

# CENTRAL SPINE

November, 2001

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## FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Many of us had a blast Saturday the 3<sup>rd</sup> on the Tucson bus trip. There was a full range of plant prices at the four nurseries, and everybody went home with lots of boxes of plants. We'll be sure in the future to include nurseries selling inexpensive plants as well as the rarities.

Cathy Babcock is soliciting interest for a Spring bus trip to San Diego nurseries. She will contact nurseries. We would stay overnight at a budget motel and total cost would not be too high, probably under \$100 a person for bus, plus room. Contact Cathy or me. We would need about 20 participants to make this work. Which month? Which nurseries? Let us know.

Our president, vice president, and treasurer have agreed to run for election again. The position of secretary will be open. I have had people express interest but it was when I was busy so I can't remember your names. Would you please step up at the November meeting and identify yourself? Many of our directors are stepping down due to term limits, and we need people to run for director. There is no absolute number of directors needed, so as many of YOU as possible will be fine in that position. Our constitution specifies that officers serve for one-year terms and directors for two-year terms. No person may hold a given office more than three terms in succession.

At the Holiday Party nominations will be read, and nominations from the floor will be taken. If you wish to nominate somebody, make sure that person is willing to serve. Then, we will hold the election.



CACSS's Rich Zeh with Woody Minnich '00

This month's meeting features Woody Minnich, proprietor of Cactus Data Plants in Littlerock, California, northeast of Los Angeles in the desert. Woody's climate is almost exactly like ours. He has been visiting Mexico for decades, photographing plants in habitat. He knows as much about the desert plants of Mexico as anybody. He sells plants with collection data, showing where exactly the plant was. Woody has been an annual favorite lecturer. This year he will be speaking on the *Mammillaria* of Mexico.

If you are looking for anything in particular, especially from his wonderful *Mammillaria* collection, ask him in advance and maybe he can bring plants for you. Woody Minnich, Cactus Data Plants, 9607 Ave S-12, Littlerock, CA, 93543, 1-661-944-2784. I will not be there, though I love hearing Woody speak. I will be travelling in Oaxaca and Veracruz looking at plants and taking slides, which I hope to show you next year.

We have two silent auctions each year. Your dues bring in just enough to pay for the newsletter. Library, posters, show judges' gas and lunch, and transportation for visiting speakers come from money raised at the silent auction. Some people have suggested we go to one silent auction per year, in the fall, and have another speaker. While those speaking to me already were about evenly divided on the subject, those wishing to keep the second auction were quite vocal. Their concern was that the auctions are great places to find inexpensive plants. I thought about this and wondered about having a small silent auction at each meeting. Members would bring in whatever they wished to offer. The auction would be closed at the end of the meeting. What do you think?

On the subject of dues... This seems a good time to explain where your dues go and what we may do with them. We are a tax-exempt charitable and educational corporation. Money we raise must be spent on educational and charitable activities.

We cannot spend any money on things that benefit individual members of the club. For example, we can pay for publishing this newsletter and any other educational publications; speaker's expenses; show expenses; judges' expenses (so long as they are not members of our club); donations to other charitable institutions; books for our library but not for individual members; costs of business to raise money for the club, such as table rental for our annual sale; and time and materials for any other educational purpose serving the public. We cannot pay for food for the holiday party,

bus expenses for the members, plants for members, or salaries or mileage expenses to officers or directors.



*Winter Party 2000 at Webster Auditorium*

Next month's annual Holiday Party will not be on the last Sunday; it will be December 9<sup>th</sup> at ONE P.M. in Webster Auditorium. We will enjoy a potluck, arranged by Jo D. Jo will be assuring that we don't have 75 desserts and one salad.

*Leo A. Martin*

## PLANT OF THE MONTH—MAMMILLARIA

*Mammillaria* was first described as a genus by Haworth in 1812. It is a large genus, ranging from the United States to Venezuela and the Caribbean islands. The largest number occur in Mexico.



*M. millerii*

They are relatively small globular cacti, often clustering, with stems bearing small bumps called **tubercles** arranged into spirals rather than ribs. The tubercles were thought by Haworth to resemble nipples, thus the genus name, from Latin *mammilla*, or nipple. The distinguishing characteristics from other globular tuberculated cacti are the flowers arising from

the **axil** (the cranny at the base of the tubercle) and the absence of a groove along the top surface of the tubercle. Grooved tubercles usually mark a plant as a *Coryphantha*. Many subgenera of *Mammillaria* exist with slightly differing flowers. Presence or absence of milky sap is an important identifying characteristic. Our local plant is *M. grahamii*, the older name for which *M. microcarpa* is a synonym. Most *Mammillaria* have rings of small flowers in the late winter or early spring, borne just down the shoulder of the plant from the apex. A few produce flowers on and off during warm weather if watered adequately.

Some of the more interesting groups to collectors are:

- ☉ the Baja California members of the former genus, now considered a subgenus, *Cochemiea*,
- ☉ the small tuberous-rooted ones with huge magenta flowers like *M. hernandezii* or *M. saboae*;
- ☉ and, of course, anything with big nasty spines like *M. rekoii* variety *leptacantha* or lots of flowers like *M. guelzowiana*, the largest-flowering plant in the genus, and lots of white hair to boot.



*M. guelzowiana*

People in warm-summer areas tend to lose *Mammillarias* during the hottest, most humid portion of the year. I seem to lose *M. bombycina* every 3–5 years, always during August. Most *Mammillarias* do better with a distinct dry and perhaps even somewhat shady rest during the entire monsoon season, until nights cool again. Many will shrivel terribly but when nights cool down they perk up again looking fine again. Most *Mammillarias* grow very fast from mid January until May, and again from late October until mid December. Flowers can be had all year on a collection of no more than 10 plants.





*M. morganiana*

It is best to grow the Baja natives warm all year. They will tolerate temperatures below 40 degrees F (4.5 degrees C), but they don't like it. They don't mind water during the monsoon, because they often get the same rain but more of it. Sonoran Desert natives also can use summer water. These summer-growers have some of the best flowers of the genus. Subgenus *Cochemiea* has tubular red flowers in flushes all summer.

*Mammillarias* are propagated very easily from seed or from divisions of the clumping ones. I often have seedlings pop up in my pots under parent plants.

I plant *Mammillaria* in shallower and shallower pots each time I repot. Most have small root systems, growing in nature in cracks in rocks or in tiny pockets of soil. The group including *M. hernandezii* grows on the surface of bare rocks where tiny amounts of leaf litter have accumulated. Some of the really hard-to-grow species such as *M. humboldtii* and *M. hernandezii* have tiny feeder roots (though *M. hernandezii* does have a large tuberous root.) If planted in a pot that looks appropriate, the roots stay wet too long and the plant rots.

So, when repotting, pay attention to your plant. If it has a tiny root system, use a pot more like a bonsai dish



*M. grahamii*

and soil mix that will dry out fast. If you must put *M. humboldtii* into a large pot, try potting it first into a tiny pot then burying that pot in gravel inside the larger pot.

*Leo A. Martin*

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## OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Deadline for insertion in the next issue of the *Central Spine*: November 30, 2001. Send insertions to Jim Davis (who has switched back to Earthlink) at: [pantenor@earthlink.net](mailto:pantenor@earthlink.net) or to him at P O Box 2875, Peoria, AZ 85380

*Central Spine* is the newsletter of the Central Arizona Cactus and Succulent Society.

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All opinions are those of respective authors. Publication herein does not imply that CACSS or any CACSS members agree with any statements published.

## CALENDAR

- November 18 Woody Minnich on Mexico's *Mammillarias*
- December 9 Holiday Party & Elections (1 P.M.)
- January 20 Ken Schutz, Director of the DBG, on the Future of the DBG and his trip to Kenya
- February 24
- March 24 Leo Martin talking on the Flora of Veracruz and Oaxaca, Mexico
- April 3-7 Annual Plant Show
- May 19
- June 30
- July 28
- August 25
- September 29

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



*M. wrightii*

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