

## *Hylocereus minutiflorus* Britton & Rose (Cactaceae) an endemic species of Central America

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*Hylocereus minutiflorus* Britton & Rose is one of the species of “pitahaya“ least known and documented of Central American endemic cacti, this due to its distribution, the fact it has small flowers, small fruits and grows from Atlantic Belize, to Guatemala and Honduras, where it is found as an epiphyte in very warm and wet forests.

**Keywords:** *Hylocereus minutiflorus*, Cactaceae, endemic, Central America.

### Introduction

The genus *Hylocereus* (Berger) Britton & Rose 1909, includes climbing Cactaceae, collectively epiphytic; with triangular stems, with more or less waved ribs, branches emit aerial roots; flowers are solitary on areoles, nocturnal, generally large (20-30 cm long), producing big fruits without spines and are edible, known normally as “ pitahaya “; the pollination seems to ensue from moths, and frugivorous birds intervene in the distribution of seeds. (Bravo, 1978).

For Guatemala, 5 species of *Hylocereus* are documented, 4 of them are endemic (*Hylocereus escuintlensis*, *H. guatemalensis*, *H. minutiflorus* and *H. undatus*). More than one exotic species (*Hylocereus megalanthus*). *Hylocereus undatus* and *H. megalanthus* are cultivated in Guatemala (Standley & Steyermark, 1962; Véliz *et al.* 2003; Arias & Hunt, Taylor & Gram., 2006; Véliz, 2006; Véliz & Méndez, 2007; Véliz, 2008).

*Hylocereus minutiflorus*, an endemic species of Central America, probably the rarer and least documented species, is the subject of the present article, the purpose of which is allowing the reader to know a little bit more about the great floristic richness we have in Central America.



Plate 1. *Hylocereus minutiflorus* Britton & Rose. A. Shape. B. Branch with floral buds. C. Night-flowering. D. Plant in flower. E. Size of the flower.





***Hylocereus minutiflorus* Britton & Rose** (Plate 1)

*Contributions from the United States National Herbarium* 16(7): 240, t. 69. 1913.

*Cereus minutiflorus* (Britton & Rose) Vaupel, *Wilmattea minutiflora* (Britton & Rose) Britton & Rose.

Plants generally epiphytic or climbing; 1.5-3.5 cm wide, stems dark green; triangular, with thin, unarmed angles; areoles separated 2-4 cm from each other, spines usually 1-3, small, brown. Flowers 5-6 cm long, solitary in the areole, perfumed, pericarpel 1 cm long, scales elongated to oval, purple or greenish at the base, areoles of the flower sometimes setose; external segments of the perianth red in the median vein and at the apex; internal segments of the perianth very narrow, white. Style 3.5 cm long, lobes of the stigma 10-11, 7 mm long. Fruit spherical, 4.5 cm, magenta, pulp white.

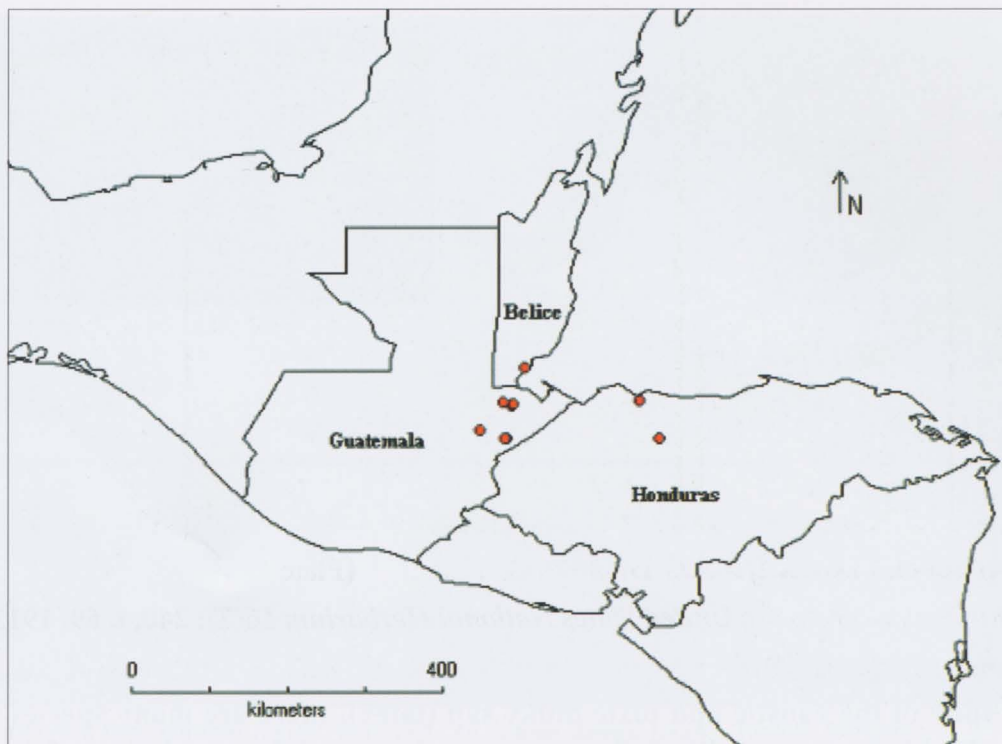
**Distribution:** known in Belize, in Guatemala (Izabal) and in Honduras (Atlántida and Yoro), the species grows at 0-400 m. in altitude, in very warm and wet forests (see map 2)

**Flowering:** nocturnal, remaining partially opened in the morning, blooming in March-June.

**Utilisation:** the fruit is edible.

**Status of Conservation:** *Hylocereus minutiflorus* is included in the List of Species threatened with Extinction of the CONAP (2006). In the Category of State of the Red List (IUCN, on 2001), it must be considered as vulnerable (VU) because it grows in regions where the vegetation is subjected to a strong pressure for its use.

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Map 2. Distribution of *Hylocereus minutiflorus* in Central America (circles).

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