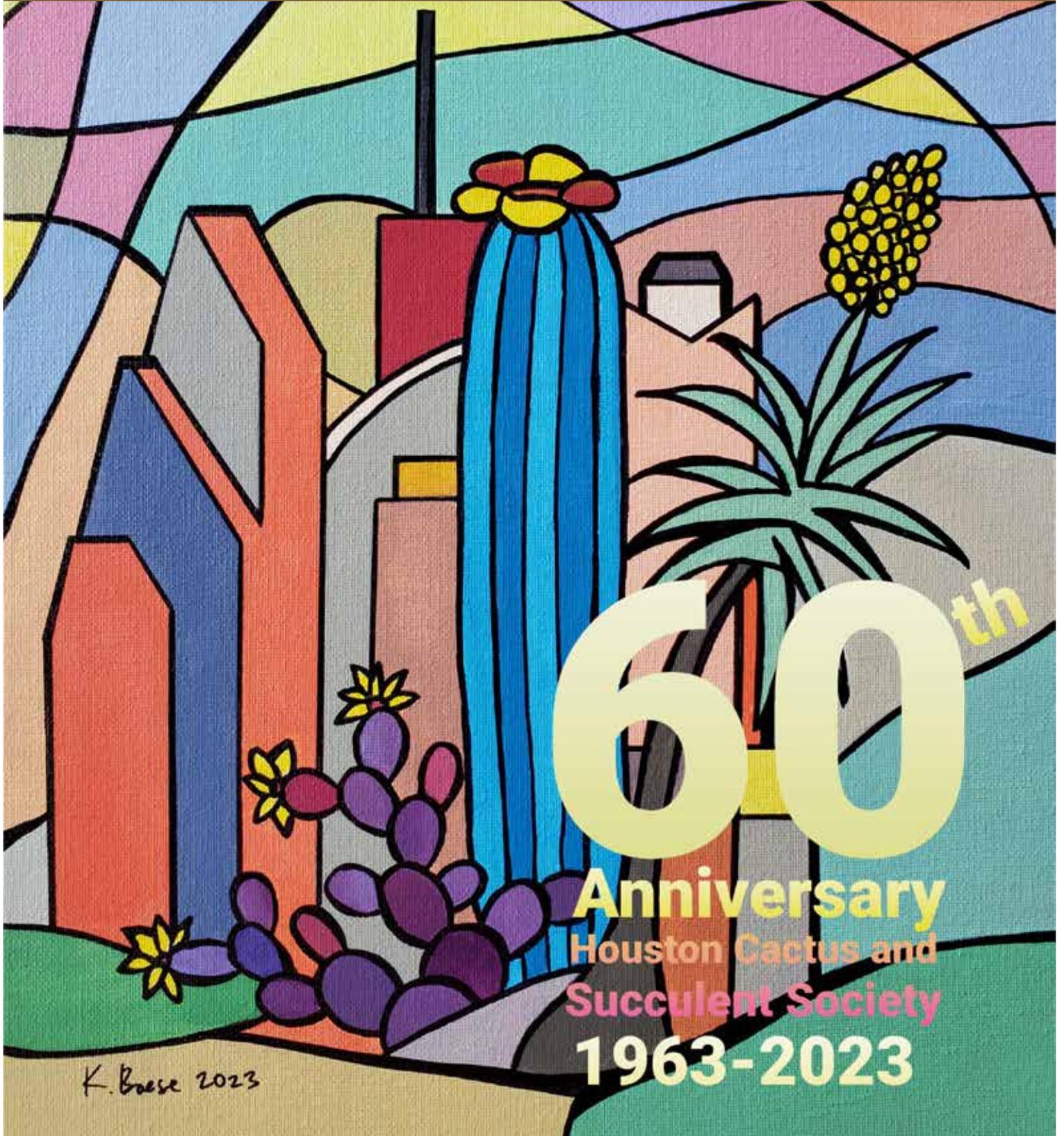


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Kaktos Komments

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



60th

Anniversary
Houston Cactus and
Succulent Society
1963-2023

K. Boese 2023



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

From the Editor**Karla Halpaap-Wood**

In July we will celebrate HCSS's 60th anniversary. Thank you Karina Boese for the painting for this special occasion. Of course I am always grateful for all the submissions for the KK.

Membership**Lana Sands and Andrea Varesic**

On May 24, 2023, 7 pm HCSS met at the Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. There were twenty-nine members and ten guests in attendance. Cactus of the month was *Cleistocactus winteri* ssp. *Colademono* and was presented by Karina Boese. Succulent of the month, *Chlorophytum suffruticosum*, was presented by Karla Halpaap-Wood.

A very interesting program -- "Importing Succulent Seeds into USA per USDA Regulations SMALL LOTS OF SEED" was presented by Wallace Ward.

Our thanks to Liliana Cracraft for bringing in chips, dip, and fried nopolitos for the Club members -- delicious!

On June 28th, our monthly meeting was held at the Multipurpose Center. We had thirty four members and two guests in attendance. Our door prizes were provided by Dave Thomas, soil samples from his presentation, and multiple members brought donated plants. Dave Thomas presented "Cactus and Succulent Plant Tips" and "The Mix", sharing with us considerations and recommendations from his 40 years of experience with cactus and succulents.

The June cactus of the Month: *Obregonia denegrii* was presented by Echo Pang and the June succulent of the Month: *Euphorbia Francoisii* was shown by Craig Hamilton.

Echo Pang, Craig Hamilton and Jacob Martin also brought in plants for the show and tell.

At our July meeting we will be having our 60th anniversary dinner. The next Show and Sale has been confirmed for September 22 and 23rd at the Multipurpose Center.

We have a field trip to Fred Reyes Nursery planned for October, a date still needs to be confirmed.

Calendar:

July 12, 2023	7:00 pm Board Meeting via Zoom
July 26, 2023	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Anniversary dinner, no program
August 23, 2023	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Program: "Learning from a trip to the desert from central NM to west TX- what we can do to build a better home for cactus to thrive in tropical Houston?" by Echo Pang
September 1, 2023	Deadline for submitting articles for the KK.
Sept. 22-23, 2023	Show and Sale at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center

July Cactus of the Month

Elizabeth Jackson

Common Name: **Fire Barrel Cactus**

Species: *Ferocactus Gracilis*

Family: Cactaceae

Subfamily: Cactoideae

Genus: *Ferocactus*

I became interested in this cactus when I was at a local nursery just south of Houston trying to decide on the cactus I wanted to present and add to my collection. What caught my attention was the striking red spines.

I ended up getting this cactus from Miles Anderson (miles2go.com). This is a good cactus for beginners so of course that's a good fit for me and it does well in containers.



Origin and Habitat: This barrel cactus is native to Baja California, Mexico which is located in the northwest. Most notable range of mountains found there are the Sierra De Juárez and the Sierra de San Pedro Mártir.

It is a dry climate with hot summers, but with its proximity near the Pacific Ocean the cold air current helps to maintain temperatures and add humidity. This ferocactus can be found along the rocky hillsides, silt flats and gravel plains.

Description: Dark green stem, bright red spines with light-grey felted areoles that are oval and bear clusters of 7 to 13 central spines. The central spines are somewhat hooked and flat, up to 1.6 inches (4cm) long. Radial spines are slender, up to 2.4 inches (6cm) long. The flowers appear in late spring to early summer and will open during the day. Colors range from golden yellow or reddish, with a darker red stripe down the middle of each petal followed by yellow fruit. Younger specimens will start off globular and become more cylindrical with age.

Cultivating/Growth: This is a slow growing species. You will see growth during the summer months and it will begin giving you blooms when it reaches around 20-25cm. It does well in containers with fast draining soil.

Choose a location for your *Ferocactus* that receives direct sun light to develop their typical spines. Keep it watered regularly in the summer but let it dry out between watering. It can take more water if you are seeing good, active growth.

This *Ferocactus* will need a dormant period, so reduce your watering through the winter months, and then by March you should start to see new growth. It can be sensitive to frost so be careful to protect it during colder months.



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<https://miles2go.com/images/6776.jpg>

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http://www.llifile.com/Encyclopedia/CACTI/Family/Cactaceae/11980/Ferocactus_gracilis

www.Wikipedia.org Baja California climate - Search results - Wikipedia

Map Image: <https://www.climatestotravel.com/climate/mexico/baja-california>

Photo of Ferocactus belong to Elizabeth Jackson

Photo of ferocactus flower Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferocactus_gracilis#/media/File:Ferocactus_gracilis_ssp._coloratus_01.JPG



CSSA News

Liliana Cracraft

Chuck Staples, a long-time historian of the Cactus and Succulents Society of America, has made his books available at the CSSA Archives.

A very interesting book is entitled "A HISTORICAL RECORD OF AUTHORS OF CACTUS AND SUC-CULENT PLANT NAMES AND BOOKS FOR THE AMATEUR HOBBYIST." There are 2 volumes.

Visit the CSSA website at cactusandsucculentsociety.org Click on CSSA Archives, and you will be able to find Chuck's books under "Other Histories."

Chuck has been the CSSA Historian since 1932. He's 90 years young.

Plectranthus ernstii

Family: Lamiaceae

Genus: Plectranthus

Species: Ernstii

Origin and Habitat: Originally from a small number of sites in South African KwaZulu-Natal (approximately the Eastern Cape of South Africa). It is known from well drained but mineral poor soils with 30-60 inches of rain annually. They are known to be somewhat specialists in cliff faces, sharing habitat with *Gasteria*, *Crassula* and *Aeollanthus*. Although with high nutrients and water they can shoot outwards, their ability to grow compact is adaptive to the habitat.

Hardiness: Native to twelve habitats, the plant seems to be adaptable to any hot dry climate provided enough drainage. An ideal for arid bonsai style cultivation, it seems to appreciate small pots and drying out between waterings.

Description: Grows erect, up to 11 inches. Grows a swollen tannish caudex with relatively pronounced lateral streaking. All stems can thicken but seems to happen most proximally to base. Leaves are semi succulent with minor round teeth, and are scented somewhat like spearmint, especially when under water stress. Both leaves and tender stems are fairly fragile and snappy when well watered.

Flowers appear relatively frequently with regular watering, and are blue purple with white markings, and look like typical Lamiaceae flowers.

Cultivation/Growth: Can be propagated easily by cuttings, which can rot in water but also root very rapidly so this may be tolerable. Anecdotally, a cutting from a single stem can grow into a 1" caudex in under a year with good conditions. Visibly wilts when underwatered but recover quite rapidly. They appreciate well drained soil with frequent waterings especially in summer. A bonsai look can be achieved with frequent aggressive pruning. Can tolerate high light and heat but seem equally adapted to a sunny windowsill indoors.

References:

<https://pza.sanbi.org/plectranthus-ernstii>

http://lilfe.info/Encyclopedia/SUCCULENTS/Family/Lamiaceae/35391/Plectranthus_ernstii

One of the few examples online of native growth habit



Echinocereus viridiflorus var. Davisii

Family: Cactaceae

Subfamily: Cactoideae

Genus: Echinocereus

Species: *viridiflorus* var *Davisii*

This very small cactus is only endemic to Texas in Brewster county. It grows on beds of selanginella on a substrate of rocky soil of Novaculite origin. It is seriously endangered, and not expected to expand due to its very specific substrate. This plant was not field collected, but is special to me because we once had a field trip to a Novaculite area. This area is described as Chichuachuan Desert scrublands.

It is a dwarf cactus, green with 6-9 ribs. It is turbinate to ovate, and is only 1" tall and .8" in diameter as a mature plant. It is usually solitary. Areoles have 8-11 spines, which are white, gray, or red-tipped. It is very sensitive to overwatering and should be watered only lightly, with water withheld in the winter months. It is very drought-tolerant, and recedes below the soil with only a few spines visible in extreme drought. Because of this, a well-draining soil mix is mandatory.

The blooms are yellow, green, or bronze and narrow at the tip. The bloom period is February through April.

The plant can tolerate full sun to light shade. It is also very heat-tolerant. It obviously can take freezes, but is in a very dry environment in habitat.

The plant is propagated by seed or stem cuttings.

I purchased my plant in 2017 at TACSS and it was the size of the tip of my little finger. I'm sure it would not be considered a good show plant because it would be judged as immature by judges who were not familiar with this particular species and its small size, although other *Echinocereus* clump and grow much larger. I enjoy it because of its small size and pretty flowers. It resides in my greenhouse and is planted in my cactus mix. It has never had any insect problems, but is becoming corky at soil level.



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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Echinocereus_viridiflorus Planet desert.com

<https://davesgarden.com/guides/pf/go/102983/#b>

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/science-magazines/davis-green-pitaya>



August Succulent of the Month

Bruce Moffett

Euphorbia Neriifolia

Euphorbia neriifolia, also known as Indian Spurge Tree, is one among the over 2,000 species that belong to the Euphorbiaceae family. It is native to Eastern or Central India and also reported in Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand.

When cultivated, it looks more like a shrub since it has the traits of a perennial succulent plant. As the plant slowly matures you can expect it to form a tree shape and reach up to 20ft. Most notable feature of the plant are the green leaves that have a strong yellow color on the outside. When the plant flowers you can expect it to produce bell-shaped yellow-green flowers. Another notable feature is the two pronged spikes that line the stems where leaves grew that make it difficult to handle.

Euphorbia neriifolia needs strong light. Full to partial sun is the best for its growth. It is better to grow outdoor rather than indoor. The watering method is very important to keep the plant healthy. It should not be wet, and an excess amount of water should be avoided. The best way of watering is soak and dry method to avoid overwatering. It prefers a warm climate and will appear dormant when the temperature drops below 50 degrees. It can survive at zone 10a-11b. If you live in a cold area, it is better to plant Indian Spurge Tree in an indoor environment.

It can be propagated by leaf cuttings or seeds. When propagating from cuttings, cut a leaf from the mother plant carefully with a clean knife or scissors. Before replanting, wait for a few days to allow it to callous. You can use root stimulator. Use well-draining pots and soil. It is a slow grower, so even though it can be propa-

gated by its seeds, it is not recommended.

Maintaining the plant is fairly easy. When growing indoors where light isn't too bright, the growth hormones might signal the plant to grow in a leggy manner. So, you want to prune the stems just to keep them in perfect shape, and place it somewhere it won't struggle to search for light. Growing outdoors, make sure it gets lots of sun and the pot drains well and don't do much else.

Even though this Euphorbia variety is a hardy plant, it is also prone to a few common issues such as root rot and algae growth which crop up as a result of overwatering. Get rid of any leaves that show signs of wilting or appear to suffer from fungal diseases.

References

<https://www.diys.com/euphorbia-neriifolia/>

<https://succulentsnetwork.com/euphorbia-neriifolia-indian-spurge-tree-care-guide/>



Spring Sale

We had our Spring Sale May 12 and 13.

Echo Pang was the top seller, followed by Dave Thomas and Jacob Martin. The club table did also very well. We also gained 9 new members.



Reprinted with permission from **Bats Conservation International**.



Austin, Texas (May 4, 2023) – Bat Conservation International (BCI) launches the “We Belong Together” campaign to promote the delicate balance between nectar-feeding bats and native agaves, and the need to protect and restore agave habitat across North America. In 10 years, populations of the Mexican long-nosed bat (*Leptonycteris nivalis*) decreased by half due to habitat loss and roost disturbances. Protecting these habitats is critical, not just for bats, but for the ecosystems and communities that rely on them.

“Approximately thirty years ago, the Mexican long-nosed bat was listed as Endangered by the Mexican and U.S. governments because bat numbers were dire,” says Dr. Ana Ibarra, BCI’s Strategic Advisor for Endangered Species. “Now we find that 26 historically known roosts for long-nosed bats are alarmingly empty or at risk.”



Mexican long-nosed bats are in peril due in part to diminishing numbers of agaves across vast desert and mountain landscapes. Bats and agaves have a mutualistic relationship. Female bats need blooming agaves for nourishment as they make their annual migration north to give birth. Agaves rely on bats to slurp nectar from the flowers and collect grains of

pollen on their fur, wings, and faces to pollinate the agaves and help propagate new plants.

“Bats are very important for ecosystems,” says Dr. Kristen Lear, BCI’s Agave Restoration Manager. “These bats that drink nectar from agaves are pollinating agaves. Other bats eat insects; they help control pest populations. Some bats disperse seeds and help regrow places like tropical rainforests.”



Additionally, agaves have a long history in religion and Mexican culture. Today, agaves are important resources, cultivated by farmers and harvested by rural communities to make products like tequila, mezcal, bacanora, agua miel, pulque, and agave syrup. The leaves, stalks, and rosettes of agaves are also used to feed livestock, and to make rope, paper, fabric, and soap. Plus, agave plants have extending root systems which help stabilize soil and control erosion.

Alarming, extensive land-use changes, livestock grazing, drought, and other pressures are threatening agaves and the ecosystems that depend on them. Across landscapes in Mexico and the U.S. Southwest, the Agave Restoration Initiative — a binational collaboration of diverse partners working between Mexico and the U.S. Southwest to save bats, restore native agaves, and support businesses and communities in sustainable agricultural and business practices — is helping unite communities to implement strategies that support and help grow local economies.

To bring the “We Belong Together” campaign to life, BCI worked with award-winning filmmaker Chris Gallaway of Horizonline Pictures to create a series of videos that capture the work of the Agave Restoration Initiative, in which partners engage in planting agaves, collecting seeds, and growing new plants; training farmers and community members in sustainable harvesting and agricultural practices; and working with land use managers to further inform decision-making.

The campaign also captures stories with BCI scientists, farmers turned conservationists learning how to sustainably harvest agaves for their livelihood, and landscape conservationists working in the U.S. Southwest and Mexico to preserve desert and mountain ecosystems.

To learn more about the “We Belong Together” campaign visit batcon.org/batsandagave.

Media Contact: Kathryn Slater



Remembering Grant Wells

Liliana Cracraft

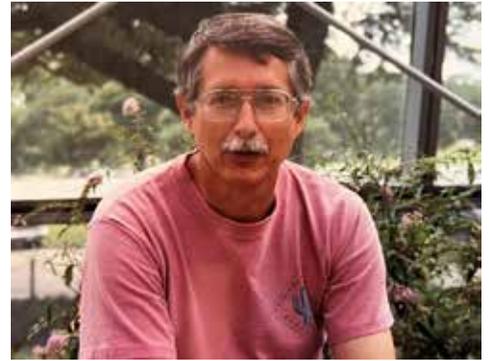
Grant Wells, a long-time member of HCSS and past president in 2003, sadly passed away on June 6, 2023. He had a passion for landscaping, and enjoyed working on his plants and cactus.

He joined the club in the early 1980's and remained active until 1990. After a few years' hiatus, he rejoined the club and became the president in 2003.

He presented several plants of the month, and contributed two excellent articles about Gasterias and Space-saving Aloes to our newsletter. You can find those articles in the KK archives Vol. 40. <https://www.hcsstex.org/newsletters.html>

Grant liked to participate at the Plants Sales, and at one point envisioned to have 4 sales a year; something that it never happened. After 2010 he was not as active as before, but continued to help the Club as a judge during the Plants Annual Show. He was a nice, knowledgeable, and quiet man.

Grant is survived by his children Michelle, Mathew, and Kristopher, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family. May he Rest in Peace.



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