

Cactus Comments

New York Cactus and Succulent Society

est 1962

September
2012

Next Meeting

Thursday, September 20th, 2012
6-7:45 pm
331 Madison Ave (near 43rd St)
7th Floor New York, NY
www.nycss.org

Cactus and Succulent Book
Review

Books provide a wealth of information for hobbyists so members are encouraged to bring a list cactus and succulent books that they like and dislike.

Guests are always welcomed at meetings!

Membership

Joining NYCSS gives you information packed monthly meetings, talks from experts and amateur enthusiasts, demonstrations, slide shows, trips, and our monthly newsletter, Cactus Comments. The 10\$ annual dues covers everyone in your household, from September to June.

Mail membership checks payable to

Richard Stone
3777 Independence Ave. Apt 12C
Bronx, NY 10463

Officers & Board of Directors:

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Webmaster: Suzanne Bernard
•webmaster@nycss.org
Editor- Stephanie Ciparis
•stephanie.ciparis@gmail.com

Directors

Ivan Black, MD
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•yemaya75@hotmail.com

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BOTANICAL LATIN, DEMYSTIFIED... MAYBE...

Learning botanical latin is an intimidating experience for everyone with an interest in plants. The rules of the naming system itself can seem complex and the components can seem even more foreign. Eventually every succulent enthusiast finds themselves enamored with one specific type of barrel cactus or stonecrop and it is at this time that the naming system becomes important. Botanical latin will not only differentiate between different barrel cacti but it will also help an enthusiast learn more about the plant.

Anyone familiar with plants will often use some genus names in Botanical Latin never realize it. Aster, Chrysanthemum, Delphinium, and Geranium are all common names of plants and just happen to be the names of the corresponding genus. A genus is a more or less closely related and definable group of plants. Plants in one genus are more like one another than they are like any other group.

The second part of a botanical name is called the specific epithet. The specific epithet acts as a descriptor to help distinguish a specific plant from others in the genus. Epithet comes from the ancient Greek word for 'adjective.' Both the genus and the specific epithet make up the species name. A species is the most basic unit used in classifying a living organism.

Sometimes a third part to a botanical name will exist, in which the particular variety or cultivar or subspecies of a plant is identified. A cultivar is an assemblage of cultivated plants which are clearly distinguishable from others of its species. These plants retain their distinguishing characteristics when reproduced.

Genera and species are grouped into larger units called families. By convention, most names of botanical families end in the arbitrarily chosen termination -aceae. These names are most useful in determining when different genera are related.

Example:

Adromischus marianiae 'Alveolatus'

Genus specific epithet 'Cultivar Name'

You might notice that the species name is written in italics, the genus is always capitalized and the specific epithet lowercase. The cultivar name is always listed in single quotes with the first letter of each word capitalized.

The botanical naming system is based on an international system for naming each individual plant. This system was developed by Carl Linnaeus, an 18th century botanist. Today, this cataloging is done by the group of botanists who analyze the characters and attributes of plants, and put them into the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature. This system allows us to use plant names worldwide without confusion.

What is in a name? A name in botanical latin will tell you a lot about a plant. Each word means something. For example a common landscape plant, *Juniperus procumbens* 'Nana'. In Latin, juniperus is combination of the word junio, which means young, and parere, to produce, hence youth producing, or evergreen. The specific epithet is procumbens. The word procumbens means growing flat to the ground, i.e., it is a ground cover plant. The word in quotations, Nana, means dwarf. So even if I have never seen this plant or read about it I know from its name that it is an evergreen that grows close to the ground, and is a dwarf variety. The components of the root words come from greek or latin origins. These may be hard to recognize at first but as you learn more plant names you'll realize that many are used in repetition.

Next month I'll cover the finer details of hybrids, clones and subspecies.

GENUS SPOTLIGHT

Acanthocereus

Acanthocereus is a genus of shrubby cacti with arching or climbing stems up to several meters in height. The generic name is derived from the Greek word *ἀκανθα* (*acantha*), meaning spine, and the Latin word *cereus*, meaning candle. The six species are recognized by botanists occurring from the southern tip of Florida to Colombia, including islands of the Caribbean. Stems have 3 to 5 ribs, typically thin, with stout spines. The pretty white funnel-shaped flowers are night-opening, 12–25 cm (4.7–9.8 in) long and 6–12 cm (2.4–4.7 in) in diameter. The name was first used by George Engelmann in 1863. Engelmann did not describe its characters, leaving it to Alwin Berger in 1905 to define it as a subsection of *Cereus*. In 1909, Nathaniel Britton and Joseph Nelson Rose elevated *Acanthocereus* to a genus.

Acanthocereus baxaniensis is a shrubby cactus native to Cuba reaching heights up to 2 feet tall with large white flowers.



Acanthocereus colombianus is native to Columbia reaching heights of 10 feet and flower lengths of ten inches. Flowers are white and very showy.

Acanthocereus horridus is believed to have originated from Guatemala. It reaches heights of four feet and stems have a lighter green color than the previous two.



Acanthocereus occidentalis originates from Coastal western Mexico, this cactus reaches heights of four feet and has red, pear shaped fruits following flowering.

Acanthocereus subinermis is endemic to Oaxaca, Mexico, but is now becoming scarce in the wild. Plant reaches heights of 1.2 m or more.



Acanthocereus tetragonus, commonly known as Barbed-wire Cactus, is the most widespread of the genus and the largest, reaching up to 23 feet tall. The Barbed-wire Cactus can be found in the southern United States. Large, white, flowers open from midnight until dawn, attracting hummingbird moths as pollinators. Young stems of the Barbed-wire Cactus can be eaten as a vegetable either cooked or raw, while the fruits are edible and sweet.

Articles you may have missed this summer.....

Chicken Fried...Cactus?

Posted: Aug 31, 2012 3:47 PM by NBC News

Updated: Aug 31, 2012 4:06 PM

(NBC NEWS) - Fried Oreos have nothing on these new inventions by the deep-frying wizards that entered the Big Tex Choice Awards at the State Fair of Texas.

Chicken Fried Cactus Bites - Fair goers will stick with these hand-picked prickly pear cactus pads, thinly sliced, chicken battered and deep fried to perfection. Served with a combination of sweet & spicy secret jalapeno ranch, and agave nectar dipping sauce... yummm.



Flowers of
Acanthocereus
tetragonus in full
bloom.

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