President's Letter… Kathy Butler

At the 2006 Show and Sale I heard multiple comments that there are fewer and fewer cacti in the Spring Show each year. Most of the comments were from Members but I also heard the same thing discussed among the visitors.

People are noticing that each year there is less emphasis on cacti and more emphasis on caudiciforms and other unusual plants. There is room for every kind of plant. The unusual plants enhance the “ooh and ahh” factor and add interest to the show. However, some of the long standing CACSS Members are concerned that we are losing sight of our prickly beginnings.

I have a twinge of guilt when I look at my cups of lithops and other assorted mesembs. I did not plant a single cup of cactus this year. Out of fourteen new plants purchased at this year’s sale, only two were cacti.

 Twelve days ago, I planted a cup of Astrophytum X, one of Doug’s hybrids. They are growing nicely under lights. Some resemble yellow asparagus; there are gray-green eggs with pink tips, two shades of green ones with notches, and a large multicolored one with a white tuft on top.

I have great expectations that at least three or four will be suitable entries for the seedling division in next spring’s Show and Sale. If my best cacti survive the extra month of summer with out aesthetic damage, I will enter those as well.

If there is such a thing as guilt by association, I hope that some of you catch it from me, go through your collections and groom a few extra cacti as entries for the next show.

I hope to see all of you at the June General Meeting – last Sunday of the month – just a reminder.

Kindest Regards,

Kathy Butler
President, CACSS
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Calendar

June 25th, Sunday, 2 pm
Regular club meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden
Steve Plath, CACSS member, will give a presentation on The Revegetation of a Mohave Desert Gold Mine.

June 30th - July 2nd, Friday - Sunday, All Day
Annual Show & Sale of the Cactus & Succulent Society of America Huntington Botanical Gardens
Los Angeles, CA
All CSSA members or members of an affiliated club may enter plants. For more information, contact Cynthia Robinson or Leo Martin.

July 30th, Sunday, 2 pm
Regular club meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden

August 27th, Sunday, 2 pm
Regular club meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden
Ken Schutt, Executive Director of the Desert Botanical Garden will speak on What’s Happening at the Garden.

September 2nd, Saturday, All Day
23rd Annual Huntington Succulent Symposium
“Science from the Garden” will be discussed by experts in the field of botany, ethnobotany, and plant taxonomy.
Huntington Botanical Gardens
Los Angeles, CA

September 24th, Sunday, 2 pm
Regular club meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden

October 13th - 15th, Friday - Sunday,
DBG Fall Plant Sale
Volunteers will be needed to assist the DBG staff with answering cactus & succulent related questions, giving our CACSS & CSSA info, etc.

October 29th, Sunday, Noon Setup, 2 pm Auction
Silent Auction of Member’s Plants
Wildflower Pavilion, Desert Botanical Garden
The Annual Silent Auction is the perfect way to part with some of your propagations and/or expand your collection without spending a lot of money. Review your collection today to see if you have any plants that you could part with to help make this annual event a success!

November 19th, Sunday, 2 pm (Not the last Sunday)
Regular club meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden
Guest speaker will be Steve Hammer, topic to be determined.

December 10th, Sunday, Noon (Not the last Sunday)
Holiday Party, Elections
Webster Auditorium, Desert Botanical Garden

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May 31 - After a year of these articles, I hope you've gotten something useful on some of the trees and shrubs to choose to provide needed shade (and flowers). Trees flowering this month included Screwbean mesquite (Prosopis pubescens - tornillo) and the other mesquites, Acacia constricta (Whitethorn) and A. greggii (Cactiaw), Tiphana tipu (Pride of Bolivia) and the Sissoo tree (Dalbergia sissoo - Indian teakwood) with fragrant but inconspicuous white flowers. There was also Desert willow (Chilopsis linearis), Jatropha cinerea (Limberbush), Accacia penatula (Feather acacia), Ironwood, and Pomegranate (Punica granatum). A Cordia boissieri (Texas olive) flowered for the first time at 3 feet but it took about 20 years from seed for Date palms (Phoenix dactylifera). Eucalyptus torquata (Coral gum) has continued to flower for a couple of months but Eucalyptus spathulata failed again and not for lack of water. It is hard to resist the temptation to buy the largest 5 gallon trees in the nursery but if they've been there a long time the odds of success go down. A hybrid Palo verde that was supposed to be a fast grower has done nothing in a year. Luckily, volunteers of African sumac and Palo verdes came up in the right places. When that happens they tend to be relatively fast growers.

Shrubs flowering included Creosotes, Caesalpinias (C. pulcherrima - Red bird and C. mexicana - Mexican bird), Calliandra californica (Baja fairy duster), Gossypium harknessii (San Marcos hibiscus) an evergreen shrub with yellow flowers, Yellow bells (Tecoma stans) and an orange flowered hybrid. Chuparosa (Justicia californica) seems to be about done but a very ornamental cousin; Justicia brandegeana (Shrimp plant) does well here with extra water. Ruellia and Desert aster continue to flower and Coulter's hibiscus is colorful but not much use for shade. Cat's claw vine (Macfadyena unguis-cati) put on a brief but good show of yellow flowers and can provide good shade when you get it up on a pergola.

A few small aloes flowered including A. rauhii, A. somaliensis and A. nobilis (reddish). Aloe jucunda, a dwarf species with nice pink flowers on simple racemes, can be used as a ground cover. A. sladeniana, a relative of A. variegata, is just getting started. Pachypodium namaquanum is leafing out and a large Pachyormus discolor is flowering. Euphorbia resinifera continued to flower through mid-month. Euphorbia milii and E. heterochroma were flowering at month's end.

Cacti flowers were exceptional this year. Larger cactus plants flowered several times and most of the trichocereus did so again this month including the best display of Trichocereus spachianus (Golden torch) we have seen in 20 years. T. huascha can form large clumps and is very colorful even without the bright red-orange flowers. Opuntias continued with O. microdasys (Bunny ears), several chollas, O. paraguayense; a glossy dark green almost spineless plant which just doesn't look like it should reach 6 ft. tall and O. violacea (Santa Rita). More barrels flowered starting with Ferocactus schwartzii (yellow), then F. latispinus (purple), F. potsii v. alamosanus (yellow), F. cylindraceus (even at only 1 ft.) and finally the golden barrels (Echinocactus grusonii). For the others the sequence through the month was gymnocalyciums, notocacti, lobivia, pilosocereus, astrophytum, pereskia, rathbunia and other stenocereus varieties, and finally the native mammillaria (M. microcarpa).

Quail Gardens in Encinitas, CA has a variety of gardens including tropical fruit. After tasting Surinam cherries (Eugenia uniflora) and White sapote (Casimeroa edulis) we decided to try growing them and a few others. Now, after many years, the Surinam cherry is still a small shrub that has never flowered. The White sapote is up to 7 ft. and can take lots of sun as long as it gets extra water....but so far no flowers. Barbados cherry (Malpighia glabra) is a large bush that had lots of small attractive flowers many of which have become colorful small fruit (tasteless). Guavas (Psidium) can do well here with extra water, and we have had good fruit production on a small strawberry guava tree. Guava "Tropic Pink" was purchased as a small tree 2 years ago and is hanging on. Pineapple guava (Feijoa sellowiana) is a nice evergreen shrub and, although fruit production is low in the desert, the flowers are edible. So it seems our best "tropical" fruit crop this year is Myrtillocactus geometrizans with large berries that didn't seem to ripen (the berries were all green). Of course they ripened but it wasn't until I checked at 7 AM that I discovered the Thrashers carefully inspecting each plant and taking every berry with a hint of purple color.
Providing Shade for Cactus & Succulents...


Sometimes it is helpful in landscaping to compare the elements of our gardens to an interior space, with the vines and taller shrubs serving as the walls, the flowers and groundcovers as a living carpet, the accent plants our artwork, and the tree canopies as our ceilings. Well, last summer a major portion of our garden ceiling collapsed when one of the 40-foot wide South American mesquite trees in our backyard blew over during a monsoon storm. This heart-breaking event left our shade-grown perennials and succulents silently screaming for protection. Fortunately, our shed was fairly well stocked with black shade cloth from an earlier incident involving the loss of a major limb from said tree, and I immediately applied it to protect my succulents from sunburn, which can quickly occur in just one afternoon on a scorching July day. In a pinch, you can even use the white frost cloth sold in nurseries; it will give your plants approximately 70% shade. Some folks invest in shade umbrellas like those sold for pool decks to protect sun-sensitive plants from the hot afternoon sun.

Last fall I transplanted those plants that can't take full sun to more sheltered areas. This summer I will need to continue to use shade cloth to acclimate the plants that can eventually take full sun. Unfortunately much of the shade cloth sold at garden centers provides 70% shade or more, which is way too much for many desert plants and they may never acclimate to full sun with this much cover. You can find shade cloth of varying densities by shopping around on line or locally from G&M Agricultural Supply in Payson (1-800-901-0096) or Arizona Bag Company (602-272-1333, 2530 W. Buckeye Rd., Phoenix). I've had good luck starting with 50% shade cloth and eventually reducing it to 30% shade cloth after a few months (or an entire summer), and eventually removing it altogether, provided that the succulent plants do not begin to turn yellow. A yellowing cactus or succulent can be restored to its healthy green color, but once it turns white or brown, it is permanently scarred. Purple or red is a natural response of many cacti, aloes, agaves and some other succulents to strong sun or other stressors and is usually not a concern. Another option is to use multiple layers of 20 or 30% shade cloth to either increase or decrease the amount of shade desired.

If you just can't stand the look of shade cloth cloaking your plants like a shroud all summer, try cutting a few boughs from a mesquite tree (if you still have one standing!) and draping them over the plant needing protection. As the leaves dry, shrink and eventually drop off, the plant will gradually get more and more sun. If it looks okay, remove the branch. If it begins to yellow again, add some fresh branches.

Thanks to Scott McMahon and Chad Davis for helping me with this article.

Tom Gatz
CACSS Board Meeting Minutes for May 18, 2006

As Tom Ballen was absent, there was no treasurer's report. Consequently, there was no report as to how well we did financially during our Show and Sale. All indications are that we did well, however.

There was an extensive discussion of what could be done to improve the Show and Sale. Among the items discussed were timing of the show, traffic pattern, signage, and trophies.

A motion for a capital expenditure for equipment for the newsletter was passed. In addition, a motion was also passed to give the editor funds ahead of time to cover printing and postage for the newsletter since the cost is over $200 per month.

Possible avenues for improvement of the General Meeting were discussed including: speakers, workshops, time for socializing, general business, and length of meetings.

Lee Brownson reported that he has been talking to the developers of Verrado about acquiring their "nursery" of already-dug plants for the Rescue Committee. It could be a huge undertaking which will require many committed volunteers.

Celeste Gornick reported that she is still working on the trip to California. She has names of possible nurseries to visit and a motel where single room rates are between $60 and $90 per night. The Inter-City Show at the Los Angeles Arboretum would be one of the highlights of the trip.

Sue Daley

My Cactus & Succulent Filled Life... Davin Owen

My name is Davin Owen and I am a fairly recent transplant to Arizona. I'm originally from a rural area of Central Missouri. My fascination with cacti and succulents began when I was 7 or 8 years old. My grandma had a small collection of plants that she grew in window boxes. As far back as I can remember I was captivated by the bizarre shapes and the spines, which of course I always wanted to touch. My mom and grandma were constantly telling me not to touch them, as if I really listened. As soon as they left the room I touched. I guess the exotic appearance of these plants and the fact that they didn't look like any of the ones that grew on the family farm was what really captured my imagination.

When I was 11 years old my grandma gave me a mixed pot of cacti and succulents that she had propagated from her own plants; they were planted in a Mexican pot that looked like an owl. I was thrilled and managed to keep them alive for a couple of years, which is pretty good for a preteen. I even got the Echinopsis that was in there to bloom for me. I don't remember now what happened to the plants; I may have left them out too long one fall. After that I was hooked. As I grew up I developed other plant interests as well, but I always had a few (usually more than a few) cacti and succulents around.

During my high school years, I hauled hay for two months, which I absolutely hated, just to have the money to buy cacti & succulents at Missouri State Fair. I was also constantly reading any plant or gardening book that I could get my hands, which in turn led to me study botany and horticulture in college.

Since then my love and fascination for these plants has grown into a full blown addiction. I joined the Kansas City Cactus & Succulent Society and the Cactus & Succulent Society of America in 1994 where I met my good friend & now roommate Cynthia Robinson. In 2004 she convinced me to leave the Midwest behind and move to a state where every street that I drive on has some of my beloved plants.
Miscellaneous News & Fun FAQ's

For those of you who provided an e-mail address when you joined the CACSS, you may have received an email from Lee Brownson advising of an upcoming rescue opportunity. There will be at least one rescue in July at the Verrado Development west of Phoenix. You may remember this location, as it was the site of several rescues during 2004-2005.

This rescue will be different than previous rescues in that the developer has already salvaged the plants from their habitat locations and moved them to a "nursery" on their property. The rescue will give the opportunity to save approximately 7,000 barrel cacti and 3,000 cholla which the developer had planned on using for revegetation. The rescue will involve digging the plants, tagging the plants and transporting the plants to wholesale locations or to CACSS’s holding area.

If you are interested in participating in this rescue which is tentatively set for the end of July, please call or e-mail Lee Brownson.

If you have taken a look at the Events Calendar, you will see that there are two months, July & September, where there has not been a speaker lined up yet. Maybe you have a personal connection with someone that wouldn’t mind giving a cactus or succulent related presentation at one of these meetings or you just have a suggestion for a speaker that you would like to hear. Either way, the Board would like your input! If you have an idea that you would like to share, please email or call Ingrid Swenson with the details.

Did you know that drywall tape is the perfect remedy for a pot with overly large drainage holes? As a previous user of newspaper, coffee filters, paper towels, large gravel, Styrofoam peanuts, etc., I was always searching for the perfect "pot liner," and I am surprised by the fact that I have not seen it used in this fashion until just recently.

If you are not already familiar with drywall tape, it is made out of a fiberglass mesh, is slightly sticky on one side, and is comparable in width to duct tape. It can be found in most hardware stores near the paint aisle.

-Cynthia Robinson
Mini Bits... Ray Daley

MINI-BITS---------- Now it can be told - Prevention Magazine reports that prickly pear (Opuntia ficus-indica) is actually good for something after all. As it says, "desert dwellers of North and Central America have used it to treat skin diseases, burns, and joint and muscle pain for some time" - but what's new and possibly top drawer stuff is that "when taken several hours before drinking alcohol, prickly pear extract can prevent severe hangover symptoms, such as nausea, aversion to food, and dry mouth (but not headache), by 50%". Who would have guessed? ......and an un-attributed quote I saw in another gardening publication: "If you planted everything you bought you did not buy enough."...... a couple of AZ license plates I found amusing/interesting: "NO1BSER", and "OPUNTIA". I know the last is a on a CACSS member's vehicle, not sure about the other......is it just me, or is it getting hot outside!......continuing our series on plant species names, here are some color-related terms you might encounter and puzzle over (and I haven't made any of these up)......... (and of course the -- (double dashes) indicate that the term is a prefix or suffix to the rest of the word)........

albescens = turning white, changing from another color
albicans, albescence = short of absolute pure white
albidus = whitish, a little soiled
albus = dead white
argenteus = silvery
atrovirens = green verging on black a little
aureus, chryso-- = pure bright yellow, duller than citreus
azureus = light pure blue, sky blue
digea, digeas = azureus, light blue, sky blue
candicans, candidus = pure white but not as clear as niveus
canescens = grayish white
carneus = flesh colored
chloro-- = clear green
cloridus = citreus, citrinus = purest yellow
coccineus = scarlet
concolor = of the same color, of one color throughout
cretaceous, calcareous = chalk-white, dull w/a touch of grey
dealbatus = whitened
eburens, eborinus = ivory-white
erythro-- = red
flameus = very lively scarlet, fiery red
flavivirens = yellowish green
flavus, flavidus, flavescens = pure pale yellow
glaucus, glaucens = dull green
griseous = pearl grey
guttatus = spotted
incarnatus = flesh-colored
lacteous = milk-white, dull verging to blue
luteus = egg-yoke yellow
marmoratus = marbled, irregularly striped or veined
mela--, mellano-- = pure black
mutabilis = changeable
niger = black tinged with grey
nigrescens, nigricans = greys which turns black
niveus, nivalis = snow-white, the purest white
pictus = colored, painted
pisaceus = the green of unripe peas (rd: hmmm)
punctatus = dotted, spotted
purpureus = purple
robinaeus = the grey of last year's oak-twigs (really!)
roseus, rhodo-- = pale pure red
rubescens, rubellus, ruber-- = red
rufus, rufescens = reddish brown
rutilans, rutilus = bright red
stramineus = dull yellow, straw colored
violaceus = violet
viridis, viridescens = clear green
xanthe-- = egg-yoke yellow

And finally, it seems that species names ending in 'ii' were named after a male whereas species names ending in 'ae' were named after a female..........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, the list is simply alphabetical with principle interests. When more members add their information, the list will be cross-referenced by topic.

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

Who To Contact!!!