

Trichocereus Hybrids

By Linda Hollingsworth, Bexar County Master Gardener

Trichocereus hybrid cacti, also known as Echinopsis hybrids, are mostly a cross of two different parents due to most being self-sterile. Offspring come closer to the mother plant, although there are exceptions. They are columnar in growth and can grow to 4-feet high at maturity.

Each year, I volunteered at the Carlsbad, California, Flower Fields, assisting with the children's school tours. While on break, I strolled through the attached Armstrong Garden Center Nursery and saw a cactus, 8-inches tall, 6-inches in diameter, with an over-the-top 10-inch diameter flower! It was in various shades of pink, translucent, and looked as if someone had sprinkled it with glitter. I knew little about cacti, but I had to have this beauty. Thus, began my love affair with these beautiful cacti. Several cacti nurseries were in San Marcos, CA. I bought more. The cacti moved with us from Oceanside, CA, to Las Vegas, NV, and now reside in San Antonio, TX.

As I was removing lawn and designing my new drought-tolerant yard, my new neighbors said, "Why would you want these thorny, ugly, things?" A few weeks later, those thorny, ugly things were blooming. Boy, did my neighbors change their minds, bringing cameras and watching daily for what was blooming. Here are some of my favorites:



'Flying Saucer' was my first *Trichocereus* hybrid and still my favorite. It will have extra-large blooms, up to 14-inches in diameter, if you pull several buds off (which I cannot bear to do). Blooms are pink with orange mid-stripes, contrasting with a pastel yellow throat.

'Orange California' has a large 8-inch diameter bloom in light orange to pink, with a darker orange mid-stripe and back petals. The cactus averages 6-8 inches in diameter and up to 40-inches tall at maturity. It tends to lean at 36-inches and may need some support. Hybridized by Hans Britsch.



'First Light' has an 8-inch diameter bloom with light pink inner petals, a darker pink mid-stripe, and darker pink back petals. It is a cross of *Echinopsis* 'Diehls' hybrid and *Tricho* 'Newlands Orange.' Hybridized by Mark Dimmitt.

'LaLania' has 6-inch diameter blooms with orange inner petals, a touch of cerise, darker orange mid-stripe and burnt orange back petals. The column is up to 10-inches in diameter and 3-4 feet tall at maturity.



Trichocereus hybrid CULTURE

Blooms:

Generally, they bloom in early May, depending on weather and temperature. They can bloom in many sets.

There are color variations, depending on weather and fertilization.

Most buds open late night into early morning and last one day.

Blooms attract bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. I saw one C5 bumble bee rolling over and over down in the flower totally covered in pollen... he was extremely happy!

Fertilization:

mid-January until buds end - 0-10-10

June through October, one time per month - 10-10-5

Let the cacti rest November through mid-January – None

Other:

- Tolerant of hard frosts (25°F) and heat
- Plant in containers or in ground
- Filtered shade to full sun with afternoon shade... loves being under Palo Verde or mesquite trees
- Propagate by stem cuttings (allow to callus over) or pups
- Cutting off the spent blooms close to the stem will result in greater flowering instead of producing fruit from pollinated flowers.