

CENTRAL SPINE

Newsletter of the CENTRAL ARIZONA CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY

DECEMBER, 2000

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT—DECEMBER

Our Holiday Party and annual elections approach. Please come! It is your club, and your vote for officers and board members is important. What you expect and want from the club is important too. If you have requests, suggestions for programs, or concerns, please tell one of the officers or board members listed in each month's Central Spine.

The party will be held in Webster Auditorium on Sunday, December 10. We will again do a potluck. Please RSVP by Dec. 7 to Judy Braun at 480-951-1363 or Jo Davis at 480-839-3792 to coordinate dishes. Yes, I'll make eggnog again.

We will schedule a little differently this year: a social hour from noon to 1 pm, and then the food will be served.

It still hasn't been cold enough to stop growth in most of my plants. The *Echinopsis* have taken off; mine grow all winter. I leave them outside in pots, in full sun, and water and fertilize heavily throughout the cold weather. I've never lost one to rot, and the flower displays are spectacular.

My *Lithops* are flowering too. Woody Minnich told us at last year's talk to regard the flower as a flag saying, "No more water, please, until next spring!" Other Mesembs such as *Aloinopsis* and *Titanopsis* grow for the all winter. This is one group of plants that it pays to read about first or ask somebody who's grown them.

I've received a favorable response to the proposal to advise students at Ocotillo Charter High with landscaping the front of their school. If you'd like to help (no digging involved—the students will do all the work), please contact me.

Leo Martin

PLANT FAMILY OF THE MONTH: MESEMBRYANTHEMACEAE

This is the time of the year when many species in this family, commonly abbreviated as Mesembs, come out of hot-weather dormancy and begin to grow and put out flowers.

*Fenestraria aurantiaca*¹



As we who grow Mesembs know, their conditions vary considerably, and it may take some time to learn how best to grow them in our greenhouses or on our patios. (Cont. on page 2)

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Where do Mesembs come from? Well, I don't know about yours, but all of mine came from nurseries!

However, the original source for most genera is southern portions of South Africa and along the coast of Namibia, formerly called South West Africa—a one-time German colony (*I was a history major; I know that kind of detail!*). Since our plant sources are nurseries or seeds that we acquire, it really doesn't help us much to describe their original native environments. Our plants grow in the central Arizona environment, and we must learn how to make them flourish here.

Lapidaria margaritae with a bright yellow flower that appears for



several days in autumn.²

Typically, however, the plant is largely dormant in our hot summer, and grows and flowers in the fall, winter, and spring—which might be only 4-5 months here in the Phoenix area.

When to water Mesembs? You need to learn this from experience, but for most species, you water it very little in the hot summer and slightly more often in the rest of the year.

The best known genera of Mesembs are the Lithops. Our local DBG plant shop is often a source of these plants. Lithops are very popular, it seems, because of their unusual appearance. While most succulents

have stems, Lithops do not; they consist of pairs of thick leaves. They grow close to the ground to protect themselves from predators but also from the sun's rays in the hot time of the year. Sometimes they are almost flush with the ground surface. All light enters through windowed tips on the leaves. Lithops grow well with minimal watering. If they start to shrivel, it's time for a bit of water. Ideally, they flower in the autumn. The flower appears from the cleft between the leaves.

Lithops leslicii cv. *Albinica* (Photo by JAD)



Sources for this article:

¹*The new Growing the Mesembs* by Ed Storms (1986).

²*The Ultimate Book of Cacti & Succulents* by Miles Anderson (1998).

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Succulents by Gordon Rowley (1978)

ANNUAL DECEMBER MEMBER PARTY & ELECTIONS

The annual party is December 10 at Webster Auditorium. This year it is a potluck dinner, and those planning to attend are asked to call Jo Davis (420.839.3792) or Judy Brody (480.951.1363) to make reservations by Dec. 7. The Club provides soft drinks and meat hors d'oeuvres platters.

Social hour: 12 noon-1
Dinner: 1-2 or later
Entertainment & Elections: 2?

Elections will take place for next year's officers. The Nominating Committee offers the following names for officers (other names can always be nominated from the floor):

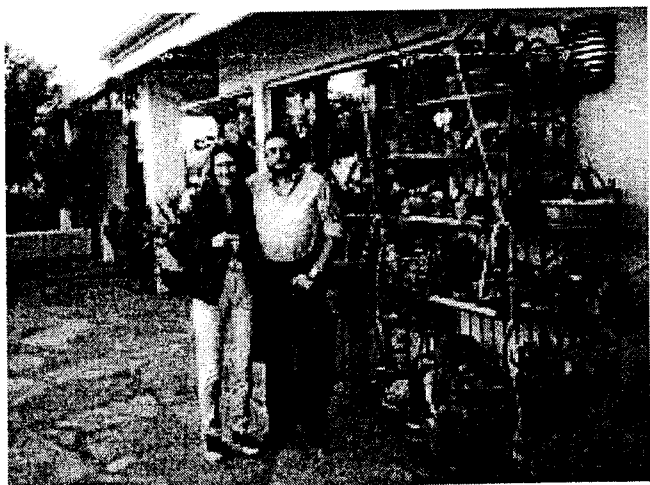
- President: Leo Martin
- Vice President: Judy Brody
- Treasurer: Pam Bass
- Secretary: Dana Hiser

NOVEMBER RECAP

Rich Zeh Open House

Thanks, Rich, for hosting a wine & cheese party to meet our guest speaker for the November meeting and to tour your wonderful garden and home. We did notice that there is still some space left for more plants in the ground....

Dana H. & Russ H. by some of Rich's many plants.



November Meeting

Our guest speaker for the November meeting was Woody Minnich. Woody presented a very enjoyable geographic and plant tour of northern Mexico through slides and commentaries.

CACTI AND SUCCULENTS IN COLD WEATHER

Well, gardeners, it looks like Winter is here to stay. Cold weather can be very hard on many cacti and succulents. Many succulents, in response to cold, lose their leaves or top growth.

Leaf drop is a normal response in Adenia, Adeniums, Bursera, and many semi-woody, shrub succulents. It is important to keep these plants from freezing or the trunk or branches will die. These plants go into varying states of dormancy and do need moisture to stay alive. The plants don't want to stay soaking wet though for any length of time. If they do, they can easily rot.

Many plants that have a defined caudex also go into a resting state when it's cool outside. Genera such as Momordica, Cephalopendandra, and Ibervillea lose leaves and most of the viney top. The caudex needs very little water at this stage, but avoid freezing. Freezing in cacti and succulents can create dead or damaged areas where rot will start. Don't let it!

Winter care of cacti is more variable. We grow species from the hottest to the coldest zones. I grew Opuntias outside in SW Wisconsin that survived -30° F with no protection. It's best to check the fine books in our library for specific temperature requirements for a species! However, by using "freeze cloth" you can insulate your plants from the cold. This product is available at most of the nurseries in the valley. By covering plants with this material, you can prevent damage from occurring. Another choice during cold spells is to bring plants in the house (to sunny, bright windows).

Fortunately, most years we don't experience severely cold weather here in the valley of the sun. Best of luck to everyone with outside plants!

Russ Hintz

C & S FUNNIES

Spines

A member who works in the DBG plant shop reported the following request from a man visiting from New Hampshire: "Do you sell cactus spines? I want my kids to feel what it's like to get poked by one."

Now is this a sadistic father or what!?

RIBBON CONTEST

OK. You won lots of ribbons at the plant show. What are you going to do with them now? I try to show mine to friends (CACSS or non-CACSS members), and they politely smile and then change the subject. What next?

Why not give them back to the club for re-use for the next show?

Who ever gives back the most ribbons gets a prize at the meeting before the plant show.... And not a plant prize, but a dinner for two at a good restaurant in Peoria, AZ. *Contact the Editor for your prize dinner.*

P.S. Even if you don't want to win the prize, please donate your ribbons back to the club. Bring them at the next meeting you attend, and your name will receive public recognition at the meeting and in the *Central Spine*.

CARPOOLING

Too far to drive to attend CACSS meetings?

Where do you live?

There are members all over the valley. Let's reduce pollution by car-pooling. Anyone in the nw valley can call the Editor (Jim Davis) who can haul 4-5. Who else can offer rides? Let's set up a list for meetings, and let the Editor know each month just before the meeting date if you will be around and can transport others. Those needing rides can then call the Editor for information.

C.A.C.S.S. WEB PAGE DESIGN PARTY— DECEMBER 28

Leo Martin, CACSS President and Jim Davis, your *Central Spine* Editor, want your input for a CACSS web page. We need not only design ideas, but also some photos of your plants at your home—in the ground or in pots—that we can use to advertise our organization. Home site photos are far more effective in attracting visitors than pictures I can scan from a book.

Why a web page? Increasingly, folk are using the Internet to find nurseries, restaurants, jobs, things to do. Who reads newspapers? People now look "online." Our club needs to be a "place" on the Internet that potential visitors or locals can visit not

only to find us as an organization, but also maybe to find answers to plant questions.

We can easily be a resource of plant information. Many of our members, I'm sure, would be willing to share their plant expertise for the benefit of our beloved desert environment. Many now do so as volunteers at the garden or in answering questions raised at our meetings. Somehow, we'll need to figure out a way to tap into our collective expertise for our webpage, but in the meantime, we can develop a web page that will help our organization grow as well as benefit our environment. {Someone call FOX News team to visit one of our meetings....!}

However, the hardest thing about creating a web page is plotting the layout and making decisions about what art (photos) to use at that site. Once we create a base site, we can easily alter timely information month to month.

Jim offers his place, just south of Sun City, for a design and layout party. You can also tour his and Russ Hintz's gardens during work breaks.... Bring photos you can authorize the organization to use, and Jim will scan and then return them to you during the party.



Jim will provide *wine* (A and non-A) and cheese, crackers, etc. If you have an e-mail address, he can send you a map to his place. Otherwise, call him to RSVP by Dec. 27 at: 623.583.3901. Jim lives on 103rd Ave, just west of the newly completed Hwy 101 loop in the west valley (Agua Fria Freeway). It's really an easy and quick drive now from the DBG and other points in the valley. There is no longer any need for all events to be held in the east valley; there is plenty of fertile dirt in the west valley!

EDITOR NOTES

Newsletter. This is my first issue. While I don't plan to change the *Central Spine* appearance too drastically each issue, I will be experimenting and eagerly awaiting feedback in the process. Call me at: 623.583.3901 or send me an e-mail at: pantenor@earthlink.net

Color Issues by E-mail. While photos are shown on paper in black and white, I could e-mail PDF versions of the newsletter to those with computers and access to the Internet, who could then see it all in color.

This form of delivery would be an alternative to a paper copy mailed to you. Every computer sold nowadays includes Acrobat Reader, which is necessary to view PDF formats, or you can get a version free from many online computer sites.

If anyone is interested in receiving the newsletter this way, let me know.

Please Note: a PDF file with any color might take several minutes to download on your computer (or many minutes, depending on your computer's speed and access limitations, etc.). But, personally, I think the advantage of seeing color outweighs this factor; you can go out and water your plants while it's downloading....

Editor, Jim Davis

Want to be on the cover?

Your editor, with an *Adnium*, is on this issue's mailing cover because he didn't have any other art to use. It could be a picture of you and your plants or

garden. If you have a scanner, send the pictures in JPG format or mail the photo to Jim for scanning.

Central Arizona Cactus and Succulent Society 2000

President	Leo Martin	602-852-9714
Vice Pres.		
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Deadline for insertion in next issue: January 15, 2001.

Send insertions to: Jim Davis at PO Box 2875, Peoria, AZ 85380 or at pantenor@earthlink.net

All opinions are those of respective authors. Publication herein does not imply that CACSS nor any CACSS members agree with any statements published.

C.A.C.S.S. Membership Renewal Form

Membership for the year 2001 is \$20 for individuals and \$25 for households. Return your form in December (so that you don't miss getting the January newsletter) at the potluck or mail to: C.A.C.S.S., POB 8774, Scottsdale, AZ 85252

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, & ZIP: _____

Check which applies: Individual Household

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____



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