

CENTRAL SPINE

February, 2002

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

If you haven't paid your 2002 dues, this might be your last issue of *Central Spine*. Dues are \$20 individual and \$25 household. Make them out to CACSS and mail to P. O. Box 8774, Scottsdale, AZ, 85252-8774.

Note! This month's meeting will be in the Marley Bldg, which is in the new building to the left as you pass the admissions booth. We will see how this room works for us, and we may change our meeting location permanently. The board meeting will be in the Educational Conference Rm in the same building at 1 P.M., and the general meeting at 2 P.M.

IOS Congress— The 27th Congress of the International Organization for Succulent Studies will be held at the DBG from Sunday, April 7 to Saturday, April 13. The IOS is composed of research botanists, scientists, hobbyists, and commercial growers. These are all plant people who love to talk about plants and share their knowledge. Our club has been given the opportunity to spend time with members of the IOS. I would **strongly** encourage you to take the time to do so! Under similar circumstances I've met people from all over the world who have invited me to visit them in other countries and go out into the field looking at plants. I've been given seeds and cuttings of plants otherwise unobtainable. And been able to ask questions to people who've been there about how plants grow in habitat, which has led to my own plants doing much better.

IOS Reception— On Sunday evening, April 7, the welcoming reception for the IOS will occur in Webster Auditorium. Our annual Show will be on display for the members of the Congress. Members of the CACSS are welcome to attend the reception and meet members of the Congress. The cost is \$19 per person, which includes hors d'oeuvres from Arcadia Farms.

IOS Volunteers— Sessions of the Congress are Monday through Saturday of the following week, with field trips on Wednesday. Volunteers are needed to help with the Congress. Volunteers who help for at least four hours during the Congress will be permitted to attend the other Congress activities normally included with the registration fee at no additional charge (but would have to pay for the same events for which IOS members must pay.) Please contact me or Cathy Babcock to volunteer.

Enter Our Plant Show!— If you are new to showing, contact me, and I will put you in touch with an experienced mentor who will help you. Remember, we have 3 classes of entrants: *novice, intermediate, and advanced*. Novices are judged against novices and so forth. People advance to the next category based on the number of blue ribbons they have won over the years. Novices have won in important categories such as Best Succulent in Show and Best Euphorbia! Plant check-in is Wednesday, April 3; judging Thursday, April 4; and the show is open Friday to Sunday, April 5–7. We ask that you leave your plants at the show until Monday so the show can be viewed by the IOS at the reception Sunday evening. If you cannot pick up your plants Monday, we will find a way to get them to you.

We hope to have a much larger plant sale this year during our show. The exact location in the DBG has not been determined yet, but I think there will be a lot more vendors, and the site will really wow everyone. And there will be a table for CACSS members to sell plants. Get started now propagating things! The DBG and the CACSS will each receive 15% of gross sales, with the vendors receiving 70%. I am going to donate proceeds from sale of my plants to the CACSS.

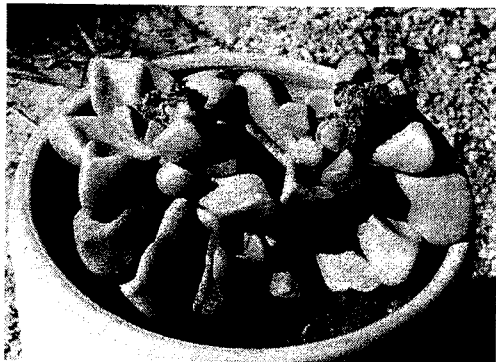
San Diego Nursery Bus Trip— Cathy Babcock is polling interest for a June or July bus trip to San Diego nurseries. Remember, it's a lot cooler there! We will leave very early Friday, drive there and go to one nursery that afternoon, check in to the motel, and go to nurseries all day Saturday and again Sunday until about mid-day. Cathy will contact nurseries. We would stay overnight at a budget motel, and total cost would not be too high, probably under \$100 per person for the bus plus room. Contact Cathy or me. We would need about 20 participants to make this work. Which nurseries do you like? **What are good dates? Call me!**

Leo A. Martin

PLANTS OF THE MONTH—EASY MESEMBS FOR PHOENIX

Bijlia, Cephalophyllum, Cerochlamys, Cheiridopsis, and *Schwantesia* are mesembs, members of the ice plant family, Aizoaceae. They come from southern Africa. They do well here given just a little attention to watering and have beautiful winter flowers. They want full sun during cool weather but considerable shade in our hot summers when they are more or less dormant. Most people have trouble with mesembs because they

water too much during summer dormancy or not enough during cool periods of active growth.



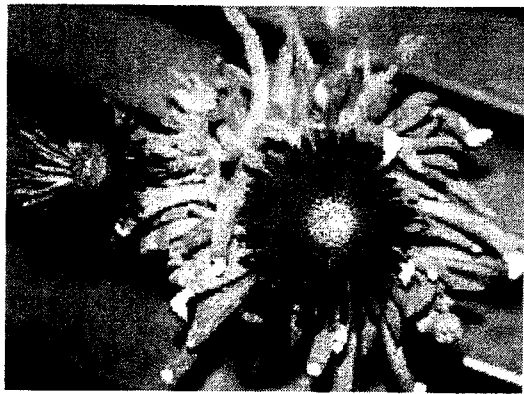
Bijlia cana Rich Zeh photo [L. Martin plant]

Bijlia was named after Deborah Susanna van der Bijl, who sent specimens she found to botanist N. E. Brown at Kew. They are clumping plants with boat-shaped, yellowish-green leaves and bright yellow flowers. They come from the Little Karoo north of Capetown and get rain in habitat in early summer and in the autumn, flowering with autumn rains. Mine, bought at the DBG, flowered in December and January.

Cephalophyllum (Greek for “leafy heads”) are clumping to spreading plants with long cylindrical leaves. They are strict winter growers, dormant in the summer. There are dozens of species with spectacular flowers in a full range of colors and bicolors. Best is to quote Steven Brack of Mesa Garden, Belen, New Mexico:

This is the season for *Cephalophyllum* to flower and the show is terrific. They are very active and thirsty in late winter and early spring. During this time it helps to water them generously while keeping them cool and in full sun. If you can give them a burst of growth and sustain this you will get loads of flowers and continue the show for about a month. By late spring when it turns hot they rest and their thirst drops off sharply, they will just sit inactive until late in the fall when it cools off. Many of the flowers are spectacular, the thin-leaved types like *C. pillansii* and *C. diversiphyllum* flower in profusion. In NM it is very cold in the winter but we have a lot of strong sunshine, so they are all grown in [containers.] They are best grown in bulb pans as like to spread out.

They [also] do well in hanging baskets, I have some in hanging pots from greenhouse rafters and they are in full flower now. It is hard to beat *C. alstonii* for the show of huge red flowers. Another beauty that flowers readily is *C. pulchrum*, with pink flowers and golden anthers. Then when late spring arrives they shut down and need only a little water until winter.



C. alstonii hybrid Jim Davis Photo [R. Hintz plant]

We are warmer here than in Belen and so just a little frost protection is needed, even so little as putting them under the eaves on cold nights. (The Skirvins, CACSS members, grow *C. alstonii* in the ground, protected from frost under shrubs).

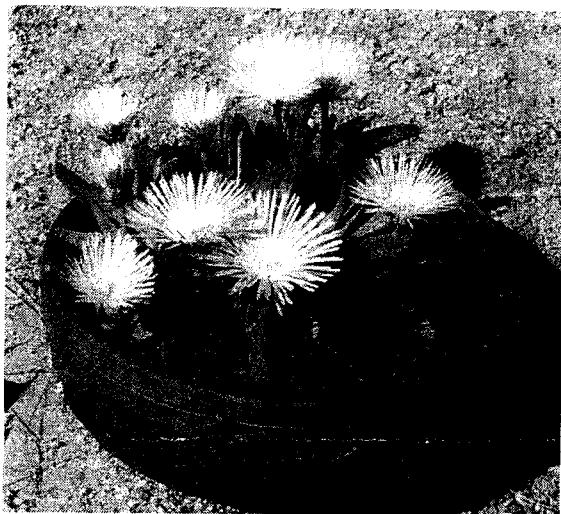
Cerochlamys (Greek for “waxy mantle”) is little known here but should be more widely grown. It is an opportunistic grower from a part of southern Africa that may get rain at any time of year, and the climate is much like here though not so hot in the summer. It will take frosts down to about 28 F. The leaves are thick, three-sided, and covered with wax, and the flowers a bright pink during the winter. The plant looks like it was carved from green wax. *C. pachyphylla* (“thick leaf” in Greek) is flowering for me as I write; the first plant just finished three weeks of bloom, and the second is starting.



Cerochlamys pachyphylla Rich Zeh Photo [L. Martin plant]

Cheiridopsis (Greek for “like a hand”) have paired, often finger-shaped leaves held in a V. Many have beautiful white skin with or without teeth on the leaf margins. Most have big yellow or white flowers in — profusion during the winter, opening in afternoon sunshine and greeting you upon arrival home. They come from areas of southwestern Africa with no rain

during warm weather but reliable light rains in the winter. They sleep during the summer and cannot tolerate water while dormant, so you can just put the pot in a mostly shady spot or inside on a windowsill and forget about the plant—don't water—until nights are definitely cool. In the winter here the soil should be kept moist all the time. They want full sun in the winter. Different species tolerate frost from 28 F to 20 F, so most don't need winter protection here. Most people lose their Cheiros in August when they water, which is unnecessary. They are very easy from seed, or cuttings taken during the growing season and kept moist. I do mean moist.



Cheiridopsis duplessii Rich Zey Photo [L Martin plant]

One cutting I have with three branches and six leaves sucks a 3" clay pot dry each day. It has been in full bloom for almost 3 weeks.

Schwantesia was named after German botanist and student of mesembs Schwantes. They grow in both winter and summer rainfall areas along the Orange River, which forms the boundary between South Africa and Namibia in southwestern Africa. They have beautiful leaves, normally two opposed pairs, often white skinned and nubby, narrower and laxer than *Cerochlamys*. Flowers are bright yellow.

All mesembs love sun and water during periods of active growth, and fresh air at all times. *Bijlia*, *Cerochlamys*, and *Schwantesia* have similar needs. They are opportunistic growers, resting during the heat of the summer and the coldest weeks of the winter, and growing when nights are below about 60 F and days above 55 F. They can be watered all winter. These are mesembs that won't die if you occasionally forget and water during summer dormancy, the way *Cheiridopsis* may; in fact, I water these three about once every 2–3 weeks during the summer to prevent the roots from

dying completely in our heat, and keep them in at least half shade. They will tolerate much more sun but will look pretty bad by the fall. The books say they must be kept quite dry. In our climate this is incorrect in the winter; remember the books were intended primarily for people with greenhouses who have dank, stagnant, artificially heated atmospheres in the winter. I use soil from the wash next to my property; none have any organic material in the soil in habitat. I have not had any pest problems with plants kept outside, though birds will peck and mar the leaves.



Schwantesia triebneri A Jim Davis Photo [Hintz plant]

All five of these genera are easy from seed sown in the fall or winter, or cuttings taken during active growth and kept moist. Some *Cephalophyllum* may take years to bloom from seed, though the other genera usually bloom within 2–3 seasons after sowing.

Leo A Martin

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Deadline for insertion in the next issue is March 12, 2002.
 Send insertions or communications to Jim Davis at:
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 and have internet access, send your e-mail address to Jim.

Central Spine is the newsletter of the Central Arizona Cactus
 and Succulent Society. All opinions are those of respective
 authors. Publication herein does not imply that CACSS or
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Changes of address: contact our Treasurer, Pam Bass.

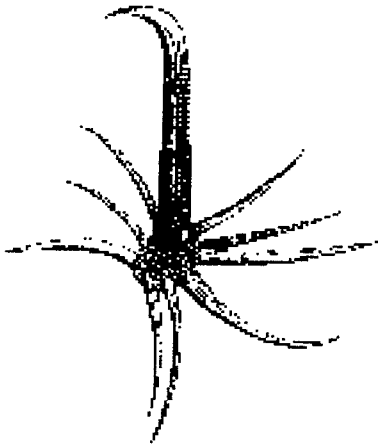
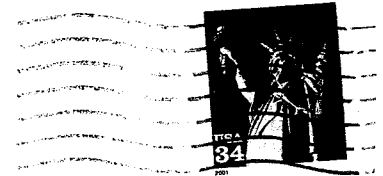
CALENDAR

February 24 Cesar Mazier of the DBG on Australia
 March 24 Leo Martin on the Flora of Veracruz and
 Oaxaca, Mexico

April 3-7 Annual Plant Show
 April 20 Wallace garden tour, 9 A.M.-Noon
 May 19 Show Awards & Plant Auction
 June 30
 July 28
 August 25

**This month's meeting is in the Marley building
 classrooms. In March we return to Webster
 Auditorium. All meetings include a question and
 answer session on growing plants.**

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