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2008 CACSS OFFICERS

President:  Steve Plath........................................ 623-238-3342
revegdude1@juno.com
Vice-President:  Lee Brownson.................................. 480-951-4945
lsbrownson@cox.net
Secretary: Julie Plath........................................ 623-915-7615
revegdude1@juno.com
Treasurer: Wayne Whipple................................. 480-460-3623
w7676@msn.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Terms Ending 12/2008

Gard Roper.............................................. 602-996-9745
tagaveguy@cox.net
Daniel Sumberg........................................ 480-361-6503
daniels@libertyiron.com
Ingrid Swenson............................................. 602-957-9865
iswenson@cox.net

Terms Ending 12/2009

Doug Dawson........................................ 480-893-1207
doug.dawson@gcmail.maricopa.edu
Leo Martin................................................. 602-852-9714
leo@possi.org
Steve Martinez........................................ 480-688-4339
altrigo2@aol.com
Cynthia Robinson...................................... 602-615-2261
crobin500@msn.com
Lois Schneberger...................................... 480-946-8373
lschneberger@cox.net

2008 CACSS COMMITTEES

Programs & Workshops..................................... Lee Brownson
Publications & Publicity.................................. Cynthia Robinson
Newsletter Editor.......................................... Laurence Garvie
lgarvie@cox.net
Assistant Editor .......................................... Paul Schueneman
480-706-1672
Schue888@wbhsi.net
Membership............................................... Doug Dawson or
Jo Davis..................................................... 480-839-3792
Finance..................................................... Wayne Whipple
Plant Rescue.............................................. Robert & Cheryl Brown
480-664-9409
rp62@intergate.com
Library..................................................... Erik Anderson
480-967-3984
woodcraftman@earthlink.net

2009 Show................................................ Cynthia Robinson
2009 Sale ................................................... Mike Cone
623-215-7692
imakepots@hotmail.com
Refreshments............................................. Melinda Louise
Field Trips................................................. Daniel Sumberg or
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Web-Site..................................................... Lee Brownson

AUGUST SPEAKER

Featuring: Peter Breslin
Subject: Echinomastus in Arizona
When: August 24th

LOCAL CALENDAR

August 24th, Sunday, 2 pm
Speaker - Peter Breslin
Title - Echinomastus in Arizona
Regular Club Meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden

September 28th, Sunday, 2 pm
Speaker - TBA
Regular Club Meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden

October 26th, Sunday, 12 pm Setup, 2 pm Auction
Silent Auction of Member’s Plants
Wildflower Pavilion, Desert Botanical Garden
Start your propagations now to make this annual event a success!

The CSSA website will soon have an online events calendar. It is
my hope that we will not need to duplicate this information but
instead list selected events that are of local interest.

CENTRAL SPINE ONLINE

A reminder that issues of Central Spine from January 2007 to the
present are available for download in PDF format at
http://www.centralarizonacactus.org/news.html

ON THE COVER

A flowering Echinocactus horizonthalonius x platyacanthus photographed this Spring at the Desert Botanical Garden (DBG), Phoenix, Arizona. It has many characteristics of E. horizonthalonius while taking on some of the impressive size that E. platyacanthus can have. This plant was accessioned into the DBG in 1953.

Photo © Scott McMahon

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PRESIDENT’S LETTER

Holy cow…it’s August!!! What happened to May? I know time goes by faster as you get older but this warp speed stuff is ridiculous! The reality is we’re well into the back half of the year and several things are coming up that I’d like to mention.

First our annual silent plant Auction will be in October at the Desert Botanical Garden. Even though it’s currently August it’s not too early to be thinking about plants you may want to bring to the auction. Perhaps you have a few special or odd plants you can make vegetative cuttings of and get them rooted by October. Or, like me, maybe you have a few duplicates of the same species that if you got rid of a couple there’d be room for some new specimens. Even the individual plant that is still in good shape but your interests has ventured on to other genera or species is a candidate. Details about the auction will be coming for those who haven’t participated before. You won’t want to miss this event!

Next, we’ll be organizing the Nomination Committee this month for the 2009 slate of CACSS Officers and Directors. If you would like to be on this Committee please let me or another Board Member know. Likewise, if you would like to be nominated for an Officer position or to the Board of Directors let me or a Nomination Committee member know. In every club it’s often said that the same people sit on the Board year in and year out…and in some instances it’s true. It’s also said it’s nice to get some new blood on the Board, but often easier said than done. Please, if you’re approached by a Nominating Committee member to be on the Board, seriously consider being a part of the business end of the CACSS. The flip side is if you do commit to being nominated please understand that it is a term commitment and for the sake of the smooth operation of the Board we need you to attend the Board meetings. If we have a lot of Board members but not enough show up at the monthly meetings to make a quorum it prohibits the ability of the Board to vote on issues. I hope you’ll join us…and yes, we do have fun!

Finally, in late September or early October Julie and I are going to have an open house at our garden and nursery. By the General Meeting we’ll have settled on a date and time and will have information and directions to our place. It’ll be a fun opportunity to “get out of the city” and see our humble home. Hope you’ll be able to come!

See you at the meeting! - Steve Plath

From the editor ...

Where are your Miscellanea contributions?
Have you grown too many seedlings and need to sell some? - Advertise in Miscellanea. Are you trying to find a home for some cactus books? - Advertise in Miscellanea. Are you searching for some choice succulent? - Advertise in Miscellanea. Did you buy a greenhouse but realise you do not need it? - Advertise in Miscellanea. Did your super rare cactus or succulent produce lots of seeds and you don’t know what to do with them? - Advertise in Miscellanea.

Affiliations
Since our newsletter is available online and there for the world to read I think it is important to put an address (possibly shortened if you feel uncomfortable giving your full home address) and email after the names of authors of contributed articles. While we all know each other, readers from outside the club are unlikely to know who the author is or how to contact them.

What to Submit
Almost anything cactus and succulent related. Even a beautiful photograph of some choice succulent with an extended figure caption is considered a contribution.

When to Submit
AT ANY TIME!!! For articles or Miscellanea that need to make it into a specific issue then I need the material by the end of the first week of the month that you need to be published in.

Short Guide for Contributions
One page of the Central Spine is equivalent to about 1000 words. Plan on ca. 500 words with three small figures. Please contact me first if you want to publish an article with three or more pages.
There are no Echinomastus in Arizona!, exclaimed a passionate cactophile friend of mine from the UK in a recent conversation. “Some very interesting Sclerocactus, of course, but no Echinomastus.”

Such is the position, still, of the genus Echinomastus. Originally separated from Echinocactus by Britton and Rose, with the type species being Arizona’s own Echinomastus erectocentrus, the genus has baffled and confused many amateur and professional cactologists for nearly a century since. In the Flora of North America and the CITES Cactaceae Checklist as well as the New Cactus Lexicon, Echinomastus is indeed considered a synonym under Sclerocactus. Weniger returned all of the Texas plants (dasyacanthus, mariposensis, and warnockii) to Echinocactus. Benson, in The Cacti of Arizona, also placed the plants in Echinocactus and then, in Cacti of the United States and Canada, without explanation, placed Echinomastus as a synonym under Neolloydia. Powell and Weedin, Zimmerman, Anderson and others retain Echinomastus.

While growers need not concern themselves with the headaches the genus causes taxonomists, the plants in cultivation are notorious for causing headaches of their own. Known as “difficult,” or even “impossible,” some of the forms from Arizona in particular have been entirely abandoned by experts in the nursery trade and hobbyists alike. Fat, healthy seedlings have a habit of suddenly languishing and fading away, and plants from habitat are often challenging to re-establish either in situ or in cultivation.

Since I enjoy the luxury of being a rank amateur, I recognize 5 distinct forms of the genus occurring in Arizona. For the forms not currently deserving of wide taxonomic recognition, I simply use the handy cultivar approach. Cultivars, either in cultivation or in habitat, can be indicated using the abbreviation “cv,” or simply by using single quotes. So that gives Echinomastus intertextus, erectocentrus, erectocentrus acunensis, johnsonii lutescens and johnsonii.

Most of the Arizona Echinomastus are cryptic and/or rare in habitat. E. intertextus in southeast Arizona, for example, is often obscured by tall grass. E. erectocentrus sometimes can be well camouflaged in its surroundings. E. erectocentrus acunensis grows in highly restricted populations and is often well hidden, except when crowned by its loud, showy flowers. The easiest to find are plants of E. johnsonii lutescens near Wickenburg, usually growing in the open on gentle rocky slopes and ridge tops, giving the appearance of small barrel cacti, perhaps the reason E. johnsonii was originally included in Ferocactus.

From Santa Cruz County to Mohave County, most of my weekends since last October have been spent searching for Echinomastus locations, observing and photographing plants and their surroundings and collecting population data. An anomalous population of E. erectocentrus acunensis near Florence, about 175 miles from the type locality in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (OPNM), attracted most of my attention. Nursery growers such as Dan Bach and Steven Brack and plant ecologists such as Sue Rutman at OPNM and Mima Falk with US Fish and Wildlife have provided at least as much information for me along the way as is available in the published literature.

The plants have everything a cactus fan could want including relative scarcity, fierce, colorful spines and showy flowers with a wide variety of color forms. In habitat, Echinomastus add fascinating variety; they are often highly restricted endemics appearing mysteriously among the more widespread, dominant species. A spectacular group of plants, no matter the name!
MEMBERS’ PHOTOS

Agave pelona. This species is also featured in this year’s July-August issue of the Cactus and Succulent Journal - photo © Susan Tyrrel.

Echinopsis hybrid “Flying Saucer” - photo © RP Brown.

Mammillaria viridiflora from near Superior, Arizona. This plant is normally difficult to find unless flowering. - photo © Laurence Garvie.
Stapelia and Mealy Bugs: Preventing Infestations

Sue Hakala

These hot summer months trapped indoors has found me combing through old articles I’ve archived about growing cactus and succulent plants, and, especially, stapelias. I have many articles about mealy bug prevention for this genus of much loved plants. None of which have ever worked for me. In fact, one year, following the advice of one author, I lost 30 stapelias to these insatiable pests.

My solution to ridding my plants of mealy bugs is an easy one involving no chemicals. I learned this method when I had an incredible opportunity to talk with one of the world’s stapelia experts. Attending the Cactus and Succulent Society of America’s conference in Tempe in 1987, I rode in from the stadium parking lot on the trolley with a fellow attendee, Darrel Plowes, who came from Sudan to speak at the conference about stapelias—my favorite succulent. Darrel told me how to prevent mealy bugs on the short ride. It has worked without exception! I know that's a bold statement. Here's what he said, and what I do:

- Use clay pots.
- Layer the pot with one-third gravel in the bottom section.
- Use regular soil mix with about 40% pumice for the center one-third section.
- Sprinkle on more gravel and lay the roots or cutting on it. Don’t let the plant actually touch the soil in any way. Fill the remaining third of the pot with gravel around the base of the plant to support it.

The roots will grow through the gravel into the dirt. This method provides for lots of air circulation, something mealy bugs don’t like. Since I’ve converted all my plants to this method—about 20 years ago—mealy bugs have not been a problem. Try it, I’ll bet it’ll work for you too.

BOOK REVIEW

by Paul Schueneman

ALOES aristocrats of Namibian Flora.

By Sakkie Rothmann, 96 pp., paperback, color photos, in English and German, Creda Communications, Capetown, RSA, 2004.

This booklet is a recent addition to our CACSS Library. Contact Erik Anderson, CACSS librarian, to check it out.

Sakkie Rothmann’s compact work addresses the 27 Aloe species native to Namibia. Since 1955, when he was 9 years old, his ambition was to find and study as many succulents as possible. He became an authority on the subject by spending many hours and traveling many kilometers studying and taking photographs of the different Aloe species in Namibia.

Rothmann begins by briefly telling of his childhood growing up on a farm in Outjo in northern Namibia and how it led to his fascination with Aloes. One of his interesting stories is of the horrors that happened to Namibian Aloes in the late 1950’s. At that time, well-meaning authors wrote several books and articles about this genus. This prompted thousands of South African gardeners, followed by commercial nurseries, to start digging them up out of the wild, which led to near extinction of several of the species.

His discussion of Aloe genus characteristics, Carl Linne’s binomial system of naming plants, and the geographical distribution of Aloes in Namibia make this a good introduction to readers unfamiliar with the genus and binomial nomenclature. Additionally, numerous close-ups and panoramic colored photos show the Aloes in their typical natural Namibian habitats.

For those interested in growing Aloes, Rothmann includes sections on diseases and pests, planting, soil mixtures, landscaping design, beds, and seed sowing. All of these sections include specific, helpful information and tips for successful plants. However, you will probably need to find an alternative to his recommended soil mixture, which requires some pretty exotic ingredients (kraal manure, chicken manure, coal ash, etc.).

Also included are maps of Namibia showing rainfall zones, rainfall seasons, frost zones, and which species grow in which zones. These can be helpful in deciding what conditions you need to grow which species.

The remainder of the book is a profile of each of the 27 Namibian Aloes. Two pages are devoted to each Aloe. The first page has species-specific information and 2 or 3 photos of the plant. The photos show an inflorescence, a close-up, or a distance shot showing the general terrain in which the plant lives. The second page is an 8” X 5” close-up photo of the plant. The photos are excellent.

I would recommend this book to anyone interested in a brief introduction to Aloes (Namibian or otherwise) or interested in Namibian Aloes shown in their natural habitat. It addresses a specific set of plants and it does a solid, thorough job of telling you about them.
PUMICE FOR SALE

If anyone is interested in buying some pumice, I can bring bags of pumice to the meeting on Sunday. One bag - equivalent to a 5 gallon bucket full - is $2.00. Email me if you want some and how many bags you would like.

Lee Brownson - lsbrownson@cox.net

NEWSLETTER PROJECT

We are trying to collect copies of all of the past issues of our Central Spine newsletter and have made great progress. We have 126 issues, but there are still many missing. We especially need newsletters issued prior to 2000. The first issue we have is dated August 1975. From that issue through 1998, we have only 26 copies. We have none for the years 1997-1994, 1985-1983, and 1980-1981. We have one to three from the remaining years.

If you have any of these older issues, could you please contact Lee Brownson at 480-951-4945 or lsbrownson@cox.net. He would like to make copies then return them to you.

REDESIGNED CACSS WEBSITE

I hope you have visited the CACSS website recently. If you haven’t, you should take a minute to have a look. A few months ago the website underwent a major overhaul. Thanks to web designer Elizabeth Pappas, our website is beautiful, informative, and easy to navigate. As nice as it is, it can be improved. We want to have a website that serves both our membership and the general public. What do you think we should do? What would you like to see on the website? What kind of information would be helpful to you as a CACSS member?

If you have any suggestions, please send them to Lee Brownson, either via email or snail mail – lsbrownson@cox.net or 6702 E Clinton Street, Scottsdale, AZ 85254

CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED

Article submission deadline for the Central Spine is the first week of the month but please feel free to email contributions at any time, especially before being asked.

Email contributions to lgarvie@cox.net

PHOTOS NEEDED

Would you like to see your best photographs adorn the cover of Central Spine? Well then send them to me. Initially, send me medium-sized jpeg images. If your image is chosen for the cover then I will request a higher resolution image. Please keep photo editing to a minimum. If necessary I will adjust contrast, color, etc.

Email contributions to lgarvie@cox.net

DUES

Pay your dues! Membership is by calendar year. Annual dues $20 individual (1 newsletter, 1 vote), $25 household (1 newsletter, 1 vote per member); 1/2 price paid August-December. Make checks payable to and mail to:

CACSS, PO Box 63572, Phoenix, AZ 85082-3572. More info: 602-852-9714.

NAME BADGES

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

Cylindropuntia cholla - Laurence Garvie

Myrtillocactus geometrizans v longareolatus - Phil Ruttenbur

Cen t r a l S p i n e A u g u s t, 2008
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 principal interests. When more members add their information, the list will be cross-referenced by topic.

DOUG DAWSON
480-893-1207
doug.dawson@gcmail.maricopa.edu
Specializations include Flora of Namibia, Growing from Seed, Lithops, other Mesembs, and Melocactus.

MIKE GALLAGHER
602-942-8580
mgallagher26@cox.net
Specializations include Aloes, Haworthias, Columnar Cacti, and Turbinicarpus.

STEVE PLATH
623-915-7615
revegdude1@juno.com
Specializations include Ariocarpus, Astrophytum, Cyphostemma, Echinocereus, Fouquieria, Thelocactus, General Propagation, and Desert Revegetation.

CYNTHIA ROBINSON
602-615-2261
crobin500@msn.com
Specializations include Flora of Madagascar, Growing from Seed, Caudiciform & Pachycaul Succulents, Aloes, Apocynaceae, Burseraceae, Euphorbiaceae, Fouquieriaceae, and Succulent Bonsai.

BOB TORREST
480-994-3868
robertst9114@msn.com
Specializations include Desert Landscaping, Unusual (including Rare Fruit) Trees and Shrubs, Aloes, Agaves, Columnar Cacti, Trichocereus, and Opuntia.