Central Spine

October, 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**

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CACCS Meeting: Sunday, Nov. 20

2 pm, Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden

The Big Deal, Super Large Silent Auction

Nominees for CACSS Officers and Board of Directors page 3

CACSS Plant Propagation Committee by Doug Dawson page 4

Plant People in the San Diego Botanic Garden

By Linda Larson

Just before the killer cold snap last January, I had managed to prune my torch bougainvillea into a heart shape topiary. It made me smile and I eagerly looked forward to it as part of the landscape for a Valentine celebration in February. Then nature changed my plans and the shape was lost in the freeze damage. A topiary is a fanciful thing; it isn't a garden style that appeals to everyone. It is a living work of art that requires a vision, patience and an artist using the medium of plants.

Descriptions of Roman gardens with cypress trees cut into shapes of sailing ships and hunting scenes as early as 75 AD establish topiary an ancient art. The 17th century is considered the pinnacle of topiary art. Louis the XV hosted a "Ball of the Clipped Yew Trees" at Versailles in 1745, celebrating his son's wedding" (*The Gardener's Wise Words,* R. Binney) For this fancy dress party, the King dressed as a clipped yew. (Lady Gaga take note.)

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Prima Ballerina Photo by Rich Larsen

November Newsletter Deadline:
Friday, November. 11, 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
Debora Life 480-580-3813
lifedebora@yahoo.com
Beth Kirkpatrick 480-275-4833
2kirks@cox.net

Beth Kirkpatrick
Chair of the Membership Committee

Welcome to New Members

Britt Thomas Myslinski
Les Longino
Joyce Partain
Melissa Vandolah
Renee-Ann Wilkie
Dianne Nutter

October 30--The Big Deal, Super Large Silent Auction

Wildflower Pavilion, Desert Botanical Garden
- Bring plants from 12 pm to 1:30 pm.
- Silent Auction begins at 2 pm

Make sure the bid sheet for each plant you bring for the auction includes the plant's name. Please bring your own boxes to carry plants home. Also bring a pen or pencil to place your bid on a bid sheet.

Special invitation from Jo Davis:
I encourage you to attend the Silent Auction. It's a lot of fun and you'll have the opportunity to go home with some nice plants if you're the **Highest Bidder!**

2011 Meeting Schedule

Note the date change in November meeting because of the Thanksgiving weekend.

November 20 (in place of November 27th)
Presentation: Gary James-Ethiopia
Gary has traveled to the far corners of the Earth, in search of seeing new plants and experiencing different cultures. He will present a program about the Plants and People of Ethiopia. We have never had a program about this country because not many people go there. Put this presentation on your calendar.

December 11- Party time!
Annual Holiday Potluck (details on page 3)

President's Letter

I can't help it --I'm going to talk about the weather again, just a little. I have lived in Phoenix for almost 32 years, and this has been the most ridiculous summer I have yet seen. Unrelenting triple digit blitzes throughout, 117 degrees in August, 101 in mid-October,… need I say more?

Well at least it's cool at night now, but it's been tough on the plants. And last year we had a freeze at the end of November, which is about six weeks from when I am writing this. Go figure. This said, we still have better growing conditions than most of the continental United States, except for southern California.

I hope everybody is looking forward to and getting ready for our October Silent Auction. This is the

second biggest fund raiser for our club, and a great way to buy cool plants at affordable prices. It will be in the Wildflower Pavilion in lieu of our regular meeting, at the normal time, 2 PM, but come early if you are bringing plants to donate. This is a fun event so I hope to see you there.

On a personal note, my nursery has been coming along very nicely, and I just was selected New Times Best of Phoenix in the desert nursery category.

I once again must say that I don't think I would be where I am today in the 'cactus world' had I not joined this great club. The networking that I am part of all started out as a result of connecting with members of our club, so a thank you to a great group of plant enthusiasts.

I encourage all of you to take advantage of the knowledge and experience embodied in the membership of the CACSS by participating in our events such as bus trips, workshops, picnics, open houses, and maybe just coming a little early and socializing at the general meetings. Ok, enough! See you soon,.... Steve M.

CACSS Election ballots and candidate information will be mailed to members the first week of November.

Officers: 2012 Nominees
President: Steve Martinez
Vice President:----------
Secretary: Lois Schneburger
Treasureer: Wayne Whipple

(If you would like to run for Vice President, or know someone who does, call a current Officer or Board member.)

Directors:
(2year terms ending December, 2013
Lucio Amado
Cindy Capek
Steven Mack
Joseph Miracle
Nancy Mumpton
Sue Tyrrel

Christmas Potluck

1:30 to 5 pm, Sunday, December 11
8625 N. Mountainview Rd., Scottsdale

Your hostesses this year will be Dana, Jo and Debra.

Bring a main dish, appetizer or dessert of your choice.
We have room for 100 members. Join us for a memorable time Bring your holiday spirit and a plant to exchange. If you bring a plant, you may take a plant. Please bring an appetizer, a main course or dessert, with utensils for serving it. You'll also need to bring your own plates, silverware and napkins. As always, Gard and Loren will make a great punch and serve coffee.

IT'S VERY, VERY IMPORTANT TO RSVP to Jo Davis by phone, 480-839-3792.
She must know what you're bringing so she can coordinate the menu. Please get your reservation in now. If you leave a message for Jo, be sure to include your phone number, so she can call you back.

The reservation deadline is Sunday, December 4.

CACSS Plant Propagation Committee

By Doug Dawson

During the 2011 summer, a new club committee has taken shape. At the July and August general meetings of the CACSS, Gard Roper and Doug Dawson made announcements and put out signup sheets for those interested in coming to committee startup meetings on either September 10 or 24 at Gard's home. Both sessions filled and even more are interested in the committee's future.

At the first meeting on September 10, thirteen of us discussed propagation topics and goals of the committee. One goal is to propagate quality plants for the club and to bring them for the monthly silent auctions and other events. Also we wish to organize a repository for information on how to grow specific succulents here in our harsh climate.

The second group met on September 24 and we had a guest speaker, Cecilia Phelan. She is well known in our club for growing Aeoniums, which can be rather tricky here in our hot summers. Cecilia brought plenty of Aeonium cuttings for the Propagation Committee members present. Way to go, Cecilia!

The CACSS Board has supplied us with $200 startup money for supplies. It is our hope that when the committee matures, we will be able to introduce hard-to-find species to our members and to give a free plant to every new visitor or new member who comes to our club's general meeting each month.

Propagation Committee members take a lunch break in Gard's backyard. Photo by Doug Dawson

What will we need from the general membership? Please continue to bring in recycled plastic pots and other appropriate pots for the committee to use. We hope that many of you will keep us in mind when you look over your collection and find potential seed, offsets, cuttings and pups which we will need for future propagations. If you do have such plants, call either Gard (602-996-9745) or Doug (480-893-1207).

Contact the *Central Spine* Editor
Diana Decker
dianadec@cox.net (602) 220-9825

for article and photo submissions, and to suggest topics you'd like to see included in the *Central Spine.*

New Columnist for Arizona Republic's 'Saturday column, 'Know Your Desert Garden'

Brian Kissinger, Horticulture Director at Desert Botanical Garden, now answers readers' questions in the Saturday column. He replaced Kathy Babcock, former Assistant Director of Horticulture, who has left the Garden to move on in life.

Plant People in the San Diego Botanic Garden

by Linda Larson

(continued from Page 1)

Margaret at work Photo by Rich Larson

Topiary has long been done in shrubs, trees and vines, with yews, boxwood and ivy as favorite mediums for these shapes. As garden styles became less formal, topiary lost its popularity. Today amusement parks sculpt their greenery into geometric or fanciful shapes. Corporate logos are shaped in shrubbery in the entry ways of company headquarters.

In the San Diego Botanic Garden, topiary is in fashion with succulents as the artist medium. During my recent visit there I met Margaret Jones, who describes herself as the "fashion maven of the well-dressed topiaries of the succulent garden." A garden volunteer she works with her pallet of plants creating plant people modeled on human form.

A beautiful garden is always in transition and plant sculpture vividly demonstrates this. Working on steel forms covered with sphagnum moss, succulent starts are pushed into the frame to take root and grow to cover the entire structure. Margaret does this, working with a small plastic container hung around her neck. She works carefully with her long-handled tweezers easing the pieces into place. The artist's work requires patience as the beginnings can be a bit sparse. Unlike working with paint on a canvas where the artist completes the work, here nature will control the final product. Watering, warm weather and a bit of luck will in time create the masterpiece.

Each of the plant people has two garden volunteers working to keep them well dressed. Pat Hammer is director of Operations for SDBG and is responsible for bringing the topiaries to SDBG. Originally they were all covered with ivy. Now the clothing fashion is changing to succulents.

The clay masks are modeled on the human faces of garden luminaries. The man with the vest is Don Walker who started the San Diego Horticultural Society. The hostess serving tea is his wife, Dorthea Walker. The three musicians are the faces of three of the nursery workers of Weidner's Nursery, a well-loved destination of local residents.

Dorthea Walker Photo by Rich Larson

The Don Walker topiary was recently replanted and has the appearance of a fresh haircut but his head will be full and curly as the little plants grow. One of the musicians sports sleeves of Dudleya in a spiky blue tone.

During this visit, the most beautiful plant person represents Evelyn Cisneros, the captivating prima ballerina of the San Francisco Ballet. (see photos page 1 and 6) This masterpiece of perfect succulents is the work of Margaret and has had a year to mature. The results are magical.

Her skirt is a floral work of Echeveria and will bloom in purple flowers. Her hair is sedum, as is the toe of her ballet slipper. Elfin Thyme is covering the bodice and her shoulders are ruffled with succulents. Creative use of many plants form

her intricate detail: hair of sedum, a string of succulent pearls around her neck, she holds a nosegay in one hand, a ring and a bracelet of plants on the other.

Don Walker Photo by Rich Larson

Nursery worker Photo by Rich Larson

Now and then the clothing needs a trim, a patch and a reweaving as the plants naturally grow, bloom and die. This is a temporary splendor changing each day. But artistic volunteers will redesign and grow a new outfit for all of us to enjoy.

Prima Ballerina close-up Photo by Rich Larson

There is no shortage of magnificent plant specimens to enjoy at the SDBG and those who enjoy a more natural garden style will find plenty to admire. But if when you turn a corner and spy a well-dressed topiary, perhaps you will smile and enjoy this temporary art of ornamental gardening.

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Reprinted from the August 2011 'Roots and Shoots,' the Maricopa Master Gardener newsletter

About the Author, Linda Larson:

A monthly columnist for the Maricopa Master Gardener newsletter "Roots and Shoots," her column, "A Traveling Gardener, *Wandering, Wondering, Noticing.* . . ." reflects her passion for combining two of her favorite pastimes – travel and gardening - but also highlights the restorative properties for young and old alike when spending time in nature.

Linda Larson presents a dynamic presentation on Wandering through Gardens to all audiences and is available for speaking engagements. She publishes online at http://travelinggardener.com/ and can be reached at larson20@me.com.

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 email 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*.

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