Central Spine
August 2012

Newsletter of the Central Arizona Cactus & Succulent Society

An Affiliate of the Cactus & Succulent Society of America

On the Web at www.centralarizonacactus.org

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CACSS Meeting August 26
2 p.m. Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden
Presenter: Dr. Cathryn Hoyt, Executive Director of the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute

Articles
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Mammilaria estonii in the Desert Botanical Garden
Photo by Scott McMahon, the Garden’s Cactaceae Collections Manager
September Newsletter
Deadline Sept 13, 2012

Please Note:

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2012 CACSS Officers

President: Steve Martinez
602-688-4339
altrigo2@aol.com
Vice-President: Gard Roper
602-996-9745
Secretary: Lois Schneberger
480-946-8373
lschneberger@cox.net
Treasurer: Wayne Whipple
480-460-3623
w7676@msn.com

2012 Board of Directors
Serving through December, 2012

Debora Life
480-580-3813
lifedebora@yahoo.com
Beth Kirkpatrick
480-275-4833
2kirks@cox.net

Serving through December, 2013

Cindy Capek
623-979-9389
ronluccap@aol.com
Sue Tyrrel
480-797-8952
styrrel@cox.net
Joseph Miracle
480-345-6644
demiracle@cox.net
Nancy Mumpton
480-649-1558
nancy.mumpton@gmail.com
Joe Barnes
480-883-1651
barnesinaz@gmail.com

2012 Meeting Schedule
Sunday, August 26, Dorrance Hall
Presentation: Big Bend National Park, Big Bend Ranch State Park and the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center.
Presenter: Dr. Cathryn Hoyt, Executive Director of the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute in western Texas

Many of us in our club have dreamed of going to Big Bend since it has a tremendous number of fascinating cacti and succulents. Please come hear about them at the Sunday meeting. Also visit the website of the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute at www.cdri.org to learn more about Dr. Hoyt and the Nature Center, located about 40 miles south of I-10, on Texas State Highway 18, and directly north of the two Big Bend parks.

Future Meeting Dates
Sunday, September 30
Mark Muradian
Peru: Land of the Incas, Land of Cacti

Sunday October 14 – Giant Silent Auction
Members bring in a very diverse collection of plants and the PRICES ARE GREAT. See Jo Davis’ article below.

CACSS Silent Auction
Sunday, October 14
Get those plants and cuttings ready for our Silent Auction at the Wildflower Pavilion at Desert Botanical Garden. You may also bring pottery and other items of interest.

You’ll need a bid sheet for each plant you bring. The bid sheet should include the name of the plant (if you know it) and two columns, one for the bid, the other for the name of the bidder. You’ll also need a pen or pencil to write down your bid for other members’ plants. Don’t forget BOXES so you can take your purchases home with you.

Set-up: 12:30 – 1:30 pm
As usual you’ll be given instructions on how to bid and pay for your plants.
Silent Auction begins at 2 pm

Contact the Central Spine Editor
Diana Decker
dianadec@cox.net (602) 220-9825
for article and photo submissions, and to suggest topics you’d like to see included in the Central Spine.
President’s Letter
Well here I am in sunny southern California, and I do mean sunny. They are having a heat wave here, too, coupled with excessive humidity. I felt worse here than in Phoenix, until the evening when it cooled off quite a bit.

I did some plant shopping in the Vista area then came up to Arcadia for the night because tomorrow I will visit the LA Arboretum to see the Inter-City Show and Sale. For me half the fun is chatting with all the vendors and the plant crazies out here on the left coast! I usually can also find some treasure to add to my collection.

We have a very enthusiastic club as well, and we now number close to 300 members! There was also tremendous response to our planned Tucson overnight bus trip in October, so if you want to go, hurry and sign up for the few seats left.

Mesemb Day 20th Anniversary Edition, October 20

Tim Jackson, a well-known expert mesemb grower in Phelan, California, north of San Bernardino, is hosting his 20th annual Mesemb Day on Saturday, October 20th. It’s a very informal day-- no speakers, lectures, tours or auctions; just good people, good food, and great plants. Tim’s huge screen / greenhouse is a wonder.

Doug Dawson and Leo Martin will leave early, drive there, and drive home in the late afternoon. If you are interested in going, contact Leo Martin: voice 602-852-9714 text 602-799-8703 or leo@possi.org.

Before I left for California, I watered every one of my plants and I noticed a couple of them starting to sunburn on the south side. The angle of the sun is changing a little every day, so as always, keep an eye on things!

One last thing, elections are coming up so contact our Election Committee if you would like to run for a position on the Board.

That’s all I have to say for this month, so... see you at the meeting! Steve M.

Election Committee
Sue Tyrrell and Debora Life
See Board of Directors list (page. 2) for their contact information.

Welcome To New Members
Maureen & John Voloudakis
Gillian Rice
Michelle B. Anderson
Lillian Barker
Shari Brown
Susan Monahan
Membership Chair: Beth Kirkpatrick
The flowers of opuntias are beautiful but short-lived. Try to pick a species with unusual spines or pads for year-round interest like this *Opuntia sulfurica*. Photo by Tom Gatz

**Prickly Pear Cactus in Pots**

by Tom Gatz

Wait. Don't turn the page. Stay with me on this. I know, I know, while many of us appreciate prickly pear cactus (*opuntia*) in the desert we don't appreciate their spines and *glochids* (hair-like spines) in our gardens, gloves or hands. Most of us have had some very irritating experiences with them. Some gardeners never plant them at all while others eventually remove them when they start to overrun their gardens.

We are usually quick to put our newly acquired plants into the ground where they almost always do better than in pots, especially through our hot summers. But in the case of the prickly pear cactus, they often do so well in the ground that they can literally take over. Also, if everything is planted in the ground, on the same level, it can look kind of boring. Elevating a few specimen plants in pots or even on our garden walls is a great way to provide some architectural relief to our landscapes. The biggest challenge is finding something with sculptural interest and a “sense of place” that will look good in the full sun in a medium-sized pot in our summer climate, especially without frequent watering.

Here is one solution – prickly pear cactus in pots. In a pot, prickly pear cactus are much easier to safely move and manage than are their rambling ground-dwelling kin. It is also a great way to add an accent to the top of cinder block or adobe wall. I like to grow them this way because I can painlessly enjoy a dozen species of flowering opuntia even in my small garden.

Summer is a good time to get cuttings of pads and root them in pots with a soil mix that drains well and some landscape gravel as top dressing. I water mine once a week in the heat of the summer but they can survive
the winter without any supplemental water. However, if we get good winter rains (or if you give them a periodic splash of water in the winter) the wildflower seeds you tossed in the pot in the fall will give you some bonus spring color.

You can rejuvenate them every five years or so by discarding the lower, gnarly portion and rooting some of the newer pads. Always use tongs, never gloves, when handling the pads. It helps to gently spray the pads with water before handling or transporting opuntias to prevent loose glochids from becoming airborne.

If you have a hot wall where nothing will grow, try a potted opuntia to add an architectural exclamation point to your landscape.

(reprinted from the DBG volunteer newsletter "Gatherings")

The bi-colored spines, purplish pads in winter and gorgeous flowers in spring make the *Opuntia macrocentra* a favorite in or out of a pot.

Photo by Tom Gatz
Looking Back: A view of the last 40 years of the CACSS

Cactus Smasher
by Sue Hakala

Bill Stroppe Associates, Inc., of Long Beach, California, placed an ad in *Open Road* magazine for King Off Road Accessories’ new product: the “Cactus Smasher” push bar. Its “tubular construction with strong mandrel bends in satin black finish,” is just the thing for placing on the bumper of your “Bronco and all Ford pick-ups ($39.95) or Ford vans ($49.95)” to push over cactus while off-roading in the desert. The “standard push bar, on special, with straight bar construction at $35 for Broncos, and $39.95 for Ford pickups and vans,” was also advertised. (A copy of the ad is in CACSS archives.)

The ad drew the attention and ire of CACSS member, Kent Newland (horticulturist at Boyce Thompson Arboretum). He brought the ad to the October 1974 Society meeting. Kent pointed out that such a device would be illegal in Arizona. He made a motion, seconded by Frank Hennessey, and unanimously passed by the membership to protest the manufacture of such a device. Additionally, the membership directed Ken to write a resolution to send to the manufacturer, and other parties interested in the conservation of desert flora, protesting such a device.

Kent wrote an eloquent resolution that in part reads, “...this Society verily believes that the continued advertising, sale and use of said ‘Cactus Smasher’ device, which enables off-road vehicles to smash cactus and other desert plants, constitutes a form of vandalism which can and will permit the wholesale destruction of much of the natural beauty of our desert areas.” Affixed were members’ signatures. Joan Skirvin, a CACSS member since 1973, remembers a lively discussion at the meeting.
A letter was sent to the manufacturer by Society Secretary, Frank Hennessey, along with the resolution and signatures, stating, “that use of such a device in Arizona may be subject to a fine of $300 per cactus plant destroyed, by state law.” Further, “It is our intention to send a copy of this resolution (and signatures) to our congressmen, governor, Bureau of Land Management, every cactus and succulent society in the world, the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, all hunting and fishing clubs, rock hound clubs and four-wheel clubs in the western states, as well as any person we can enlist to prevent the advertising, sale and use of this device.” Indeed, letters were sent.

Several responses are in the archives. One from the National Parks and Conservation Association states: “We support your actions in this effort. We are working to prevent the very land-use practices exemplified by the ‘Cactus Smasher’ on our public lands.” Senator Barry Goldwater also supported the efforts, as well as many others.

I would guess Stroppe was stunned at the vigorous protest their “Cactus Smasher” generated. They agreed to discontinue the device. Long live passionate and vocal desert lovers everywhere who fight to protect our beautiful desert and plants. Smashing cactus, the very idea!

*(Information gleaned from archives compiled by Lois Schneberger.)*

**This is one of a series of articles about club history that will be included in the Central Spine, as CACSS approaches its 40th anniversary celebration.**

An image used by the CACSS early members
A Mexican columnar cactus, *Isolatocereus dumortieri* at the Garden. Photo by Scott McMahon. The Garden’s Cactaceae Collections Manager

**PLANT QUESTIONS???</br>WHOM TO CONTACT!!!**

Many CACSS members have experience with different kinds of succulent plants. I hope they will add their names to the following list. Call or e-mail Diana Decker, *Central Spine* editor. See contact information on p. 2.

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

dawsonlithops@hotmail.com

Specializations include Growing from Seed, Flora of Namibia, Lithops, other Mesembs, Melocactus, Miniature Cacti and Succulents of Arizona.

**MIKE GALLAGHER**

602-942-8580

mgallagher26@cox.net

Specializations include Aloes, Haworthias, Columnar Cacti, and *Turbinicarpus*.

**DEAN PATRICK**

480-759-0312

deserpatrick@cox.net

Specialization in softwood stem-cuttings, plant division and seed starting (rooting cacti, agave and aloe).
STEVE PLATH
623-915-7615
revgdude1@juno.com
Specializations include General Propagation and Desert Revegetation, *Ariocarpus, Astrophytum, Cyphostemma, Echinocereus, Fouquieria, Thelocactus*.

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*. 