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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



Echinocereus viridiflorus
by David Van Langen

From the editor

Happy New Year. In December we had a rare occurrence of snow in Houston. 2018 started very cold with a few nights with temperatures below freezing. So we all had to work hard protecting the sensible plants.

My wish for this year is to get more HCSS members to actively participate in the club. There are open positions on the board and committees to be filled. This is your chance to have influence how the club works.

Karla Halpaap-Wood

Membership

Kathy Fewox

Twenty members attended the November 15, 2017 meeting of HCSS. Also attending were four guests: Angeles and Eddie Rojas, Teresa S. Garcia and Rachel Higham, who joined the club at the meeting. Thanks to Cindy Gray for taking charge of the membership sign-in sheet while I was out of town.

The HCSS holiday party was held December 3 at Riva's Italian Restaurant. Attending were Josie Watts, Bruce Moffett, Paul Stricklin, Wally Ward, Cindy Gray, Mary McConnell, David Van Langen and his wife Jennie, Dick and Phyllis McEuen, Kathy Fewox, and new member Rachel McKellar. The atmosphere was very festive, as it always is at Riva's (but especially around Christmas) and we all had a great time. Everybody took home little poinsettias, which had been the table decorations.

As many of you know, I am in the process of moving to Blanco. It's about four hours from Houston (including pit stops at Buc-ee's), so although I hope to make it to many HCSS meetings, I probably won't be able to come regularly once I move. Therefore, I am actively searching for someone to take over duties as Membership Chairperson (or whatever I'm officially called). It is a fun job which doesn't come with many responsibilities or pressure. It has allowed me to get to know every member of the club, as keeping the membership rolls lets me connect names with faces. This is the easiest job in HCSS. There is no learning curve whatsoever. All you need is a willingness to attend the meetings regularly, a pen, some notebook paper, and the membership notebook which I will hand over to you. You will need to write the KK Membership Report every two months. Please let me know if you would like to volunteer to be my successor. Email kathyfewox@aim.com, or speak to me or another HCSS Board Member at an upcoming meeting. Your club needs you!

Please send news of HCSS members and their families to kathyfewox@aim.com.

Calendar:

January 10, 2018	7:30 pm Board Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center.
January 24, 2018	7:30 pm Membership Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. Program: Phyllis and Dick McEuen "Eve St. Laurent Gardens in Morocco"
February 28, 2018	7:30 pm Membership Meeting at Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. Program: Craig Hamilton and Wally Ward "Tutorial on Soil Mixing for Succulents with materials for members to work with at the meeting"

Dear members of HCSS,

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy New Year. Last year was difficult for many because of our unwanted visitor, Harvey. I hope all of you who were affected have recovered, or at least made progress. It was a difficult decision to cancel the show and sale, and that leaves us with less money to donate to institutions who do research or support knowledge of cactus and succulents. I will propose to the board that we limit our donations to local causes that may need help after Harvey. I was so proud of us for the job we were able to do on TACSS so soon after the storm. We received so many compliments and were really able to shine. And we were even able to wear our wonderful tshirts!

This year should be less stressful. My plans are to have at least one social at someone's home. I plan to renew that tradition with a "spring fling" in honor of our dear past member, Ann Russ. We will have at least one local field trip and an out of town trip much closer to Houston. We are open to ideas and suggestions, and help in planning, of course. We've had some stressful years being the nomadic club, then being hit by a major hurricane. Hopefully this year will go smoothly and we will manage to have more fun. I encourage new members to sign up for cactus and succulent of the month, socials, and other jobs. That is how you learn more about cactus, and how you feel more at home in the club.

Looking forward to 2018,
Josie Watts, President

**Christmas Party
at Riva's December 3rd, 2017**

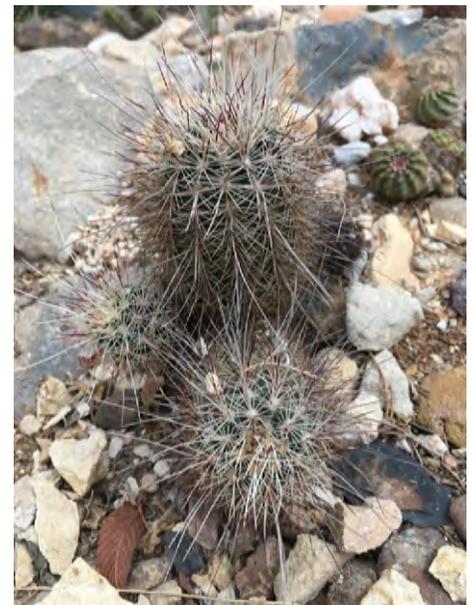


January Cactus of the Month

David VanLangen

Echinocereus viridiflorus

The *Echinocereus viridiflorus* complex is a widely distributed group of small barrel shaped cactus found over much of the dry central plains down to the deserts of the Big Bend area and beyond into Northern Mexico. In general the plants are single or form small clusters but never large mounds and are under 12" tall. All have spines covering most of the body and most have one or more longer central spines. Most of the spines are reddish, yellow or brown. All have flowers smaller than most *Echinocereus* and they are typically yellow, brown or reddish. These flowers are found emerging from the vertical sides of the plant and not near the top. Some cactus in the complex are widespread while some have an extremely limited range. Only a few of these are considered to be endangered or threatened. Most site specific variants have distinct differences.



The northern most of this group is the typical species *Echinocereus viridiflorus* var *viridiflorus* and is found as far north as Wyoming and South Dakota down through the intermountainous areas of New Mexico and Colorado. It also extends into the Texas and Panhandle. This is also the smallest of the group being usually less than 3-4 inches tall and the pure yellow flowers have a strong scent of lemon. Some populations have nice central spines and some have all radials. This plant is common and widespread.

Another fairly widespread variant is *Echinocereus viridiflorus* var *chloranthus*. Many cactus experts consider this to be a separate species. *Echino* var. *chloranthus* is mainly found from the far western portion of Texas into much of the southern part of New Mexico. It is much more bristly than the species and most have long centrals that are white, yellow or red and many are twisted. *E chloranthus* is common from Carlsbad to Las Cruces to Deming, New Mexico and south into the middle elevations eastward to near the Davis Mountains. This form can grow up to 6-8 inches tall and has mainly brownish flowers. This plant is much overlooked and is well worthy of being in a collection - especially the ones with long red spines !! Very Nice !!

Another variety is known as *Echino. cylindricus*. This form is one of the more chunky ones and is found in middle elevations from the Davis Mountains through the mountains around Van Horn to El Paso up into

southern New Mexico. Many spines are reddish but the centrals are not very long or shaggy. These look more like a southern version of the *Echino viridiflorus* var *viridiflorus* on steroids !! This plant is found mainly on igneous soils in less harsh conditions than the lower deserts.

South in the lower Big Bend and into Mexico the common plant in this group is the var. *russanthus*. This cactus can get over a foot tall and usually has long and shaggy red spines. The flowers are also reddish to brown. Some plants are single but many of these will form nice clusters. *E. russanthus* is also singled out as its own species by some and several local varieties can be found in habitat. *E. russanthus* can be seen in Big Bend National Park in the Basin Campground up in the Chisos to the lower elevations near the Rio Grande. This is also a cactus well worth collecting as the nice red spines are sure to show off when properly grown.

Some of the lesser know variants of this complex are--

Echino var *davisii*-- barely one inch tall!! and *Echino* var. *corellii*-- with yellow spines and golden yellow flowers. Both of these are restricted to a small area near Mararthon, Texas.

Echino weedenii-- a yellow spined variety found in the higher elevations of the Davis Mountains.

In several varieties the seedlings are covered with hair like spines for the first few years-- some of these are--

Echino milleri- found only in Coke county Texas near San Angelo

Echino canus- found only in certain locales within Big Bend Ranch State Park west of Terlingua, Texas

Echino neocapillus- found mainly north of Big Bend Natl Park

Echino carmenensis- found in the Sierra Del Carmen range in northern Mexico. This plant also has a chocolate flavored aroma to the flowers!

Hopefully this will serve as a wake up call !! To start collecting more *Echinocereus* !!!! Most all the the *Echino viridiflorus*/ *chloranthus*/ *russanthus* family are well behaved in cultivation as long as given full sun and protection from too much rain !! All are temperature hardy here in Houston if kept from being too wet!! Their small to moderate size makes them well suited for pot / greenhouse culture-- along with some great colorful spines !!



January Succulent of the Month

Jeff Boggan

- **NAME:** *Euphorbia turbiniformis* – was first described by this name in 1929 by Emilio Chiovenda.

- **HABITAT/DISTRIBUTION:** Horn of Africa, Somalia, near Eil. It grows on a plateau at an altitude of around 300 feet above sea level. In the 1970's Frank Harwood was on an expedition to Somalia when he heard that the local government was going to build a new airport on the habitat. He hired some locals to rescue about three thousand plants before the land was bulldozed. It may be practically extinct in the wild now due to destruction of the habitat. Hopefully, there are other pockets of this species that are yet to be discovered. The specimens that Mr. Harwood collected became the source for many of the plants now in collections. The sun is very intense in Somalia. *E. turbiniformis* has evolved a special survival technique, when it germinates the seedling produces a bead of sap that bonds the sand on top of it into a little cap. This sand cap helps to dissipate the intense solar radiation.



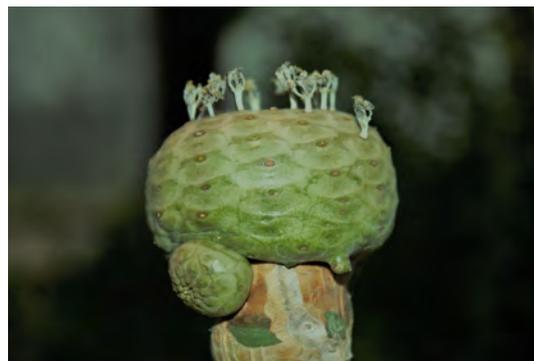
- **DESCRIPTION:** It is very similar to *Euphorbia piscidermis* except without the white scales. In habitat it is a mushroom brown color. It grows flat and slightly recessed into the ground. In cultivation as a graft it loses these rugged flattened features and tends to grow more spherical and is shiny like a small green apple. It has a tiled pattern which spirals out from the growing apex.

In the wild it is typically found as a single head. It is a small globular plant about typically about the diameter of a quarter to half dollar.

- **CULTIVATION/GROWTH:** It is grown from seed or by grafting. The majority of the specimens on the market are grafts. They are prone to rot on their own roots in humid climates.

- **AVAILABILITY:** These plants appear to be available from numerous nurseries in the USA, Europe and Asia. However, you will need to search for them.

- **REMARKS:** I have been growing these plants for about 7 years. All my specimens were grafted on *E. canariensis* or *E. lacteal*. One cold winter some rats took refuge in my greenhouse. They nibbled on some plants here and there. Once they got a taste of my *E. turbiniformis* they searched my greenhouse and ate every single one and excluded everything else. Maybe *E. turbiniformis* is not as poisonous as other *Euphorbia*.



• REFERENCES:

1. http://www.cactus-art.biz/schede/EUPHORBIA/Euphorbia_turbiniiformis/Euphorbia_turbiniiformis_cristata/Euphorbia_turbiniiformis_cristata.htm
 2. <https://davesgarden.com/guides/pf/go/160716/>
 3. http://www.llifile.com/Encyclopedia/SUCCULENTS/Family/Euphorbiaceae/15539/Euphorbia_turbiniiformis
 4. <http://explorelifeonearth.org/somalia.html>
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The Migration of the Cactus Shack Part 2

by Cactus Boy

One thing is for sure: I'll never build another greenhouse! After thorough investigation I ordered a 24' X 8' Riverstone Greenhouse kit through Home Depot. Before it arrived I contracted with a landscape company to build a platform to serve as a foundation for the greenhouse as well as an area to line-out plants. The first three photos show how this happened.

The kit arrived in many boxes with a total weight of 500 pounds. It features 8mm twin-wall poly panes and extruded aluminum parts. The kit assembles by means of small locking bolts and nuts. It has 5 automatic vents in the roof. The quality is very good throughout and the instructions were adequate.

I had to get a permit to have the greenhouse. This took three inspection visits not to mention a hand-drawn plan and a lot of anxiety. Got the permit...

The problem with amateur builders is a lack of experience. In my case the first problem was getting the greenhouse foundation "square and level". This did not happen although I got close. I began assembling the base. My son-in-law Brian agreed to help out when he was off from his fire-chief job. Brian is that guy who could build a house by himself, so this was key to our eventual success. Many of the roof sections did not fit very well due to the walls bowing out. We used bungee cords to pull them together, but it didn't work that well. I called the manufacturer for advice. He told me they use a ratchet strap arrangement to really pull the walls in. Good advice all right, but a day late since we were almost finished. The next 4 photos show stages of the greenhouse going up, including the fabric flooring I installed.

Brian commented that in spite of our troubles with the greenhouse that it looked great and would work out. So it did. Within a week after completion we had a cold blast. I spent the day before stuffing the greenhouse with plants. I bought Structural Plastic benches. You see them at Houston Garden Center, HEB and other places. They are indestructible. Then I got a role of what is called mechanic's pad (or something like that). After moving the plants back out I installed the benches and put the pad down the middle aisle. Then the plants went back in.

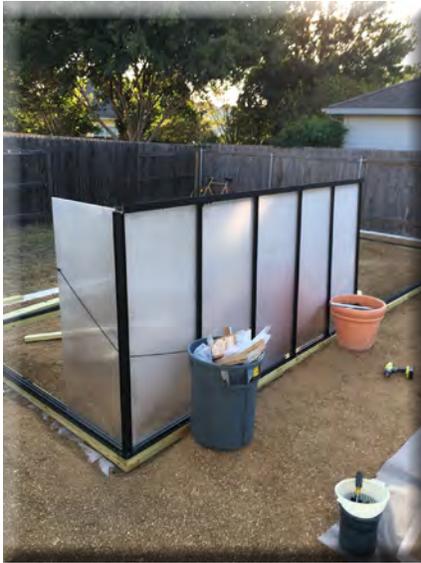
Riverstone sells a shade system that is installed inside the greenhouse. I put up 55% shade over the Haworthia and such, with 30% shade over Cacti and Lithops. This was in the winter/early spring. Later I had to install 55% over the whole thing. Since the long side of the structure faces southwest I also shaded the side-walls with 45% shade. I'll have to add more since 45% was inadequate to protect the small plants and offsets I placed on the ground platform of the benches. The temperature inside the greenhouse was over 100 degrees much of the summer even with the Quiet Aire evaporative cooler I put in there. Many plants seemed to thrive in the heat,

but some suffered. Such is horticulture.

So The Cactus Shack is in its new setting. It quickly filled up. The last photo shows Cactus Boy and granddaughter Jordan Patterson inside. I intend to stay with the one greenhouse since I still have the 2 4" X 8" cold frames. Recently I had some very large planting beds built with drip irrigation. I want to establish a native plant/cactus/succulent garden in the two front yard beds and an "Agave farm" in the back yard bed with some caladiums and perhaps some edible stuff.

I'll take some photos and write part three when I get along with this next stage.





FEBRUARY CACTUS OF THE MONTH

PHYLLIS MCEUEN

NAME: *Espostoa nana*

SYNONYMS: *Espostoa melanostele* ssp. *nana* and *Pseudoespostoa nana*

DISTRIBUTION: Found in the Santa River valley near Huallanca, Ancash, Peru in the high Andes.

DESCRIPTION: *Espostoa nana* is a thick-stemmed columnar cactus that branches at the base to form a shrub-like plant reaching a maximum of five feet in height. It is covered with white woolly hair and will form a white cephalium when mature. White flowers bloom at night.

Espostoa nana is often confused with *Espostoa melanostele* especially when young. *Melanostele* has thinner stems, grows taller, and has a dark brown cephalium when mature. *Melanostele* also grows at lower elevations than *nana*.

CULTIVATION: *Nana* is an easy-to-grow cactus. It requires a standard porous cactus mix which drains quickly. During the summer growing season, it can be watered frequently and lightly fertilized once a month. Repotting should be done every two to three years after the plant begins to offset.

This is a cold hardy plant which can stand freezing temperatures if perfectly dry. It is susceptible to fungal diseases if overwatered in the winter.

PROPAGATION: Cuttings and seeds. *Nana* seeds germinate readily when fresh.

REFERENCES: Internet sites lifle.com and cactuspro.com



FEBRUARY SUCCULENT OF THE MONTH**Dick McEuen**NAME: *Agave ocahui*

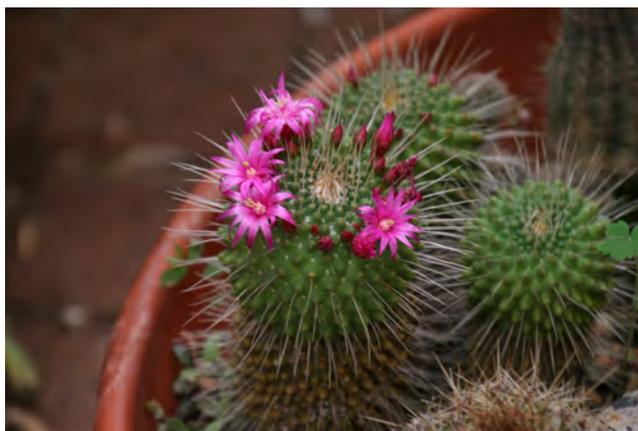
COMMON NAMES: Ojahui, Amolillo, Amoliyo

DISTRIBUTION: Known only in northeastern Sonora, Mexico where it grows on cliffs and outcrops of volcanic rocks. Variety *longifolia* grows in eastern and central Sonora.CULTIVATION: *Ocahui* grows as a dense symmetrical medium green rosette. With good growing conditions it's leaves can reach 20 inches long yielding a plant around 40 inches wide. *Ocahui* has proved to be easily grown. It is tolerant of a wide range of sun and shade, and thrives in any well-drained soil. It survives temperatures as low as 15 degrees F. and is a fine container plant, needing minimum care.PROPAGATION: *Ocahui* forms neither bulbils nor offsets, reproducing only from seed. Blooms appear on a tall spike up to 15 feet tall. Age to bloom is usually quoted as 29 years, however one documented case at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix, AZ. was 5 years. The tall bloom spike produces thousands of tiny white flowers, attracts many bees, and makes hundreds of seed pods

OUR PLANT: We found our plant at Maas Nursery in Seabrook, Texas about ten years ago. We planted it in a raised bed and generally ignored for long periods. We rarely water these beds, only after long periods without rain. The leaves are around 18 inches long giving us a plant of nearly three feet width. This year it decided to bloom and the bloom spike reached 13 feet tall. It had thousands of tiny white flowers which were difficult to see because of so much yellow pollen which was covered with bees. The result was around 100 seed pods.

REFERENCES: *Agaves of continental North America*, Howard Gentry, 1982*Agaves, Yuccas and Related Plants*, Mary & Gary Irish, 2000

Snow in Houston - December 8, 2017



Mammillaria spinosissima cv. Un Pico covered in snow and two weeks later in bloom.

Photos © Karla Halpaap-Wood, Liliana Cracraft, Tom Cardinal.

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