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IF IT'S FLOWERS YOU WANT, THEN IT'S ECHINOPSIS YOU NEED!

The genus *Echinopsis* was established in 1837 making it one of the oldest cactus genera. These plants are native of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. The plants are generally green and globular with 8 to 30 sharp and continuous ribs. Their spines are usually uniform without any major differentiation of the central or radial spines. Older specimens tend to become somewhat elongated.

While the plants in this genus are generally not spectacular in appearance, their flowers more than make up for it. Their flowers are large and quite colorful. They appear laterally and are long and trumpet-like in shape. They are also very scaly and hairy. They bear a distinct ring of throat stamens that separate them from the stamens of any other plant.

The genus *Echinopsis* is related to the genera *Lobivia*, *Pseudolobivia*, *Helianthocereus* and *Soehrensia*. All these plants flowers which are scaly and hairy with a recessed ring of throat stamens. *Echinopsis* are very easy to hybridize. In fact, there are many species of well-known hybrids, which are sought for their beautiful and profuse flowers. As a matter of fact, for the last several years, Huntington Botanical Gardens has offered the world famous Bob Schick hybrids for sale as part of the ISI program. For example, the following page contains a photo of a Schick hybrid called "Brigitte's Beauty". Its flowers reach 10 1/2 cm. (4 in.) across. Some species of *Echinopsis* have even been hybridized with species of related genera.

Their flowers can be both diurnal or nocturnal. Those specimens which flower during the day bear flowers which range from yellow to red. Those which flower at night bear white or pale lilac flowers with a very pleasant scent. Diurnal and nocturnal flowers are identical in shape. Flowers may open for only a day or may remain open for three days, depending on the species. It appears that specimens bearing diurnal flowers are endemic of regions of high altitudes (1,700 to 3,500 meters {5,600 to 11,500 feet}). Those bearing flowers during the evening appear in locations of lower altitudes.

To care for these plants in cultivation, they should be provided with well drained soil which is rich in humus. They should be kept relatively warm in the winter being careful not to expose them to temperatures below 10°C (50°F). They should not be allowed to dry out completely. If exposed to extreme cold and/or dryness in the winter, they may not come out of dormancy at spring-time. During their growth period (spring through early fall), they should be watered and fertilized often. They should be kept in very bright conditions but care should be exercised not to expose them directly to the scorching midday sun.

Plants in this genus can be propagated from seed with seedlings being able to flower after they are four years old. A faster method of propagation is from pups, which these plants tend to form regularly. Pups may begin to produce roots while they are still attached to their mother plant.

Some of the better-known species in the *Echinopsis* genus include:

E. ancistrophora. This is native of Argentina. It is a relatively small species (5 to 8 cm. {2 to 3 1/4 in.}). Its flowers are white, diurnal and range from (12 to 16 cm. 4 3/4 to 6 1/4 in.}).

E. arachnacantha. This species from Bolivia is very small (up to 4 cm. {1 1/2 in.}). Its diurnal flowers range from golden yellow to orange.

E. arachnacanta v. torrecillasensis. Same as above except for carmine red flowers.

E. aurea. A native of Argentina, this species can reach a diameter of 7 cm. (2 3/4 in.). Its diurnal flowers can are yellow.

E. calochlora. This plant's diameter is between 6 to 9 cm. (2 1/4 to 3 1/2 in.). It bears white, nocturnal flowers and is a native of Brazil.

E. calorubra. This species is relative larger reaching diameters of 14 cm. (5 1/2 in.). It is native of Bolivia and bears flowers which orange-red, bluish pink towards the base. The flowers can be 15 cm. (6 in.) in length.

E. cardenasiana. Also a native of Bolivia, this plant can reach 10 cm. (4 in.) in diameter. Its diurnal flowers are bluish red with greenish-white throats.

E. eyriesii. This plant (up to 15 cm. {6 in.} in width) has a wide habitat from South Brazil to Argentina to Uruguay. It is nocturnal with flowers opening in late afternoon. It bears white flowers. E. ferox. This species is quite large with diameters reaching 20 cm. (7 3/4 in.). Its diurnal flowers can range from the usual white to pink or yellow. It is a native of Bolivia.

E. hamatacantha. A native of Argentina, this species can reach 15 cm. (6 in.) in diameter. Its flowers are nocturnal, white, scented and up to 20 cm. (7 3/4 in.) long.

E. kratochviliana. This plant reaches a width of 6 cm. (2 1/4 in.). It bears small, white diurnal flowers. It is a native of Argentina.

E. leucantha. This native of Argentina can reach 15 cm. (6 in.) in diameter. It bears white, scented, nocturnal flowers reaching 20 cm. (7 3/4 in.).

E. mammillosa v. kermesina. This plant is native of Argentina and can reach 15 cm. (6 in.) in diameter. It bears red, diurnal flowers reaching 18 cm. (7 in.).

E. multiplex. This native of S. Brazil can reach 15 cm. (6 in.) in diameter. It bears flesh-colored nocturnal flowers with pink at the tip reaching 20 cm. (7 3/4 in.) The flowers have a strong pleasant scent.

E. obrepanda v. calorubra. This plant reaches 14 cm. (5 1/2 in.) in width. It is native of Bolivia and bears red, diurnal flowers which may reach 15 cm. (6 in.).

E. oxygona. Probably the largest in the genus, this species may reach 25 cm. (10 in.) in diameter. It is native of S. Brazil and Uruguay. Its flowers are pale red, diurnal and may also reach 25 cm. (10 in.).

E. polyancistra. This native of Argentina only reaches 6 cm. (2 1/4 in.) in diameter. Its flowers are thin, white and scented.

E. silvestrii. This plant's diameter can reach 15 cm. (6 in.). It is a native of Argentina. Its flowers are white and can reach 20 cm. (7 3/4 in.) in length.

E. toralapana. This Bolivian species can reach 16 cm. (6 1/4 in.) across. Its flowers are bluish-red.

E. tubiflora. This native of Argentina has white, nocturnal flowers, which can reach 20 cm. (7 3/4 in) in length. The plant can reach a diameter of 12 cm. (4 3/4 in.).

In summary, Echinopsis are classified as excellent plants for moderate, well balanced cultural conditions. Aside from the extremes mentioned earlier, they will thrive with relatively little care. Just think of it, a relatively easy plant to cultivate, which will reward you with plenty of large, bright colorful flowers! How can you resist?