

The

Central

Spine

THE CENTRAL SPINE

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NOTES OF APPRECIATION TO FRAN TOLLESON AND TO THE CENTRAL ARIZONA CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY, HOSTS FOR THE C.S.S.A. 1987 CONVENTION:

August 5, 1987.

Dear Fran et al,

Just a note (better late than never!) to say how much Joe and I appreciate all your work to make our CSSA Convention a fine experience for all the conventioners. From what I've heard from others everyone learned much and enjoyed much. This is only my second convention but it appeared to run smoothly---with lots of opportunities for individuals to tailor the convention to their needs. I know the work which must have gone into this by the Central Arizona Cactus and Succulent Society and especially you. These things are done out of love and yet the only reward may seem to be exhaustion! But at the next convention it will be your turn to enjoy the efforts of others!!

This was my first chance to experience Arizona--see the Saguaro forests--meet its people. You and your Society and the University and Tram people set a fine example.

Thank you for all your efforts on our behalf. You were indeed fine hosts.

Best wishes, Carol and Joe Weycir.

P. S.

Special thanks also to Frank Hennessey and to Marilyn Fitz-Randolph for sharing their gardens with us. It is always a privilege to be invited to someone's garden! C.W.

"A great convention!" Don Pinkava.

June 30, 1987.

Dear Fran:

This was my first CSSA convention and I think you all did an outstanding job.

I have no other addresses, so please pass the word along.

Best regards, Peyton M. Alexander Decatur, Georgia.

July 8, 1987

Dear Fran,

I have been to four CSSA conventions now and the one you hosted in Phoenix is about the best! I am sure you and all the members of your Society worked long and hard the last two years---and the fine results were proof of it.

We could use a little of your warm days here in California. It is still foggy and quite cool.

I hope to see you all in Denver in 1989.

Again my thanks for your really warm and splendid hospitality

Most sincerely, Bob Carr.

June 30, 1987.

Dear Fran,

I want to thank you and your group for hosting such a successful convention. It was simply great and I really enjoyed myself. The programs were the best I had ever heard. I have not attended the conventions for the past ten years but there was a remarkable improvement.

Everyone of you were so cheerful and helpful--even when we complained of the heat. It was 63 degrees at noon today in Denver. I am ready to return to PHoenix!

Your group appeared to work together so well. Having worked on two iris conventions, I know how much friction develops when people get tired and frustrated, but if there was any friction or trouble it was not evident to us conventioners. I congratulate all of you for a job well done. Denver is going to have to hussel to beat the 1987 convention and if we can just do half as good, I will be happy. Everything seemed to be so well organized, and I thought the colored dots on our name tags was a fantastic idea.

I know you are tremendously fatigued and glad the whole convention is over with but altho it was a lot of very hard work and long hours of planning, you put on a first rate convention and made a lot of us very, very happy.

Best wishes to you and your club members and again, thanks for providing such a pleasant and interesting convention. I really had a wonderful time.

Sincerely, Mary Ann Heacock Denver, Colorado.

July 3, 1987

Dear Fran:

I know there were times during the past two years that you thought the whole convention was going to unravel. We all thought that from time to time.

We were not pleased that ASU turned out to be less than helpful because it put all the pressure on you Arizonans to take up the slack.

You did a great job and believe me, all the CSSA appreciates how much work and effort it was on your part.

Thanks again for a great and delicate job.

All the best, Paul Johnson

June 26, 1987.

Dear Fran,

We arrived home about 5:00 P.M. Thursday, and had absolutely no trouble crossing the California border with the plants we brought back, so I hope the same holds true for the convention delegates. Thank you for all your help with maps and calling to let us know when we could set up. Since we crossed the desert at night, the plants came through just fine. Coming home was nice because there was a cloud cover.

I know how hard you all must have worked getting everything set up for the convention. I must say that from the comments we heard, the delegates seemed pleased.

Sincerely, Louis Burke, California Epi Center.

DISH GARDENS

by LEWIS STEICHMAN

The terms "dish gardens" and "planters" are often used interchangeably. In general, these terms refer to a container in which two or more plants are grown. Sometimes a dish garden is described as an uncovered terrarium, a miniature landscape, or as a collection of small plants. Containers in which single plants are grown are usually referred to as just "houseplants."

A good dish garden contains a collection of compatible plants growing together in a small container. Many different types of containers may be used such as pottery, glass, plastic, wood, wicker baskets, etc. Containers at least 3" deep are best. All shapes are satisfactory.

Selection of Plants:

There are several different types of dish gardens. Most would fall into one of the following types: woodland, tropical plants, cactus and succulents. Probably the most common type of dish garden is the one using tropical plants, some of which are listed below;

Plants for Dish Gardens:

Aglaonema
Asparagus Fern
Bromeliads
Dracaena
Euonymous
Ferns
Jade Plant
Pandanus
Peperomia
Pick-a-back
Pothos
Wax Plant

Aluminum Plant
Baby's Tears
Cacti
English Ivy
False Aralia
Grape Ivy
Kingsroo Vine
Panamiga
Pepper
Plectranthuel
Snake Plant

Artillery Plant
Boxwood
Dieffenbachia
Hemigraphis
Episcia pellionia
Fatshedera
Nephthytis
Pelleonia
Philondendron
Podocarpus
Strawberry Begonia

Making a Dish Garden:Assembling:

Assemble the container, drainage material, soil mixture and plants on a convenient work table. If you wish to view the dish garden from all sides use a round or square container and place the tallest plant in the center. If the dish garden is to be viewed from only one side, place the tallest plant at one end of the container or perhaps in the center and place shorter plants adjacent to it.

Plants to be used should be grown in 2-1/4" or 3" pots so that they will fit in the dish garden without having to break off the bottom of the soil mass. After placing drainage material in the bottom of the container, determine the position of the plants by moving them about in the container until you are satisfied with their arrangement. Before doing this, remove them from the pots in which they were grown so that you can accurately tell how it will look in the dish garden.

(over)

When you have decided on the location of all the plants, fill in around the plants with soil and gently firm the soil around the root balls.

The use of figurines in most dish gardens is discouraged because figurines usually detract from the plants.

Likewise, the use of gaudy, highly decorated containers is discouraged because the plants should be the center of interest instead of the container.

Watering:

After planting, moisten the soil thoroughly. Soil particles can be washed off the leaves at this time. The use of rain or distilled water will probably extend the useful life of the dish gardens. If you overwater, tip the dish garden up and pour it off.

One method of watering suggests immersing the dish garden in a sink until air bubbles no longer appear. Then place the dish garden on its side for half an hour or so to let the excess water run off. This could be done once a week.

Most individuals will probably use the more conventional method of watering by adding a cup or so of water at one time whenever the plants need watering. You can often tell by the weight of the dish garden when it is getting low on water. Never allow plants to wilt because they often lose their bottom leaves after wilting. If plants wilt, you waited too long to water. If the environment in which the dish garden is located is relatively constant, you may find it possible to water according to a time schedule, but this method is not nearly as good as watering when the plants need watering.

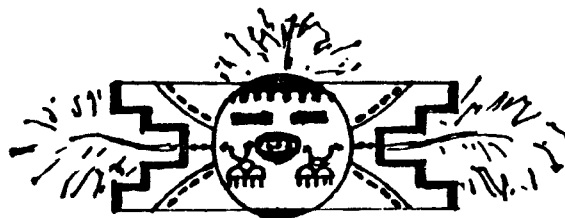
Some individuals prefer to use containers having a reservoir at the base with a wick extending up into the soil mass. This method of watering is sometimes referred to as automatic watering.

Care:

Pinch fast-growing plants often to keep them within bounds. Fertilize with a good houseplant fertilizer as directed on the label of the container. Giving the plants a shower once a month in a sink or tub will remove dust. The use of foliage spray is usually not desirable.

Insects can often be removed by washing them off. If this doesn't work, try using an insecticide bomb or pressurized spray can.

Don't expect a dish garden to last forever. If it lasts six months or more you should be satisfied. Often, many of the plants in a dish garden can be re-used if they are repotted. Many plants can also be propagated by cuttings which, when rooted, can be used when the dish garden is replanted.



PLANT OF THE MONTH:

THE LOVELY "RAT-TAIL" CACTUS

A P O R O C A C T U S

Growing high in the rugged jungle terrains of Mexico and South America is one of the most unusual of all the epiphytic cacti - the Aporocactus, or nicknamed the "rat-tail" cactus. These beautiful plants hang from the stems and thick branches of trees. They are slender, vine-like cactus, creeping or clambering, sending out roots freely, thus enabling to attach themselves easily to trunk depressions and ledges of the rocks in the wild.

Its green cylindrical stems lengthen at the rate of 3-4 inches a year, having 8-15 narrow rounded ribs thickly covered with short, thin spines that are yellow or red-brown.

The oldest and most well known "rat-tail" is the beautiful lavender colored flowering Aporocactus flagelliformis - said to have been introduced from Peru in 1690, but presumably originally from Mexico. In the old days it was very common in Mexico to see this plant about the houses of the poorer citizens, often planted in the end of a cow's horn and hung on the side of the house. Even the dried flowers were used as a household remedy and sold in the drug stores under the name of "flor de Cuerno".

There are only 5 recognized day blooming species. Flowers are rather small and funnel-shaped, diurnal, red to reddish-orange, pink, or lavender, having slightly irregular shaped flowers with stamens longer than the petals. Flowers are produced in the early spring and will last for several days. These 5 species consist of:

Aporocactus conzatti,	Aporocactus martianus,
Aporocactus flagelliformis,	Aporocactus leptophis.
Aporocactus flagriformis,	

These same species are known to have been crossed with such unusual plants as Echinopsis, Heliocereus, and Cryptocereus. Closely related and highly coveted by Epiphyllum lovers is the unique cross of the Aporocactus with the hybrid Epiphyllum - better known as X Aporocactus, combining the good qualities of both, but are not quite different from either one.

As to the care of these wonderful oddities, the book says the "easy part is at hand"! For best growth, the "rat-tail" cactus should get 4+ hours of direct sunlight a day or at least 12 hours of strong artificial light, but it will grow fairly well in bright indirect light. Light during the dormancy period as well as growth periods, is the most important factor in producing flowers. From spring through autumn, the soil should become barely dry between thorough waterings; in the winter, it needs only enough water to keep the plant from shriveling. Repotting annually in early Spring will hasten growth but the procedure is only necessary when the plant is overcrowded.

Aporocactus is attractively displayed on a pedestal or in a hanging basket. It can be successfully grafted onto upright-growing cacti. Hybrids have been developed that produce brighter red or pink flowers. Outdoors, especially in Southern California, the plant can be grown pendant or creeping over the ground and among rocks.

What a lovely plant to behold, especially in full bloom! What a wonderful plant to add to anyone's collection! It won't take up too much room, and with a little tender-loving care can be a most rewarding experience. Just ask our fellow member, Sol Kleinman. He has raised and grown some real beauties.

Excerpts from:
Cacti & Succulents/Time-Life Encyclopedia
of Gardening
Cactus & Succulent Journal/Volume 54
(Charles H. Everson)

MY WAR WITH MEALYBUGS

By JUDY JOHNSON

Mealybugs are a good argument for reincarnation. Just when you think the last one is dead, you find a new fluffy white patch, usually on your favorite plant.

This is a story of one person's encounter, no, WAR with the mealties.

I am a fairly new cactophile with a mixed collection grown under lights. I had never had mealybugs, but I had certainly heard of them. All the books warned that new plants should be quarantined before introducing them into a collection. A time period was not mentioned so I tried one week. Believe me, that is not enough!

One day I purchased an Aeonium sp., and after one week I carefully inspected it and put it on my light table. About two dozen plants became infected and the Aeonium showed signs of damage. I inspected my plants, removing bugs with alcohol soaked Q-tips. After recovering from a light hangover, the mealties were back in force and many of my previously healthy plants were now infested.

At this point I reached for the heavy artillery and got hold of a systemic insecticide containing the chemical Di-Syston*. I applied it to the infested plants in addition to repeating the alcohol treatment. This seemed to work for about a month and then the little white monsters started reappearing. At this point, in desperation, I treated every single plant with the systemic insecticide and scrubbed my light table with disinfectant and soap. I repeated the treatment twice at two-week intervals. I have now been free of mealybugs for about eight months.

This experience taught me several things. I now quarantine all new plants for two months and anything showing signs of infection gets three treatments with the Di-Syston* before it gets added to my collection. There are many members who may think this is over-reacting, but after having 60-70% of my collection effected and losing several of my favorite plants, I am taking no more chances.

Since my collection is mixed I also learned that mealybugs will attack almost anything. I have even found them attacking a 3" diameter trunk of a mimosa tree (yes, the tree looked worse for wear,) and on the roots of a common carpet-forming spurge which I cannot seem to clear out. They prefer the leafier types of plants but are not averse to Lithops or almost any other plant which has nooks and crannies in which they can hide.

My cacti were much less effected than my other succulents except the globose Euphorbias which were all unscathed.

I have not expert advice to offer on eradicating mealybugs, but I hope this story may be useful to others.

From "BETWEEN THE SPINES" Wichita, Kansas.
Courtesy of Elaine Steichman.

