

San Gabriel Valley Cactus and Succulent Society

Cacti of the Month February 2003 - *Notocactus* and *Parodia*

Notocactus and *Parodia* are now generally considered to be the same genus, and in modern references, all *Notocacti* have been moved into *Parodia*. The original distinguishing characteristic was the red stigmas in the flowers of *Notocactus*, and the yellow stigma in those of *Parodia*. The distinguishing characteristic between the two genera evolved over time, eventually becoming a minor difference in the attachment of the seed to ovary. *Parodia* has swept up several other genera, and is likely to grow and swallow a few more as botanical and genetic studies continue.



Notocactus magnificus entered in the 2001 Intercity Show by Paul and Carol Maker

Nonetheless, the two are separate in many seed catalogs, in older reference books, in our shows, and in most of our collections.

Both *Parodia* and *Notocactus* are South American Cacti, with the centers of the genera in Brazil and Argentina, but with members throughout the Eastern side of the Andes. All are easy to grow, growing freely in the spring through the fall, and going more or less dormant in the fall. Some will flower in mid winter, and given their native environment, most do better given a little water year around. Some of the more tropical species need protection from colder weather to prevent scarring, but most will take normal Southern California winters without protection.



Parodia chrysacanthion entered in the 2001 Intercity Show by David and Eileen Tufenkian

All the species are easy to grow from seed. Seed is available for nearly all the species and from many localities. It germinates readily and can grow a show quality plant in just a few years. Vegetative propagation of the clustering types is easy as well. Cuttings taken during the late spring and early summer root readily and show new growth before the season is over.

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Noteworthy *Notocactus*

Notocactus leninghausii from Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil is easy to come by, and with patience and care becomes a very impressive species. It is nearly columnar, offsetting from the base, with short yellow spines. The growing tip always leans towards the sun (much more so in California than in its native Brazil). Give it root room and lots of fertilizer to grow and spread.

Notocactus magnificus from Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil is easy to come by, easy to grow, and lives up to its name. Spectacular even as a single head, it clumps with time for a very impressive display. Like all the *Notocacti*, a reliable bloomer.

Notocactus ottonis, widespread in South America from Southern Brazil to Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. This species exists in many forms. Look for a dark purple form that turns green when growth starts in spring. This species clumps readily, even when small.

Notocactus uebelmannianus another species from Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil has thick rounded ribs, the crown and the areoles all have lots of white wool. It has white spines and red flowers.

Particular *Parodias*

Parodia chrysacanthion from Jujuy, Argentina shown left is a solitary globose species, with great spines.

Parodia maassii has dense spination, often colored. It is native to Southern Bolivia and Northern Argentina.

Parodia penicillata from Northern Argentina has very dense radial spines that stick out from the body. A very unusual species that is easy to grow. This another species whose growing point always points towards the sun, giving the plant a leaning appearance. This can be avoided by frequently turning the plant, or it can be emphasized as part of the unique character of the species.

Parodia turecekiana, named after our own Victor Turecek, comes from western Uruguay and Northern Argentina. A great species that is readily available.

References:

E. Anderson, **The Cactus Family**

J. Pilbeam, **Cactus for the Connoisseur**

A. Innes & C. Glass **Cacti**

Tom Glavich January 2003

Photos by T. Nomer