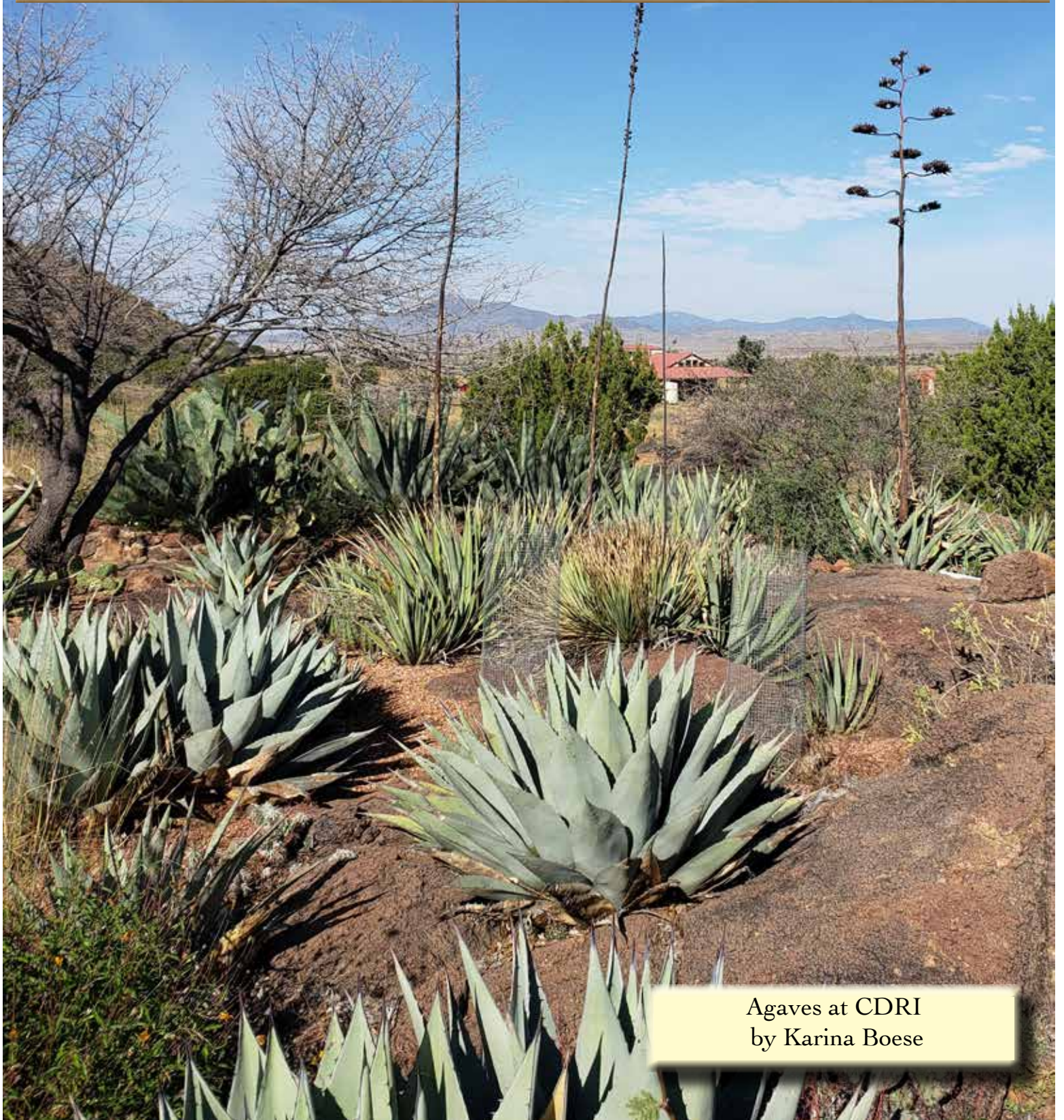


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NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2022

# Kaktos Komments

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



Agaves at CDRI  
by Karina Boese



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

**From the Editor****Karla Halpaap-Wood**

I want to thank everybody who contributed to this edition of the KK. It is our publication and anybody can contribute. Please send me your articles by the first of the odd months.

**Membership****Andrea Varesic**

On September 28th the HCSS met in person and on Zoom at the Multi-Purpose Center. We had seventeen members in attendance and three guests. The succulent of the month was presented by Karina Boese, *Monadenium stapelioides/ Euphorbia neostapedioides*. Cactus of the month, *Thelocactus hexaedrophorus*, was presented by Echo Pang. The program, "Big Bend National Park" was given Karina Boese.

On October 26th the HCSS met in person and on Zoom at the Multi-Purpose Center. We had eighteen members in attendance and five guests. The cactus of the month was presented by David Van Langen, *Mammillaria melaleuca*, and the Succulent of the month, *Haworthia emelyae X H. turgida*, was presented by Wallace Ward. The program was given by Andrea Varesic, "Phoenix Botanical Garden and Saguaro National Park". New officer nominations for 2023 were offered and accepted.

**HCSS officers for 2023**

President: Andrea Varesic  
 First Vice President: Wallace Ward  
 Second Vice President: Cindy Gray  
 Treasurer: Bruce Moffett  
 Secretary: Echo Pang

**Calendar:**

<b>November 9, 2022</b>	7:00 pm Board Meeting via Zoom
<b>November 16, 2022</b>	7:00 pm Membership Meeting, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center Program: A Leather-Like Product Developed from the Prickly Pear Cactus by Karla Halpaap-Wood, HCSS
<b>December 4, 2022</b>	Christmas party and Installation dinner
<b>January 1, 2023</b>	Deadline for submitting articles for the KK.

## November Cactus of the Month

Echo Pang

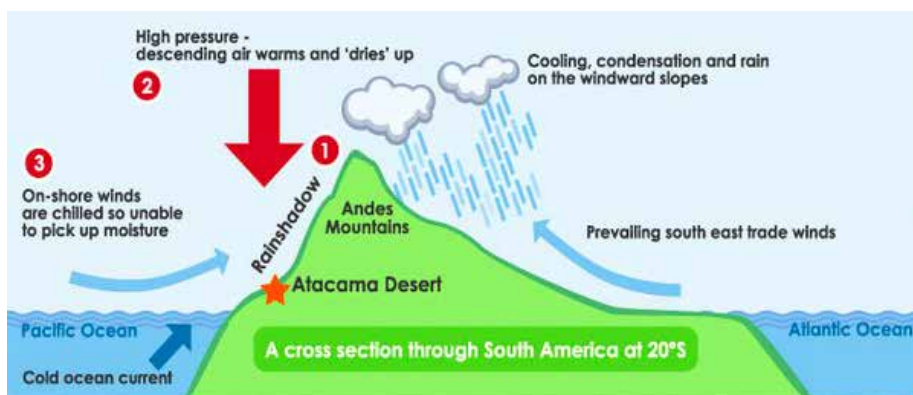
## Neoporteria Villosa



<https://chileanendemics.rbge.org.uk/taxa/eriosyce-villosa-monv-katt>

**Habitat and Ecology:** In Chile, where transverse mountain ranges link the coastal mountains with the Andes, forms the Atacama Region. The Atacama Region is known for its unique cacti- the genus of Copiapoa, along with a couple of Eriosyce species. The endemics include *Copiapoa echinoides*, *Copiapoa malletiana*, *Eriosyce napina* and *Neoporteria villosa*.

They occur in coastal hills on rocky soils where they are abundant and the population is stable. It is said that the desert of Atacama is the driest place on earth. The desert seems to sit on the wrong side of the Andes with regards to prevailing winds. The prevailing southeast trade winds carry moist air, forced to rise by high air pressure but fall on the opposite side of the Andes to the Atacama forming a “rain shadow”. Cold Humboldt Current from the Pacific Ocean chills onshore air, making it difficult to pick up moisture from the ocean.



<https://www.beautifulworld.com/south-america/chile/atacama-desert/>

The temperature in the Atacama Desert can reach highs of around 100°F (40°C) during the daytime, whilst falling to 40°F (5°C) or below at night.

A fun fact about the Atacama Desert-soil samples taken from Mars have been identified as being surprisingly similar to those taken from the Atacama Desert. As a result, NASA uses

the desert landscape to test its planetary rover vehicles prior to embarking upon missions to the red planet.

**Description:** *Neoporteria Villosa (Eriosyce villosa)* is one of the endemics to the Atacama Region (costal desert and semidesert) in Chile, a small solitary cactus typically with long hair-like radial spines and several small magenta flowers at a time. It has a globose stem, which becomes shortly columnar with age. The cactus usually has 13-15 prominent ribs deeply notched between areoles with very dense 3-4cm long, bristle like, greyish to black central spines and whitish hair-like radial spines. The colors of this cactus range from dark-green, greyish-green to dark blackish-purple, depending on the amount of sun exposure. In cultivation, it can be measured up to 15cm tall and 8cm in diameter. It has a large tuberose tap-root system.

Flowers appear at plant apex on young areoles, tubular to narrow funnel shape; the colors are bright magenta, showing various shades of purple-pink with clearer throat and floral tubes with long woolly white bristles. It blooms early in spring and late in fall here in Houston; and it can sometimes flower during the winter, although the main burst of flowering is in April. Pollination yields elongated red fruits after flowering.

**Cultivation and Propagation:** *Neoporteria Villosa* grows well from Spring to Fall. It is easy to cultivate if its soil has a good amount of mineral rocks. It is somewhat rot prone if kept in a non ventilated place and the soil is too rich in organic. It requires a very fast draining drying soil. I use grow my specimen in a 6" terracotta pot using 20% soil with 80% lava rocks, coarse sand and perlite mix. You can water regularly in growing season, but do not overwater. It thrives in full sun to light shade. It has good heat tolerance and hardy to 25 F (-5°C) for brief periods. As a solitary cactus, it is usually propagated from seeds.



**Reference:**

[https://www.cactus-art.biz/schede/ERIOSYCE/Eriosyce\\_villosa/Eriosyce\\_villosa\\_polyraphis/Eriosyce\\_villosa\\_polyraphis.htm](https://www.cactus-art.biz/schede/ERIOSYCE/Eriosyce_villosa/Eriosyce_villosa_polyraphis/Eriosyce_villosa_polyraphis.htm)

<https://chileanendemics.rbge.org.uk/regions/iii>

<https://www.beautifulworld.com/south-america/chile/atacama-desert/>

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**November Succulent of the Month**
**Karla Halpaap-Wood**

**Name:** *Dorstenia foetida*  
**Common names:** Grendelion, Shield flower  
**Family:** Moraceae  
**Genus:** *Dorstenia*

**Distribution:** Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Oman

**Habitat:** Deciduous and succulent bushland, open places, and on rocks. Appears at low to slightly higher elevations  
 The common name "Shield flower" refers to the flower-like structure called a hypanthodium.

**Description:** *Dorstenia foetida* is a perennial caudex-forming succulent plant. Trunk is thick dark green to mahogany, can be branched. The species is very variable especially the leaf shapes.

It blooms in the summer with many solitary, disc-shaped, and tentacle-featuring flower-like structures called hypanthodiums on small, thick, reddish-green stems. The hypanthodiums consist of many tiny flowers. The blossoms appear in various colors, such as green, greyish, pinkish, or orange. After the blooms fruits develop. The fruits contain many seed pods that open explosively when ripe. They can send the seeds away at quite a distance. I often observe seedlings in other pots that were not even close to the mother plant.

The tubers of *Dorstenia foetida* are edible. In Oman, people use its tubers for food. But all parts of the plant are toxic if consumed in large quantity.



**My experience:** I grow mine in full sun, but bright shade is also good. Soil should be typical well draining cactus soil. I protect it from the cold in the winter, otherwise it stays out even when we have lots of rain. If it get's too dry for some time it just loses the leaves, but always comes back with watering.

**Diseases:** *Dorstenia foetida* is mostly pest and disease-free, occasionally aphids or root rot may occur. Root rot only when it is sitting wet in non draining soil.

**Propagation:** Easiest is from seed, just let nature do it for you. Collecting seeds is harder, I have never tried, but enclosing the flower structure in a fine net should work. It can also be propagated from leaf cuttings which I have never tried. It also makes offshoots at the bottoms that can be separated.



**References:**

[http://www.llifile.com/Encyclopedia/SUCCULENTS/Family/Moraceae/16417/Dorstenia\\_foetida](http://www.llifile.com/Encyclopedia/SUCCULENTS/Family/Moraceae/16417/Dorstenia_foetida)

<https://gardenbeast.com/dorstenia-foetida-guide/>

KK, Vol 23 1985, p. 38. June Succulent of the month

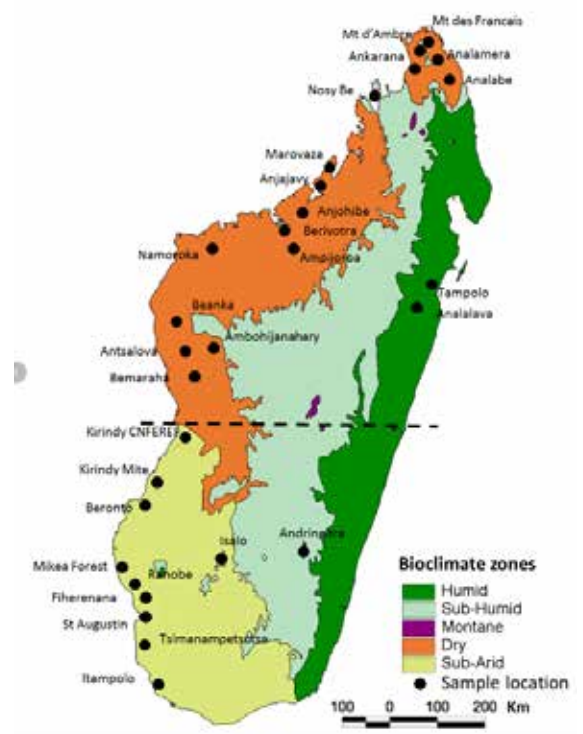
## December Succulent of the Month

Echo Pang

### *Euphorbia Gottlebei*

**Habitat:** *Euphorbia gottlebei* is a species of euphorbia that looks very similar to the commonly recognized *Euphorbia milii* (Crown of Thorns). In habitat, they grow on steep limestone slopes. They are sub-arid deciduous thorny thickets; loose their leaves and flourish during the short dry winter at Fiherenana, west of Sakaraha in Southwest of Madagascar. The habitat has distinct wet and dry seasons with high temperatures. Major threats to the species are habitat degradation, fire and collection for horticultural trade. *E. gottlebei* is the only euphorbia species endemic to the Fiherenana valley!

**Description:** Although looking similar to a crown of thorns, *Euphorbia gottlebei* is a freely branched shrub that can reach about 1.5 meters tall. It is very thorny but hard to notice at first as they are well covered in those dense and slender leaves. It also has a long taproot. Their inflorescences are produced near the branch-tips. Although flowers are small, they form a nice pair of petal-like bracts. The female organs (ovaries and stigmas) mature first, later replaced by the male stamens with pollen. Several color variants comprising red, yellow, pink, etc. has been developed



in cultivation and hybridization with *Euphorbia rossii*. Pollination makes a green fruit, which is a triangular capsule with three round seeds. The fruits ripen gradually during the warm days in fall.



**Cultivation:** I obtained my *Euphorbia gottlebei* from HCSS fall sale in September 2022. Being a slow-growing and cold-sensitive species, it is better to keep it as a specimen growing in pot here in Houston. Being a USDA zone 10a-11b succulent, it is best to keep temperatures above 50F (10C) in cultivation. Some collectors have success overwintering this euphorbia indoor by a very sunny south facing window and enjoy those little red ornamental flowers. Mineral based potting substrate with excellent drainage is a must for the health of a tap-root succulent. Reduce watering in fall and keep them dry in winter. During the summer, they enjoy moderate feeding and well watering.

**Propagation:** You can propagate *Euphorbia gottlebei* by seeds or cuttings. Let the cutting dry and the wound heal at a cool place away from direct sun. It is also advised to wash the cut to remove the latex. Propagation in warm weather (spring and summer) is highly suggested.

**Warning:** As with all other Euphorbias, when the plant is damaged, a thick white milky sap known as latex, drips out of its wound. This latex is poisonous and may irritate. Avoid getting latex into your eyes and mouth and handle with gloves are recommended.

ous and may irritate. Avoid getting latex into your eyes and mouth and handle with gloves are recommended.

#### Reference:

[http://www.llifile.com/Encyclopedia/SUCCULENTS/Family/Euphorbiaceae/25959/Euphorbia\\_gottlebei](http://www.llifile.com/Encyclopedia/SUCCULENTS/Family/Euphorbiaceae/25959/Euphorbia_gottlebei)

[https://calphotos.berkeley.edu/cgi/img\\_query?enlarge=0000+0000+0612+0813](https://calphotos.berkeley.edu/cgi/img_query?enlarge=0000+0000+0612+0813)

#### Photo reference:

[https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Madagascar-showing-the-different-collection-localities-of-specimens-of\\_fig1\\_330441611](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Madagascar-showing-the-different-collection-localities-of-specimens-of_fig1_330441611)

## December Cactus of the Month

Karina Boese

*Lophocereus schottii* f. *Monstrous*

Common Name:

Totem Pole

Totem Pole Cactus

Monstrous Whisker Cactus

Synonym:

*Pachycereus schottii* f. *monstrous*



### ORIGIN & HABITAT:

*Lophocereus* is the genus name of this cactus, which means “torch” or “crest cactus” in Greek. As for its ‘last name’ *Schottii*, it refers to Arthur Carl Victor Schott, a German 19th century naturalist. The additional ‘monstrous’ name refers to their strange growth habit. It is named the “totem pole cactus” because of the unusual bumpy shapes (spineless protuberances) that look like multiple faces.

This specific monstrous form is only found northeast of El Arco, the central of Baja California. The straight species (not monstrous form) is native to the desert areas of Baja peninsula of Mexico, California, and some areas of Arizona. They grow in the desert hillsides and in valleys.

### DESCRIPTION:

This trunkless cactus grows in tall columns which tend to branch out. The greenish and waxy stems can grow up to 15’ feet high.

There are three monstrose varieties: fat (*obesa*), spiral (*spiralis*) and skinny or totem pole (*mieckleyanus*).

Unlike the straight species, there are very few areoles and minuscule. It is very rare for them to develop flowers. If you are lucky to have ever seen one, their sterile flowers will be in pale pink color with a not-so-pleasant smell that open at dusk and close up when the sun comes up (night bloomer).





Branching of skinny totem pole



The obesa spineless protuberances



Totem pole insignificant areole

**CULTIVATION/GROWTH:**

*P. Schottii monstrosus* is a slow growing cactus. When grown in a pot, it should be planted in a porous and gravelly soil to prevent root-rot. It is recommended to change the substrate every few years to encourage good growth. Make sure the substrate is dry completely between waterings.

They love being under our full direct sun in Houston! I feed mine with diluted fish fertilizer and/or cactus fertilizer in early spring and summer. This species is not cold hardy and will need to be covered during the winter.

The only method of propagation is through woody or softwood stem cuttings. It is better to do the cuttings in spring or summer. Allow the cuttings to fully callused before planting them in loose, well-draining gravelly soil. Leave them alone for a couple weeks, then water very little or mist every few days to provide a bit of moisture until the cuttings develop roots.

**REFERENCES:**

[http://www.llifile.com/Encyclopedia/CACTI/Family/Cactaceae/8362/Pachycereus\\_schottii\\_f.\\_monstrosus](http://www.llifile.com/Encyclopedia/CACTI/Family/Cactaceae/8362/Pachycereus_schottii_f._monstrosus)

<https://worldofsucculents.com/pachycereus-schottii-monstrosus-totem-pole-cactus/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3777577/>

All photos in this article belong to Karina Boese

## HCSS Big Bend Trip 2022

**Kellie Clark**

The Houston Cactus and Succulent Society's trip to Big Bend Park in October was a fantastic experience. It was so nice to be with a great group of people to socialize with and learn from. I was able to experience first hand the amazing and diverse terrain and flora of far west Texas.

I found myself most drawn to the Ocotillo. While the plant normally appears to be an arrangement of large spiny dead sticks, I saw a vibrant green with pretty red flowers. It is apparently uncharacteristic for the plant to appear this way during the October month. Heavy summer rains lead to the desert being much greener than normal.

The trip overall was very much an educational and illuminating experience that deepened my interest in cactus and succulents. I can't wait to go back!





Photos by Kellie Clark



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