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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



Epithelantha micromeris gregii
by John Weistroffer



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

From the Editor**Karla Halpaap-Wood**

I want to thank everybody who contributed to this edition of the KK with their articles.

Membership**Sara Ortiz**

On July 24, 2024, HCSS met at the Metropolitan Multipurpose Center. There were 23 members in attendance, and one guest joined us for our Anniversary potluck dinner. There was no program since we gathered to celebrate our 61st anniversary as a Club. Cindy Barraza presented the cactus of the month, *Cereus peruvianus* f. *spiral*. Sara Ortiz gave the succulent of the month, *Plumeria* (Frangipani).

We had a fantastic celebration with delicious food, laughter, and entertainment. After the gathering, we enjoyed playing with the white elephant; everyone was happy to receive a special gift.

On August 28, 2024, HCSS met at the Metropolitan Multiservice Center.

There were 43 members in attendance and 4 guests. Program: Grafting Cactus by Joseph Rodd and Echo Pang. The Cactus of the Month, *Notocactus* (*Parodia*) *schlosseri*, was presented by Liliana Cracraft. The succulent of the month, *Euphorbia obesa* (Baseball Plant) was given by John Weistroffer.

We received many lovely door prizes, and our members were thrilled to win them. Thank you to former president Don R James for donating beautiful cacti and succulents. Some of his plants have already brightened up the homes of our club members in previous meetings, and the rest will be available for sale at our Fall event.

Calendar:

September 6+7, 2024 Show and Sale, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center

September 11, 2024 7:00 pm Board Meeting via Zoom

September 24, 2024 7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center
 Program by Zoom: Rob Romero "Unique cacti of Cochise County, Arizona"

October 4-6, 2024 TACSS Seminar, Fort Worth Botanic Garden

October 23, 2024 7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center
 Program: "Growing Cacti and Succulents from Seeds" by Jacob Martin

November 1, 2024 Deadline for submitting articles for the KK.

We are having two great programs in September and October! One is going to take us to a virtual field trip to deserts of Arizona; the other is going to teach you how to successfully grow cacti and succulents from seeds in Houston.

September 25th 7pm: “Unique cacti of Cochise County, Arizona” by Rob Romero

Program description:

Cochise County, Arizona is a unique part of the state. It is a transition area where the Chihuahuan Desert creeps into Arizona. Most of the cacti that occur in this region are unique to that single county. Rob Romero will take you on a tour to showcase the unique cacti of Cochise County, Arizona.

A short bio of Rob:

Rob Romero was an Albuquerque, NM native when he was bitten by the cactus bug on the Cactus & Succulent Society of New Mexico show and sale in 1990. In stopping merely out of curiosity, Rob was amazed at the wonders within where he met Steven Brack. He quickly became a member of the CSSNM and held the position of club president from 1994-1997. A relocation to Tucson AZ took him away. His first official field trip was to the Jarilla Mountains of SE New Mexico and then the travel bug took hold as well. Rob has traveled extensively in the southwest observing many species of cacti in habitat from the USA and Mexico. He grows many plants from seed and is always trying new methods to improve his skills. Rob is one of the authors of “Field Guide to Cacti and Other Succulents of Arizona”. <https://tcss.wildapricot.org/TCSS-Field-Guide>. And now, having moved back “home” to NM, the cactus fun continues with hundreds of travels to see plants in nature.



October 23rd 7pm: “Growing Cacti and Succulents from Seed” by Jacob Martin

Program description:

This will be an educational program on growing cacti and succulents from seed. Jacob will help everyone learn the tricks about getting plants from seed through that first delicate year of their little lives. We will learn why growing cacti from seed is so important. Jacob will provide pictures and live examples of different species of cacti in the seedling stage.

A short bio of Jacob:

“I am Jacob Martin; I am the head of horticulture and greenhouse manager at Mercer Botanic Gardens. I propagate thousands of plants a year from every corner of the plant kingdom. I am an avid seed collector and maintain an extensive seed bank. The main plant groups I study are *Zanthoxylum* (prickly ash) and *Quercus* (oaks). I run a nursery in Houston called Old School Produce, that focuses on hard to find plants for serious collectors.”



HCSS August 2024 Program highlights: “Grafting Cactus” by Echo Pang and Joseph Rodd

Grafting is a cultural method that fuses two plants of the same genus into one. It can be used for any plant from ornamental plants to crops. In grafting cactus, many different methods can be used. The most practical and commonly used techniques are:

1) “**Flat or lateral graft**” - both stock and scion are cut straight across and the vascular rings



are attached together fusing a scion with a stock.

2) “**Micro-grafting**” is a very useful grafting technique utilizes seedlings that can be as young as a few days old. They are grafted on to small pieces of Pereskopsis.



The biggest advantage of using Pereskopsis is the fast SPEED. It can be a game changer for slow growing species. For example for species that typically take 5+ years to flower, they can have flowers in the first year. And care for a grafted piece on Pereskopsis is absurdly easy in our climate. They prefer humidity and moisture; not picky about soil; easy to propagate and you can produce a lot of them just don't let them freeze.

Tips for grafting:

1. The best time is in warm weather when the plants are in active growth.
2. Make sure your rootstock is fully hydrated before grafting.
3. Practice your technique to for a fast, clean and gentle performance.
4. The less green tissue of the scion there is, the more green tissue of the stock you need above the ground;
5. Bigger stocks will plump up the scion faster, which is fine for rapid propagation but not desirable for long-term culture in collection.

Caring for a grafted piece:

1. Place the new graft in a warm place out of direct sunlight with free air movement. The stock should be watered and the bands left on for about 7 days after which the graft should have taken.
2. Grafted plants need to be treated in a way that suits the stock; a little water in winter will help to stop excessive dehydration, which can cause the stock to die.
3. Offsets from the stock must be removed to stop them from taking over from the scion. One way to stop this from happening is to cut away all the areoles from the stock.

**If you'd like to revisit this program and programs in the past, visit HCSS YouTube channel: https://youtube.com/@houstoncactussucculentssociety?si=aF_r8LsN7CeifJ-V

September Cactus of the Month

Echo Pang

Turbinicarpus alonsoi

Pic 1: *T. alonsoi* in habitat observed in October 2019 by Pedro Nájera Quezada (iNaturalist)

Genus: *Turbinicarpus*

Species: *alonsoi*

Etmology:

Turbinicarpus [tur-bin-ih-KAR-pus] is from the Latin *turbineus* (top) and the Greek *karpos* (fruit).

Alonsoi [al-ON-so-eye] is named for Alonso Garcia Luna, who discovered the plant as a young boy accompanying Charles Glass in Mexico.

Origin and Habitat

Turbinicarpus alonsoi occurs on rocky hills near the municipality of Xichu in the state of Guanajuato (Mexico), where the weather is nice and warm without extreme summer heat or harsh winter freezes. Annual precipitation is about 20" with most of the rainfall coming from June to September.

T. alonsoi is a relatively recent discovered species, first de-

scribed in 1996. This cactus grows in semi-desert scrub on steep rocky calcareous slopes at about 6200 feet (1,900 meters) above sea level. It is reported to be critically endangered due to its occurrence in a single location and as a result of illegal collection.

Description

T. alonsoi is a beautiful and easily recognized species. It is a solitary small cactus (mature plants are 1.5 to 4 inches in diameter) that has a spherical stem with triangular cusps projecting from the center. There are 3 to 5 flattened, cardboard-like spines gray or brown in color with a darker tip. Seed grown specimens from cultivation should have an intact taproot system.

T. alonsoi is a free blooming species from spring to fall. It can produce fairly large magenta flowers (1 to 1.5 inches in diameter) from the apex. Reddish to dark purple fruits are form after the flowers from different individuals are pollinated. Seeds are small, black and elliptical in shape.



Pic 2: *T. alonsoi* cultivated in Echo's collection

Cultivation

T. alonsoi is quite adaptive and can live a better life in proper cultivation. It is relatively easy to grow so long as care is taken with the taproot and the air is free moving. Either clay or plastic pots can be used keeping in mind that clay pots will dry out more quickly. Make sure to choose a pot to accommodate its root system. It requires porous soil with mostly inorganic minerals so that the potting media can drain effectively. In Houston

with high humidity, it only needs a small drink when it is dry during the growing season. Full morning sun to part shade, or filtered full sun is preferred, as you want to encourage slow, compact and steady growth and to prevent sun scorch. During its winter quiescent period, keep dry to prevent rot. If growing in a greenhouse, ventilation should continue throughout the year 24/7 and do not overcrowd the plants. Winter temperatures can be set ideally at 40F.

Please do not over-feed your *Turbinicarpus*! Over-feeding or over-watering will produce bloated unnatural looking plants... These are miniature plants and should therefore remain so.

Propagation

T. alonsoi can be raised from seed or by grafting just like any other species of cactus. In my opinion, propagation from seed it is the easiest and most effective way to raise *Turbinicarpus*. Seed grows are slow for the first year, but they will grow into a reasonable size in about two years and starting to flower.

References

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/36714574>

<https://www.cactusandsucculentreview.org.uk/assets/downloads/2015/esr-june-2015.pdf>

http://www.llifl.com/Encyclopedia/CACTI/Family/Cactaceae/11705/Turbinicarpus_alonsoi

<https://www.timeanddate.com/weather/@3979992/climate>



September Succulent of the Month**Eddie Novak****Euphorbia milii**

Family: Euphorbiaceae

Common name: Crown of thorns

Habitat: Madagascar

The species name honors Baron Milius, once governor of the island of Réunion who introduced the plant to France in the 19th century.

Crown of thorns. Both of my grandmothers grew them and that's kind of what started me loving plants. Most of the members in my family have green thumbs and it passed on down to me. I can remember going to see my grandma in Arkansas and she had a pot of crown of thorns on the porch. I always thought they were so cool plus the story behind them that they were used to make the crown for Christ when he was crucified. So here's what I know about Crown of thorns and why I like them. For me they are very easy to grow and bloom nonstop. I myself do water more than most people do and I do fertilize. I'd say I water at least twice a week, and I fertilize using Osmocote and some other stuff that I just throw in at least once a year. They cannot freeze and they can get big. There are now many different hybrids with huge blossoms, but I find that those do not grow as well for me and or bloom as often. They are poisonous as all Euphorbias are, so be careful when making cuttings to start new plants ... do not rub your eyes with the sap on your hands. When I take cuttings, I just let them sit out for a couple of days, then I just shove them in a pot of dirt. I'm an old-fashioned kind of person when it comes to planting cuttings up. I just put them in the dirt and they better grow or else they are out of here. LOL I probably have 10/15 pots of Euphorbia milii and they're always blooming. Do not let them freeze. They now have developed some hybrids that don't have any thorns on them so I guess they really wouldn't be called crown of thorns they would just be called crown of (dad joke!.) The pictures show some of mine when they are blooming.



October Cactus of the Month

David Van Langen

Mammillaria pottsii

Mammillaria pottsii is a rather small but distinctive clumping cactus of the Chihuahuan Desert. While common and widespread in the northern Mexican states of Coahuila, Chihuahua, Durango and Zacatecas, this plant barely reaches the extreme southern tip of Trans-Pecos Texas. The tubercled stems of *Mammillaria pottsii* are cylindrical in shape and seldom exceed 6-8 inches tall and 1-1/2 inches diameter. There are 30-40 mostly white radial spines per areole and 6-12 central spines which average 1/2 to 5/8 inch long. The tips of the central spines vary from brown, gray, purple and bluish, giving the plant the appearance of Blue Steel. Springtime finds small red, bell shaped flowers appearing on the upper part of the stem but not on the apex of new growth as is common with many Mamms. The flowers seldom open widely and are less than a half inch long and wide. The fruit that follows are small and club shaped with very small black seeds.

The thin cylindrical shape somewhat resembles *Escobaria*. Though a common Mamm shape in Mexico and is contrast with the other Mamms found in the U.S. which are more or less flat to globular shaped. The appearance is neat and tidy in young plants but as the clumps expand the older stems will begin to sag a bit.

In Mexico a miniature variety can be found-- *Mammillaria pottsii* var *multicaulis*. The stems seem to stay less than a couple inches tall and are highly clustering. It has the same coloration as the typical species. *Mammillaria pottsii* seems to favor chalky limestone in the lower elevations of the harsh desert. It grows in association with the typical indicator plants, Creosote Bush and Lechugilla. It does not seem to be nearly as common in Big Bend National Park as it is further west in Terlingua and Lajitas.

While not common in local nurseries, *Mammillaria pottsii* can be ordered from specialty nurseries such as Mesa Garden and others.

An extremely gritty and free draining mix is a must and should contain a high percentage of limestone. Water should be given sparingly and only when dry during the growing season and withheld from October through March as it is very rot prone and unforgiving when pampered too much.



October Succulent of the Month

Karla Halpaap-Wood

NAME: *Echidnopsis cereiformis*

Family: Apocynaceae

Genus: *Echidnopsis*

Species: *cereiformis*

This plant was first described as a genus in 1871 (Hooker). There are about 34 species in the genus. The genus is considered to be monophyletic, which means its members are decedents of a common ancestor. The genus name means “viper-like” referring to the snake-like shape of its member species, “*cereiformis*” from its cactus-like appearance.

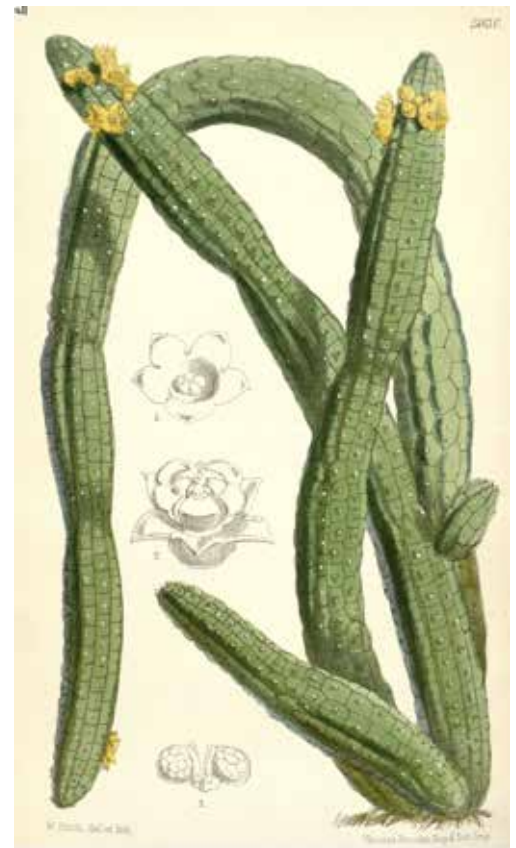
HABITAT/DISTRIBUTION: *Echidnopsis* is native to eastern Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and Socotra Island.

DESCRIPTION:

Echidnopsis cereiformis is a small snake-like succulent with thin tufted cylindrical branches. It has tiny flowers that sprout out of the entire length of each stem but mainly toward the tip.

Stems: 7-30 cm long, leafless, green, dull dark green, round with ribs divided into 6-10 rows of broadly hexagonal, flat tubercles, the remains of an undeveloped leaf.

Leaves are only tiny, rudimentary.



From Curtis' Botanical Magazine, Vol 97, 1871



Flowers: Very small, pale yellow to dull yellow, but also brownish or dark brown-purple, produced near the top of the stems.

Blooming season: Late summer to autumn.

CULTIVATION/GROWTH: This plant is easy to grow, soil should be some cactus mix. This plant can be watered and fertilized freely in summer when hot, less in winter. It should not be left in wet cold conditions, same like the other asclepiads.

Hardiness: Takes temperatures to 5°C with plenty of light.

Sun Exposure: Partial sun or light shade.

Pest and diseases: They are susceptible to stem and root mealy bugs.

Propagation: Easiest with stem cuttings. Allow cuttings to dry a day before planting and then lay stems (not buried) on gritty compost and then they will root from the underside of the stems. They can also be grown from seeds .

REMARKS/COMMENTS/MY EXPERIENCE:

I got this plant from Grant Wells' estate. It was one little shoot and

very soon started to bloom with dainty little yellow flowers. This spring it grew a second shoot and over the summer two more are appearing. I keep it so far in full sun, but water regularly.

References:

Curtis botanical magazine, October 1, 1871, p 235

http://www.llifle.com/Encyclopedia/SUCCULENTS/Family/Asclepiadaceae/18992/Echidnopsis_cereiformis

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Echidnopsis>

<https://succulent.guide/types-of-succulents/echidnopsis-cereiformis/>



Tylecodon buchholzianus

by Richard “Cactus Boy” Stamper

Speaking of Tylecodons (see March/April KK of this year) let us look at a really odd one. *T. buchholzianus* (Schuldt & Steph.) Toelken. It is named after plant enthusiast Reinhold Wilhelm Buchholz (1837-1876). *T. buchholzianus* is native to South Africa and Namibia.

This Tylecodon is small, especially compared to its large relatives like *T. paniculatus*. I have two examples of this *T. buchholzianus*. I like to truly dwarf example in the photos. I got this one years ago from Woody. It would grow a bit, but never had the small, tubular leaves it carries today. This year it produced these leaves to go along with what is described as “microscopic leaflets”.

A winter grower, I water about once a week the same as my Haworthias. As the heat comes it will shed the green leaves and enter dormancy. I place it in a shaded position and still water it a bit in hot weather when it is either dormant or in a state of torpor. Perhaps the micro leaves still continue transpiration during the heat. I use Haworthia substrate for this one along with many others. It is about 60% mineral and 40% organic in the form of coir.

A proper description of *T. buchholzianus* from World of Succulents is included here:

Tylecodon buchholzianus is a small winter-growing succulent shrub with a swollen, irregularly shaped stem and many erect to spreading or rarely drooping branches. It slowly grows up to twelve inches (30 cm) tall and up to ten inches (25 cm) wide. Branches are whitish or grey-green and usually short. The older branches have peeling bark in brown flakes. It may or may not decide to produce leaves in the spring, leaving photosynthesis to microscopic leaflets on the stems. The short-lived leaves are green, almost cylindrical, up to four inches (10 cm) long, and up to 0.2 inches (0.5 cm) in diameter. Flowers are tubular, up to 0.6 inches (1.5 cm) long, pale pink to red-purple, and appear on short petioles from mid-winter to late spring.



Detail of the “bark” on a stem.



Detail of the tubular green leaves and the not so “microscopic” leaflets.



Tylecodon buchholzianus in a six by five inch bonsai pot.

Duvalia modesta

by Richard 'Cactus Boy' Stamper

Another article about teeny, tiny plants in the Cactus Shack. Here is what Chat-gpt has to say about it:

"*Duvalia modesta* is a species of succulent plant in the Apocynaceae family, native to South Africa. Like many succulents, it has adapted to arid conditions by storing water in its fleshy stems and leaves. This species is known for its unique and intricate flowers, which often have interesting shapes and patterns. As with many succulents, *Duvalia modesta* is popular among collectors and enthusiasts for its ornamental value and relative ease of care." Boy, is writing a plant article easy! Try it sometime.

The genus (*Duvalia*) was first described in 1812, named after the French physician and botanist Henri-Auguste Duval (1777-1814). The species (*modesta*) is credited to N.E. Brown. It is native to the Eastern Cape Province of south Africa where it is found over a large area.

Enough specifics! This is a tiny stapeliad-type succulent. I got it from Michiel Pillet when I attended the Cactus & Succulent Society biannual Convention last July in Colorado Springs. I put it on the top bench under up to 80% shade. Nowadays it is under 60% shade and flowering happily. It gets water once or twice a week depending on the fortunes of the moment and along with everyone else.

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