

Myrtillocactus schenckii (Purpus) Britton & Rose, a new record for Guatemala

Mario Esteban Véliz Pérez (Guatemala)

During the expeditions for the project "Analysis of the biodiversity and endemisms of the semi-arid zones of Guatemala" patronized by the Secretariat of Sciences and Technology-SENACYT-, the vicepresident of Guatemala, a treelike cactus was collected for the first time in the municipality of Cuilco, Huehuetenango, *Myrtillocactus schenckii* (Purpus) Britton & Rose, until now considered as endemic of Mexico and distributed in the States of Oaxaca and Puebla (Arias, Gama & Guzmán, 1977). With the project of investigation on "Cactus (Cactaceae) of Guatemala" in progress and patronized by the National Fund for the Conservation of the Nature-FONACON-, it was collected in a new village, at the edge of Rio Negro, bordering a zone between the departments of Huehuetenango and Quiché; Furthermore, it brings better information about the distribution and the phenology of this medium species, the small fruits of which have pleasant taste. It is known as *Tunopach*, *guanojo*, *chinchón* or *organito*; a new record for the biodiversity of Guatemala.

Myrtillocactus schenckii (Purpus) Britton and Rose, Contr. U. S Herb. 12: 427. 1909
Cereus schenckii Purpus, Monats. Kakt. 19: 38. 1909.

• Description

Treelike **plant**, 3-5 m. high, with a short main stem 1-1.5 m; **branches** ascending, 7-10 cm wide, green to dark green; **ribs** 6-8, 1.5-2 cm, with a slightly pointed margin; **areoles** with white wool, 4-6 cm distant, circular-oval, 4-7 mm diameter with few hairs at the top of the areole, yellowish, deciduous; **radial spines** (6-7), 0.5-1.2 cm long, 0.5-0.8 mm thick, tubular, stiff, brown to black; one **central spine** 1-4 cm long, 0.7-0.9 mm thick, tubular, stiff, straight, black. **Flowers** 1.8-2.5 cm long, 2.0-2.5 cm large, pericarpel 4-6 mm long, 4-6 mm thick, bracts red, few, insignificant areoles, spines 0-2; 1-3 mm long, setose, deciduous; floral tube 4-5 mm long; **tepals** 0.8-1.2 cm long, 0.4-0.5 mm wide, elongated, stretched out; brown-greenish **external tepals**, **inner tepals** white-yellowish; stamens 0.8-1.2 cm long, white strands; **style** long, white 1.0-1.5 cm, lobes of the stigma 4-5, ca. 3 mm, greenish yellow. **Fruit** 0.8-1.5 cm long, 0.6-1.5 cm wide, spherical or ellipsoid, red carmine, possibly with small vestigial, deciduous spines, pulp reddish; **seeds** black, ca. 1 mm long (Arias, Range & Guzmán, 1997; Bravo, 1978, Véliz, 2001).

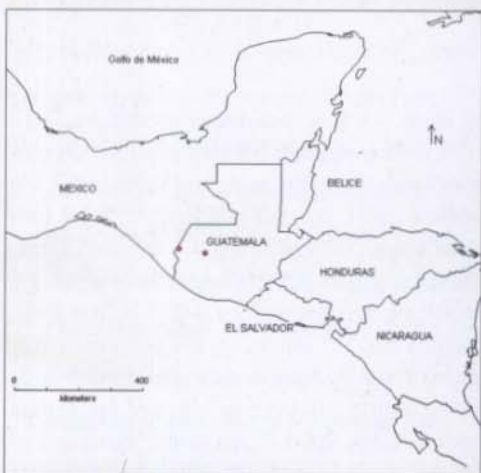


Myrtillocactus schenckii fl. (photo : M. Veliz.).



Myrtillocactus schenckii fl. (photo : M. Veliz.).

Myrtillocactus schenckii tige (photo : M. Veliz.).



Distribution map of *Myrtillocactus schenckii* in Guatemala.



Myrtillocactus schenckii fr. (photo : M. Veliz.).



Myrtillocactus schenckii, habitat, Guatemala (photo : M. Veliz.).

• **Studied Specimens:**

GUATEMALA, Huehuetenango, Mpio Aguacatán. February 15th, 2008 (fl, fr) M. Véliz MV 19793 with L. Vélasquez and T. Calderón (BIGU); **Mpio Cuilco**, Village Canibál. June 15th, 2006 (fr.) M. Véliz MV 16892 with C. Méndez and J. Morales; July 12th, 2006 M. Véliz MV 17086, 17087, 17088 (fr.) with V. Dávila and J. Morales (BIGU), V. Davila 1077, 1078, 1079 (fr.) with M. Véliz and J Morales (BIGU); March 23rd, 2007 (fl.) M. Véliz MV 18477 with L. Vélasquez (BIGU); **Quiche, Mpio San Pedro Jocopilas. Edges of the Rio Negro**, February 20th, 2008 (fl., fr.) M. Véliz MV 19871 with L. Vélasquez and T. Calderón (BIGU);

• **Distribution:**

It is only known from the banks of the river Cuilco, at 900-1100 m in altitude, in the municipality of Cuilco, Huehuetenango, which is close to the State of Chiapas, Mexico, where it is also probably distributed but was not reported (figure 2).

• **Phenology:** it blooms in January - April, fruits appear in February-May.

• **Habitat:**

A frequent species, growing together with *Stenocereus pruinosus*, *Pilosocereus leucocephalus*, *Nopalea dejecta*, *Opuntia pubescens*, *Mammillaria karwinskiana* var. *collinsii*, *Acanthocereus chiapensis*, *Ceiba parvifolia*, *Cederla salvadorensis*, *Bursera schlechtendalii* and *B. simaruba* in the low caducifolious forest (Véliz & Méndez, 2007; Véliz, 2007)

Text & Photos: M. Véliz

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

ARIAS MONTES S., GAMA LOPEZ y L. U. GUZMAN CRUZ. 1997 *Flora del valle de Tehuacan-Cuicatlan. Cactaceae*. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México 14:89-90

BRAVO HOLLIS, H. 1978. *Las cactáceas de México*. México, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (1)705

VELIZ PEREZ, M. E. y C. MENDEZ. 2007. *Análisis de la diversidad florística y endemismos de las zonas semiáridas de Guatemala*. Secretaria Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología-SENACYT, Vicepresidencia de la Republica de Guatemala. Informe Final

VELIZ PEREZ, M. E. 2007. *Los cactus (Cactaceae) de Guatemala: Diversidad y usos*. Fondo Nacional para la Conservación de la Naturaleza-FONACON, Guatemala. Primer Informe Trimestral. 42 p.



Hortícola Los Serranos

Cactus & Suculentas
Severo Ochoa 21
04700 El Ejido, (AL)
ESPAÑA
(00.34) 607.38.52.20

