

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/>