

June 1992

CENTRAL ARIZONA  
CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER

**"NEXT MEETING"**

**Sunday, June 28th at 2:00 P.M. in the Webster Auditorium**

Joey Betzler from San Diego will be our guest speaker. He is a leading authority on stapeliads. The presentation will feature large format slides of Joey's botanical travels in South Africa. He will also be available to provide identification of plants brought in by members.

Henry and Debra regret that they will not be able to attend this month's meeting. Vice-president Jim Oravetz will conduct this month's proceedings.

There will be a board meeting at 1:00 P.M. in the Archer House. All members are welcome.

**"LOOKING FORWARD"**

**July Meeting**

A slide show developed by the Cactus and Succulent Society of America will be presented entitled "Madagascar: The Beguiling Isle".

**August Meeting**

A guest speaker from the Boyce Thompson Arboretum will be featured.

**November Fall Camp-Out**

Mark your calendars on November 6-8 for the fall camp-out in the Superstitions.

**Open Garden**

Anyone wishing to host an open garden in October, December, or January should contact Debra Korobkin at 493-7003.

"LAST MONTH"

Thanks to Larry Fischer, Linda Miller, and Mike Gallagher of the Propagation Committee for their discussions concerning the methods and techniques on the propagation of cacti and succulents. Anyone interested in helping expand the society's propagation effort should contact Linda Miller at 979-3387 or Bill Solberg at 936-7293.

The "mini" silent auction was a success. \$453 was added to the society's coffers. Thanks to one and all for participating.

"On the Dry Side" by Timothy Chapman

You know the routine. Some friends of yours seem to have a mild interest in succulents. Happy to encourage them, perhaps a little anxious to show off, you invite them over to see your collection. The weather's warm, a lot of your plants are in bloom. Perfect. You lead them out to your greenhouse or whatever, and you have that modest yet knowing little smile of yours; they are really going to dig this. The birds are singing, the sun is shining, and as your friends bend down to behold a particularly unusual blossom, a gentle breeze stirs up five or six blowflies and the delicate aroma of dead cow.

Ah, yes, the Stapeliads are flowering. A Stapeliad is any of the stem succulents in the Asclepiadaceae, or milkweed family. Most species come from southern Africa, and genera include Orbea, Huernia, Caralluma, Tavaresia (=Decabelone), and of course Stapelia. Stapeliads are pretty different-looking from what I'm used to thinking of as milkweeds, but one clue pointing to their relatedness is the structure of the seed; a thin oval topped off by a little parachute of silky threads. Another Stapeliad feature is a lack of leaves. In nearly all species the leaves have been reduced to little nothings so that the plants, superficially anyway, resemble little cactus. Kind of.

But it's that flower that is a Stapeliad's most outstanding feature. Its radial symmetry is divided into five parts, the "petals" or outer lobes are strangely leathery, and the whole thing is often decorated in a rich and complex tapestry of spots, stripes and textures. And like so many of the remarkable designs in Nature, it has to do with survival strategy; in this case reproductive strategy.

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So say you're the new kid on the evolutionary block. You want to get pollinated (who doesn't?) but everybody else is into bees. Moths and birds maybe, they're okay, but you want something different, something with a little panache, that adaptive *je ne sais quoi*. Well flies may not have been your first choice, but the Stapeliads loved the idea. The foul odor many of them put forth smells like decaying flesh. The predominant colors -- reds, browns and violets -- are found in animal excreta and other rotten nastiness. Some species' flowers are even fringed with little dark hairs that, in the slightest breeze, twitch with movements that are remarkably like those of tiny insects. Flies are so taken with this macabre display that some even lay their eggs on the open blossoms. Gross, man.

So, in spite of their rich perfumes and a tendency to get hassled by root mealybugs, the Stapeliads are a fascinating addition to any succulent collection. Just don't be hurt if your friends don't appreciate a little game of "Quick, smell this." Because they probably won't.