It was re-classified as *Parodia* in 1997, but many still name it *Notocactus*. Some argue *schlosseri* is just a form of *erubescens*. Others say neither is a good species because this plant is believed to be a natural hybrid in its native Uruguay between *P. mammulosa* and another *Parodia*.



DESCRIPTION

Parodia schlosseri is a usually solitary spherical to shortly cylindrical, upright cactus. It is related to *Parodia mammulosa* and with its very dense, reddish-spined young growth, it is an attractive plant.

Stems: Green, solitary, club shaped to short cylindrical, up to about 20 cm high and 12 cm in diameter, with red spines and scanty white wool apically.

Ribs: 22 with chin-like protrusions between areoles.

Areoles: White, later grey.

Central spines: 4, forming a cross, short, stiff, sharp and erect; they are russet to orange with darker bases, 17-24 mm long

Radial spines: About 34, whiter with yellow bases, thinner, straight, needle-like, spreading against the body of the cactus, to 11 mm long.

Flowers: Shiny lemon-yellow, up to 4.5 cm long and 5 cm in diameter. with contrasting burgundy stigmas.

Blooming season: It will usually flower after 3-5 years in the spring.

Fruits: Many seeded, with thick walls.

Seeds: Shiny black, tuberculate.

CULTIVATION/GROWTH:

This is an easy plant to cultivate. It can support quite a lot of water during the growing season. It prefers a neutral to slightly acidic mineral-based potting mix with plenty of extra grit and feed during the summer.

Watering Needs: Can support quite some water during the growing season but pot plants in winter are wet-sensitive and needs to be kept dry (rots easily if soil is wet and cold) tends to lose its roots in winter. It rots easily if soil is wet and cold. Best if watered with rain water. Relatively cold hardy. Usually it is recommended to over-winter this plant in a bright and warm greenhouse with at least 8-10° C, but it has proved to tolerate temperatures as low as -5° C for short periods. It is susceptible to spider mites, so it should be check once in a while for it.

Sun Exposure: Light shade to full sun, but it doesn't like full, hot blazing sun in the central summer months.

Propagation: Seeds, cuttings or root suckers (if available). Not too difficult to grow from seed.

AVAILABILITY

This cactus is available for sale on-line at many nurseries in the U.S.

REMARKS

I purchased my plant from Echo's Cacti and Succulents. It bloomed on April 22, of this year, and a picture taken on June 21, shows the old flower still attached to the cactus.

REFERENCES:

Plants Delight Nursery <https://www.plantdelights.com/products/notocactus-schlosseri>

LLiFLe Encyclopedias of LivingForms

http://www.llifl.com/Encyclopedia/CACTI/Family/Cactaceae/11873/Notocactus_schlosseri



August Succulent of the Month**John Weistroffer**

Plant Name: *Euphorbia obesa* (Baseball Plant)

Description: A solitary succulent euphorbia that is flattened when young (resembling *Astrophytum asterias*) and virtually spherical during middle age, completely lacking spines or leaves usually with 8 ribs. It is slow growing and remains relatively small (5-6" tall, 3-4" diameter). As plants get older they can acquire a conical or dome shape and may become columnar with great age, but with height not exceeding about 8". Skin is cryptically colored with a crosshatch pattern in shades of grey, green, and brown with a reddish flush in intense sunlight.

Cultivation: This species receives summer rain and is winter dormant much like the desert species of cactus that we grow. It can tolerate full sun and intense light is necessary for it to develop its best body shape and coloration/farina (low light will cause etiolation). It prefers a mineral based and quickly draining soil. Because of it's toxic latex sap it has virtually no insect pests.

Hardiness: This species tolerates very hot summers without any issues. Light frost occurs during the winter months in habitat. If the roots are kept dry it can endure brief freezes down to -5C (23F).

Reproduction: *Euphorbia obesa* is propagated by seed, or rarely by offset from very mature plants. Plants are either male or female so two plants are needed to make seeds. Seeds are dispersed from "exploding" seed pods and so must be captured from the mother plant by some means such as a net. Seed viability is said to be short lived so fresh seed is very important. Seeds are germinated by standard methods for most cactus.

Origin: *Euphorbia obesa* is a species endemic to Kendrew, a small area of the Great Karroo, the Northern Cape region of South Africa, in the Graaff-Reinet district.

Natural Habitat: In nature it grows in full sun or sometimes under the protection of small scrubs or boulders in sandy soils. It is a mimicry plant (common in this area) that blends in with its surroundings.



Male plant with flowers



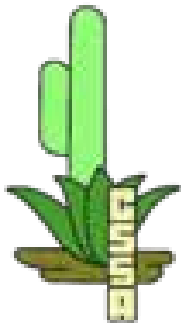
Female plant with flowers
and seed pods

Cultivars: 'Symmetrica', 'Super White'**Reference:**

http://www.llifl.com/Encyclopedia/SUCCULENTS/Family/Euphorbiaceae/1966/Euphorbia_obesa

CSSA NEWS

LILIANA CRACRAFT



On June 15, CSSA held their annual meeting via zoom after the presentation of the monthly webinar.

President. Ron Haenii reported that the 2023 Convention was a huge success with speakers from all over the world. He also mentioned that the financial situation of the Club is stable, and that the number of current regular members is 1,886. They also have 150 members on the supportive category. They do not receive the journals.

During last year, CSSA donate \$7500 for research projects in 2023. Feel free to contact them for more information if you are working on or know about any project related to education, propagation, or preservation. They anticipate to continue

to provide these annual awards.

CSSA Conservation Committee has also contributed funding to benefit two sites designed to protect plants that have been confiscated from poachers, especially in South Africa. Two sites are being helped; the Karoo Desert Botanical Garden in Worcester, S.A., and the National Botanical Garden in Namibia.

The 2024 photo was a great success with 70 entries. Photos of the first and second places will appear in the upcoming CSSA journal. Please consider submitting your favorite photo for this competition next year in May.

The webinars will continue to be presented on the third Saturday of each month and will be available permanently on the CSSA website, and you won't have to be a CSSA member to log in.

Four candidates for the next election were presented. You should receive your voting ballots later this year from me. Lastly, our affiliate information has been updated on their new website, and our Show and sale event will appear on their calendar.

If you have any CSSA related questions, please send a message to: opuntia77@yahoo.com

HCSS Spring Sale

We had a successful Spring Sale on May 10 and 11 with 12 vendors, a few were new to selling. The three top vendors were Dave Thomas, Echo Pang and Jacob Martin.



Margaret Elzine Evans
 June 29, 1932 – April 3, 2024

With heavy hearts, we announce the passing of Margaret Elzine Evans, a remarkable soul who dedicated her life to her passions. Born June 29, 1932, she brought joy to those around her through her love for cacti and succulents. Together with her beloved husband Bert Evans, they co-founded the Houston Cactus and Succulent Society, leaving a lasting legacy.

Mrs. Evans and her husband dazzled audiences with various programs, including “Getting Ready for the Show,” “ID of Succulents,” and captivating tales from their travels to Africa and Mexico. She held multiple positions of leadership in the Club, including:

- 1965 - Treasurer
- 1966-1968 - KK Editor
- 1973 - Membership Chair
- 1982 - First Vice President
- 1983 - president
- 1986-1988 - CSSA Affiliate Director



From KK Vol. 24, 1983
 Elzine Evans on right at Midstate Conference
 Omaha, Nebraska

She wrote numerous articles for the KK about the Succulent of the Month, including an excellent series entitled “Our Succulent World,” and interestingly called herself “A Cactus Bee.” She also gave presentations at the Arboretum and once appeared on TV on Channel 39.

She and her husband were active in the Club and often hosted the Social. They opened their garden for potting parties or visits by the HCSS members, attended many TACSS and other Cactus Conferences, and served as judges for the Annual Show.

Her plants won several awards, including Best Cactus of Show in 1973. Mrs Evans and her husband received a Dick Gregg Award in 2016.

Her books, including the Cacti and Succulent Cyclopedia, were donated to HCSS, as she always wished. Instead of flowers, a \$50 donation to HCSS was made in her honor.

May she rest in peace, and may her legacy continue to inspire cactus and succulent enthusiasts.

Sara Ortiz

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