

June, 2005

Black Widow Spiders.....by Sue Hakala

Black widow spiders have avoided my yard for decades, but this year they are back. They especially like to form webs in and around pots in my plant house. Black widow spider females are a glossy-black with a bright orange to red hour-glass on their abdomens. Males are one-half the size of the females. They are poisonous at all stages, even the egg sack.

Black widow webs are irregularly shaped appearing messy, criss-crossed, and mish-mashed. The spiders hide during the day, and hang upside down in their webs at night. They build their webs basically anywhere they can attach a web such as: under outhouse seats (especially men's as they are less disturbed), in shoe boxes, under tables and shelves, tool sheds, unused and used flower pots (I had some over-wintering in some pots), chicken coops, within piles of papers, under loose flagstones, in tin cans, old bottles, the back pocket of overalls, etc.

When the male spider comes a calling he makes his presence known by sending chemical signals, and by plucking and tapping the edge of the web. He will only enter the web at her invitation or, will probably be eaten. The male places a sperm packet into her genital opening, and quickly exits out of the web. The female mates only once, storing the sperm. She lays about 300 eggs at a time, generally from May to October, which she wraps in a silken, round, cream-colored egg sack guarding them until they hatch. She can produce several egg sacs in her life.

You don't want to be bitten by a black widow as the venom is a nerve toxin, and drop for drop is more potent than a rattlesnake. The bite may feel like a pin-prick, with no effect at all. Some victims describe it as an electrical current jolting through their body. Or, you could feel a mild, burning sensation for only a few minutes, to excruciating pains and death, although a bite is generally not fatal. It all depends on how much venom the spider chooses to inject. The poison spreads quickly through the body with maximum intensity occurring in about one hour. If bit, capture the spider for identification as many victims are misdiagnosed with everything from appendicitis to ulcers. You should call your local poison control center immediately.

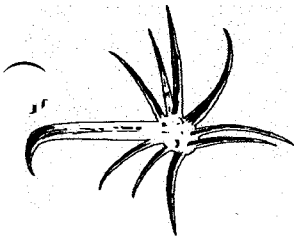
And dinner is served...black widow spiders have major weapons to secure prey. When insects touch the web they get stuck, the more they struggle, the more entangled they get. The motion alerts the spider who dashes out, and swaths her victim in a film giving it a mummified appearance. She injects her victim with venom killing it, which starts liquefying the insides so she can suck it up. She may devour it then or, wait until later. After her feast, she cuts the empty victim from the web.

It's best to remove webs as soon as you see them using a long handled boom. Crush egg sacks being sure not to touch them. Check webs at night with a flashlight looking for the spiders. Squash the black widow with a heavy object not your shoe as she may run up your leg or, spray with an insecticide labeled for spiders. Removing clutter and debris around your plants, pots, garage and house reduces places for them to hide. Be especially vigilant in areas not disturbed very often

On The Web at <http://www.centralarizonacactus.org/>

CENTRAL SPINE

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL ARIZONA CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY



OFFICERS

PRESIDENT - Lee Brownson

480.951.9494

lsbrownson@cox.net

VICE PRESIDENT - Michael Gallagher

602.9428580

gallman@getnet.com

SECRETARY - Sue Daley

623.876.0060

daleyspubbud@aol.com

TREASURER - Tom Ballen

480.502.8639

tballen@aol.com

PAST PRESIDENT - Scott B. McMahon

480.657.7786

scottmcmahon1@cox.net

DIRECTORS

Carol Clapp 520.908.9001

cactusnews@earthlink.net

Celeste Gornick 602.938.9590

hheaven77@aol.com

Leo Martin 602.852.9714

leo1010@attglobal.net

Doug Dawson 480.893.1207

doug.dawson@gcmail.maricopa.edu

Ray Daley 623.876.0060

daleyspubbud@aol.com

Denise Diederich

rainbowvalleynsy@aol.com

Sundee Helm

shelm85259@yahoo.com

Cecilia Phelan 480.488.1205

cactuslady1@cox.net

Ingrid Swenson 602.957.9865

plantlady100@yahoo.com

Robert Torrest 480.994.3868

robertst9114@msn.com

Dana Hiser 480.368.8606

dana2garden@aol.com

Librarian - Harold Stoetzer

623.872.9020

cacsslibrary@aol.com

Newsletter - Galyn Jensen

480.786.1077

galynkj@cox.net

Calendar

June 26, Sunday

Regular club meeting Dorrance Hall 2:00pm
Speaker to be determined

July 31, Sunday

Regular club meeting Dorrance Hall 2:00pm
Judy Mielke, senior landscape architect with **Logan Simpson Design**, Tempe, previously of the Desert Botanical Garden
Landscaping with Succulents

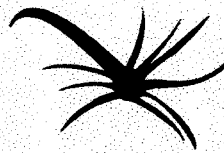
August 5-10 CSSA National Convention

August 28, Sunday

Regular club meeting Dorrance Hall 2:00pm
Leo Martin, CACSS Board Member and Past President of the Cactus and Succulent Society of America
2004 Field Trip to Madagascar

At the CACSS show and sale in April **Jim Sudals pottery** was sold so quickly that several members did not get what they wanted. **Jim will sell pottery at the June 26th meeting.** Jim is a longtime CACSS member and has helped us each year increase the profits in our raffle with a nice donation.

CENTRAL ARIZONA CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY



JO
DAVIS

Interested in one of the name badges you see other members wearing? You can have one of your very own! Talk to Jo Davis at the meeting or send her a check for \$7.50 made out to "Jo Davis" to her home address:

2714 W. Monte Ave
Mesa, AZ 85202

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Around My (Or Your?) Desert Garden.....Bob Torrest

☞ May 23rd...Today is the third day of 110F+ (after a cool wet winter and spring) and some newly planted 5 gallon trees are showing the stress. *Chorisa speciosa* and *eucalyptus spathulata* will need to be kept moist. Remember, the nursery watered the pots at least once a day. They will be worth the extra effort. After all, it will soon be abundantly clear that most of your succulent plants would benefit from more shade. We are finally trying the hybrid palo verde "desert museum" in the hope that it is as fast as promised.

What is in flower? The larger trees include the mesquites, palo verdes and *lysiloma watsonii*. *Tipuana* looks cool with its yellow flowers and airy bright foliage. The mexican palo verde (*parkinsonia aculeata*) is fast and colorful but plant something more substantial near by so that it will be up when the parkinsonia is exhausted (less than 20 years). Smaller trees include screw bean mesquite, catclaw acacia, palo blanco, *jatropha cuneata* and desert willow. Shrubs include the yellow bird of paradise and *calliandra*. For more shade *cordia boissieri* is a nice small tree (Baker's nursery has a couple at the entry).

Cacti flowering in full sun include *ferocactus cylindraceus* (*acanthodes*), mexican organ pipe (several *stenocereus* are sold under this name) and *rathbunia* (*stenocereus alamosensis*). there are still a few *opuntia* in flower including tree forms *O. velutina* (sometimes sold in California as velvet fig) and *O. leucotrichia* (said to have a good fruit). *Myrtillocactus geometrizans* has berries in colors from green to purple (eat these garambullos). The berries are larger each year and these blue myrtle cacti, which can take full sun, are a lot easier to grow here than blueberries. The Arizona organ pipe will be flowering soon but for now the new growth is colorful.

☞ There are still some flowers on the ocotillos and *Fouquieria diguettii*. *Bougainvillea* always looks good and provides shade when you get it up on a pergola, etc. We've got about 6 different *cereus* which are usually all sold ☞s *C. peruvianus*. There are large nocturnal flowers and some of them are much better with some shade, as is *Opalea* with its red flowers and a shrubby, spineless *opuntia* with large bright yellow flowers (?).

Smaller plants still in flower include some of the *mammillarias* and *echinocereus* (many of which appreciate some shade) *notocacti* and some *cleistocacti* which have been bright spots for months. *Cassias* and *sennas* will provide these with some shade. Even desert aster which spreads itself will help with the smaller plants.

Hummingbirds are working anything with color now and of course the greater the variety of plants you have the more likely it is that you will see them all summer. Most of the aloes are done but a few will flower in the coming weeks and months.

CACSS Board Meeting minutes for May 22, 2005

Tom Ballen reported a checkbook balance of \$19,001.90 as of May 20, 2005

Lee reported that rescues at Verrado will be suspended for now as the plot of land has been pretty much harvested completely. An article ran in the Republic about the rescue efforts.

This year's Show and Sale produced a 33% increase over last year's sales. Denise Diederich is willing to chair the 2006 Show which will be held on the last weekend of April. The Board is looking into a storage unit so that all of the Club's supplies can be gathered into one place rather than spread out in various member's homes. This will make Show set-up run more smoothly.

☞ It has been suggested that the Club hold a fall plant sale instead of our regular bus trip to Tucson. Send your ideas/preferences to Denise Diederich. The Board will discuss the matter further in June.

rainbowvalleynsy@aol.com

To my fellow members.....

I would like to thank all of you for your hard work with this year's sale and show. It was an incredible success on all accounts. Part of what makes this undertaking work so well is getting your input. I am requesting your feelings on this year's show and sale, good and bad. The only way we can have an even better event is to know what we did right and what we did wrong. Please email me with your thoughts of this year's event, and even suggestions for next year's. Also, think about volunteering for the planning stages of next year's show. It's never too early to start planning! The earlier we start, the smoother it will run (we hope!).

Thank You in advance for your input

Denise rainbowvalley@sy@aol.com

2006 Show Chair

Help Wanted

GARDEN GIFT & PLANT SALES ASSOCIATE POSITION

The beautiful Desert Botanical Garden, with a mission to exhibit, conserve and study arid-land plants of the world, is seeking **Part Time Sales Associates** to join the Garden Gift & Plant Shop.

Primary responsibilities include customer service, maintaining merchandise standards including processing new stock, housekeeping and accurate cash handling.

The successful candidate will have computer literacy and strong communication skills. Some knowledge of desert plants is expected for the Plant Shop position.

Our shop is open 9-5 daily, so some weekend availability and flexibility is important. Positions vary from 12 to 20 hours per week. Salary is \$8.00 per hour.

Applications for these positions are currently being accepted. To apply, send a resume and cover letter to: Desert Botanical Garden, Attn: Gift Shop, 1201 N. Galvin Pkwy, Phoenix, AZ 85008 or fax to: 480-481-8157, or e-mail to dbggiftshop@qwest.net



Mini Bits.....Ray Daley

MINI Bits.....ever wondered about the pillbugs/sowbugs in your yard? Well, according to an article written by Nancy Cheng which appeared in a recent issue of *The Hosta Journal* (a holdover from our Ohio gardening days), they are two different creatures. She said (and at age 17, she was the winner of the 2002 Young Naturalists Award from the American Museum of Natural History) sowbugs don't curl up, whereas pillbugs do. There are 2 kinds of pillbugs, one which curls into a ball and another which can only manage a 'C' shape. And they aren't insects at all, since they have 7 pairs of legs, 2 antennae and well developed eyes. They belong to the scientific group Isopoda. In addition to not rolling up into a ball, the sowbug has 2 long, tail-like structures at the base of the abdomen. And during her research, she found that, left in a foam cup on the nightstand next to her bed overnight, pillbugs can make a heck of a racket. So be warned. She also reported that pillbugs are also called woodlice or roly-polies. Now aren't you glad you asked?.....know what Doris Day, Andy Williams, Pete Rose and CACSS's Joan Skirvin, and Sue Daley have in common? they all attended the same high school (West High in Cincinnati).....

.....while driving on I-40 east of Holbrook have you seen the signs for Big and Little Lithodendron Wash? I have, and have wondered what a Lithodendron is - it's not listed in any botanical book I've searched, including *Hortus*. Well, just recently, in a small specialty newspaper included once a month in our *Sun City* newspaper, a Dick Mullins reports his findings on the same question. He's called the AZ Highway Department, the Holbrook Chamber of Commerce, and the administrative offices of Navajo County and got no answer. He quoted someone from Surprise, who seems to have a reasonable answer: Lithodendron consists of litho, and dendron. Both are from the Greek, lithos (stone) and dendron (tree or tree-like). Both washes run through Petrified Forest National Park, and he assumes the names come from the petrified trees. Sounds good to me.....Ray D.

Library Notes.....Harold Stoetzer

Due to a prior commitment, Paul Schueneman will be handling the library for me at the June meeting. Thank you Paul.

The more I get involved with our library, the more I am amazed at the depth of the books available for members to use. We have a great variety of general cactus and succulent books, but also many books on specific species or families. For instance, to complement the full ten volume set of *Euphorbia Journals* in our library, we recently acquired the definitive two volume set *The Succulent Euphorbiae* by White, Dyer and Sloane. If Euphorbias interest you at all, check out some of these books.

We have gotten some wonderful book donations lately from the estate of Henry Treisler, and another box of books from Gus Hermann. Some are duplicates of books already in our library, but others are welcome additions. If you have purchased plants without names and would like to identify the plant, you might check out www.cactushop.com on the Internet and click on plant library. This is Altman's site, and there are 42 pages of pictures of their plants. Unfortunately not all plants have pictures, but most of them do. Happy reading. Harold



