President’s Letter...

Kathy Butler

Prior to this Newsletter, many of you had never heard my name. Kathy Butler has neither written a column in the Newsletter about a plant, nor served on the Board, and will have been a Member of CACSS for only two years in July of 2006. I am not an expert on the flora of any country. I am the President of your Board because, when no one else stepped forward, Lee asked me to serve.

Each of us had a reason to attend that first CACSS meeting and each found a reason to stay and become a CACSS Member. I came initially because I have a passion for Lithops and had difficulty getting them to thrive. I stayed because of Doug Dawson. As my “new member” Mentor, Doug shared his time, knowledge and seeds.

One of the things that Doug gives to his students at Glendale Community College is permission to fail. He gave that same gift to me. Permission to fail opened the door to courage to try. When I became discouraged because I lost a cup of seedlings, Doug reminded me that, even with his years of experience, he still has an unexplained “melt down” now and then. Without that courage to try, my answer to Lee’s request to serve as President of your Board would have been “no”.

Sue and Ray Daley were kind enough to provide copies of the Board Minutes going back to the year 2000. As I read through the minutes, I noticed that year after year, the same people have donated their time and energy. My father used to tell me there are two kinds of people in any organization. Pillars and Caterpillars. The Pillars support the organization – the Caterpillars crawl in and out of the building.

As each of you makes plans for your upcoming new year, I hope that you will take a moment to remember why you attended your first meeting and what you have gained from your association with CACSS. May those of you who are new Members find activities that interest you and volunteer to support the Pillars who have given so much to CACSS for so many years. May those of you who are rich in knowledge and experience consider mentoring a newer, less experienced member. Share your gifts with them…give them permission to fail.

I look forward to getting to serve as your President in 2006.

Kindest Regards, Kathy Butler
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Calendar

January 29th, Sunday
2006 Show & Sale meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden
1:00 pm
Are you interested in helping to make this year’s Show & Sale a success? If so, the Show & Sale Committee is looking for you! Come prepared to discuss all aspects of planning for this annual event.

January 29th, Sunday
Regular club meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden
2:00 pm
Kathy Rice of the Desert Botanical Garden will give an overview of ongoing conservation efforts at the Desert Botanical Garden.

Interested in one of the name badges you see other members wearing? You can have one of your very own! Talk to Jo Davis at the meeting or send her a check for $7.50, made out to “Jo Davis,” to her home address:

2714 W. Monte Ave.
Mesa, AZ 85202

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CASS Classified

Dues

2006 Dues are due!
Send your dues ($20 Individual, $25 household) to:
CACSS, PO Box 63572, Phoenix, AZ 85082-3572, USA
Better yet, bring them with you to the next meeting!

Seeds

The “Red Cup Club”
Many members have been “initiated” into the CACSS by
fellow member Doug Dawson & are familiar with the red
cups that he uses to successfully germinate his seeds. A new
informal group has established to teach this method to any
interested individuals. If you would like to experience the
rewards of growing cacti & succulents from seed, then this
group is for you!

Work is in progress to secure a meeting space, & seed
planting clinics will be held. If you are interested in joining
this club, or if you have an excess of seasonally appropriate
seed & would like to donate it to the club, please contact
Cliff Fielding at (602)625-5186 or clifffielding@msn.com.

2006 Show & Sale

The 2006 Show & Sale is approaching fast! Have you started
to think about which plants you will be entering? Maybe you
are like me & found that a lot of the succulents you grow
have been lumped into one class, or maybe you have never
entered your plants in a Show and are not sure where to
begin. If so, I encourage you to call or email me with any
concerns that you have, as well as any ideas for improving
the Show.
- Cynthia Robinson, 2006 Show Chair
  (602)615-2261, crobin500@msn.com

Do you have one of the trophies from last year’s Show? If
so, it is time to return it. Please return the trophy by the
February, 2006 meeting or call / email Denise Diederich at
(520)424-3464 / rainbowvalleynsy@aol.com to make other
arrangements.

Miscellaneous

From the Editor
I hope that you are enjoying the new layout of the newsletter.
A lot of time and effort is put into writing articles and taking
photographs, and for the members who continue to provide
these valuable resources every month, I thank you. I would
also like to make a plea for articles, photos and any other
C&S related tidbit of information from the rest of the 200+
members that have not submitted anything over the last year.
Any submission, no matter how big or small, is appreciated.

Do you like the photos, but wish they were in color? You will
soon be able to view the full color, pdf version of the Central
Spine on the web-site (www.centralarizonacactus.org).

Good Growing, Cynthia Robinson (crobin500@msn.com)
Around My (Or Your?) Desert Garden...

Bob Torrest

November 31 - The month began with flowers still on Chorisia, Calliandra californica and willow acacia (Acacia salicina) and a few remaining on Coulter's and San Marcos hibiscus. Cascalotes were beginning to flower (with a name like Caesalpinia cocalaco and great yellow flowers you should have at least one). By mid-month there was Cassia artemisioides (the common feathery cassia) and Acacia aneura (Mulga). Chuparosa's red flowers are 7 ft up in a Pachycormus discolor. Salvia greggi's red flowers are welcome and desert aster continues to flower in sun and shade.

Aloes flowering in full and part sun included A. ramosissima (with its unique bright yellow flower spikes), A. somaliensis, A. branddraaiensis (much branched, coral red) and A. krapohlana. There are buds on A. divaricata, and next month many others will flower.

Remarkably, Coryphantha elephantides continued to flower all month. Some Notocactus magnificus flowered again and Ferocactus latispinus, with its attractive buds and colorful flowers, was getting started.

The articles in this series have begun with "what's flowering" and that emphasis short changes Euphorbias and Agaves. Since poinsettias, with their brightly colored bracts, are everywhere in the holiday season, I will include some brief comments about my experiences with Euphorbias in the landscape. The wild poinsettia, Euphorbia heterophylla (Mexican fire plant) seed themselves and remind you that you've got them this time of year as their leaf-like bracts are blotched with white and red. The Sunset Western Garden Book says they "give the appearance of second-rate poinsettias" but you will be glad you've got them.

Euphorbia resiniera has been planted around Phoenix for years and will take full sun. E. echinus, another relatively small plant from Morocco, forms nice clumps. E. fruticosa has done well in light shade, as has E. grandiflora, which makes larger branches from the base. E. coendusiana is shrubby and grows well, with yellow inflorescence near branch tips. E. tirucalli, the "pencil tree" can get large with the protection and support of a desert tree but will also take lots of bright light. A small bushy plant in full winter sun (but high summer shade) was lost after a frost.

Larger varieties, including the very spiny Euphorbia stenoclada, E. ingens & E. ammak etc., do well with light shade and frost protection. E. canariensis will get large in the ground in a greenhouse but does not like frost. You can also grow E. lactea and E. trigona outdoors with some protection (these are usually sold as house plants) but E. mili (lots of colorful varieties) are best used indoors (in south Florida they make nice ground covers). I am still experimenting a bit with Euphorbias outdoors and your questions are welcome.

Euphorbias are interesting and different BUT remember the latex is poisonous and a severe irritant to eyes and open cuts. BE CAREFUL.
**Around My (Or Your?) Desert Garden… continued**

*Bob Torrest*

**December 31** - The month began with a few light frosts and ended with above average temperatures. There has been no rain for months. These conditions differ substantially from a year ago and will influence flowering, etc. in ways we will soon see.

Trees continuing to flower include cascalotes and Chorisia. African sumac (*Rhus lancea*) and sweet acacia (*Acacia farnesiana*) got started. Cape honeysuckle (*Teecomaria capensis*) makes a very colorful bush and *Calliandra californica* just keeps flowering. Smaller flowering plants include ruellia, chuparosa, salvias and desert aster.

Aloes with open flowers include *A. ramosissima*, *A. branddraaiensis* with a colorful 3 ft spike, *A. kraplihana* (red), *A. divaricata* (red branched), *A. sinkatana* (yellow) and *A. crymtopoda*…very colorful and worth although it will lose leaves in summer. There are unopened racemes on *A. striata*, *A. arborescens* (these were in full flower in San Diego), *A. suprafoliata*, *A. secundiflora*, *A. ferox*, *A. superba*, *A. vera*, *A. chahaudii*, and *A. vaomethe*.

Just a few cacti flowered including *Cochemia maritima* (bright red) and *Ferocactus latispinus* (even small plants). Mammilarias will be flowering soon. There are buds on some *Myrtillocactus geometrizan* and Senita.

In the previous article there were some comments on Euphorbias for landscape use. Agaves are the other group that has been under represented in these articles. Few people have enough to see flowers on any kind of regular basis. There are good photos of the common varieties in a recent book "*Agaves, Yuccas and Related Plants*" (M & G Irish). Here the focus is on those varieties that you can plant in full sun as we did before we had any shade on our place. The largest include the much planted *Agave americana* and the standard variegated form (yellow and green), Weber's agave (*A. weberi*) and sisal (*A. sisalana*), which is better with some shade and frost protection. Good colorful plants not quite as large include *Datilillo* (*A. datylio*); bright green and *A. lapphantha*; green with yellow green midstripe. The octopus agave (*A. vilmoriniana*) is often planted in full sun and watered heavily but is better with some shade. They are native to the foothills of the Sierra Madre and if you take the train up into the mountains from the west side you will see them appearing to scramble up the slopes. You can also use *A. angustifolia* (var. *marginata*), *A. mupheyi* and its very nice variegate, and *A. desmettiana*, also with a nice variegate (but better with some shade).

When around San Diego find some time for Torrey Pines State Reserve between La Jolla and Del Mar. You will see some coast barrels (*Ferocactus viridesceus*) and *Agave shawii*. On the ocean side, with chaparral all around, you almost forget the congestion nearby (you can barely see La Jolla off to the south). Quail Gardens in Encinitas has a nice Aloe collection (labeled) and a grove of dragon trees (*Dracaena draco*) among other collections.
Most people know the plant aloe vera, *Aloe barbadensis*. If fact, it may be among the first houseplants people grow. It's kind of exotic looking, takes a great deal of abuse in terms of growing conditions, and is handy to have around for burns. Many a cook has snapped off a leaf and rubbed the slimy juice on a burn or blister. The juice helps to take away the burning feeling, and helps to prevent blisters from forming. It aids in healing by helping to promote skin cell growth. Only four aloes out of 450+ known aloes are good for medicinal purposes though. Don't be in a rush to use just any aloe on your skin, as some can be quite caustic and damaging to the skin. It is best to know what you are using before you use it.

Humans have known the aloe vera for its uses for a very long time. The first recorded medicinal applications of the aloe vera plant were found in a Sumerian clay tablet written around 2200 BC. The aloe vera is listed among plants of great healing powers. The first real detailed discussion of aloe vera’s medicinal value, appears in a document written by the Egyptians in 1550 BC. This document gives twelve formulas for mixing aloe with other agents to treat both internal and external human disorders.

Through the ages people have used the aloe vera plant for these and other purposes, some more successfully than others. Western medicine has studied the use of aloe vera in treating wounds, ringworm, skin allergies, abscesses, fungal infections, dermatitis, lacerations, inflamed cysts, etc. A physician in the Chicago Burn Center demonstrated in the 1980’s that aloe treatment eliminated scarring, aided the return of normal skin color, and amazingly regenerated hair follicles in a burned skin area - all very important uses for burn patients.

This kind of publicity has given aloe vera an elevated status as a health remedy. Some promote aloe vera as a treatment for a wide variety of ailments beyond its use as a help for burns. In doing research for this article on the Internet, I found hundreds of sites championing the use of aloe vera internally and externally for almost anything. Most claims are unsubstantiated and unproven. Desert Botanical Garden’s Cathy Babcock cautions that consumers should be wary of claims on the Internet and elsewhere stating ingesting aloe can help arthritic swelling, reduce blood sugar in diabetics, and work wonders on a variety of ailments. It simply is not true.

Being that there are over 450 known species of Aloes, it was just a matter of time before other uses were found. The stem of the tree *Aloe dichotoma*, has been hollowed out to make a quiver for arrows. Mariners discovered that the resinous part of the aloe is not water-soluble, and therefore used it to coat ships to protect the wood from water for as long as eight months.

Lately, people have been hanging an aloe plant over the door of their home to act as a talisman to ensure a long and flourishing life - although probably not for the aloe. Not many aloes can take full exposure to the Arizona sun and certainly not aloe veras, preferring some filtered shade on a hot summer day. Most also don't care for cold nights, needing some cover or, to be brought indoors for the night. Keep these requirements in mind when placing a plant, provide slow deep watering after drying out the soil some, and a little rose food fertilizer, and you'll be rewarded with a flowering plant, and help with a burn. That is if you can bear to snap a leaf off.
MINI-BITS........the capitol of Peru is Lima (Leema), the town in western Ohio, Lima, sounds like the bean, which is why there is a sign on the edge of town "LIMA, NOT YOUR AVERAGE BEAN TOWN"........is our Stenocereus stellatus confused or do they normally bloom this time of year? (it's been blooming sporadically since early last summer)........our Acacia smallii is blooming now, trying it's best to counter the stink from the carob trees in the neighborhood..............our Agave geminiflora is sending up a bloom stalk now - last years grew up to 3 1/2 " per day, while this years is somewhat slower - it in NO way matches that SPECTACULAR one in the yard of Cliff Fielding's neighbor...if you didn't make it to Cliff's open garden you missed that plant, plus all of Cliff's quite neatly arranged plants - true to his claim there were several plants I had not seen before, but now want......... a big thanks to Cliff and his wife for opening up their house and garden to us - it was quite worth the drive............in an earlier column I reported on my success with hanging used CDs in our Palo Brea to deter a pesky woodpecker from attacking our tree; well, last winter it worked, but this year it hasn't..........good luck to Cynthia as our new editor - if you've read my tripe here and have thought you could do better, I'd just bet she'd welcome anything you would send (let's hope she doesn't follow the lead of our last 4 editors and disappear from the club).......we recently lost an Agave to those d*** beetles - it didn't give off the smell or have the melted look that I associate with a typical infestation by these agents of the devil, rather it just got wrinkled and tired looking with no evident above-ground rotting. They ate away the base of the plant so I could pull it out of ground by hand - then I could see the grubs. I made up a dose of good stuff using some old liquid Malathion - turns out they liked the stuff, even swam around in it unfazed. I later heard, at Bakers, that (1) the Malathion turns into something else after a couple years, and (2) it isn't available anymore. First they take Isotox away from me, now Malathion - what next? How am I supposed to tame nature?..........  

When Hydrogen U played Oxygen Tech,  
the game had just begun  
when Hydrogen racked up two fast points  
and Oxygen still had none.  
Then Oxygen scored a single goal and thus it did remain,  
At Hydrogen two and oxygen one,  
Called because of rain.  

.............Ray D.
Plant Questions???

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

**DOUG DAWSON**
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Specialization includes Flora of Namibia, Growing from Seed, Lithops, other Mesembs & Melocactus.

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Specialization includes Aloes, Haworthias, Columnar Cacti & Turbinicarpus.

**CYNTHIA ROBINSON**
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Specialization includes Flora of Madagascar, Growing from Seed, Caudiciform & Pachycaul Succulents, Aloes, Apocynaceae, Burseraceae, Euphorbiaceae, Fouquieria, & Succulent Bonsai.

**BOB TORREST**
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Specialization includes Desert Landscaping, Unusual (including Rare Fruit) Trees & Shrubs, Aloes, Agaves, Columnar Cacti, Trichocereus & Opuntia.

Who To Contact!!!