

MAY-JUNE 2017

VOL. 54
No. 3

Kaktos Komments

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



Ceropegia stapeliformis
by Karla Halpaap-Wood

Membership**Kathy Fewox**

Attending the March 22nd meeting of HCSS were eighteen members.

Our April 26th meeting was attended by 27 members. We were joined by three guests: Lynne Schafer, Stephen Prescott, and Cat Garza. Several door prizes were given away. Richard Holland donated two *Gasteria batesiana* "Rowley" plants, which were won by Frank Lee and guest Lynne Schafer. Dave Thomas donated a huge *Hectia glauca*, which was won by Daryl Rebrovich. Bruce Moffett brought many *Agave titanota* pups of various sizes, which went home with guest Cat Garza, Imtiaz Bangee, and others (I lost track of them).

The sandwiches at the April meeting were donated by Joyce Kellogg. Drinks were provided by Cindy Gray.

The four of us who went on the April 20-24 field trip to CDRI, Big Bend State Park, and Big Bend had a fantastic time. We only wished more of you could have accompanied us, as it was a really good one!

On a sad note, Dr. Raymond W. Neck, husband of Mary Pinké Neck, passed away on March 23. The Necks joined HCSS at the 2016 Show & Sale. Dr. Neck was a former Conservation Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife, then Curator of Invertebrates at the Houston Museum of Natural Science until his retirement in 1993. He authored "The Butterflies of Texas" and co-authored "Freshwater Mussels of Texas." Mary Pinké Neck has been quite active in HCSS since joining the club, and has been working on new artwork for our shirts.

As always, please send any news of HCSS members and their families to kathyfewox@aim.com.

Calendar:

May 10 Board Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center.

May 13 & 14 Spring Sale at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. 9:00 am - 5:00 pm each day

May 25 7:30 pm Membership Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center.
"Jardin de Exotique" by Bruce Moffet and Josie Watts



June 22 7:30 pm Membership Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center.
Ray Gonzalez will speak on Bonsai with Succulents

July 1 Deadline for KK submissions

May Cactus of the Month

Wally Ward

NAME: *Consolea corallicola*

SYNONYMS: *Opuntia corallicola*; *Cactus spinosissima*; *Cactus spinosissimus*; *Opuntia spinosissima*

COMMON NAMES: Florida semaphore cactus; semaphore cactus; semaphore prickly pear

HABITAT/DISTRIBUTION: Endemic to the Florida Keys; grows on bare coral rock or a sandy substrate grounded on Key Largo limestone with limited patches of humus

DESCRIPTION: a “tree” prickly pear up to six feet tall; individual pads up to a foot long; armed with long spines which are pink when newly extruded; flowers with fleshy outer tepals and reddish inner tepals up to an inch long; flowers have faint odor of rotting meat; flowers year-round but most intensely December-April; fruits yellow up to 2.5” long; colonial, trunked plant when mature with several pups; common name from resemblance of plant to railroad semaphore signals.



CULTIVATION/GROWTH: to attempt to duplicate substrate where these plants grow, I have added finely-crumbled oyster shells sold by Wabash Hardware as a calcium supplement for chicken feed. Plant grows naturally in sunny openings under a canopy in the Keys, so I have it placed to get partial sun during the day. I water infrequently. Some offsets have rooted and are doing well in my regular soil mix without the additional carbonate.

AVAILABILITY: Since this is an endangered plant under the Endangered Species Act (see 78 Federal Register 63976 (October 24, 2013)), only cultivated plants in conformity with the ESA would be available, and I know of no supplier. My plants came from a single source cactus from a weekend house in Key West on private property where the source plant has been grown in the landscaping for many years.



REMARKS/COMMENTS: I have been growing three offsets from the Key West source plant starting last Fall, but one died. The other plants are pupping, and I have successfully cultivated six pups. *C. corallicola* has been extirpated from several localities in the Florida Keys. The moth *Cactoblastis cactorum* has attacked one of the two primary populations in the Keys. One population consists only of male

plants and reproduces only by clonal fragmentation. It would be fair to say this plant is experiencing a genetic bottleneck. Attempts to cultivate it from seed have been unsuccessful. The total mature plants growing in the wild number around 500. Imminent threats of extinction also consist of sea-level rise, storm surge, poaching, habitat destruction, and vandalism.

REFERENCES: 78 Federal Register 63976 (October 24, 2013) (a very interesting read, and you can call it up with a Google search);

USDA PLANTS database; and
IUCN List of Threatened Species

FROM THE KK ARCHIVES

This article was originally published in the KK March 1964, Vol II, No. III



QUESTIONS ???
by Herman Kropp

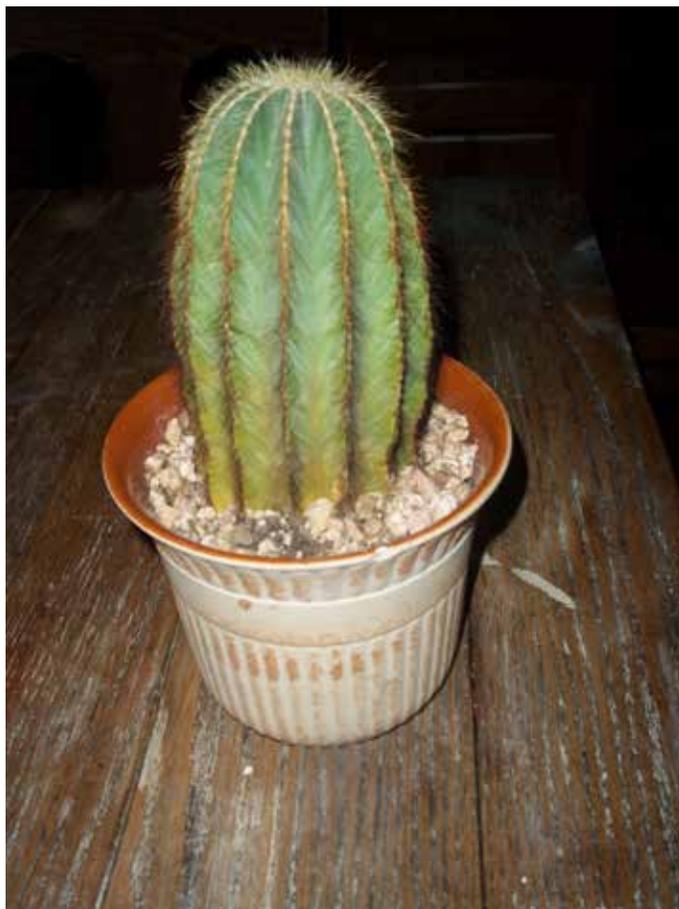
The opening statement of our publication says to promote the study of Cacti and Succulents. The following questions may provoke some research work if the answers are not known. I believe to become a better Cactophile some book work must be done.

- (1) What is a Succulent?
- (2) What is a Cactus?
- (3) What is an areole?
- (4) What is a Glochid?
- (5) What is the meaning of the word Cereus?
- (6) What are the various types of spines?
- (7) How is the Cactus propagated?.
- (8) What treatment should be given cuttings?
- {9) What are the soil requirements of Cacti?
- (10) How can drainage be best secured?
- (11) When and how should they be watered?
- (12) What is the greatest foe to a Cactus plant in cultivation?
- (13) When and how should plants be repotted?
- (14) What special pests should be watched for in the culture of Cacti?
- (15) What remedies are used?
- (16) What benefits are to be derived from grafting?

June Cactus of the Month**Robert Smith****Notocactus Magnifus**

The Notocactus Magnifus is called a ball or balloon cactus, because it can shrink and expand in volume due to climate change. The form can be solitary column, reaching heights of 36 inches or a clusters of offset with height of 6 to 7 inches. They are native to southern Brazil and neighboring Uruguay. Growing on rocky hillsides mixed with evergreens and deciduous trees. This area has warm and cool seasons very much like we have in the 9 and 10 zone of the U.S by growing on these hillsides they are in danger of extinction due to landslides. The color is bright green surface with 11 to 13 ribs lined with flexible spines in yellow to tan. The apex is adorned with bright yellow to gold flowers singly or in groups . Flowers occurs in summer to early fall. Under cultivation it is easy to grow in a bright location with some shade from hot sun. They need good drainage of composted soil with grit added. Water and feed during summer growing season. In winter keep on the dry side as roots rot easy with cool wet weather. They can be grown from a seed or from cuttings. I have rooted 3 tops, my son has one in his cactus bed. I also have one in a pot outside. Both have been growing outside, unprotected, for several years. The photo with the article is the original top from a plant I have been growing for over 50 years.

Some information for the article came from LLIFLE.com and Henry Shaw Cactus and Succulent Society.



June Succulent of the Month

David Van Langen

Hechtia texensis

Hechtia texensis is a desert dwelling plant in the Bromeliad family. This plant is found on rocky limestone cliffs and hillsides in the lower hottest regions of the Chihuahuan Desert of northern Mexico and extends into the United States in the Big Bend area of southwest Texas. Formidable in nature, this plant is commonly called the Texas False Agave. Each rosette of red tinged leaves can reach 18 inches across and mature clumps can reach several feet across with many dozens of offsets. The leaves are greenish when young and as they mature in full sun take on a red coloration. The ends of the leaves tend to recurve backwards and the tips turn brown. The leaf edges are spiny to say the very least !! The edges of the leaves are lined with human hating spiny hooks that will draw blood by simply looking at them !!! . The small whitish blooms appear in late spring and summer and are held up on stalks about two foot long.



In cultivation *Hechtia texensis* is very easy to grow and requires little to no attention. Planted in a rocky/ gravel/ coarse mixture this plant can be treated like a cactus with the exception that *Hechtia texensis* does not demand shelter from Houston rains !! In the landscape this rascal can be planted in a very well drained site that gets full sun to mostly sun. In my rock garden the ones that were planted in a very rocky area did just fine when we hit 20° F as a low over last winter. The only one I lost (out of several) to the hard freeze was a young plant that was growing in a very exposed situation nestled between several large rocks that was above ground level. It did not make it but all others did-- even some in pots. None were given any protection from cold weather. *Hechtia texensis* is not easy to find in culture. But here in Houston the nursery on I-45 north called Cactus King has a large number of these plants for sale. Given how easy this mean little kinfolk of the Pineapple plant is to cultivate, I would suggest that this fella be added to your collection of Cactus and Succulents !! Just remember---*Hechtia texensis* HATES Humans !!!



The following article is from the The Desert NewsFlash February 2017, Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute's monthly e-mail newsletter, reprinted with permission from CDRI.



Why Native Plants are Better for Birds and People

As our plant enthusiasts already know, your native plant garden is your outdoor sanctuary. Not only can you plant your garden to enjoy its flowers and fragrances, but you can also landscape specifically to attract native birds. More native plants mean more native birds. Native birds, of course, eat native insects which are attracted to plants to which they are adapted.

With more than half of North American bird species threatened by climate change, native plant landscaping provides a suitable habitat, and can help birds by providing a food source and nesting area. Studies point to an increase in bird diversity through native landscaping.

By encouraging a native landscape, you are also cutting down on lawnmower use. Nationwide, some 56 million Americans mow 40 million acres of grass each week. That's about eight times the size of New Jersey! Mowers and weed whackers burn gasoline to the tune of 800 million gallons per year. And, the EPA estimates that more than 17 million gallons of fuel each year is spilled while refueling lawn equipment. That's oil and gas that pollutes the air and groundwater. Older, less efficient two-cycle engines release significant amounts of their oil and gas unburned.

Less mowing also means less noise pollution. The noise from lawnmowers and weed whackers not only scares away birds, but can also lead to operator hearing loss over time.

Other Benefits from Planting Native Species

Save Water

According to the EPA, 30-60 percent of fresh water in American cities is used for watering lawns. As we all know, native plants have adapted to thriving in their native habitat, without added water or nutrients.

Control Flooding

If you watch the water flow in your yard during heavy rainfall, you can plant accordingly with different layers of vegetation that channel the rainfall through dry streambeds or directly into garden areas, increasing the

opportunity for the water to be absorbed by your plants and the soil.

Reduce Chemical Use

Native plants tend to be hardier than non-native ornamentals, and generally do not require the use of pesticides or fertilizers. U.S. homeowners use close to 80 million pounds of pesticides on their lawns annually--which is 10 times more pesticides used per acre on lawns than what farmers use on crops.

Reduce Maintenance

Not to say that you won't have to pull weeds, but you'll be doing a lot less mowing or weed-whacking.

Create Beauty

By creating a garden with native plants, you'll have a healthy garden, provide plenty of food and nesting sources for the birds, and you'll have a colorful yard to enjoy, where you can sit back and enjoy your backyard birds. You can see specimens and learn about Chihuahuan Desert native plants in our Botanical Garden. Here, you can see how large a shrub or tree grows, plus you can enjoy their fragrant blossoms starting in about 8 weeks (late March to early April). We have lots of resources and information to assist you in the fun, rewarding endeavor of "going native."

We've included a list of native plants for the Davis Mountain region which we think you'll derive pleasure from, and your birds will appreciate.

To attract hummingbirds:

Anisicanthes quadrifidus	(Mexican Flame)
Chilopsis linearis	(Desert Willow)
Foieria splendens	(Ocotillo)
Salvia greggii	(Autumn Sage)
Tacoma stans	(Yellowbells)

To provide a food source for birds:

Aloysia gratissima	(Fragrant Bee Bush)
Aloysia wrightii	(Wright's bee Bush)
Atriplex canescens	(Four Wing Saltbush)
Opuntia basilaris	(Beaver-tail Prickly Pear)
Opuntia macrocentra	(Purple Prickly Pear)
Opuntia phaeacantha	(Engelmann's Prickly Pear)
Lance Leaf Sumac	(Fall food)
Evergreen Sumac	(Fall food)
Agarita	(Spring food)
Yucca	(Spring food)

To provide for nesting and food:

Tracy Hawthorne
 Junipers
 Fragrant Ash
 Cholla
 Chinkapin Oak
 Native grasses

For information regarding native plants in your specific location: <http://www.audubon.org/native-plants>
 Our thanks to the audobon.org.news for information used in this article.

FROM THE KK ARCHIVES

This article was originally published in the KK April 1964, Vol II, No. IV

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS IN THE LAST ISSUE

(1) Succulent means juicy; this applies to plants having thick or fleshy leaves or stems

(2) A cactus is a succulent; they are usually armed with spines; they are usually leafless (except Pereskias); generally bear many-petaled, showy blossoms.

(3) An areole is the little cushion from which spring the spines and glochids.

(4) Glochids are the tiny bristles found growing in the areoles of Opuntias.

(5) Waxy, the Torch Cactus

(6) Spines, their arrangement and types, enter into the identification of a specimen; this is important. Central and radial - subulate - acicular - setose - tortuous erect - porrect - curved - decurved - appressed - divergent pectinate - annular or annulate.

(7) From seeds, cuttings and offshoots

(8) Cuttings should be left exposed to callous, otherwise they are subject to rot. Water very sparingly.

(9) (10) and (11) These three questions more or less tie together into one overall answer. The following basic mixture has done well for my plants over the years, 1/3 good garden soil, 1/3 peat and 1/3 builders sand. Add to this whatever the specific plant needs. When potting, the bottom of the pot should have about 1/3 gravel or broken pots. If this material is not available, use anything that will carry water away from the roots. Watering of plants simply calls for good judgement on our part. More water is required during the growing and blossoming season; also we must consider the size of the container, as very small pots will dry out quickly. Remember, a plant with continuously wet roots will rot, and this last statement answers number (12).

(13) Repotting should take place if your plants do not appear to be in good condition or if they seem crowded. After repotting, water sparingly until reestablished.

(14) Scale, Aphis Ants and mealy bugs.

(15) Volck still remains on the top of my list for a good spray and Green Light for an effective control of ants.

(16) See article in Vol 1 No 11

by Herman Kropp

Field trip to the Big Bend Area

The HCSS had a field trip to the Big Bend area from 4/20 to 4/24, 2017.

We visited CDRI and got a guided tour of the garden by Leslie, the gardener, followed by a visit to the greenhouse. They also treated us to lunch on the porch with the breeze blowing, blue skies, birds, etc. They truly work constantly to add to the beauty and purpose of the place. They also have rocks labeled with identity and location and era, which is the beginning of a new exhibit.

We stayed at the Terlingua Ranch Resort and had a few meals at the Bad Rabbit Cafe. They have renovated the rooms inside and out, and have added a beautiful swimming pool. We also had fun visiting Many Stones, the Terlingua Cemetery, and the Starlight Cafe. At night we saw “billions and billions of stars”, and Bruce Moffett and Kathy Fewox were very good at pointing out constellations.

We visited the Contrabando trail in Big Bend State Ranch. Though it was not an area with *epilantha micromeris bokeii*, I think we probably saw every other cactus of the Big Bend, many in bloom. It was a lovely morning.

The next day we ventured into Big Bend National Park and saw Luna's Jakal and Sam Neil Ranch, both very interesting sites, followed by hiking for a few hours at Grapevine Hills, which had many fabulous rock formations and a variety of cacti. We brought our own lunches, which we ate at a place recommended by Kathy Fewox, called Dugout Wells,



a beautiful place with trees and shade and a walking trail. We visited the basin and showed Cindy Gray the famous Window and Casa Grande Mountain, amongst others.

All in all, it was a small, but fabulous and fun, fieldtrip. As usual, we could have easily have used a couple more days. But then, I've never been out there without wanting to go back.

Josie Watts
HCSS Fieldtrip Coordinator



The tile wall and HCSS tile are from Barton Warnock Visitors Center, near Lajitas, that serves as an info center for Big Bend Ranch State Park



Strawberry Pitaya



Greater Earless Lizard



Terlingua Ranch Sunset



Nice Rocks

Photo credit: Kathy Fewox

Cooking With Cactus

Liliana Cracraft

Beef Stew with Nopales

- 2 pounds Beef Stew Meat
- 1 cube Beef Bouillon
- 1 whole Bay Leaf
- 3 cloves Garlic, Minced
- 1 whole White Onion, Minced
- ½ Onion to boil with the nopales
- 2 tablespoon Oil
- 1 tablespoon of Chile De Arbol Powder
- ⅓ tablespoon of Mexican Oregano
- 5 Tender Nopalitos Pads
- 1 can (5oz) of Tomato Paste
- 2 tablespoons Cornstarch



Cut the nopales in strips and boil them for about 15 min with salt and ½ onion. Drain and rinse and set aside. Discard the onion

Chop beef into smaller pieces (about 1/4").

In a pot, place beef, beef bouillon cube, bay leaf, and enough water to cover the meat. Boil meat until tender about 1-1/2 hours. Add water and salt as needed. The water should be covering the meat at all times.

Sauté garlic and onion in oil. After meat is tender, add onion, garlic, chili powder, oregano, nopales (make sure the nopales are drained and rinsed) and tomato paste to meat and water.

Mix cornstarch with 1/4 cup warm water, slowly add into meat mixture while stirring. Let simmer about 30 minutes. Sauce should thicken.

Serve over rice.

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