
CENTRAL SPINE

Newsletter of the

CENTRAL ARIZONA CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY

JUNE, 2001

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT—JUNE 2001

The 2001 Convention of the Cactus and Succulent Society of America is coming up July 1–6 in Los Angeles. Many of our members will be there. Will you? We have CSSA brochures available at the meetings, and the Web page is <http://www.cssainc.org>.

Our club will be bidding on hosting the 2005 Convention. This action was authorized unanimously by the membership at the May 20 meeting. First, realize our club has no financial responsibility for hosting the convention. We will plan on holding it sometime in August so hotel rates are low. We all know it will be work but it will be an absolute blast. You will meet the movers and shakers of the succulent world, make friends from around the world, and learn more than you can imagine about the plants. There will be at least one other city bidding on the Convention but we believe we have the best to offer. The site of the 2005 Convention will be determined by a vote of the affiliate representatives at the July 2001 Convention in Los Angeles. I will be making a slide presentation to the CSSA Affiliate Representatives to get their votes. Some have suggested I wear a saguaro suit. What do you think? Call me.

The week features Sunday afternoon registration and no-host cocktail party; four days of lectures and plant/book sales with around 30 plant vendors and Rainbow Gardens Bookshop; a Monday evening get-together banquet with a lecture; a Rare Plant Auction with proceeds split 50:50 between the CSSA Research Fund and the host club (that would be us!); a day of optional field trips; meetings of all the club newsletter editors, CSSA Round Robin, and cacti_etc online discussion members; the CSSA Affiliate Representatives' Meeting, at which the site of the

convention 4 years hence is decided; and a Friday evening farewell banquet—with Entertainment.

For now, our club is: scouting venues and presenting detailed bids from 2–3 hotels to the CSSA Board, who will decide scouting itineraries for 4 field trips of about 50 people each, lasting roughly 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

I have been talking to hotels and getting bids. I am going to show slides of some of the properties and their environs at the Convention to help convince the Affiliate Representatives that the Phoenix area is the best for the 2005 Convention.

For the field trips, we have tentatively thought of:

- ☉ Desert Botanical Garden and Boyce-Thompson Arboretum
- ☉ A tour of members' gardens
- ☉ A trip to the desert
- ☉ A trip to Tucson nurseries not selling at the Convention that year.

In the upcoming four years there will be quite a bit of organizing to do but it is certainly manageable. Please contact me now if you want to help.

In response to all our newer members who have asked for cultural information, we will begin a new meeting feature this month. We will pick a plant and talk in detail about how to grow it. Experienced growers in our club will bring in plants and talk about their soil, light, watering, fertilizing, propagating, and repotting methods. This will take about 10–15 minutes, and I believe it will be time well spent. Call me to let me know what plant(s) you want covered this month.

Next month, July, we will have TWO MEETINGS.

- ☉ SPECIAL MEETING: *SATURDAY, JULY 14*, at 2 p.m. in Webster Auditorium. Tony and Suzanne Mace will present their travels through succulandia. Tony Mace runs the Cactus Mall

online at <http://www.cactus-mall.com> and Suzanne runs the Mesemb Study Group online at <http://www.cactus-mall.com/msg/index.html>. They will have just attended the 2001 CSSA Convention in Los Angeles and will be traveling back to England. They have graciously agreed to stop in Arizona and lecture to us on their way home.

- ☉ REGULAR MEETING: **SUNDAY, JULY 29**, at 2 p.m. in Webster Auditorium. Wendy Hodgson will talk about surveying ALL the plants along the ENTIRE Arizona Trail.

Dorothy Pasek, owner together with husband John of Plantas del Sol in Tucson, fell and broke her hip in mid-May. We circulated a get-well card at the May meeting. She is doing well on her road to recovery but still might appreciate cards.

*John and Dorothy Pasek
Plantas del Sol
6175 North Noel Lane
Tucson AZ 85743*

Leo M

PLANT OF THE MONTH—CUCURBITS

The plant family *Cucurbitaceae*, the cucumber and squash family, has many genera with large caudices. A non-inclusive list of these would hold *Acanthosicyos*, (and anything else with -sicyos in the name), *Cephalopentandra*, *Coccinia*, *Corallocarpus*, *Ctenolepis*, *Cucumis*, *Cucurbita*, *Dendrosicyos*, *Gerrardanthus*, *Ibervillea*, *Kedrostis*, *Marah*, *Momordica*, *Seyrigia*, *Sicyos*, *Trochomeria*, *Xerosicyos*, *Zehneria* and *Zygosityos*.



Kedrostis africana

Cucurbits can be recognized by a vining habit, tendrils at the bases of each leaf, and flowers looking like squash blossoms. In most of these genera the flowers are very much smaller than squash, melon, or pumpkin flowers. Interestingly, many of these plants are “dioecious,” meaning each plant bears either male or female flowers and it takes one of each sex to reproduce.



Trochomeria debilis in fruit

People like to grow these because the caudices can become huge. At the Show we had many spectacular examples of these plants: large bulbous trunks with long green vines, some in flower. How to get that seedling or cutting to show size? And, how to propagate them?

Most are very easy from seed. If you've ever grown zucchini, melons, or gourds, you are probably already an expert on planting these from seed and growing them the first summer. I bought from Mesa Gardens (seedlist online: <http://www.mesagarden.com>; mail: 2 stamps to PO Box 72, Belen NM 87002) and planted *Kedrostis* and *Momordica* this spring. They have little caudices already. I also planted caudiciform *Ipomoea* but that's another article.

In common with squash, they need warmth, lots of water while growing or they will wilt, something on which to climb, and plenty of fertilizer. The caudex is normally buried to stay cool while the vines reach into the sun. I would recommend leaving your caudices buried for a few years because they almost

stop growing once raised. And, these plants can't stand being damp while dormant, so you will have to keep them bone dry during the winter or they will rot rapidly.

All cucurbits are warm-season growers, so wait until you can assure soil temperatures above 70 degrees F at night. Soak the seeds for two days, changing the water once daily. Then plant them in a large pot or in your vegetable garden next to the squash unless you want small, stunted tubers and poor growth. I wouldn't use anything smaller than 1 gallon per seed; a 5-gallon pot makes a good nursery for up to about 10 seeds the first year. Use rich garden soil. Cucurbits are not happy if they dry out while in active growth so be sure your soil doesn't dry out too fast. I add Ironite for trace minerals (about 1/4 cup a gallon of soil) and a little long-acting fertilizer (I use ammonium phosphate, about a tablespoon a gallon of soil.) You could just as easily use Osmocote or similar.

Put the pot in the sun where it will be warm to hot. Then stand back; most will sprout within a few days. Just keep them moist and sunny the first summer. It's OK to fertilize a lot if you want them to grow fast. They will climb all over the place, so provide a trellis or let them climb into trees or shrubs.

If you bought a plant, it is almost as easy.

Chuck Everson of Arid Lands in Tucson recommends unpotting all new plants, removing all soil and roots, then re-rooting. He says there's a lot less rot and pests this way. If you find mealybugs, scale, or rot, treat and dry out before attempting to re-root.

Remember that the caudex may not be accustomed to Arizona sun. If you burn that caudex, the plant may die. *Gerrardanthus* is particularly sensitive.

After repotting, put it someplace warm for a week or so, then drench once. Don't water again until new growth is about an inch long. Then treat like your seedlings. If it doesn't grow after the drench, let it get bone dry, (a moisture meter costs less than \$10 and will save you that much in plants quickly,) let sit for another week, and try again. It will grow eventually.

Fall will come sooner rather than later. You will notice the vines looking pekid and yellowing as days cool. Stop watering! The vines will die back naturally. Now, just cut them off. Once the soil is bone dry, store the pot someplace where it will get

good air circulation but no water at all until it warms up in the spring.

That's how easy it is!

Some genera will root from cuttings. I know *Momordica rostrata* does so because I've done it, and the cuttings form caudices indistinguishable from seedlings. Easiest is to layer: In the summer, put a pot with damp soil under a node on a vine and tack it down. In a week or so it will root. I don't know exactly which genera do this, but why not experiment?

Leo M

MAY MEETING

President Leo gave out trophies for our April CACSS Plant Show. We also held the Spring silent auction for plants donated by members to raise money for our treasury.



President Leo giving Scott McM the Charles E. Mieg Memorial Trophy for Most Blue Ribbons



Frank & Philomena Hennessy Memorial Trophy for Best Novice Succulent to Cindy and (not visible) Scott K

CENTRAL ARIZONA CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY 2001

President	Leo M	xxx
Vice Pres.	Judy B	xxx
Secretary	Dana H	xxx
Treasurer	Pam B	xxxx
Past President	Cathy B	xxx
Directors:	Damon B	xxx
	Jerry C	xxx
	Doug D	xxx
	Bob D	xxx
	Janet H	xxx
	Richard M	xxx
	Scott McM	xxx
	Regina R	xxx
	Richard Z	xxx
CSSA Rep.	Henry T	xxx
Librarian	Muriel B	xxx

CALENDAR

June 24	Kathy Rice - Conservation
July 14	Special Presentation by Tony and Suzanne Mace
July 29	Wendy Hodgson - Surveying Plants Along the Arizona Trail
August 26	TBA
September 30	TBA
October 28	Silent Auction
November 18	Woody Minnich
December 9	Holiday Party & Elections

Meetings are at 2 p.m. in Webster Auditorium, unless otherwise noted. All meetings include a question and answer session on growing plants

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Silent Auction in Webster Auditorium