

# Philippine Gardens

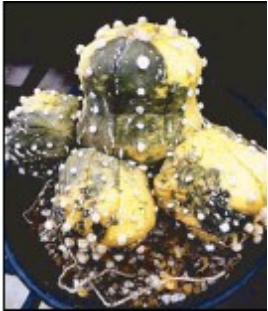
(A special section on flowers and ornamental plants)

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Cacti have been popular since the 70's. The old generation did not like them too much because of the spines and superstitious beliefs surrounding these exotic plants. Old timers will advise female gardeners to avoid growing cacti otherwise they will never get married and die a virgin.



The Taoists did not help either in its popularity due to the belief that the spines are very unlucky or bad Fungshui. The plant will inflict harm to the owner or the members of the household.

Modern Fungshui masters on other hand recommend Cacti as barriers for negative energies and Succulents as absorber of Negative Energies.

### Cacti and Succulents in the Philippines

The 70's showed a surge in the interest in cultivation of cacti and succulents as a commercial crop in the Philippines. The world trotters bring in the plants during their travels abroad. The main growing areas are in Benguet and the main market is Baguio.

By early 90's, cactus growing communities popped up in Mabalacat, Pampanga as livelihood. This served as the main source of affordable commercial varieties that unloads into Manila and Baguio City. Cacti seeds have been imported to create interest in new varieties. The interest in Cacti and succulent has been in a steady rise since then.

At the start of the millennium, the plant importers started bringing varieties from Thailand. This created a renewed interest in Cacti and succulents. The traders make the most money.

Whoever gets to the suppliers first earns the most. Cactus Market Trend

During the peak of Cactus Trade, a question was asked by a successful trader..."How long will the interest in cactus last?"

The Sansevieria Trade craze, which the Philippines participated together with the southeastern neighbors were having a field day for 12 years before it simmered down and is now a regular mainstay in plant markets in Indonesia and Thailand.

The Anthurium craze of Southeast Asia lasted about 10 years and then slowed down but volumes increased and plants found their way to the malls in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The interest in imported cacti and succulents has been running for a few years already and it is expected that fads and craze in marketing of horticultural commodities follows an 8 years cycle... so, it should be good for another 4 years.

The current situation in the market is that the traders are bringing in middle level products that Thailand is milling out. If the high-end merchandise is brought in, it should liven up the market place and raise the bar in terms of pricing. Being a slow grower, the price should hold for a longer period.

The traders were warned that the high-end merchandise might not get sold so soon and that they may be written off as lost header.

As soon as the high-end merchandise were imported, they got sold fast. It did not follow the perceived current model in plant marketing. The Millennial Factor

Looking at the profile of people who bought the expensive ones, they are mostly new participants in the industry and the traditional business models do not hold. The buyers were mostly young professionals and condominium owners who grow the cacti in a limited space, thus pickier with the higher grade plants and are more inclined to consider the plants as their pet. They are the millennials.

In business, there is a need to go with the flow of change. Even the buying habits of the millennials changed the infrastructure of business. Most millennials do not have time to shop around, so they use the internet to buy what they like. Expensive plants abroad may be photographed and posted in social media. Within minutes, an expensive plant is pre-sold before they even leave the producer's nursery.

Plants may now be traded through courier services or even through Grab motorcycle brigade. The changes include the payment mode from cash to electronic facilities like paypal and other systems. The Future

The Cacti and Succulents specialization in the Philippines is virtually just starting. Although production has been attempted earlier, the market interest simply was not there. With the recent developments in the market, it is about time to harness the past experiences (trials and failures included) and cash in on some concepts. Seed Grown Cacti

and Succulents Seeds were successfully grown in commercial scale during the 80's and 90's. The market was not specialized so that the plants were sold as ordinary plants. With the developments in seed technology in the Netherlands, USA and other more advanced countries, the seed market got very interesting. What used to be very rare in collections may now be enjoyed by home growers and they may make money out of their hobby.

The seed posed less government restrictions and are the cheapest source of planting materials for production. Mutants or sports in seedling (i.e. variegatas, color mutation and cretin plants) spontaneously show up in germination flats. Cloning Special Varieties

Tissue Culture or Aseptic Culture may be done on cacti and succulents to develop the numbers for commerce. For some of the succulents, the most practical way of propagation is through stem propagation before launching into full scale production of special varieties.

Chemical method of cloning using bud activators or alcoholic solution of cytokinins are now available for beginners to try out. Gift Item

Cacti and Succulents has been recently used as wedding giveaways. To sustain this trend, there is a need for the seed-grown base to get the volume and low price so that the planners can integrate the cacti into gift item designs. Flasked cacti seedling may be used also as wedding giveaways and fits the Kawai Marketing system for the millenials.

#### Culinary and Nutritional Uses

With the current exposure of Filipinos to social media, there is a bigger likelihood that the Nopale and Nopalitos of Mexico will end up in the plate of Filipinos. The Dragon fruit will stay now that it is being marketed as health food. Other cactus fruits with better flavors are now arriving at the food scene in the Philippines.

The proteolytic enzymes of some cacti fruits are being studied for anti-inflammatory virtues and anti-cancer treatment.

Cacti and Succulents have a very bright future in the Philippines