

My Flowers Bloomed at 12 a.m.!

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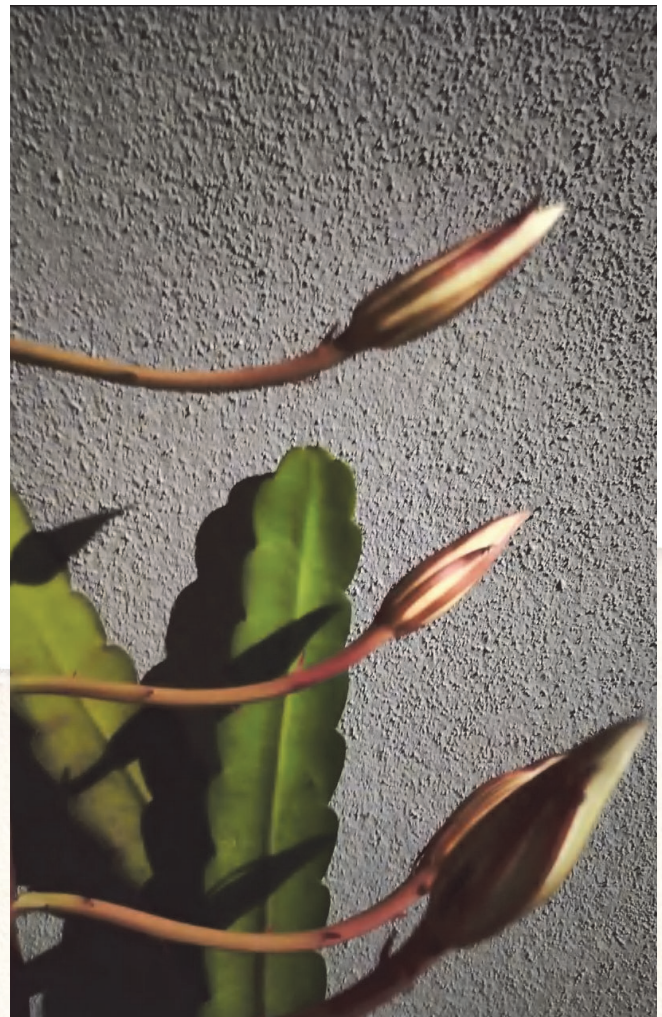
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Last week, I was very excited to wait for the bloom of my flowers at midnight. The flowers are known as bakawali. I have one pot of bakawali plants on my porch. It has flattened green stems or leaves. Its white flowers sprout from the stems several times a year. The flowers smell sweet like vanilla. When the flowers bloom, I could see some small black ants on the petals. I got more excited last week because there were more flowers than before.

Bakawali actually belongs to the cactus family. Thus, it is easy to take care of. It does not need fertilizers and frequent watering. If you forget to water it, it will not die, but the colour of the stems turn into red. When the plant gets sufficient water, the stems turn into green again. You do not have to worry if you forget to water it for weeks, it still can survive because it is a cactus! If you want to plant it, just cut the stem since it does not produce fruits. Put it in a pot and water it until it grows bigger.

I think the uniqueness of this plant is that the flowers only bloom at midnight. The bloom lasts for several hours only. There are actually many types of bakawali plants. Mine has white flowers. Here are the pictures of my bakawali flowers. Its size is about-

the size of my palm. It bloomed last month. I waited until 12 a.m. just to capture the pictures and smell the sweet vanilla scent! Is it cool to have this plant?



Bakawali flowers are not only beautiful but also useful. My late mother told me that bakawali flowers are used for treating sick eyes and as skincare. I still remember when I was small, in the 1970s, she also planted bakawali for the-

flowers. Actually, we lived in a remote village. Thus, it was very difficult for us to get modern treatments at a hospital which was located far from town. To reach the town, the villagers had to cross the Dungun River by a traditional boat called "sampan". The boat used a piece of cloth as the sail which was made from the wheat gunny sacks sewed by hand. Hence, it was difficult to go to the hospital. The villagers-



including my mother prepared eye drops by using bakawali flowers to treat sick eyes. It worked well and soothed our sick eyes. Another use of the flower, according to my mother, was to prepare youth restoring water; something like rose water. The water was applied onto the face as skincare in

order to beautify the skin. It was believed that the bakawali water could restore the skin's youth. Frankly, I have never tried this so far!

Another thing that my late mother told me about this flower is a myth, I believe. She said that the plant was guarded by a good genie. The genie princess would come when the flowers bloom. This sounds a bit scary! Now, would you dare to plant bakawali at your house compound?

As for me, I will keep the plants on my porch. I love the flowers and its scent. After all, it is easy and not costly to grow the plant.