THE OFFSET

JULY 2013

Webpage https://sites.google.com/site/cocssok/

Echinocereus reichenbachii subsp baileyi in the Wichita Mountains NWR, Oklahoma. Mount Scott in the background. Photo by Michael Douglas

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL OKLAHOMA CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY

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MEETING At Will Rogers Garden Center at 3400 NW 36th in Oklahoma City, the third Thursday of every month at **7:00 pm** (except in January, the month of our show, picnic and December).

IN THIS ISSUE

CLUB NEWS- FROM THE PRESIDENT

I hope you are all enjoying the great cool weather this summer. I would like to welcome all new members that joined the club at our show and sale in June. We did not have a regular meeting in June since we had the Show&Sale. Meetings will resume this month on the 18th and this month's talk will be about North American Deserts by Mike Douglas.

For our new members I would like to let you know that we have a lending library full of great books about cactus and succulents and you can check them out during the meetings free of charge. We also have a webpage at: https://sites.google.com/site/cocssok/. Among other subjects you can also see previous newsletters there.

I would also like to remind you that in September we have our annual picnic. Date and location will be announced soon.

Finally I would like to encourage everybody including new members to contribute to the newsletter. If you have questions, comments or would like to see certain subjects in the newsletter send me an email at: rosariod@cox.net. In order to allow enough time for the newsletter to be mailed to few members that do not have email we have a deadline of the 7th of the month for accepting materials for that month's newsletter. We try to email the newsletter the 8th of every month.

Hope to see you all at the meeting.

Rosario Douglas, on behalf of our president Niki Furrh
Vice-president, newsletter editor and Webmaster

OPEN MEETING: JUNE 20th

To discuss more details related to the 15th Biennial Mid-States Cactus and Succulent Conference Hosted by the Central Oklahoma Cactus and Succulent Society in Oklahoma City.

Where: At the Will Rogers Exhibition Center, 3400 NW36th St in Oklahoma City.

Time: Starting at 9:30 am

COCSS July 18th Program

"Deserts of North America" by Michael Douglas.

This talk will provide an overview of the arid lands of North America with emphasis on the succulent plants.

Upper right: Chihuahuan desert landscape at Big Bend National Park in Texas. A Chihuahuan desert cactus, *Ariocarpus fissuratus,* on the right. Bottom right: a Saguaro cactus landscape, typical of the Sonoran desert. Photo taken at Saguaro National Monument near Tucson, Arizona. *Photos by Mike and Rosario Douglas.*

Where: At the Will Rogers Garden Center- Oklahoma City

Time: 7:00 pm

Refreshments by: Peggy and Helen Hill

CACTUS AND SUCCULENT HAPPENINGS IN THE REGION *By Joyce Hochtritt*

July 18 **7 pm COCSS Monthly meeting**
At the Will Rogers Exhibition Center, 3400 NW36th St., OKC, OK.

Program: **Deserts of North America** by Mike and Rosario Douglas
Extra Activity: Book Review
Refreshments: Peggy and Helen Hill

August 15th **7 pm COCSS Monthly meeting**
At the Will Rogers Exhibition Center, 3400 NW36th St., OKC, OK.

Program: **Gardening to attract birds** by Mark D. Howery, Wildlife Diversity Biologist at the Oklahoma Dept. of Wildlife Conservation

Refreshments: to be announced

September Annual picnic. Location and time to be announced.

2014 Cactus and Succulent Happenings

June 12- 15th The 15th Biennial Mid-States Cactus and Succulent Conference Hosted by the Central Oklahoma Cactus and Succulent Society in Oklahoma City, OK. More information to come!

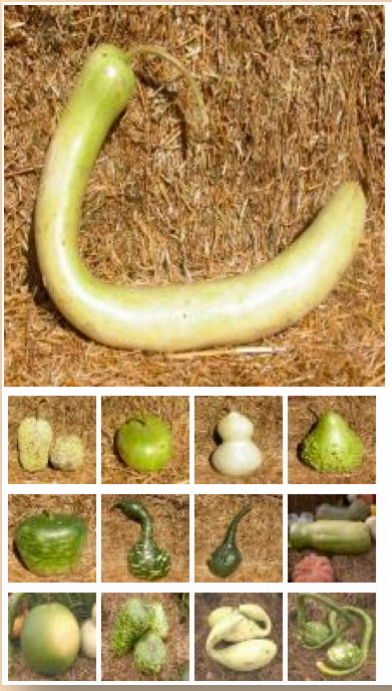
If you know of any plant happenings, please send me the information.

Thank you, Joyce

ARTICLE OF THE MONTH

by Rosario Douglas

Calabash and it many uses



Common Name: hardshell gourd
Type: Annual
Family: Cucurbitaceae
Zone: 2 to 11
Native Range: Pantropical
Height: 0.75 to 1.5 feet
Spread: 10 to 16 feet
Bloom Time: July to August
Bloom Color: White
Bloom Description: White
Sun: Full sun
Water: Medium
Maintenance: Medium
Flowers: Showy Flowers
Fruit: Showy Fruit, Edible Fruit
Wildlife: Attracts Hummingbirds
Uses: Vegetable, Suitable as Annual

Calabash is a name used for the fruit (gourd) of the vine *Lagenaria siceraria* (*Lagenaria vulgaris* is a synonym). This plant is in the Curcubitacea (cucumber) family. The name for the genus comes from the Greek lagenos, which means vase or jar.

It is believed that the plant is native to Africa, but today this plant is grown in many semi-tropical to tropical locations around the world. It is likely that the plant was carried by humans during their migrations from Africa to Asia, Europe and the Americas.

Some of the common names for this fruit are hardshell ground, long melon, opo squash and bottle gourd.

Radiocarbon dating shows that bottle gourds were present in the Americas 10,000 years ago and were widespread by 8000 years ago. (From article in the Science daily titled: **Ancient Humans brought bottle gourds to the Americas from Asia.** (http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2005/12/051214081513.htm).

This vine can produce fruits or gourds of many different shapes, round gourds are called calabash and bottle-shaped fruits are called bottle gourds.

The fruits or gourds can be eaten or they can be used for a variety of purposes. This plant is probably one of the first plants that were grown by man for a purpose other than eating it. It is believed that originally its main use was to serve as a water container.

Lower left: Drinking palm wine from a calabash in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Photo from Wikipedia Commons.

Gourds were used for making musical instruments including sacred instruments, as is the case in Haiti where the gourd is used to make the sacred rattle emblematic of the Voodoo priesthood. Other uses include: decorations and to carry medicines as it was done in the old days in China.

In the Caribbean region calabash are used as a dish for soups or as a container for carrying water. In parts of South America calabash is used to make containers used to drink mate tea. In Africa today people in large areas continue to use the gourds for a variety of purposes.

An example of a distinct traditional musical instrument made with a calabash is the kora. This instrument is used in Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso and the Gambia. The kora is made by using a large calabash cut in half and covered with cowhide to make a resonator. It has a large hardwood neck. Although the sound resembles that of a harp, when played traditionally the sound is reminiscent of flamenco music. Another instrument that is made using the gourd is the ipu-heke, a percussion instrument used in Hawaii.

All parts of the plant (leaves, fruit, shoots and tendrils) are edible. The culinary uses of this plant vary depending on the country. For example in India there are a variety of dishes that use this plant. In particular the dish from northern India known as Lauki channa consists of diced gourd in a semi-dry gravy. In China it is used as a vegetable in a stir-fry or in soups. In Burma the leaves are boiled and fermented to be later eaten with a spicy hot, fermented fish sauce. In Central America the seeds are roasted and later ground to be mixed with different dishes. In Arab countries the young fruits are eaten as summer squash.

Crafts are also made with calabash gourds. In Peru, specifically the town of Huancayo, there are large groups of artisans that engage in the engraving of gourds.

Upper left: a Kora, Upper right: legendary kora player Toumani Diabaté and the Symmetric Orchestra open Afrofest '07 in Toronto, Canada. Source Wikipedia commons.

Middle right: A calabash used in parts South America as a vessel to drink mate tea. Wikipedia commons

Taking advantage of the different calabash shapes, the artists use a scalpel called a buril to carve different animals or they use the gourd to carve different themes or stories. See the next page for a short article about Peruvian carvings that appeared in The Philadelphia Inquirer digital edition.

A very versatile and important plant, it appears that the calabash plant and its fruits/gourds have played an important role in the lives of humans from an early time.

Upper left: Raquel Rojas carving at her workshop in Huancayo-Peru. From Wikipedia Commons.

The other photos were taken from Lucuma designs, a site that offers a variety of Peruvian crafts:

http://www.lucuma.com/craft_gallery/p_CRG176N.asp

Step back, jack-o'-lanterns: It's Peruvian gourd carving

By Aimee Hansen, For The Inquirer

POSTED: October 30, 2011

Nothing says October in the United States like carving pumpkins, as carvers ask, "What face should I make?"

This story gourd, purchased by the writer for $20, tells of the autumn harvest. Mates burilados, engraved gourds, are made by craftsmen in the Central Highlands Cochas community. (AIMEE HANSEN)

Among people in Peru's Mantaro Valley, carving gourds isn't an annual tradition. It's an ancient art. And the question they ask is "What story should I tell?"

For those seeking the Peruvian Andean soul, the Central Highlands is the place to look. Cradled by green, fertile hills, each vibrant village in the Mantaro Valley boasts a unique craft, and together they preserve a local lifestyle caught in time. Equipped with hand-drawn maps, a mouthful of Spanish, and a wish to rub knees with the locals, we hopped onto one of the *colectivo* buses that sew together the valley's villages.

In Hualhuas, we haggled for an alpaca blanket to the clatter of the loom. In San Jerónimo, we watched silver being tamed into rings. In Quichuay, our mouths sang the praises of garlic trout and *papas a la huancaina*, potatoes. We strolled in the countryside between purple-flowered potato fields and long-braided women herding goats. We wrapped colorful belts around our waists in Viques. In Chongos, we sipped *chicha de jora*, the fermented corn drink of the Incas.

But when it comes to the region's pride, make no mistake. It's all about the gourds.

We headed to the source of the *mates burilados*, engraved gourds. Cochas is a cozy community where Quechua is still spoken between elders and a craft that has existed in Peru for at least 3,500 years is practiced with pride. Gourd carving arrived in Cochas through migration and trade in the 1800s, evolving to the art form alive today.

In dusty Cochas Chico, no store signs commanded us, no stalls on the streets pushed the wares. The work done here is a way of life, and people's homes are their workshops. Browsing here means being invited inside.

An open entrance grabbed my attention. The sun flooded the courtyard, where an old man in a worn felt hat sat cradling a giant gourd in his lap like a cello. He etched at a penciled llama design with the squinting, careful attention of a watchmaker bent over delicate gears.

I squeezed out a meek greeting. The old man looked up with soft gray eyes, stood slowly, introduced himself as Leoncio Veli, and gathered some chairs. Picking up a finished gourd covered in painfully detailed designs, he lunged into a fury of storytelling that defied his age and tested my Spanish, winding his finger over miniature carvings on the pale surface as though tracking a journey around a globe.

Veli began a forbidden-love tale of a shepherdess and her suitor running away together. His voice quieted to a whisper then rose. The tiny Andean figures on the gourd became real. He turned to the couple pleading before her parents to marry, pointing out a guinea-pig feast to persuade the father of the bride. We squinted to taste the *cuy* platter. The tale being told wasn't just etched in the gourd. It was in this man's enthusiasm for storytelling itself, and the palpable sense that we were sharing in tradition. He shook the gourd and the seeds rattled happily.

Having learned the craft from age 5, Leoncio Veli has been carving for 70 years. His family has passed it down for over four generations to his brothers, sisters, cousins, and children. The Andean love story gourd took weeks to carve, and was offered for $130. Some masterpieces in Cochas take four months and cost $2,500.

Veli's daughter demonstrated a technique for shading the designs after they are penciled and carved. Holding a glowing ember of eucalyptus wood, she gently blew heat onto a figure, turning a dress the size of my pinkie nail to subtle oranges and browns. She handed the glowing wood to me to try. I blew nothing at all, and then black.

We found gourds in all shapes, sizes, and forms. Not all told stories. Many featured simpler designs (llamas, owls, witches). Meeting demand for decorative motifs is a focus for families dependent on the income. It may also be an act of survival for the craft.

But for me, the best gourds were those that told stories inseparable from this place and these people - tales of daily life, rich traditions, and folklore of the Andean highlands, conveyed with striking visual complexity.

"Storytelling is important, to show our traditions and teach lessons," Leoncio said. "When I carve scenes I'm passionate about, it becomes a work of art."

As we headed home, I smiled at the $20 gourd stashed in my backpack, the tale of the autumn harvest. After all, I'm a farmer's daughter from Illinois cornfields.

But the best thing I took with me was another story to tell. Now, if only I could carve it.

Story posted at the The Philadelphia Inquirer digital edition (http://articles.philly.com/2011-10-30/news/30339184_1_gourd-storytelling-llama).

WHAT IS BLOOMING?

There were quite a few cacti blooming these past two months.

Upper left: the flower of *Opuntia spinosior. These are winter hardy.*

Middle left: *Trichocereus* sp. (hybrid). Flower frequently (in greenhouse).

Lower left: *Opuntia leucotricha* , a large tree prickly pear from central Mexico. This has rarely flowered for us.

Bottom right: *Notocactus leninghausii* - flowers at top of plant.

Photos by: Michael Douglas

SUCCULENT PLANTS

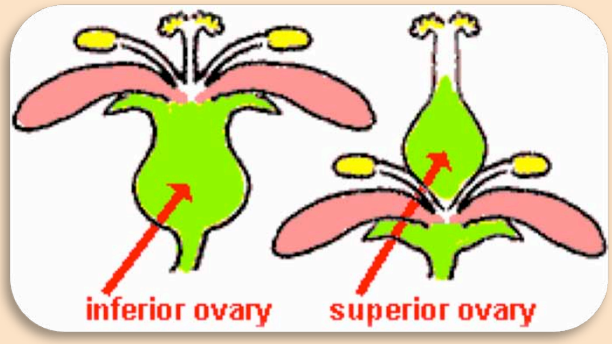
By Rosario Douglas

The Genus Pereskia ("relictual cacti")

Most members of the Cactaceae share as a unique characteristic the lack of permanent leaves. There are some exceptions and the genus Pereskia is a good example, being the only cactus genus with persistent non-succulent leaves.

The presence of leaves is not the only unusual feature of the genus Pereskia, the flowers were also described as "primitive" by Dr. Norman H. Boke. This was in reference to the position of the ovary in the flower, which in Pereskia is superior (located above the attachment of the perianth parts and the stamens). Most other cacti have inferior ovaries meaning they are located below the perianth and stamens (from "The Cactus Primer" by Gibson and Noble, 1986).

These unusual features are some of the reasons why the genus Pereskia is viewed as a type of "ancestral cactus". From the American Journal of Botany (Basal cactus phylogeny: Implications of *Pereskia* (Cactaceae) paraphyly for the transition to the cactus life) http://www.amjbot.org/content/92/7/1177.long

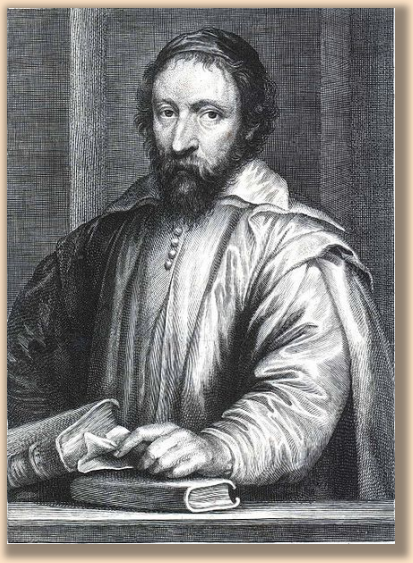


Upper left: *Pereskia aculeata* Mill. | BM t.7147/1890 | BHL.from Hortus camdenensis (http://hortuscamden.com/plants/view/pereskia-aculeata-mill).

Upper right: *Pereskia grandiflora* flower --Wikipedia Creative Commons by Luis Diego and Adolfo Garcia. 2007

Lower left: Superior and inferior ovary illustration taken from Backyard Nature (http://www.backyardnature.net/index.html)

All Pereskias have leaves and thin stems. The 17 or so species of Pereskia are tropical, originating in an area between Mexico and Brazil. Some common names include: lemon vine, leaf cacti and rose cacti. Perekia includes species that are non-succulent as well as succulent ones and some species are arborescent and shrubby. (Wikipedia)



The genus is named after Nicholas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1 December 1580-24 June 1637). Peiresc, as he is known, was a well-known Astronomer, a collector of antiquities and a noted politician in his home region of Aix-en-Provence in France. Amongst his accomplishments in Astronomy is his discovery of the Orion Nebula in 1610. He also helped determine longitude with greater precision. (Wikipedia)

Pereskia species have bright green leaves and spiny stems. Fruits can be solitary or in clusters and when mature can be reddish or orange in color. (Wikipedia)

Sources: The Cactus Primer by Arthur C. Gibson and Parks S. Nobel – 1986, Wikipedia, Backyard Nature (http://www.backyardnature.net/index.html), American Journal of Botany.

Upper left: *Pereskia tampicana*. Wikipedia Creative Commons by Stan Shebs- 2006.

Upper right: Nicholas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637), French astronomer. Wikipedia Commons.

Middle left: *Pereskia grandiflora*. Wikipedia Creative Commons by Frank Vincentz, 2006.

Lower left: *Pereskia aculeata* fruit. From Floricultura at http://www.flori-cultura.ro/

THE BOTANICAL CORNER *by Rosario Douglas*

Dear readers. I started using definitions and meanings of botanical terms in 2011. I was trying to do this in alphabetical order and I got as far as the letter G. Recently I have found, hiding in my library, an excellent book by W Taylor Marshall and R.S. Woods. The book titled, **Glossary of succulent plant terms**, was published in 1938. It has a very large variety of terms and I have decided to go back to the letter A so that I can use some of the terms mentioned in Marshall's book.

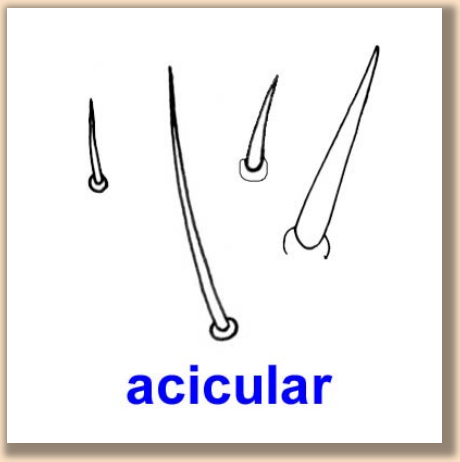
Acantha *A thorn or a spine*

Acanthocarpus *With spiny fruit*

Acanthodes *Full of thorns, spiny*

On the left Ferocactus acanthodes at Joshua Tree National Park, California.

Acaulescent *Having no true stem or only a very short one concealed in the ground. Lower left: a Cycad sp. as an example of an acaulescent plant. From the Cycad Society Webpage at:* http://www.cycad.org/publications/illustrated_glossary.htm



Acicular *Needled shaped*

Acifer *Bearing needles*