

BOOK REVIEW

JARED D. MARGULIES. 2023. **The Cactus Hunters: Desire and Extinction in the Illicit Succulent Trade.** (ISBN 13-978-1-5179-1390-4, pbk; 978-1-5179-1398-4, hbk). University Minnesota Press, 133 Third Avenue South, Suite 290, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401-2520. (Orders: www.upress.umn.edu). \$24.95 US, 381 pp., 46 b/w figures, index, 5.5" × 8.5".

Plant collectors and enthusiasts are attracted to cacti and succulents in part because of their showy flowers in comparison to body size for many species. For example, the cactus genus *Mammillaria*, among others, is often found in cactus collections. Nevertheless, this human attraction for the collection and growing of cacti has led to an extensive illegal trade of cacti well documented in this book. Cacti over collecting coupled with the fact that 31%, or about 1500 cacti species, are considered threatened, results in harvesting pressure that creates environmental concerns for the preservation of these plants. Margulies's book raises awareness to the problem of cactus collection, trading, and selling both legally and illegally.

This book is well worth reading to better understand the harvesting and collection pressures of cacti from desert and arid environments. In the introduction, I found the topical section "A Political Ecology of Desire" a fascinating discourse on the interaction between plants and humans. Chapter headings include: Cactus, Be My Desire; On Collecting and Caring for Cacti; Illicit Encounters with Succulent Collectors; Between the Iron Curtain and the Glass House; Confronting Extinction Anxiety in Cactus Country, A New Illicit Trade; Learning to Know a Plant; Disentangling Succulent Desires; For a Flourishing Geography of Succulent Life.

This book is not without shortcomings! Most black and white photographs, included as Figures, are not in sharp focus, and lack detail when illustrating habitats or highlighting of cactus morphology. The seven pages of acknowledgments cite many people, places, and organizations that supported writing this book, but lacked any photographic credits for Figures used as book illustrations.

I highly recommend this book to botanists and the lay public for its content, narrative and writing style is easy to understand. The modest price should encourage every reader to have this book on their bookshelf.

About the author:

Jared D. Margulies is Assistant Professor in Geography at the University of Alabama where he teaches political ecology. This diverse field of practice incorporates environmental inequalities, human-nature relationships, and how matters of social justice intersect with environmental questions. These elements are found in this book as part of the illicit trade of cactus plants.

—Harold W. Keller, PhD., Professor Emeritus, Botanist and Mycologist, Researcher,
Fort Worth Botanic Garden | Botanical Research Institute of Texas,
Fort Worth, Texas, 76107-3400, U.S.A