

VOL. 54  
No. 6

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2017

# Kaktos Komments

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



*Aloe chabaudii*  
Acrylic, 8" x 10", by Mary Pinké Neck

### From the editor

HCSS exchanges newsletters with the following clubs, Austin Cactus and Succulent Society "The Cacto-Files", Fort Worth Cactus and Succulent Society "The Cowtown Connection", Fresno Cactus and Succulent Society "Cactus Corner News" and Central Oklahoma Cactus and Succulent Society "The Offset". If you are interested receiving those as e-mail attachments, please let me know.

Karla Halpaap-Wood

### Membership

**Kathy Fewox**

The HCSS meeting of September 27, 2017 was attended by 24 members. Also attending were four guests: John Pruitt, Nora Pruitt, Steve Menegaz, and Teresa Garcia.

Several very nice door prizes were given away at that meeting. Karla Halpaap-Wood won an Agave donated by Dick McEuen. Richard Holland brought in a copy of "Simon & Schuster's Guide to Cacti and Succulents," which went home with Daryl Rebrovich. Craig Hamilton donated a Sansevieria, which was claimed by Frank Lee. Guest John Pruitt won a Euphorbia mili, brought in by Cindy Gray. Cindy also donated a Sansevieria sufruticosa "Frosty Spears," which went home with Liliana Cracraft. Another Cindy Gray donation, a Gasteraloe "Green Ice," was won by Cherie Lee.

HCSS gained several new members at the TACSS convention on October 7. Cindy Gray signed up Kate Morris, Arron Tuggle, Beverly Thurman, and Dick Salzer. Welcome to the club, everyone!

Twenty-three members attended our meeting on October 25 meeting. We were joined by two guests, Rachel McKellar, and Teresa Garcia.

Member Karl Schulz donated two beautiful plants as door prizes, which were delivered to the meeting by Karla Halpaap-Wood. (Karl's home was flooded during Hurricane Harvey, and he is moving to a condominium.) Taking home a very nice Echinocactus grusonii, aka Golden Barrel, was Phyllis McEuen. Wally Ward won a large Jade Plant (Crassula Ovata), which he gave to guest Rachel McKellar.

Longtime member Marie Tuma's new address is 40 Pine Tree Lane, Burr Ridge, IL 60527. Burr Ridge is a suburb of Chicago.

Please send news of HCSS members and their families to [kathyfewox@aim.com](mailto:kathyfewox@aim.com).

### Calendar:

**November 15, 2017** 7:30 pm Membership Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center.  
"Adeniums I Have Known" by Craig Hamilton, HCSS

**December 3, 2017** Christmas Dinner at Rivas Italian Restaurant, 1117 Missouri St.  
Social hour at 5:00pm followed by dinner at 6:00pm

**January 10, 2018** 7:30 pm Board Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center.

### TACSS Seminar

If you missed the TACSS meeting on October 7th at the West Gray Multi-Purpose Center you missed a great time. We had 22 members from Austin, Central Texas, Fort Worth, San Antonio and Santa Fe, New Mexico Cactus and Succulent Society clubs, with HCSS 14 members attending. I have been attending TACSS meetings for the last 10 to 12 years and enjoy speaking with other members, seeing and buying plants I can't find locally. Always take away lots of great information and unusual plants from the auction.

Cindy Gray

A very nice description of the seminar by Alice Liles can be found here:  
<http://www.aliceliles.com/2017/10/tacss-fall-seminar-2017-in-houston.html>

#### Speakers:

Richard Stamper: *Lithop gracidelineata*

Dick & Phyllis McEuen: The Plants of Namibia

Woody Minnich: The Hidden Treasures of Coahuila, Mexico

Wally Ward: A Case Study of Hybridization in Succulent Plants

Jeff Pavlat: Botanical Gardens of Havana, Cuba





Texas Grand Champion Cactus and Texas Grand Champion Succulent Competition  
Best Cactus: *Ariocarpus retusus* - Richard Stamper  
Best Succulent: *Haworthia springbokvlakensis* - Richard Stamper



Auction plants



Sunday morning visit to Liliana and Mike Cracraft’s home and Tom Cardinal’s beautiful cactus garden.

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• Thank you, Thank you, Thank you,

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• Our TACSS seminar was slightly smaller than usual, but I had so many compliments about our club. I want to thank everyone who helped. Bruce and I could not have done it without help from our members and the personnel at the Multipurpose Center. Jeff Boggan, thank you so much for being our techie that day. At least one presentation would not have happened without you. Karla Hapaap-Wood, thank you for being the nerve center, sending out all the information. Rolando Ontiveros and Cindy Gray--what can I say. You both did everything that needed doing and so much more, including mopping water puddles. And other people, ie Cherie and Frank Lee, Kathy Fewox, Daryl Rebrovich, Wally Ward, Robert Smith, Teresa Garcia, Dave VanLangen, etc. Thanks also to our speakers and vendors for the high level of plants and talks. You made us shine for the whole state! I hope I didn't omit anyone. I also hope those of you came enjoyed TACSS.

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• Very gratefully,

• Josie Watts

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HCSS now has shirts for sale. The artwork was done by our very talented Mary Pinké Neck.

T-shirts  
 S - L \$9  
 XL + \$11

Polo Shirts  
 S - L \$16  
 XL + \$18



## COOKING WITH CACTUS

LILIANA CRACRAFT

### CACTUS FRIES

*From PBS Food*

#### Ingredients

- 2 pounds prickly pear cactus pads (cleaned)
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 egg white
- About 3/4 cup ice water
- Salt and pepper
- Peanut oil for frying
- Salsa or ketchup, for accompaniment



#### Directions

1. With a sharp paring knife, remove any leftover thorns or “eyes” from the cactus pads; trim the edges.
2. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat; reduce heat, add pads, cover, and simmer for 2 minutes; drain.
3. Cut the cactus pads into 3- to 4-inch strips about the size of French fries. Set aside.
4. Combine the cornstarch, flour and baking powder in a bowl; add a little salt and pepper and mix well.
5. In another bowl, whisk the egg white until stiff peaks form. Add half of the flour mixture to the egg white and fold in. Add half the ice water, then the remaining flour mixture and enough water to make the batter have even consistency with beaten egg white. Refrigerate the batter until chilled, about 20 to 30 minutes.
6. Fill a heavy skillet with enough peanut oil to a depth of 2 inches. Heat the oil over medium-high heat to 375°.
7. Remove the batter from the refrigerator and, one at a time; dip the cactus strips in it. Drop the strips into the hot oil and cook until crispy and golden, 2 to 3 minutes.
8. Drain on paper towels and serve immediately with salsa or ketchup.

#### Tips/Techniques

So the fries don't clump as they cook, drop them into the hot oil one by one. And don't put too many in at one time; this lowers the heat and they won't be as crispy. They're done when the batter is light brown and the bubbles around each strip are almost gone. Cactus pads taste a bit like green beans crossed with okra. For these fries, use only fresh cactus pads.

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**November Succulent of the Month****Josie Watts**

Plant: *Kalanchoe beharensis*

Variety: rose leaf

Family: Crassulacea

This plant's origin is Madagascar. It can reach 12' in habitat. It has large leaves on opposite sides of the stem. They are large triangular leaves and are irregularly lobed, five to fourteen inches. They are thick and dense, covered with felt-like hairs, hence the nickname "felt plant". The plant blooms spring to summer with small yellow blooms on terminal racemes.

The plant is said to thrive on neglect, with the most common problem being overwatering. They should be watered regularly, but allowed to dry out between waterings. Light preference is sun to partial shade. I could not locate exact temperature requirements, other than that they prefer intermediate to warm environment. Propagation is by small offsets at the base of the main plant or by leaf cuttings.

Information was scarce, but I purchased this plant at the TACSS auction here in Houston. I couldn't resist the thorny trunk and big, fuzzy leaves. I have it outdoors with my other kalanchoes at present, but will watch it to be sure it is happy there. I plan to bring it in this winter.

References: [Plant of the week.org](http://Plantoftheweek.org)  
[Succulents.com](http://Succulents.com)  
[Wikipedia](http://Wikipedia)



## OBLOG – The Best Cactus & Succulent Blog

LILIANA CRACRAFT

According to the host of **OBLOG (pronounced oh'-blog)**, this blog, dedicated to cactus and succulents, was created with the intent to give the reader “a sense of these wonderful plants, their beauty, and their biology.” However, upon exploring this site, I was pleasantly surprised to find out that this blog has gone beyond, providing the user with a myriad of topics to include plants, animals, art, fungus, and more. This has made this blog unique and very interesting for the reader.

The blog, residing at <https://opuntiads.com/oblog>, is the creation of Dr. Joe J. Shaw, a former professor of botany at Auburn University. He enjoyed photographing and writing about plants, and looking for a new hobby, decided to develop the blog in 2014, after a friend suggested it.

The main page of the blog includes 4 sections: Home, About Oblog, References, and More.

### Home

The most recent articles can be found at the top of this section. The articles are short, informative, and very well-written. They are easy to read, and the included photographs are always of very high quality. Eight additional recent articles can be found by scrolling down the page, and all articles can be shared through social media or electronic mail.

On the right hand side of the page the user can also find three different **search engines** that facilitate finding articles of interest. The first engine allows the user to type any word. A second one includes 6 categories: here you can search for articles on animals, cacti, opuntiads, other plants, other topics, or succulents. The third search engine, entitled the Oblog Archives, facilitates looking for articles according to their date of publication (month & year).

My favorite section in this page is the **alphabetical list of topics** which is very interesting. Among others, it includes Africa, Birds, Cholla, Flowers, México, etc. All topics on the list have active links that will guide you to the articles of interest.

People can sign up for the blog and subscribe to the posts in the main page by entering an email account. Subscribers receive a notification when new articles are posted.

### About Oblog

This section includes a welcoming message from Dr. Shaw, information about the photographs used in the blog, and other details about the software, copyright information, and the terms of use.

### References

Here you will find an impressive list of publications consulted in the preparation of the articles. The most wonderful thing about this section is that many of the publications have an active link to a website or to an on-line book available at the Cactus and Succulents Digital Library.

### More

The “more” section of the blog is a wonderful surprise for the reader. Don't let the title and location prevent you from exploring a great site. Here you can find three sections: Opuntia Web, Chollas, and a third one called Black and White.



The **Opuntia web** includes an excellent compilation of the opuntiads found in the United States. The articles published here are the result of the work of a group of very talented individuals. Dr. Shaw is responsible for building the website, organizing the content, and serves as the publisher and senior editor. David J. Ferguson, curator for the Rio Grande Botanic Center in Albuquerque, N.M is the taxonomist and executive editor. Nancy Hussey, a botanist and avid hiker is the editor of articles on plants from the Mojave Desert. She has extensive experience in this area of the U.S. and is the co-discoverer of *Opuntia diploursina* (CSSA Journal 86(2): 79-93. 2014). Daniel A. Green is a botanist and ecologist from Florida and is responsible for editing articles on *Opuntia* species found in his state. Michelle Cloud-Hughes is a botanist and restoration ecologist specializing in desert flora, and Joselyn Fenstermacher, MSc. lives and has studied the plants in the area of the Big Bend for more than 15 years.

The photographs of the plants are taken in their natural habitat to allow the reader to see how the plants look like during the different seasons of the year and how they grow naturally. The authors conduct extensive work before any article is posted, This includes finding any original publication(s) about the plant in question and comparing the descriptions with actual plants. More than 90 species of *Opuntia* are described here and an easy to use menu allows the reader to find specific species. No hybrids are included in this blog.

For the reader who desires to learn about opuntias in more depth, the page provides links to sections about how species are identified, opuntia DNA, ecology, reproductions, and chromosomes.

As in other sections of the blog, the references list includes many citations with active links.

The **Chollas** segment includes information about *Cylindropuntia*, *Corynopuntia* (*Grusonia*), and *Micro-puntia*. About 25 species are described here. The reader can also learn in the general introduction how the species are identified, and the references list is also provided.

The third item in the "More" section includes a superb collection of **black and white** photographs related to opuntias. These interesting photographs were taken by David Griffiths (1867-1937), a botanist who once worked for the United States Department of Agriculture. He took thousands of photos, which are currently archived as glass negatives at the Smithsonian Institution Archives.

I invite you to subscribe to this blog by submitting a request on the main page, or by sending an e-mail message to Dr. Shaw at [jshaw@opuntiads.com](mailto:jshaw@opuntiads.com)

The latest article entitled *Opuntia ammophila* was posted on October 30, 2017.



Dr. Joe J. Shaw, Oblog host

## December Cactus of the Month

Cindy Gray

**Mammillaria spinosissima Un Pico**

*Mammillaria spinosissima* (spin-oh-SIS-ee-muh), also known Uno Pico, Pico, Un-pico or spiny pincushion cactus, is a type of cactus endemic to the central Mexican states of Guerrero and Morelos, where they grow at elevations of approximately 5,200 to 6,200 feet. A very popular plant is in cultivation in Europe before 1991, but never formally described.

The cylindrical and elongated dark blue green plants grow up to 12 inches tall and 4 inches wide. They reach full height after five to ten years. The spines are red-brown or white, with cream-colored radials and pink, funnel-shaped flowers that grow in a ring around the apex of the stem to approximately 0.79 inches long. It grows low to the ground in solitary or in clusters, and its flowers produce generally bright red berries that are club-shaped, smooth, and juicy.



*Mammillaria spinosissima* thrive in well-drained soils that are sandy or loam, with a pH ranging from acidic to neutral. They prefer low humidity and full, filtered sun to encourage the heaviest spine formation. Plants are watered regularly, and kept nearly dry during the winter months. They require no pruning and make good patio and container plants. They are relatively disease resistant, but susceptible to pests such as mealworms. It is a great starter plant for the cactus grower. Synonyms are *Mammillaria spinosissima* cv. 'Un Pico', *Mammillaria spinosissima* ssp *spinosissima*, *Mammillaria v unispina*, *Mammillaria spinosissima* cv. 'One Spine'.

REF: The Encyclopedia of Cacti, Plant Lust and Dave's Garden



## November Cactus of the Month

David VanLangen

**Thelocactus bicolor**

*Thelocactus bicolor* is a small barrel shaped cylindrical cactus. It is usually single stemmed and about 6-10 inches tall and 2-3 inches in diameter. The cylindrical body is composed of vertical ribs and in most varieties is mostly covered by spines. Most of the spines are reddish to pink and white although some spines are a fiery red. Most fade to a shade of gray when older. The central spines are often papery, flattened and curve upward. The stems are usually single but clumps can occur.

*Thelocactus bicolor* is found growing wild in Texas and Mexico. In Texas there are 2 localities- the typical *T. bicolor* var *bicolor* in south Texas in the area of Rio Grande City and the other in the Big Bend of West Texas. There are 2 isolated varieties of *Thelocactus bicolor* in the Big Bend -- The variety *Thelocactus bicolor* var. *flavidispinus* is found near Marathon growing on the Caballos Novaculite formation and the *T. bicolor* var *schottii* that is found mainly in the area of Big Bend State Park between Presidio and Big Bend National Park. In Mexico this plant is found in Coahuila, Nuevo LeÛn, San Luis PotosÌ, and Zacatecas, occurring in limestone or sandstone slopes or outcrops from lower deserts up to nearly 7,000 ft above sea level. Most of its habitat is within the Chihuahuan Desert regions and the Tamaulipan ecoregion. There are also several varieties known in Mexico and most are known from either the spination differences or the size of the body.

*Thelocactus bicolor* is commonly called “ The Glory of Texas ” and rightfully so ! The pink flowers have a reddish throat and are often over 3-4 inches across. Many times the flower petals will curve backwards and completely cover the plant ! This little cactus does well in cultivation and is very popular in the trade. It can be found on many mail order nurseries plant list-- along with showing up at local nurseries and the big nation wide chains. This is one of the cactus that should be in every collection--- good looking spines --- great flowers that can bloom from spring until early fall. The ability for this plant to prosper in cultivation (if sheltered from too much rain ) makes it a real winner--- Just call it “ The Glory of Texas “!!



With 2018 quickly approaching your HCSS Membership Dues is due. Renewal Membership Forms will be available at the meetings for your convenience. Dues is still \$20 for individual and \$25 for family. Please note the dues has not increased since I joined many years ago.

Cindy Gray  
HCSS - Second Vice President

**Correction:**

Last month article "INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT ECHEVERIAS" by LILIANA CRACRAFT was missing a credit.

Photo Credit: Santos Canales, Ixtapa de la Sal, México.

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