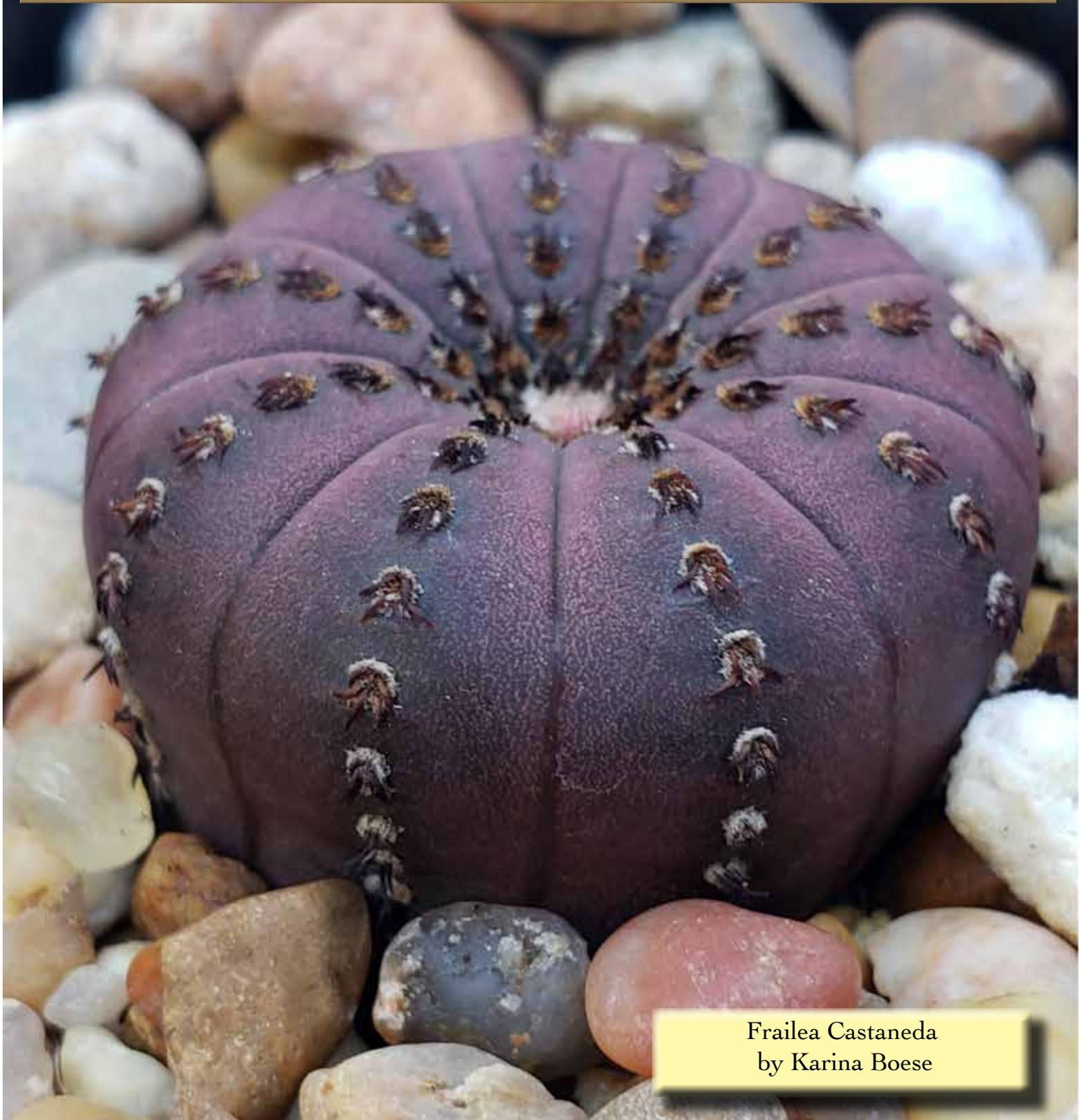


VOL. 60
No. 3

MAY-JUNE 2023

Kaktos Komments

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



Frailea Castaneda
by Karina Boese



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

Membership

Andrea Varesic and Lana Sands

On March 22nd, 7 pm HCSS met at the Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. There were twenty four members in attendance and four guests. Our first musical cactus presentation was given by the talented Chaden Yafi. Composer was John Cage, who composed "Child of the Tree", the first use of a plant as a musical instrument. Chaden performed his composition with her own plants.

We discussed our upcoming sale on Friday May 12 from 9-5 and on Saturday from 9-3 at the Center. There will also be a show and judging of our own plants, as a practice in showing and in clerking for the fall Show and Sale. The cactus of the month, *Cereus cv "Ming Thing"*, was presented by Joseph Rodd. The succulent of the month, *Hoya Krimson Princess*, was presented by Sara Ortiz.

On April 26, 7:00 pm, the HCSS met at the Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. There were twenty four members and two guests. Cactus of the month was *Echinocereus papillosus* and it was presented by David Van Langen. Succulent of the month, *Aloinopsis schooneesii*, was presented by Echo Pang. Our program was presented by Liliana Cracraft who discussed the *Opuntia* and how it benefited the entire world. Dave Thomas brought in a *Adenium socrotranum* and *Adenium arabicum* hybrids for Show and Tell. A donation of four door prizes was gifted by a member so four of other members walked away from the meeting smiling with a gift in hand!

We, as a club, wish to extend condolences to the family of Richard Holland, a life member, who passed away on March 10.

Please send membership news to Lana Sands Lana02660@gmail.com.

Calendar:

May 10, 2023	7:00 pm Board Meeting via Zoom
May 12-13, 2023	Spring Sale, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center
May 24, 2023	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Program: "Importing Succulent Seeds into the USA per USDA Regulations SMALL LOTS OF SEED PROGRAM" by Wallace Ward
June 28, 2023	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Program: Cactus and Succulent Plants "Considerations" by Dave Thomas
July 1, 2023	Deadline for submitting articles for the KK.

May Cactus of the Month**Karina Boese****Cleistocactus winteri ssp. Colademono**

Family: Cactaceae
 Subfamily: Cactoideae
 Tribe: Trichocereae
 Genus: Cleistocactus

Synonym:

Borzicactus colademononis
Cleistocactus colademononis
Hildewintera colademononis
Hildewintera polonica
Winterocereus colademononis

Common Name: Monkey Tail Cactus

ORIGIN & HABITAT:

This funky tail cactus is native to Bolivia.

Specifically in a small town in the eastern foothills of the Bolivian Andes about 18 miles east of Samaipata, a capital of Florida province in the Santa Cruz Department. The altitude is about 4600 feet above sea level.

As you may have guessed, the name refers to the appearance of the stem. “Cola de mono” means monkey tail in Spanish, and the name was given by the local Bolivian people who first encountered and kept the plant. It is suggested that the Bolivian Gray Titi Monkey or White Eared Titi Monkey is the species that this name (*callicebus donacophilus*) is based on.



Photo by Karina Boese



A group white-eared titis often twine tails together. Check out their tails!

Photo by Jack Hynes/ Creative Commons. Source: <https://neprimateconservancy.org/bolivian-gray-titi/>

The species is found on sandstone cliffs, where they grow in the cracks and crevices of the rock (epilithic or lithophytic). They usually branch at the base. At first they will grow upright, then they will curve, hang down (pendent), and grow downwards.

HARDINESS:

USDA hardiness zones 9a to 11b: from 20 °F to 50 °F.

The climate in their natural habitat is described as subtropical where winter months are cool and semi-dry with an average temperature of 68 F, and summers are wet with average temperature range between 46°F to 73 °F.

DESCRIPTION:

The stems are cylindrical, light green color, up to 8.5 feet long and up to 2.8 inches in diameter. The stems are covered with spines that are pointing downward, bristle-like yellowish with around 20-50 white hair-like long spines. Due to poor genetic formation, there are some monkey tail planted by seeds that were born with only a few spines. They classified it as *Cleistocactus colademononis inermis* (the term *inermis* in botany means it has no spines or thorns).

Flowers appear from late spring to early fall. Depending on the hybrid, they usually are bright red and up to 3.2 inches long, up to 2 inches in diameter. The flowers grow almost horizontal from the areola.

Fruits also have a reddish color, more or less globular, up to 0.5 inches in diameter, and contain black seeds that are known to germinate easily.



Photo by Karina Boese

CULTIVATION/GROWTH:

Monkey Tail cactus can be propagated by cutting, scaring the base of the plant, and seeds. Always allow the cuttings to callus before planting them. Rooting usually occurs within 3-8 weeks.

If you grow them in Houston, choose a location that gets full sun in the morning and indirect sun during the hottest time of the day. Plant them in a well-draining soil. I know a grower who has success growing them in pure lava rock and uses a low-nitrogen liquid fertilizer once or twice a year. Water during spring and summer and make sure to wait for the soil to dry before the next watering day. Reduce watering during fall season, and keep them dry during winter to avoid root rot. It is considered as an easy plant to grow!

REFERENCES:

- http://www.llifile.com/Encyclopedia/CACTI/Family/Cactaceae/9580/Cleistocactus_winteri_subsp._colademononis
- <https://worldofsucculents.com/cleistocactus-winteri-colademononis-monkeys-tail/>
- <https://www.cactusnames.org/cleistocactus-winteri-subsp-colademono/>
- <https://succulentsnetwork.com/cleistocactus-winteri-subsp-colademono-care-guide/>

May Succulent of the Month

Chlorophytum suffruticosum

Karla Halpaap-Wood

Synonyms: *Anthericum suffruticosum*
Chlorophytum rhizomatosum
Anthericum acuminatum
Anthericum campestre
Dasytachys polyphylla
Anthericum inexpectatum
Anthericum longisetosum
Chlorophytum polyphyllum

Family: ANTHERICACEAE

Origin: Kenya, Tanzania

The genera name from Greek; chloros; 'yellowish' and Latin; phytom; 'plant'.

There are over 150 species within *Chlorophytum*. Out of those, only two that are succulents: *C. suffruticosum* and *C. orchidastrum*. One fact about the *Chlorophytum* species is that it contains one of the most popular plants— *C. comosum*, the common spider plant.

Habitat: *C. suffruticosum* is found in eastern and central Africa. The plant is not found in the rainforest regions, but in drier areas.

Description:

Chlorophytum suffruticosum is a stem succulent.



It grows in well draining soil, needs some water and sun. Stems grow up to 4 cm in diameter and 60 cm long. The leaves grow from the ends of the stems and can reach 30 cm. They are similar to the leaves of the spider plant, narrow and long. The flowers are white and are also similar to those of the spider plant. They are small (3 cm across) and white, and each stalk can have up to 25 flowers. The flower stalks grow from the ends of the stems. Blooming can occur any time of the year and multiple times. Plant needs regular watering. If it is too dry for a period of time it will go dormant, winter or summer. Plant is not cold hardy and if too wet in cold temperatures roots can rot.

Propagation: seed or cuttings

My experience: I got this plant many years ago, I think it was a HCSS door prize. It was labeled, but the label has long faded and I never could find a plant by that name on the internet. So either it was bad handwriting or just wrong. But recently Echo Pang helped me identify it and I am convinced she is right with the ID. As the plant in itself is pretty ugly I often neglected it and it was dormant for a long time. Then a few years ago in summer I repotted and put it in the rain and sun and it grew a lot, bloomed and I think it is quite pretty. I repotted again this year and hope for some more growth.

References:

Bihrmann's caudiciforms: <http://www.bihrmann.com/caudiciforms/subs/chl-suf-sub.asp>

Henry Shaw Cactus and Succulent Society: <https://hscactus.org/resources/plants-of-the-month/chlorophytum-2017/>

Illustrated Handbook of Succulent Plants: Monocotyledons, Urs Eggli, p. 229

Field trip to Mercer Greenhouses

March 18th, 2023

Jacob Martin who works there gave us a tour of the greenhouses.





Euphorbia neurubella



Euphorbia bongavalensis



June Cactus of the Month

Echo Pang

Obregonia denegrii

Common name: Artichoke Cactus

Origin: Discovered in 1923 by Alberto Vojtěch Frič (a famous Czech botanist undertook 8 voyages to America, discovered, described and catalogued many species of cactus) and Marcello Castaneda in the valley of Jaumave, Tamaulipas, Mexico. The name *Obregonia* honors Alvaro Obregón, a leader in the Mexican Revolution and the country's first president.

Obregonia denegrii is the only representative of its genus among the most famous of all cacti, for its unique artichoke-shaped stem, always solitary with the sunk and woolly apex growing leveled to the ground. It is related to both *Ariocarpus* and *Lophophora*.



Photo credit:
Phaitoon Chaiwatthanamethin



Photo credit: Ad Konings, iNaturalist

Habitat:

Obregonia denegrii thrives in semi-desert (or Tamaulipan Shrubland) both

in open areas and in dense bushes. They generally grow in limestone soil, among gravel and small stone in the inferior part of a dense forest. On lower hill slopes where erosion is a serious problem, plants can get washed off from the soil during heavy rains. The climate is semi-arid, relatively wet and humid. And it is partly cloudy year round. Over the course of the year, the temperature typically varies from 51°F to 94°F (rarely below 43°F or above 104°F). Jaumave experiences extreme seasonal variation in monthly rainfall with the most rain in September (avg. rainfall of 5.5 inches); the least rain is in December (avg. rainfall of 0.4 inches). Summer into fall can be extremely humid, which can last for 5 to 6 months, from early May to late October. It feels very muggy, oppressive, or miserable at least 12% of the time during this time of the year!

Description: *O. denegrii* has a solitary, greyish green to dark green artichoke-shaped stem with a woolly center. It can grow to more than 15cm (6 inch) in diameter. The tubercles arise in

a rosette, overlapping and arranged in a spiral, deeply cut like an artichoke. The shape of tubercles is triangular, protruding, with leaf like tips. Areoles appear at the tips of the tubercles with wool. There are 2 to 4 soft and flexible spines whitish to brown in the young tubercles. A seed grown plant develops thick taproots. Buds form in the wool of the apex. Flowers are funnel-shaped, white petals with reddish filaments, yellow anthers and white style and stigma lobes. Blooming time is summer during the day. Fruits are hidden in the apex wool to ripe. Seeds are large and black (1 to 1.4 mm long).

There are three forms and cultivars of plants belonging to the *O. denegrii* group:



- 1. *Obregonia denegrii* f. *aurata* (hort.): variegated with uniformly yellow stems due to the absence of (or very little) chlorophyll pigments.
- 2. *Obregonia denegrii* f. *cristata* (hort.): crested form. The stem is fan shaped.
- 3. *Obregonia denegrii* f. *monstruosa* (hort.): monstrous form. Free branching with stocky, rounded tubercles and woolly white areoles.

Cultivation: This is a very slow growing plant and can pose some challenge to cultivate. It likes high humidity in summer, can enlarge relatively fast when well watered, but it is also very prone to stem rot in stagnant air. It is often seen as a grafted plant but grows very well on its own roots too. It needs a very well drained mineral substrate with little organic matter. Requires a decent amount of sun for good compact growth but gets scorched easily in direct sun. Water sparingly from March to October and keep dry in winter (when night temperatures remain below 10° C). To prevent drying and shedding of the lower tubercles, it is also advised to give this plant a light and cautious watering in winter. It is hardy to -4°C (or less) for a short period when well established, but it doesn't enjoy cold at all. Make sure to keep atmospheric humidity low in winter and ensure excellent ventilation in greenhouses. In Houston, this cactus will do really well in summer with rain shelter; and staying in a well ventilated, low humidity greenhouse in winter.

Propagation: Exclusively by seeds. The seedlings are tiny and very slow growing in the first two years (to reach the diameter of 3-5 mm). It's critical for seedlings to reach 4 years old because they will be tougher and easier to grow afterwards. A 5 to 6 years old plant will reach to about 5 cm in diameter but always require very careful watering. Plants reach flowering size in about 7 to 8 years. Most of the plants in cultivation nowadays are grafted as seedlings to increase their growth speed and success rate.

References:

1. http://www.llifile.com/Encyclopedia/CACTI/Family/Cactaceae/2100/Obregonia_denegrii
2. Edward Anderson "The Cactus family" Timber Press, Incorporated, 2001
3. <https://www.cactusexpert.org/cultivation-of-cacti/obregonia.html>
4. <https://weatherspark.com/y/6159/Average-Weather-in-Jaumave-Mexico-Year-Round>

Photo credit:

1. Habitat: <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/185339-Obregonia-denegrii>
2. Picture of Obregonia in habitat: <https://www.inaturalist.org/photos/81814512>
3. Pictures of Obregonia denegrii f. *aurata*; *O. denegrii* f. *cristata*; *O. denegrii* f. *monstrosa* and seedling with taproots: http://www.llifile.com/Encyclopedia/CACTI/Family/Cactaceae/2100/Obregonia_denegrii
4. Picture of cultivation plant in flowers by Phaitoon Chaiwatthanamethin: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/420722088282106/permalink/1935494460138187>

June Succulent of the Month

Craig Hamilton

Plant Name – **Euphorbia Francoisii**

Family – Euphorbiaceae

Genus – Euphorbia

Species – Francoisii

Description – Small caudiciform (up to 10 inches) with variable multi-shaped and colored leaves. The leaves are usually grey to green with the amount of sun giving them red highlights. The caudex is usually raised and displayed with older plants. The caudex is an excellent way to monitor water content. Nice and chubby is happy; if not, add water.



Origin – Southern Madagascar, subtropical to tropical dry climate. I assume they are an understory plant. I know they are losing their habitat.

Temperature – I keep mine above 45 degrees. Cold and damp are a dangerous combination.

Light – Morning sun to partial shade; more sun = more color. Avoid strong afternoon sun.

Water – Let older specimens almost dry out between waterings. Don't let seedlings and young plants dry out. I bottom water and mist these.

Propagation – Seed, branch and leaf; and in that order for quality and ease.

Soil Mix – I use 40% grit with seedlings, 50% with small plants and 60% with larger specimens.

Thailand has fallen in love with this plant and are creating incredibly unique hybrids. They are crossing francoisii with many other Euphorbias. They are creating many unique leaf colors, sizes and shapes. My favorites are francoisii var. crassicaulis rubrifolia and francoisii/tulearensis hybrids.



REMEMBERING RICHARD HOLLAND (1931-2023)

LILIANA CRACRAFT

Richard (Dick) Holland, 91, passed away peacefully in Houston, Texas on March 10, 2023. He joined HCSS in 2008 and was always very enthusiastic about being a member and attending the meetings.

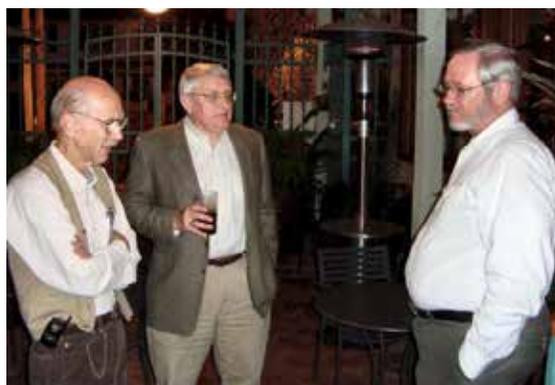
He always volunteered to set up and take down at the spring and fall shows, and served as a clerk many years. Eventually he was trained to become one of the judges.

From 2012 to 2018 he was a member of the Education Committee, in charge of scheduling the cactus and succulent of the month, and in 2018 he became the chair of the committee. In 2020 he was named a Life Member of our Club. About his personal life, Richard was born in Tulsa, OK and graduated from the Missouri School of Mines with a degree in medical engineering. Upon graduation he was hired by The Texas Company in deferral and was commissioned as a second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. For two years, he served as an officer over a combat engineering platoon deployed to Germany for training as the Korean War wound down.

At the completion of his service in the Army, Dick joined Texaco, in Port Arthur, Texas, where he spent most of his 40 year career structuring and deploying new generations of technology systems. He was always active in his church, St. Mary's Catholic Church, where he met the love of his life, and wife for over 60 years, Mary Elaine Holland.

He enjoyed the outdoors, and was part of an archery club, a Dutch Oven Cooking Group, and Our Cactus Society.

We will always remember him.



In Search of Lost Ariocarpus

Chaden Yafi

I was thrilled when my friend Dr. C offered to treat me to a vacation in her favorite place: Big Bend National Park! I had heard so much about this area of Texas, as it holds a special significance for cactus enthusiasts. I was particularly excited about the opportunity to see the exotic Ariocarpus cacti in their natural habitat. These cacti are only found in the Big Bend and a small portion of Mexico. Despite their distinctive star-like shape, they are adept at camouflage and are known to hide among rocks to avoid predators.

My friend, who shares my love for plants, was also excited to learn more about cacti. She had visited the park more than 20 times and owned a 4-wheel drive car that would allow us to explore remote areas and rough roads. Before leaving, I consulted a colleague in the Cactus Society who had visited Big Bend years ago. He advised me to search for Ariocarpus in areas with limestone slopes and Creosote plants, as they sometimes grow under these plants for shade. He also told me to walk slowly and look down, because the Ariocarpus can be easy to miss.

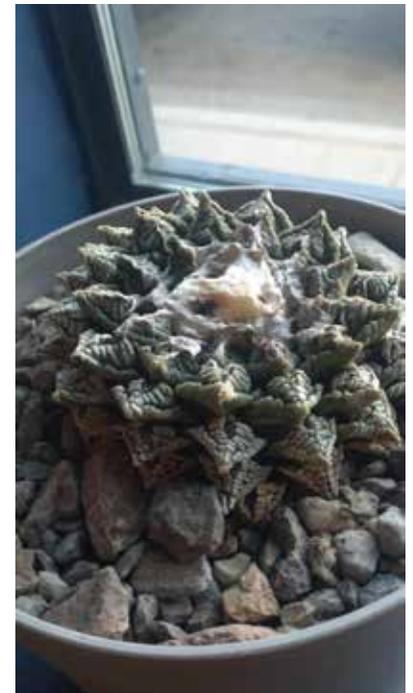
We arrived at Big Bend in the early evening after a tiring 12-hour drive. It was not yet dark, so I walked around the cabin and I was overwhelmed by the sight of numerous cacti in the surrounding area, including Ferocactus, Epithelantha, Mammillaria, Echinocactus horizionthalonius (also known as Eagle Claw), and Strawberry hedgehog cactus. They all appeared to be healthy and thriving, enjoying the dry, fresh air of the desert. Seeing them in their natural habitat was a different experience from observing my potted cacti - there was something raw, innocent, and divine about the way they looked. "Wait until you see the ones in the park," my friend said. On our first day at the park, we decided to explore the Dagger's Flat trail, an area heavily populated with cacti. As we began our trek, we were greeted by the stunning sight of thousands of tall, blooming yuccas, standing in rows like guards of the desert. Despite their spectacular view, I kept my eyes focused on the ground, searching for the Ariocarpus. Along the way, I saw a variety of cacti, including blooming Echinocereus, Ferocactus, Mammillaria, and Coryphantha, but unfortunately, I didn't spot any Ariocarpus.

Next, we visited Dugout Wells and the Hot Springs, and on the rough road back, I noticed slopes of limestone. I asked my friend to let me out and drive ahead so that I could search for the Ariocarpus in that area. I carefully scanned each part, looking for any trace of the elusive cactus. Although I found many Escobarias and other types of cacti, I was disappointed not to find a single Ariocarpus. We also explored the Marufo Vega trail but with the same result - we saw various types of cacti, but no sign of my beloved Ariocarpus.

The next day, we decided to visit Alpine and stopped at a coffee shop for some coffee. While we were there, I noticed a medium-sized clay pot on the window sill, which was occupied by a large and beautiful Ariocarpus. I immediately asked the owner where they got it from, and she told me that a professor from Sul Ross University had left it there as a "rescued plant." Near the potted Ariocarpus, my friend found business cards for a plant nursery in the area, and we decided to pay them a visit.

When we arrived, we met two women who had turned their backyard into a small plant nursery where they grew cacti from seeds to sell. Although they didn't seem to know much about Ariocarpus, they suggested that we visit Sul Ross University and their greenhouses. Even though it was a Saturday, they told us that sometimes an employee would be watering the plants, and they gave us their phone number.

We called the number and were lucky enough to find out that the employee was on her way to the greenhouse, so we decided to meet her there. The greenhouse was beautiful, with large specimens that professors used for bot-



any classes, as well as small ones that were offered for sale. I couldn't help but ask her where in the park I could find the Ariocarpus? She shared a heartbreaking story with me: a few months prior, park authorities confiscated 5,000 Ariocarpus specimens that poachers attempted to smuggle out of Big Bend for profit. She



showed me a photo from her cellphone that I will never forget: a massive pile of Ariocarpus cacti taken from the desert and stacked on top of each other. She explained that they all perished because they could not readjust to their natural environment. They were kept in terrible conditions, thrown into plastic bags, and tossed into a truck. She also said that Ariocarpus cacti are challenging to locate, as they hide very well among rocks, but during the fall, they produce a stunning pink flower that makes them easy prey for poachers, resulting in devastating consequences.

With heavy hearts, we continued our journey. My friend suggested visiting the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center, where a cactus museum had several types of Ariocarpus beautifully displayed in pots alongside other cacti. However, this was not enough for me; I was determined to witness them in their natural habitat, not in pots. We drove through numerous towns, scouring every area with limestone, but found none.

The following day, we went hiking in the Chisos Basin, and while my friend enjoyed the breathtaking view, I scanned the ground, still hoping to spot an Ariocarpus. On the way back, between Santa Elena Canyon and Terlingua Abajo, we found a desolate area with rough roads, and I requested my friend to stop once more. I spotted numerous Creosote plants and limestones substrate, but no Ariocarpus in sight, although cacti of all kinds bloomed beautifully with every step we took.

Our search continued, from trail to trail, road to road, and while we found numerous cacti, most with exquisite blooms, we did not find any Ariocarpus.

The last day of our trip, as we made our way back to the cabin after a long day exploring various towns, my friend and I were exhausted. I suddenly felt a



strange sentiment, I told her that I have always felt a spiritual connection to the desert (growing up in the Syria near one) and maybe if I focused my energy and called out to the Ariocarpus cactus, they would show up. It was a half-joking statement, but it held a lot of truth to me.

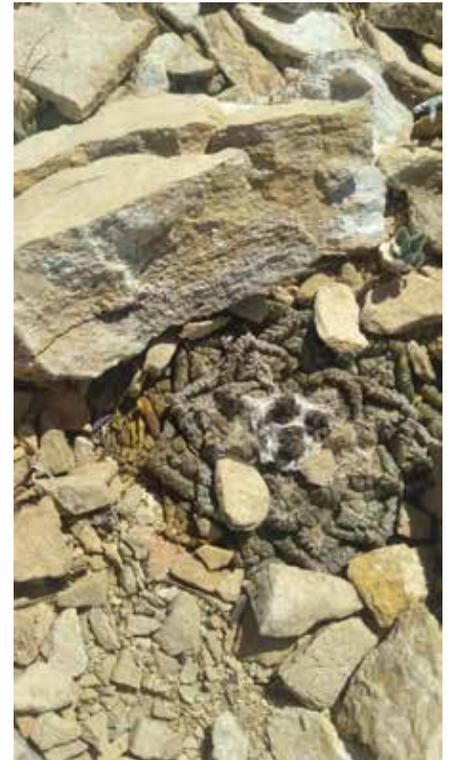
As we arrived at the cabin, my friend rested on the porch while I strolled to say goodbye to the various beautiful cacti I had seen in front of the cabin the first day. On my way back, just ten feet from the cabin, I looked down and saw, between my feet, a brownish star-shaped plant staring right back at me. It was an Ariocarpus! I screamed calling my friend over to see, Dr. C said, "When there is one, there are many." And she was right. We soon spotted over 18 Ariocarpus in the same area where we had been staying for days.



I spent some time sitting near the Ariocarpus, admiring their breathtaking beauty, serenity, and calmness. The weather was perfect, and the wind blew gently. The Ariocarpus seemed happy, content, and peaceful. This area was hidden from poachers and avid collectors. As the sun went down, a different light covered them gently, and they blended so magically in that serene desert scene as if they were going to sleep.

It saddened me to think about the other side of the hobby of collecting plants. While it can be very fulfilling it can also lead to harm. No doubt that the Ariocarpus cacti are among the most prized plants for any cactus collector worldwide. Yet, they are now threatened by extinction and need to be protected. Plants are not mere possessions to be amassed. Each one is a unique expression of life, deserving of respect and protection in its natural habitat.

I remembered the words of Emanuele Coccia the Italian/French botanist who became a philosopher and wrote about plants: “No other being adheres to the world that surrounds it more than plants... they participate in the world in its totality in everything they meet. Plants do not run, they cannot fly; they are not capable of privileging a specific place in relation to the rest of space, they have to remain where they are. Space, for them, does not crumble into a heterogeneous chessboard of geographical difference; the world is condensed into the portion of ground and sky they occupy.” Sadly, the illegal poachers, greedy sellers, and avid collectors deprive them of that portion, leaving them vulnerable to extinction.



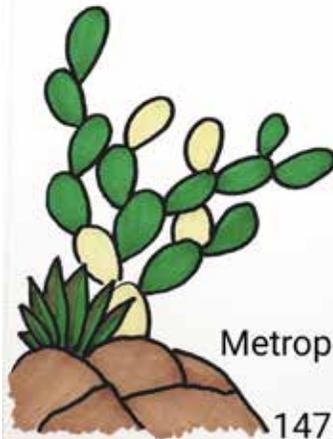
Getting ready for the Spring Sale April 29th 2023





Houston Cactus and Succulent Society

Spring Sale 2023



Friday, May 12
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Saturday, May 13
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Location:
Metropolitan Multi-Service
Center
1475 West Gray St.
Houston, TX 77019

<https://www.hcsstex.org>

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