President's Letter

On Friendship

Kathy Butler

And a youth said, "Speak to us of Friendship."
Your friend is your needs answered.
He is your field which you sow with love and reap with thanksgiving.
And he is your board and your fireside.
For you come to him with your hunger, and you seek him for peace.
When your friend speaks his mind you fear not the "nay" in your own mind, nor do you withhold the "ay."

And when he is silent your heart ceases not to listen to his heart;
For without words, in friendship, all thoughts, all desires, all expectations are born and shared, with joy that is unacknowledged.
When you part from your friend, you grieve not;
For that which you love most in him may be clearer in his absence, as the mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain.
And let there be no purpose in friendship save the deepening of the spirit.
For love that seeks aught but the disclosure of its own mystery is not love but a net cast forth: and only the unprofitable is caught.
And let your best be for your friend.
If he must know the ebb of your tide, let him know its flood also.
For what is your friend that you should seek him with hours to kill?
Seek him always with hours to live.
For it is his to fill your need, but not your emptiness.
And in the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter, and sharing of pleasures.
For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed.

Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet

Continued on page 3...
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The Cover Photo:
My mom was surprised to see this monarch butterfly (Danaus plexippus) feeding on her Sedum “Autumn Joy.” The cooler weather in the Midwest must have altered their migration patterns! Photo taken by my mother, Judy Figue at her home in Kansas City, Missouri on 9/13/06.

Regional Calendar

September 24th, Sunday, 2 pm
Regular club meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden
Petra Crist of Rare Succulents (www.rare-succulents.com) will speak on Succulents of Northern Namibia.

September 24th, Sunday, 5 pm
Open Garden at the home of Rich Zeh
5647 N Royal Circle, Paradise Valley, 85253
You don’t want to miss this opportunity to see Rich’s outstanding garden. Thomas Park of Xerophytic Designs & the day’s speaker, Petra Crist, will be selling a few choice / specimen plants. To pre-order plants from Petra, go to her website at www.rare-succulents.com. For directions to Rich’s home, come to the meeting!

October 7th, Saturday, Morning
Red Cup Society Fall Seed Starting Workshop
Home of Ingrid Swenson & Chris Herington
Emphasis on fall/winter growing species. Limited to 25 participants. For more information, contact Doug Dawson at (480)893-1207.

October 13th - 15th, Friday - Sunday, All Day
Desert Botanical Garden Fall Plant Sale
Volunteers are needed to assist the DBG staff with answering cactus & succulent related questions, giving out CACSS & CSSA info, etc.

October 21st, Saturday, 8 am - 2 pm
Maricopa County Master Gardener’s Fall Festival
Metro Tech High School, 19th Ave & Thomas, Phoenix
Volunteers are needed to staff the CACSS club table. For more info, contact Celeste Gornick or Ingrid Swenson.

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 4th, Saturday, Noon to 5 pm
Open garden at the home of Daniel Sunberg
More information will be in future editions of the Central Spine.

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

Local Calendar

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Regional Calendar

October 7th, Saturday, All Day
2006 Texas Association of Cactus & Succulent Societies Fall Seminar
Seminar highlights include a day of free educational & informative lectures, plant sales and a rare plant auction.
Marriott Northwest Hotel
San Antonio, Texas
For more information, contact Ann Black, TACSS seminar committee, at 830-336-4471 or annblack@gvtc.com.
CACSS Board Meeting Minutes for August 27, 2006

The board continued discussion regarding the financial problems encountered at this year’s Show and Sale. Obtaining a new credit card processing system was top-of-the-list, but it is not clear whether we will be able to qualify for one. An electronic system would enable the Club to get sales results sooner. Leo mentioned that there was sizeable theft at the Inter-city Show & Sale in L. A. He recommended that we use two bar codes for each item: one for the pot, and one for the plant tag. In addition, vendors will be asked to provide their own tents when possible. Cynthia Robinson has agreed to be the Show coordinator for 2007. A new Sale coordinator is needed.

Tom Ballen sent in a Treasurer’s report as he was unable to make it to the meeting. Filing with the U. S. Treasury for non-profit status cost $500, filing with the AZ Corporation Commission for non-profit status cost $25. After these expenses, plus newsletter expenses and Dept. of Agriculture tags the checking account contained $7529.40, with $1373.25 of that in the Plant Rescue Account.

Jo Davis and Doug Dawson are the nominating committee for this year. Call one of them to offer to serve on the Board or with suggestions as to who they might ask.

A Holiday Party chairperson is needed. Please contact a Board member to volunteer.

Celeste Gornick will be in charge of arranging for a CACSS presence at the Metro Tech fair. This is a gathering of non-profit groups at Metro Tech High School at 19th Ave. and Thomas with emphasis on agriculture-related topics. The event will be held October 21. Contact Celeste to offer assistance.

Leo reported that the Huntington Symposium is Sat. Sept. 2 this year. The CSSA Board meeting will be Sept. 3.

Lee reported that there were 44 people at the Verrado rescue, 22 were new members. They rescued 90 pincushion-sized barrel cacti and 385 full sized barrels. This hardly made a dent in the supply. Lee will keep the membership posted regarding new rescues.

Sue Daley

President’s Letter...continued from Page 1

In December you will elect new officers. It is my fervent hope that several among you will step forward to lead.

CACSS is a unique organization filled with knowledgeable, unselfish and caring people. My life has been enriched beyond measure by you, my friends.

Sometimes life throws a curve ball. Family members die; others become unable to care for themselves. Duty replaces those things that we love most.

Two weeks ago life threw a curve ball. I was given a territory that includes all of the states west of the Mississippi and I was put back on the road. My employer offered no choices and at least for now, duty replaces those things that I love most.

A special thanks to Leo Martin for leading the September Board Meeting and General Meeting in my absence.

Kindest Regards,

Kathy F. Butler
President, CACSS

Laurence Garvie standing next to a very tall Ferocactus cylindraceus at the August 26th Verrado rescue. Photo taken by Phoebe Garvie.
CACSS News & Updates

Verrado Rescue Recap

Congratulations to everyone who has participated in the two recent rescues at Verrado. I thank you, Verrado thanks you and, most importantly, all of the plants thank you.

August 26, 2006 Statistics
Total plants rescued: 475
Total volunteer man-hours: 198
New memberships: 22

September 9, 2006 Statistics
Total plants rescued: 548
Total volunteer man-hours: 185
New memberships: 13

All but five of the plants went home with the person who dug it. Four of the five have already been sold.

Watch your email for future rescue dates.

Lee Brownson
Cactus Rescue Program Chairman

Elections are just around the corner!

Currently the nominating committee is asking members of our club to step forward and volunteer to be on the Board of Directors for next year. If you are a member who attends our general monthly meetings regularly, please call Jo Davis at (480)839-3792 or Doug Dawson at (480)893-1207 for information on what the duties of being a Board member entail. Then consider running for the Board or for one of the offices (President, Vice-President, Secretary, or Treasurer). We wish to have a slate of candidates ready within the next 2 months. This is a great opportunity to be of service, have some fun, and develop your leadership skills.

Make a difference!

Doug Dawson
Nominating Committee Member

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

Red Cup Society Strikes Again!

As many of you know, this last spring, we offered a seed-growing seminar at Archer House at the DBG. Several have expressed interest in another seminar for this fall. Here are some preliminary details. The date will be Saturday, Oct. 07, 2006, in the morning. We will meet at the home of Ingrid Swenson and Chris Herington. We will have to limit the class to 25 persons. If you are interested and wish to be placed on the confirmed attendee list, call Doug Dawson at (480) 893-1207 as soon as possible. This is a great opportunity to see what is ideal to start from seed in the fall when the nights get cooler. Seeds and some supplies will be provided.

...Become a seed-starter...
Road Trip to Mexico

It was summer vacation and time for an adventure. Our destination was the tropical dry or deciduous forest (TDF) of Alamos, Mexico about 500 miles south of Phoenix. My wife and I drove from Phoenix through Nogales. Despite some trepidation, we crossed the border without any problems and spent the first night in Hermosillo. We made sure to have all the proper insurance and documentation. The following day we completed the second half of the drive to Alamos. We felt safe and the journey was uneventful. Alamos is a historic Spanish colonial silver mine city dating back to the 16th century. Many of the old buildings and haciendas have been purchased and restored by Americans living there. The population is about 10,000 people and it remains a true Mexican town that we picture of years past. We stayed at Hacienda de los Santos, an expensive 5 star hotel of adjacent restored haciendas connected by stone walkways, fountains, gardens, art and pools. In July they offered special rates of $100 a night, including breakfast. Quite a deal. We were the only guests. The place is wonderful and the staff is great. The town is very safe and the people are friendly. We were able to walk around late at night without any worries. Our main purpose though, was to see the flora of that area.

Prior to our trip I had contacted two local residents via the Internet in order to arrange for some guided hikes. David Mackay is an expert birder and runs a tour company. Stephanie Meyers is a botanist and local conservationist. Both they and native resident Martin Gabriel were great. Their knowledge was vast and they welcomed us as friends. We hiked the hillsides of the TDF and along the path of the Cuchajaqui River and drove into the backcountry of the Sierra Madre foothills. We felt enriched by the knowledge we gained about the plants and animals of the Tropical Deciduous Forest, the people, their history and culture. A great adventure, and of course at the end of the day we were able to return to the comforts of our hotel to relax pool side with a cold cerveza.

The tropical dry or deciduous forest (TDF) begins in Northwest Costa Rica and terminates its northern boundary around Alamos, Mexico in the foothills of the Sierra Madre Occidental Mountains. The Sonoran Desert in which we live extends its southern boundary just past this local, thus creating a unique overlapping habitat found in few other places worldwide. Alamos is located in the state of Sonora near its southern border. In the dry season, from November through June, the predominant features are the desert plants. Columnar cactus (9 species) including Organ Pipe (Stenocereus thurberi) and Hecho (Pachycereus pecten-aboriginum) stand out. The trees and shrubs of the TDF are brown and leafless. When the monsoons arrive in July, the trees leaf out and turn the forest into a dense lush green tropical forest. The desert specimens take a back seat, being covered and masked by the abundance and variety of the tropical species.

Among the plants of the TDF were about eight species of Bursera. These plants have aromatic oils and are in the same family (Burseraceae) as Frankincense and Myrrh. We have Bursera Microphylla in Phoenix whose northern extent is South Mountain Park. There are some very large examples there, but good luck finding them. There are a few nice smaller specimens in Barry Goldwater Park (Tarum and Lincoln Drive).

Also present around Alamos are 6 species of Ficus including large Strangler Fig (Ficus cotinifolia), Rock Fig (Ficus petiolaris) and other large buttress figs. There were native Plumeria (Plumeria rubra) varieties blooming in red and white. Kapok trees (Ceiba acuminata) were plentiful. The Legume family (Fabaceae) was well represented. It includes Acacia, Caesalpinia, Parkinsonia, Prosopis, Lysiloma, Pithecellobium and others, with more than 40 species. Boatspine Acacia (Acacia cochliacantha) is a dominant plant that is often first to revegetate a disturbed area. There were beautiful examples of Tree Ocotillo (Fouquieria macdougalii). Lantanas were plentiful and in full bloom. About 5 species of orchids can also be found.

In the foothills, small trees (Sebastiania pannoniana) of the Spurge family (Euphorbiaceae) - that produce the Mexican jumping bean - were being picked by kids trying to earn some money. A 2 liter soda bottle full will bring about $10 and may take all day to fill. The season only lasts about 1-2 weeks.

Sadly, about 98% of the TDF in Mesoamerica has been wiped out due to deforestation, farming and cattle ranching. Only 2% remains. This unique overlap of our Sonoran desert with the tropics, so close to home, should inspire us to help preserve this special habitat.
The Monster That Ate Sun City West - Pachycereus weberi

Columnar cactus have always been one of my favorites, but there is very little written about them as most locales can not grow them outside. Columnar cactus dominate cold climate greenhouses if given free root run. As a result we have many really great books on the 'short rounds' of our hobby and not much on columnars. This article is planned to illuminate one of the lesser known columnars that flourish in our landscapes.

Early this year we purchased a yard full of cactus in Sun City West with the dominant plant being a specimen Pachycereus weberi. This beauty was about 20' by 20' and leaning about 10 degrees off vertical towards the neighboring property. It had many, many arms which undoubtedly clouded my judgment as I visualized propagating a rarely offered plant for our customers. After dealing with this plant, I have a better idea of why it is "rarely offered." This monster has the toughest, woodiest structure I have ever dealt with. It dwarfs the skeleton of the saguaro as might be expected with the world's largest cactus. I wore out four of the best pruning saws I could buy just making cuttings. Every arm had to be secured with a choker strap held up by our truck crane as their spination is just too intense to handle by hand. Some of these individual arms were 12' long and close to 400 pounds. Obviously that is way too large to plant so we had to lower them to the ground and shorten them. During one of these lowering operations I was momentarily distracted and let the crane rotate too far. As I stopped the rotation, the cutting oscillated and tapped the side of the truck. Oops. As I walked up to the cutting the outside dual tire was hissing like a snake. The source of the hissing was a central spine of the cutting imbedded in a $300 tire. I pulled it out a little and the hissing increased so I pushed the spine back into the hole. We made it back to Chandler on five good tires and one throwing a hissy fit.

After most of a growing season, a few of the cuttings are rooted and none have given up entirely. We have 'snowed' them with a spray that increases their reflectivity to ward off sunburn. Maybe with a couple of years and some good luck, we will be able to sell this 'rarely offered' species. Another example of why cactus propagation is still a Get Rich Slow process. When they are ready we will have a beautiful bluish columnar to sell that will be the envy of your neighborhood. Not just any neighborhood. It will have to be a neighborhood with large yards. With good luck I will be retired or dead before each of these cuttings emulates their magnificent ancestor. Actually as each of these plants will be the past as well as the present they are technically just a reincarnation of themselves. Hmmm? I better go back to growing cactus than fooling around with philosophy.

Pachycereus weberi have very few ribs, as few as eight or nine, but these ribs are enormously strong as the fibrous parts take most of the cross sectional area of each stem. New stems erupt from the outside or even the bottom of the stems and then immediately go vertical. This process puts enormous torsion stresses on the cactus structure necessitating the very strong woody growth to hold it up. I had seen a specimen P. weberi in Hawaii in the early 1980's at the Plantation Gardens on Kauai but really did not check out the structure. The overall impression was overwhelming. As you probably have gathered by now our Sun City plant had rapidly progressed from a wonderful 'opportunity' to a living nightmare. I had agreed to remove the cactus completely and after the 50 or 60 usable cuttings were secured there was this enormous trunk left to deal with. Our three man crew labored for about three hours with every tool we had and the stump was still vertical. Finally with time running out I decided to use a bigger hammer by backing into the trunk with our 2-ton truck. The first attempt yielded very little movement and nothing broken on the truck. Two more times using the Ford as a battering ram and the trunk was over. Success!

Not so fast, Jim. The crane has a 1100# limit and could not lift the trunk. Another hour of cleaning all the dirt off the roots and shortening the stubs even more passed before we could lift the monster with constant creaking and groaning noises from the crane. Back at the Nursery the next day I gleefully rolled the truncated monster off the flatbed into our dumpster. Good riddance. Like a bad penny, it came back. The driver of the garbage truck would not take it! He nearly ruined his truck's hydraulics fishing the cactus stump back out of the dumpster. That was in February. We finally cut and chopped the trunk into two parts and placed the bottom 1/2 into a nearly empty dumpster where it could not be seen by the driver. One of our employees took a real liking to the top part and has stripped all of the 'meat' off the bones. It is still an impressive trophy after all these months and hundreds of hours of work. He lives in a small apartment so I suspect the trunk will be on display right where it sits for the foreseeable future. Any interested parties are welcome to view it at Arizona Cactus Sales in Chandler. It really did not 'eat' Sun City West, but it chewed a considerable hole in our budget.

Jim Elliott
Around My (Or Your?) Desert Garden...

Bob Torrest

August 31 – If you’ve been here all summer you should have given yourself a break in mid-August and gone to the Annual Inter-City Cactus and Succulent Show and Sale at the Los Angeles County Arboretum in Arcadia. The show is by far the best I’ve ever seen and it is all inclusive. You will find incredible examples of whatever you are looking for. If you are interested in the sale, get there on Saturday morning. By Sunday morning when we got there, most of the rare and unusual plants had been sold. Of course, when you go, leave at least half a day for the nearby Huntington Botanical Gardens.

The “monsoon” season brings new growth to desert trees... even though we had less than half the rain of August 2005. The leather-leaf Acacia (A. craspedocarpa) and Tipuana tipu flowered again. Desert Willow (Chilopsis linearis) continues to flower, and a few flowers on a Coral Gum (Eucalyptus torquata) were attractive enough for some hummingbirds to fight over. Eucalyptus campace (silver-topped gimlet) also had clusters of white flowers that we had never noticed before. This small tree has a striking smooth cinnamon brown bark. The common shrubs continued to flower as did the San Marcos and Coulter’s hibiscus. By the end of the month the Baja Ruellia (R. peninsulae) were back in flower. Good sized flame trees (Royal Poinciana – Delonix regia) do survive our summer and even flower (a bit). A small (1 ft.) seedling has been fine in mostly shade, while another in sun couldn’t handle August even under shade cloth.

Aloe kavasbergensis continued to flower all month (in shade) and is, by far, the best aloe flower this month. Aloe somalensis flowered again, as did A. radzii, A. harlana and A. jucunda... all small plants. Several other aloeas gave up in August. A. barnei struggled to stay alive for over a year but finally turned to mush in the ground in a shaded area. This tree aloe from coastal South Africa does very well in Los Angeles... so go see it there and don’t bother here. An old A. marlothii had reached 8 ft. with a double head (under a desert tree) but the heat and humidity finally took it out. A. alooides in a pot in a shaded area also gave up (a surprise) as did A. suprafoliata in some afternoon sun (this one is fine in shade). We try most varieties a couple of times before giving up... I hope these comments help to save you some time and money. If you know of other aloea that do well here and flower in July and August, please tell us!!

All of the ferocacti cited last month continued to flower. F. pilosus is very colorful with yellow and green fruit densely packed around buds and open flowers at the top of 14” plants in full sun. F. hamatacautus (Texas barrel) continued to flower in sun and shade... a distinctive bright yellow. F. herreriae are attractive at all sizes and do well in part shade. F. chryscactus was flowering for the first time at 7” in a pot. This golden spined barrel from Baja is frost tender. Echinocactus ngenus flowered for the first time at 12” (an egg-yolk yellow). Other cacti flowering included most of the large cereus varieties, Theocactus setispinus, Notocactus magnificus and N. schumannianus, Monwillea spegazzini, Acanthocycium glaucum (powder blue body with large yellow flowers), some astrophytum, a large totem pole (senita), and Coryphantha elephantidens got started at month’s end.

*** PLANT SALE ***
October 14 and 15 (9 am to 5 pm)
64th Street at Luke (1 mile north of Camelback Road).

1 and 5 gallon pots:
Many varieties of freshly dug aloeas and agaves and many varieties of columnar cacti.

Cuttings:
Aloeas — secundiflora, ramosissima, elegans, camperi and a dozen others.
Agaves — more than a dozen varieties for landscaping and collectors.

*** Call to see if we have what you want (480)994-3868 ***
**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.

- **DOUG DAWSON**  
  480-893-1207  
  doug.dawson@gmail.maricopa.edu

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

- **MIKE GALLAGHER**  
  602-942-8580  
  mgallagher26@cox.net

  Specialization includes Aloes, Haworthias, Columnar Cacti & Turbinicarpus.

- **STEVIE PLATH**  
  623-915-7615  
  revegdude1@juno.com

  Specialization includes Ariocarpus, Astrophytum, Cyphostemma, Echinocereus, Fouquieria, Thelocactus, General Propagation & Desert Re-vegetation.

- **CYNTHIA ROBINSON**  
  602-615-2261  
  crobin500@msn.com

- **BOB TORREST**  
  480-994-3868  
  robertst9114@msn.com

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

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

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**Who To Contact!!!**

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