

The

Central

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CONTENTS:

IN RESPONSE TO: "WELL, IF I HAD BEEN THE JUDGE....."

ON BEING A JUDGE

JIM ELLIOTT

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS AND REWARDS OF
BEING A CACTUS/SUCCULENT SHOW JUDGE

JOHN GRAHAM

HOW SHE GOT HIM INTO IT--BY HIMSELF
AEONIUMS ETERNAL

FRANK HENNESSEY
VERA GAMET

ON BEING A JUDGE

JIM ELLIOTT

I loved it! I was treated as an honored guest with a catered meal and a complimentary book by Gary Nabhan. In addition I got to spend the day with very knowledgeable people in my chosen occupation.

This show went very well although I can foresee some potential problems with the tent. We were fortunate enough to have relatively mild weather with minimal wind. If the show should catch a cold week the conditions for the more delicate families, Melocactus for example, could be critical. An all-day judging session would be brutal. I would recommend that an adequate heating system be in place before going to a larger tent. The open space and unity of the show achieved this year make the extra risk worth taking but with significant precautions to minimize the loss of plants.

The actual selection of winners in some classes was too tough for my group of judges so we awarded more ribbons than the minimum in many classes. Fortunately my group of three judges developed an accomodating style quickly so a consensus could be reached and we could move on to the next class. The three part judging team seems ideal as it always allows for a majority decision and is small enough to be workable.

I believe the "novice" division is the best idea to become part of the show in recent years. The judging is much less critical and the award of ribbons should be a factor in attracting new exhibitors. From personal observation, the success my children had in the Novice Division this year was critical in keeping them as participants.

I firmly believe another innovation should add greatly to the success and competitiveness of the show---~~THE MASTER'S DIVISION.~~

So far it has been a resounding flop and I cannot understand why. After competing for several years it seemed to me that not only did the same exhibitors dominate year after year after year, but they did it with the same plants!

The problem seems to be how to keep the top quality plants in the show so the public can be exposed to the best without allowing the show to go stale or discouraging new growers.

The idea of a Master's Division is to allow trophy winners to compete against each other in an area of the show that identifies these exhibitors and plants as the best in past shows. It should be one of the highlights of any show. The best!

We believed in this idea so strongly that we have volunteered financial support to provide trophies. Last year we had the humiliating experience of winning the silver we had paid for!

This year we could not compete as I had agreed to judge and the results were even less palatable.

There were less than a half dozen entries in the entire division.

Each year the show awards many trophies and each of these winners is eligible to compete in the "Master's Division." I am at loss as to why they do not. Possibly the points won in the Master's Division must be allowed toward sweepstakes or whatever it is that motivates the exhibitors to show. It is becoming evident that the division as currently structured is not getting the job done.

Perhaps the Cactus and Succulent Club can resolve this problem in one of two ways: either by promoting it to encourage past winners to compete and show their prize plants, or to revise it in a way that will allow the show to prosper even if that means the elimination of the division. I find it inconceivable that people who care enough to produce and show trophy winners each year care so little about the show that they will leave the best at home. There must be a solution. Perhaps a letter to each trophy winner explaining the importance of the show's success and prestige would encourage them to show their best.

Being a judge was an honor, not a burden. I would recommend it to anyone.

TRIALS, TRIBULATIONS AND REWARDS OF A CACTUS/SUCCULENT SHOW JUDGE JOHN GRAHAM

Upon receiving an invitation to be a judge--first time experience-- for the 1986 Cactus and Succulent Show I was very honored. Being a confirmed dyed-in-the-wool cacti nut with years of experience killing treasured plants I now had the opportunity to apply some rather hard earned knowledge.

Two weeks prior to judging day the show rules and Judge's Guide were reviewed, and again two days before the show the same area was covered. Ready? NO! I didn't know when to be there. Three calls and I found out.

JUDGING DAY: Up at 5:30 A.M. Butterflies? I rush around. Don't want to be late. 6:20 A.M. That is too early to go. Have a second cup of coffee. Arrive at Garden at eight o'clock. Have a third cup of coffee and waited for the other judges. By 8:20 A.M. everyone resembling an expert had arrived and we were given general instructions on what was expected, the number of ribbons, judging each class (Amateur, Advanced and Masters) etc., etc, etc, and so forth.

Then off we go, three experts to judge several hundred well grown cacti during the next five or six hours.

FIRST GROUP: four or five plants. Only one is amateur. What do we judge this against? The show clerk was consulted and we were told "against other amateurs." But how? There are no others. So we gave the plant a ribbon for merit without judging against perfection. How about that? First, second and third places were not so difficult. We three experts agreed the first try! That was the last time all day.

(NOTE: There developed a curious unspoken "pecking order" among the judges and this varied from one group of plants to the next and depended upon the strength of knowledge attached to each group being reviewed by each of the judges. This made for an excellent working relationship.)

SECOND GROUP: a large group. Amateurs were judged first and we did not agree the first try. Each judge explained likes and dislikes and we reached agreement on the second try. The Advanced Group was more difficult. We had to revert to a process of elimination, specifically following the Judging Guide. Any combination of point subtracting items (demerits) such as the plant was not in the best shape, the container dirty, the price tag was still on the container, the container was broken, there was no top dressing, the nomenclature was incorrect, etc., counted against the plant. Then each judge selected his own first, second, third and honorable mention. Being new to judging and very enthusiastic, I made my selection and waited for the other two judges to make theirs. I immediately announced my selection.....and was immediately shot down. Only one of my selections was agreed upon by the other judges, who in turn did not agree with each other. Each judge then explained his particular choice and why he thought the plant deserved a ribbon. After much discussion, and a certain amount of compromise, the ribbons were awarded.

Each category of plants we reviewed could be discussed in great detail, but for the sake of the reader's eyes and interest levels, I will mention only two others briefly.

MAMMILLARIAS: The judging was difficult at best due to the wide variety and outstanding selection of plants, but a good challenge for the same reason.

THE BEST CACTI OF THE SHOW: It was close to impossible to judge. None of us agreed on the first, second or third alternatives. As a last ditch effort we decided upon a written ballot, listing our first, second and third options. We finally had one plant with one first and two seconds....in short we had a winner.

AN OBSERVATION: Judging is not a stright forward individual selection but a combined decision based on several individual choices. After reviewing my own performance and that of my fellow judges, compromise and discussion are truly the best tools of judging and possibly the only fair tools.

I would also like to withdraw all hard thoughts given to any judge in the past who has not awarded one of my plants the prize ribbons I thought it deserved. WELL, ALMOST ALL.

HOW SHE GOT HIM INTO IT---BY HIMSELF

FRANK HENNESSEY

Frank and Phil Hennessey came to Arizona in 1952 from New Jersey to escape the severe weather, sudden storms and consequent changes of atmospheric pressure which aggravated a persistent sinus condition Frank found no longer tolerable.

Prior to their marriage in 1942 Phil had taught chemistry and physics in New York for 12 years. During World War II she worked as communications engineer for AT&T in charge of a pilot laboratory for the development of, and mass production of quartz radio crystals for the Armed Forces.

Frank was a production engineer for the manufacture of nylon and rayon spinneretts. This is an extrusion jet with holes so small they cannot be seen with the naked eye. He also managed a division of the company in London. He served in the Army Air Force as navigator on B24 bombers and taught all phases of aerial navigation.

After the war they settled in Somerset Hills in northern New Jersey where Frank engaged in the lumber business. Here the city boy under Phil's tutelage was introduced to growing things which he took to like a duck to water. Besides vegetables and fruit Frank specialized in growing roses while Phil specialized in native wild flowers and daffodils. They grew gladioli by the hundreds and Phil became a member of the historic Basking Ridge, N. J. Garden Club.

Settled in Arizona Frank returned to the lumber business and Phil became Deputy County Treasurer, the local school board considering her too old for the high school system.

Frank again took to raising roses, hundreds of bushes in formal gardens, taking many prizes along the way, including sweepstakes at the State Fair. But in 1960 he suffered a severe heart attack which curtailed his activities for a few years. The roses had to go for they were too taxing.

Phil, in the meantime, working downtown---when there was a viable downtown---would frequent the stores during her lunch hours and started buying a few cactus. When they outgrew the pots they were planted in the ground. More and more cactus arrived. Phil had a new hobby.

They turned to the library to learn more about cactus, but there was very little in the library. Phil found the Desert Botanical Garden and Hubert Earle. He became her mentor. She attended classes at the Garden for several seasons. They met Warner Dodd with his enthusiasm. Phil found the names of a few growers in Sunset Magazine which is how she found Johnson's Paramount Nursery and their catalog in color with cultural directions!

More and more cactus arrived.

About this time Frank began to take notice of Phil's hobby since he was looking for some kind of plant culture to get back into. He started to help her, learned to pronounce the names, to tell one cactus from another and how to handle them. The hobby grew jointly.

The Hennesseys were members of the Cactomaniacs at the Desert Botanical Garden until it disbanded in 1973. Both volunteered at the Garden as time allowed.

When the Cactus and Succulent Society was formed by Henry Friesler and Lou Bremer in 1973 the Hennesseys were at the first meeting and became charter members.

About this time a large flowering plum tree which provided shade for the cactus garden died. Frank built shelves in the carport which provided only morning light and not enough space, for the cactus kept arriving with no abatement. Then came a lath house which Frank thought large enough for their future needs. Plants kept coming. Shelves were added. Sonoran Palo Verde trees offered filtered shade in the yard for more plants. Soon the entire front yard was planted to cactus. After thirty years of it they have no more room, say they are beginning to feel the ravishes of time and are slowing down. They still love their hobby, exhibiting and the friends they have made through the culture of cactus.

AEONIUMS ETERNAL

VERA GAMET

"Succulents" are plants with the capability of storing water within themselves and a very special group of plants they are with usually wierd and exotic conformations and habits dear to the heart of the collector.

Aeoniums are leaf succulents. The name means "eternal" doubtlessly because of their drought resisting properties. They are a genus of the Crassula Family and a sub-family of the Sempervivums, meaning "evergreen."

Typically they are a shrubby woody stemmed genus with branches that terminate in a compact open rosette of attractive spatulate or strap shaped leaves, rather swollen in appearance. One leaf overlaps the other like tiles on a roof, in spiral formation, diminishing in size toward the center. Depending on the species they may be diminutive formations or two feet across.

The rosette arrangement of the leaves of the Aeonium is common in succulents since it permits the photosynthesizing process of the plant to take place in a minimum of space. Only the outer layer of cells in the leaves performs the function of food manufacture. The rest of the tissue contains water storage cells. In optimum conditions as much as 95% of the plant is water.

From the center of each rosette emerges a large inflorescence, a pyramidal panicle composed of many star shaped flowers packed into the cluster. They may be red, pink or white, but they are usually yellow.

Aeoniums are slow growing and it may be years before the plant blooms. When it does the stem that bore the flower dies, and in cultivation must be removed.

Since Aeoniums are native to the mild tropical climates they are frost tender and need protection in winter when the temperatures fall below fifty degrees. They are delicate African relatives of the hardy European Sempervivums.

They usually prefer their ancestral blooming period, flowering from October to May when their genes prompt them to, instead of during our spring in the North. They require a definite resting period and during that time make no response to watering or cultivation.

Aeoniums are indigenous to the Canary Islands, in the sub-tropical Atlantic off the west coast of Africa as you drop down from Spain.

Legend has it that the Canary Islands are remnants of the lost Continent of Atlantis, and it may be tantalizingly near the truth since scientists have determined that the Islands arose from a plate which never was joined to Africa.

The Islands are of volcanic origin. Their mountainous peaks rise directly from the ocean from great depths to heights of 4000' to 12,000'.

The steep rocky slopes on the northwest side of Tenarife, the largest island in the archipelago, are home to thirty-one endemic species of Aeoniums which cling to the inclines and precipices facing the trade winds blowing in from the northwest.

Tenarife is a miniature continent embracing all the varied landscapes of the other islands in the group over its vertical life zones. It is a botanist's paradise with a tremendous variety of vegetation.

Aeoniums have been cultivated since the first century after Christ when the Romans made their first expedition to the Canary Islands.

It was not until 1840 that Webb and Berthelot described the genus.



"The forced extinction of any species by humans is inexcusable when the survival of that species does not threaten our own survival. Such a loss of genetic material in the life system of our environment can never be replaced. No advanced technology will ever replace an extinct species. How much value does one place upon the future? When that can be determined by an accountant, then we can establish the value of a rare plant."

Nature Conservancy News March/April 1979.

