Central Spine

August, 2011

Newsletter of the Central Arizona Cactus & Succulent Society

An Affiliate of the Cactus & Succulent Society of America

On the Web at www.centralarizonacactus.org

Publication of material in the Central Spine does not imply agreement with the ideas expressed therein by any portion of the membership of the CACSS, nor does it constitute an endorsement or support for any portion of such material by the CACSS, or the Central Spine, regardless of any position or office held by the author. All such material represents a comment and/or personal opinion of the author.

CACCS Meeting: Sunday, August 28

2 pm, Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden

Presentation: Greg Starr, intrepid plant explorer

Article: Growing Succulents in the Dessert by Mark Dimmit, p. 4

Conophytum friedrichiae, southern Namibia near Warmbad, May, 2011 Photo by Doug Dawson

Sept. Newsletter Deadline: Sept. 10, 2011

2011 CACSS Officers

President: Steve Martinez 602-688-4339
altrigo2@aol.com
Vice-President: Lee Brownson . .480-951-4945
lsbrownson@cox.net
Secretary: Lois Schneberger. 480-946-8373
lschneberger@cox.net
Treasurer: Wayne Whipple 480-460-3623
w7676@msn.com

2011 Board of Directors

Serving through December, 2011

Doug Dawson 480-893-1207
dawsonlithops@hotmail.com
Sue Tyrrel 480-946-3499
styrrel@cox.net
Cindy Capek 623-979-9389
ronluccap@aol.com

Serving through December, 2012

Gard Roper 602-996-9745
Cheryl Brown 480-352-7019
rp62@intergate.com
Jack Meharian 954-540-5971
jackmeharian@att.net
Beth Kirkpatrick 480-275-4833
2kirks@cox.net
Debora Life 480-580-3813
lifedebora@yahoo.com

Beth Kirkpatrick
Chair of the new Membership Committee

Welcome to New Members

Janice Stein
Margaret Gall
Lillian Predny
Mary Strike
Elizabeth Taddiken

Thanks again to CACSS Co-Librarians
(Marty's name is now spelled correctly)

Paul Schueneman 602-327-5751 Schue888@wbhsi.net--
Marty Shahan-Walker 602 589-8440 martyandshay@gmail.com

August 28 Meeting Presentation

Greg Starr, intrepid plant explorer, will be back to tell us about his adventures in Baja California. Baja has some of the most interesting and unusual desert plants in the world and Greg has pictures of many of them. We have seen programs about Baja before but everyone experiences the land in a different way. Greg's narrative is sure to be entertaining as well as informative.

2011 Meeting Schedule

Note the change to our normal meeting schedule because of the Thanksgiving weekend. Also, note the date of our Christmas Potluck. Barring any unexpected event, the schedule is:

August 28
September 25
October 30
November 20 (in place of November 27th)

December 11
Christmas Potluck

Mountain View Park,
8625 E. Mountain View Road
Scottsdale

President's Letter

I write this from Long Island, NY, where I first stepped into the cactus and succulent world. In 1974, I stopped into a nursery in Freeport and bought some small plants in clay pots for 25 cents each. I was fascinated by their shapes and so I soon bought more of them. I eventually made a dish garden, and then another , and then a bigger dish garden,…. well, you know how it goes!

I eventually built myself a little greenhouse, and you can see a picture of it on my nursery website. Well, today in Arizona I am obviously totally out of control with these crazy plants, and I love every minute. I still have a house here on Long Island where I have a few really sturdy cacti and succulents indoors near a window. I sometimes leave them for months unattended and while they don't grow that much, they look none the worse, and happy to get a drink when I finally show up. I am learning more and more that these plants are

real survivors and real opportunists. They can wait long periods, as they often do in certain habitats, and when the time is right, produce growth and flowering, etc. in a short time frame. Of course, many of the plants I grow in my greenhouses need much more frequent attention-- in fact it is difficult for me to leave them in these hot months. Luckily a club member friend comes to my rescue and will water them for me a time or two, if needed. I know that other members rely on similar back-ups when they travel. That's another example of the type of friendly people you meet through the club.

As I told you in a previous letter, I like the social aspects of conventions, Symposiums; etc. At the 2009 CSSA Convention in Tucson, I was standing at a table poolside at the kick-off cocktail hour with four other people when I asked how they started in the hobby. The woman from northern California started telling me how she was living in Colorado when she went back to visit her brother who lived in Baldwin (where she grew up and which is next to Freeport, where I used to live), and while there stopped into Atlantic Nursery in Freeport and bought some small plants in 25 cent clay pots,.. well, you know the rest.

Small world or what? By the way, she says she still has some of those plants, and Atlantic Nursery is still there too.

I love this hobby!

See you at the meeting, Steve M.

Contact the *Central Spine* Editor
for article and photo submissions
Diana Decker
dianaldec@msn.com (602) 220-9825

Larryleachia, Farm Eendoorn, southern Namibia, May, 2011 Photo by Doug Dawson

Growing Succulents in the Desert

Articles and photos by Mark Dimmitt

(first printed in Desert Breeze, newsletter of the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society)

Hoya pachyclada (Sept. 2010)

Hoya is a genus formerly in the milkweed family, now in the dogbane family Apocynaceae. There are at least 300 species, all native to the Old World. Almost all are vines, and range from thin-leaved delicate tropicals to semidesert succulents. This species is one of the most succulent of all.

Hoya *pachyclada* (Figure below) does not vine; it is much slower growing than almost all other hoyas. Stems are usually short and densely clothed with very thick leaves. If overwatered and overfed, however, it will produce lengthy stems with long internodes. The leaves continue to thicken over several years. Old leaves may be more than a quarter-inch thick.

.

Plants bear good-sized umbels of white flowers in summer

This species is native to dry tropical forest in Thailand, where it is typically an epiphyte on trees. It grows well in a humus-rich potting medium. Keep it in a very small pot. Overpotting will usually result in a rotted plant. It can be grown outdoors in Tucson most of the year, tolerating heat quite well in at least half shade. (Despite its hard succulent leaves, it does not like desert sun.) It can also tolerate cool weather, but keep it well above freezing in winter.

Like many desirable plants, this one is a challenge to find. Even nurseries specializing in hoyas often don't have it, probably because it grows and propagates slowly.

Stapelia flavopurpurea: A sweet starfish flower (August 2010)

A large specimen of Stapelia flavopurpurea in full flower during late summer. The medium in this rock pot by Steve Holmes is only one to two inches deep, which helps prevent overwatering.

Most succulent collectors have grown at least a few stapeliads, a tribe of the former milkweed family Asclepiadaceae (The family was recently combined into the dogbane family, Apocynaceae). All stapeliads are succulents, and they bear a wide range of flower sizes and shapes. Most species share the trait of being pollinated by flies and carrion beetles. Therefore the flowers look and smell like dead things. (Mark wrote another article about these in a later *Desert Breeze*.)

The featured species is one of the few exceptions; it isn't a "carrion flower". The flowers don't look like rotting meat, and they have a powerful and delightful sweet fragrance. They're still fly-pollinated, but they offer nectar (energy food) instead of the false promise of a place to lay eggs. However, the flowers appear to produce no nectar; they're still apparently relying on deceit to get pollinated. The flowers are born in late summer; healthy plants produce many one-inch star-shaped flowers with a plethora of frills, spikes, and warts. The color ranges from brown to bright yellow-green, often with purple centers. The penetrating fragrance is reminiscent of honey or some cookies or candy being baked in grandma's kitchen.

Culture This species is easy to grow. It does best in filtered sunlight in any well-drained potting medium. Protect it from frost in the winter. Like most stapeliads, plants become senescent after several years, so they should be restarted from cuttings when growth and flowering slow. The best time is in late summer when they're growing most actively. The one problem I've encountered is that if the stem is even partially buried, the plant will usually rot. Cuttings should simply be laid on the surface of the potting medium. Healthy young plants grow rampantly. An easy way to propagate them is to place empty pots filled with medium adjacent to a plant when it begins to run over the edge of its pot. Masses of stems may hang a foot or more over the edge of a pot for a time, but the joints are loosely attached and easily broken.

Mark Dimmitt, Ph.D. has been the Director of Natural History at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum since 1997. Mark earned his Ph.D. in biology from the University of California at Riverside and is an avid plant hybridizer.

A brown-flowered form of Stapelia flavopurpurea Photo by Mark Dimmitt

A flower of Stapelia flavopurpurea. While you're getting close to enjoy the fragrance, the flower offers a visual treat too. Spikes, fur, and wrinkles; a punk flower? Photo by Mark Dimmitt

PLANT QUESTIONS??? WHOM TO CONTACT!!!

Many CACSS members have experience with different kinds of succulent plants. I hope they will add their names to the following list (Just call or e-mail Bob Torrest—480-994-3868; robertst9114@msn.com).

For now the list is simply alphabetical with principal interests. When more members add their information, the list will be cross-referenced by topic.

DOUG DAWSON
480-893-1207
dawsonlithops@hotmail.com
Specializations include Flora of Namibia, Growing from Seed, Lithops, other Mesembs, and Melocactus.

MIKE GALLAGHER
602-942-8580
mgallagher26@cox.net
Specializations include Aloes, Haworthias, Columnar Cacti, and *Turbinicarpus*.

STEVE PLATH
623-915-7615
revegdude1@juno.com
Specializations include *Ariocarpus, Astrophytum, Cyphostemma, Echinocereus, Fouquieria, Thelocactus*,
General Propagation, and Desert Revegetation.

BOB TORREST
480-994-3868
robertst9114@msn.com
Specializations include Desert Landscaping,
Unusual (including Rare Fruit) Trees and Shrubs, Aloes, Agaves,
Columnar Cacti, *Trichocereus*, and *Opuntia*.

CENTRAL ARIZONA CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY
PO BOX 63572
PHOENIX, AZ 85082-3572
WWW.CENTRALARIZONACACTUS.ORG