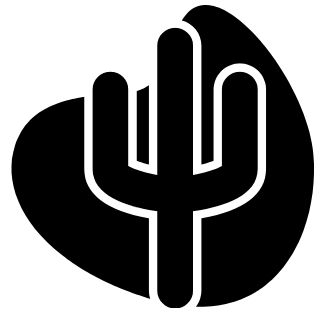




NEW YORK CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY



CACTUS COMMENTS / MARCH 2009

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NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting is on Tuesday March 17, 2009 at 6:00pm at Jan Hus Presbyterian Church, 351 East 74th Street, NYC, room 101 (above lobby). The meeting will be from 6:00pm to 7:45pm

PROGRAM

Dr. Ivan Black will give a presentation on mamillarias, the very popular cacti that no collection would be complete without. Dr. Black will have some sample plants on hand and will talk about the different species and their cultivation.

HICK'S FLOWER SHOW

The annual Hick's flower show in Westbury, Long Island starts on March 13 and continues through March 22. This has been a popular outing for the NYCSS in recent years, and this year should be no exception. We should try to attend the weekend of March 21 and 22, as our friends at the Long Island Cactus & Succulent Society will have an exhibit at the show. Contact George or Laz for info. and arrangements.

SUMMER GUEST

George has been in contact with Russel Wagner, famed editor of the very impressive CSSA journal, and Russel is hoping to be in New York sometime in July or August. The membership will be informed as to Russel's schedule, and we will have a special meeting to greet him. Russel, we hope you can make it!



***Mamillaria centricirrha* Lem.**

This cactus has a dark green, globose, later cylindrical body, 10 cm or more across and up to 30 cm high, branching freely from the base in age. The nipples are angular, 2 cm long, arranged in spiralled rows. The axils and areoles bear thick, whitish wool. The 4 to 5 radial spines are awl-shaped, about 2 cm long, straight or slightly curved; there is one central spine. All are a pale colour with dark tip. The flowers form a wreath at the top of the plant. They are about 2.5 cm across, pale pink with darker central stripe. They emerge from the end of April till June in several rows one after the other. The fruit is a club-shaped, fleshy carmine berry, the seed is small and pale brown.

Habitat: Mexico.

The specific name *centricirrha* means in the centre, central.

Mamillaria centricirrha is considered by some authorities to be synonymous with *Mamillaria magnimamma* which bears yellowish flowers. Craig lists 116 synonyms, more than half of them as varieties of *Mamillaria centricirrha*. Specimens grown in Europe for more than a hundred years are partly cross-bred and thus the individual varieties or forms cultivated in collections have mutual characters and their separation is difficult. The best known varieties are *bockii*, *divergens*, *recurva* and *krameri* described by K. Schumann. *M. centricirrha* is a common species with prolific flowers which is recommended to beginners for its easy cultivation. Even fairly small plants flower every year if they have sufficient heat, light and moisture during the growing period. It is easily propagated from the seed, which has good powers of germination, even three to four year-old seedlings bearing flowers.

***Mamillaria bocasana* Pos.**

This is a small, spherical plant, making side shoots freely as a rule. The individual stems of this green to blue-green *Mamillaria* measure only about 4 to 5 cm and are completely covered with fine, grey-white spines almost entirely concealing the soft and slightly conical tubercles. The number of radial spines is truly great, 25 to 30. Besides that, there are the yellow to reddish, needle-like central spines, terminating in a thin hook, which measure 20 mm or more in length, the greyish, hair-like radial spines being much shorter. Amidst these thick hairs the flowers are not very conspicuous. They are about 15 mm long, 10 mm broad, yellowish with a central reddish stripe on the outer petals. As if to offset this, however, *M. bocasana* flowers profusely and often even in modest circumstances.

A great favourite is the variety *splendens* (*splendens* = shining, glossy). Also known are plants that have a particularly dense coat of white spines, the lower spines usually being yellow and hooked. All these cacti can be recommended to the beginner for they can withstand even mistakes in treatment, e.g. unsuitable location, just like the hardiest of other *Mamillaria* species (*M. gracilis*, *M. pusilla*, *M. wildii*, etc.).

Besides the cactus described here, *Mamillarias* include a number of so-called soft as well as fairly hard species that are also easy to grow. For example, *M. centricirrha*, *M. hidalgensis*, etc. which can both be grown in window gardens along with other hardy cacti and succulents.

