

Cactus Comments

New York Cactus and Succulent Society

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January
2014

Next Meeting

Thursday, January 16, 2014
6-7:45 pm
331 Madison Ave (near 43rd St)
7th Floor New York, NY
www.nycss.org

Meeting topic:

Video viewing-Vic Knight:
Growing Conophytums and
Lithops. The film will be about 50
minutes long and hopefully will
demystify many questions on
these amazing plants.

Please bring in examples of these
species if you have them!

Guests are always welcomed!

Membership

Joining NYCSS gives you information
packed monthly meetings, talks from
experts and amateur enthusiasts, dem-
onstrations, 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

Looking for topics and submissions!

We need your help to keep meetings
and the newsletter fresh. Let us know
what you're interested in and help
contribute where you can. =)

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•stephanie.ciparis@gmail.com
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MEMBERSHIP

Just a friendly reminder to pay your dues at the next meeting. Dues help keep our projector running and pay for future outings.

2 OLD WISE MEN, 2 WISE OLD WOMEN

Many of the girls on my floor grew cacti in college. They were the perfect plant for a student who wouldn't always remember to water anything growing in their 95 degree steam heated box room. Cacti in the northeast are generally small and slow growing so they were manageable. You still had to go through a lot of effort to get one. Our school was in the middle of nowhere and it seemed like no one could afford a car. Our floriculture greenhouses propagated some for sale, but they really were rarely watered properly.

Every now and then we'd manage a trip to one of the flower shows or to the k mart next to the super walmart and come back with some new and interesting plants. Some of my friends were always talking about their old men. "Steph, do you have all of the old man cacti?" someone would ask. I'd stare at them blankly because unless they had a latin name associated with them, any cactus could really be an old man if you're imaginative enough. My friend explained that her father had collected all of the hairy cacti and she wanted to know why some of them died. Eventually we looked them up and kept a *Cephalocereus* for some time.

With that being said, here is a list of the hairy old men and women cacti how to care for them .

Cephalocereus senilis known generally as the Old Man Cactus is a species of native to Guanajuato and Hidalgo in eastern Mexico. It is threatened in the wild, but widespread propagation and popularity in cultivation have reduced the demand on wild populations.

Cephalocereus senilis is a tall, columnar species with clusters of stems reaching 5-15 m tall; the individual stems are unbranched. The most striking feature is the shaggy coat of long, white hairs suggestive of unkempt hair on an old man. The coat is a particularly striking silvery white on the young cactus; as the plant ages the stem begins to lose its covering.

The flowers are red, yellow, or white, though the plant may not flower until 10-20 years old. The hairs are modified spines and they make many a plant appear almost snow-white; they serve to protect the plant from frost and sun. However, the hairs are only the radial spines of the cactus; they conceal formidable sharp yellow central spines that belie the inoffensive appearance of the hairy covering.

Cephalocereus senilis is a very popular cactus in cultivation, grown for its woolly appearance. It prefers a very well-drained soil mix, and lots of bright sunlight, which encourages growth of the hair. The most common use for its hair is in the making of wool-like sweaters in southern Mexico, and the hair is generally a cheap alternative to cotton in commercial sweater production due to its natural coloring and fluffiness.

Oreocereus trollii or the Old Man of the Mountain occurs in very arid mountainous area of Southern Bolivia and Northwestern Argentina at approx. 3800m. The plant slowly forms multiple stemmed colonies of short stout stems to 12" to 18" tall. The plants are covered in long white modified spines that look like hair or wool, which help protect the fleshy stems from the intense sunlight found at the altitude in which it resides. Stout needle-like orange to orange-red spines protrude through the fine, woolly, hair-like spines and help guard the plant against thirsty critters. Tubular red flowers occur on mature plants in the summer months.

Continued...

Mammillaria hahniana commonly called old lady cactus is a species of flowering plant in the family Cactaceae, native to central Mexico. It grows to 10 inches tall and twice as broad. The solitary stems are covered in white down and white spines. Reddish purple flowers are borne in spring and summer, sometimes forming a complete ring around the apex of the plant. These flowers eventually produce red fruits.

Eriosyce senilis or Chilean old lady cactus is a solitary cactus with dense covering of bristly spines, it hybridize easily in habitat and in cultivation too with other species of the genus Eriosyce. The ssp. senilis has thin cream-white twisted spines but is quite variable in spination and the plants with different spine colours are often found in cultivation labelled as Eriosyce senilis var. multicolor. Eriosyce senilis is quite variable and has received numerous unnecessary names of no botanical value, representing no more than local phenotypes. Stems are globose to columnar, 6-18 cm tall. Spines are very dense, glassy, variable in colour from blond/white, yellow, brown to almost black, with darker tips. Spines are of variable length, obscuring the plant body and becoming longer with age. Flowers show various shades of purple-pink with clearer throat in the spring.

All of these plants have produced fine hairs to help further conserve water and protect them from bright light. They all thrive in areas of incredibly low humidity making them sometimes difficult to grow in our climate. These plants are incredibly sensitive to moisture and its best to grow them in the brightest light possible with low humidity. Inspect these plants often for scale, mealy bugs and as these problems can be easily covered with by the plant's fine hairs.



**Cephalocereus senilis- bottom left
Oreocereus trollii- bottom right
Mammillaria hahniana - middle
Eriosyce senilis- top**



The Philadelphia Cactus and Succulent Society has announced they are hosting the Eastern Conference this fall. It will be October 10-12 at the Valley Forge Double Tree. The event is not yet final but we're excited to be so close.

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FOR THE NEWSLETTER OR
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MEETINGS, ETC.**

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