

San Gabriel Valley Cactus and Succulent Society

Cacti of the Month May 2002 -- *Echinopsis/Lobivia/Trichocereus*

These three genera are all easy to grow, and all will reward the grower with spectacular flowers. *Echinopsis* hybrid flowers in particular are so well developed and hybridized by growers such as Robert Schick, that they have their own pages in ISI introductions, and special tables devoted to them at the Huntington Botanical Garden annual sale. Modern botany has made the names of two of the genera and many of the species questionable; they are very closely related and most recent authors have combined all three under *Echinopsis*.



Lobivia formosa entered in the 2001 Intercity Show by C & J Spotts
Photo T. Nomer

All three genera have flowers that are scaly and woolly with a prominent ring of stamens in the throat. *Lobivia* is distinguished from the others by having a short floral tube, flowering during the day, and having white or brightly colored flowers. *Echinopsis* tends to have a long floral tube, and the species usually have white or translucent flowers. *Lobivia* and *Echinopsis* are usually globular, while *Trichocereus* generally do not flower until they become columnar. Some species of *Trichocereus* can reach 30 feet or more. There are exceptions to all of these however, and many intermediate genera were created and abandoned in attempts to clarify the relationships. There are species that intergrade

between *Lobivia* and *Echinopsis* and *Trichocereus* and *Echinopsis*.

Propagation from seed or from offsets and cuttings is easy. Offsets are separated from the main plant with a clean, sharp knife, left to dry and replanted. Small cuttings only need a few days drying. Cuttings should be taken in the late spring through the summer, when the plant is in active growth.. Seed is best planted in April or May, to get advantage of a full summer's growth before dormancy. As with most cacti, many of the rarer species are available only as seed.

Enchanting *Echinopsis*:

In this genus, the awards for enchantment must go to the Schick Hybrids. Any CSSA journal will show amazing flowers. They are annual show stoppers at the Huntington.



Echinopsis Hyb. This is an older hybrid from Johnson's cactus.

Photo by Tom Vermilion

Echinopsis oxygona from Southern Brazil, is one of the true species with spectacular white to light pink flowers.

Note: The 2002 catalog of Schick hybrids is online at <http://www.huntington.org/BotanicalDiv/Schick/catalogintro.html>

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Lovely Lobivias:



Lobivia 'Arachnacot' hybrid from Miles2Go
Photo by Tom Vermillion

Lobivia densispina grows in clusters from a large tap root. The spines form a close network that shades and in many cases almost hides the plant body. The flowers vary from yellow to orange and red.

Lobivia ferox almost looks like *Thelocactus*. It is globular, usually singular, and grows to 8 inches in diameter. It has very long spines, on some cultivars more than six inches long.

Lobivia larae is a purple flowered species, with wonderfully long spines. It makes an impressive sight, even when not in flower.

Trichocereus pachanoi a Peruvian species with a history of medicinal and magical uses similar to peyote. The tradition of using this plant goes back through antiquity, with some of the earliest images of cacti, dated to 1300 BC being this species. Often ingested through the nose with tobacco, or boiled into a tea with a mixture of other toxic plants including *Datura*, *Brugmansia*, and members of the *Amaranthaceae* and *Euphorbiaceae*, it is a

potent plant, taken as part of a complex healing or spiritual ritual under the guidance of an experience shaman. Unlike Peyote, this plant is legal. Like many of the South American plants it doesn't form significant amounts of mind altering chemicals when grown outside of its normal environment. *Trichocereus pachanoi* is also an excellent grafting stock.



Trichocereus pachanoi
Photo by Tom Vermillion

References:

- Anderson, E. **The Cactus Family**
Cullman, Gotz and Groner, **The Encyclopedia of Cacti**
Innes, C. and Glass, C., **Cacti**

Tom Glavich April 2002