

# Central Spine

November 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](http://www.centralarizonacactus.org)**

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**CACSS Meeting**  
**Sunday, November 18, 2 p.m.**  
**Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden**  
**Presentation by Scott McMahon**  
**Introduction to Mammillarias**

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*Lithops otzeniana* on the Northern Cape of South Africa

Photo taken in May 2012 by Doug Dawson

## December Newsletter Deadline December 12, 2012

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### **2012 CACSS Officers**

President: Steve Martinez  
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### **2012 Board of Directors**

#### **Serving through December, 2012**

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### **Contact the *Central Spine* Editor**

**Diana Decker**

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for article and photo submissions, and to  
suggest topics you'd like to see included  
in the *Central Spine*.

## 2012 Meeting Schedule



**Sunday, November. 18-**

### **Introduction to Mammillarias Presented by Scott McMahon,**

Scott, Cactaceae Collections Manager, Desert Botanical Garden. will present a brief history of the genus Mammillaria, with descriptions of various plants. He will answer questions after his presentation. Scott received his master's degree in Plant Protection in 1977 from the University of Arizona. Scott's father was a landscape designer. Scott gained valuable experience in design and installation by working with him. Scott is a longtime CACSS member, past president of the CACSS twice, and always ready to guide CACSS as needed. Scott also teaches classes for the Desert Landscaper School at the DBG. His knowledge of Spanish allows him to teach classes in both English and Spanish and participate in workshops in Mexico. Please join us in welcoming Scott. He always gives excellent programs and information.



**Sunday December 9- Annual Christmas Party**  
Co-hosts: Wendy Barrett and Margaret Ann Hecox.

### **Party time!**

### **Annual Holiday Potluck**

1:30 to 5 pm, Sunday, December 9  
Mountain View Park Community Center  
8625 E. Mountain View Road, Scottsdale

**Your hostesses this year will be Wendy and Margaret Ann. Bring a main dish, appetizer or dessert of your choice.**

We have room for 100 members. Join us for a memorable time. Bring your holiday spirit and a plant to exchange. If you bring a plant, you may take a plant. Please bring an appetizer, a main course or dessert, with utensils for serving it. You will also need to bring your own plates, silverware and napkins.

**IT'S VERY, VERY IMPORTANT TO RSVP by  
Sunday, Dec. 2 by email or phone to  
Wendy (602)-971-5345- wbarrett@cox.net  
or Margaret Ann (480)-413-2124  
mahecox@cox.net**

They must know what you're bringing to coordinate the menu. If you leave a message, be sure to include your phone number so they can return your call.

**The reservation deadline is Sunday, Dec. 2.**  
The song we'll be singing at the party is on page. 8



## President's Letter

It is hard for me to believe, but I am about to write my penultimate President's letter, and after nearly three years in this role I've written about many things, especially the weather. That is, however, always an important concern for collectors and growers.

One way that it affects me is that it restricts my travel to a certain extent I am always reluctant to travel for any length of time when it is very hot or very cold. November is fairly safe, so I am planning a field trip to the Baja peninsula, a place I have not yet been. I have travelled to Africa and South America, so it is overdue that I check out some habitat that is practically in our backyard.

There are good places to hike right here in Arizona as well, and many members plan day long trips to local habitats. As I mentioned in a previous letter, there are many perks that come along with being in this Club, and this is another one of them. If you are interested in participating in these kinds of events, ask around at the meetings.

Also as a reminder, our Holiday party is in December. I hope you plan to attend (it's a potluck, so bring a dish), and I hope you attend our last regular meeting of 2012. It is November 18<sup>th</sup>, a little earlier than usual, so mark your calendar.

See you at the meeting!

Steve M



### *Welcome To New Members*

**Vincent Cassara**  
**Milly & David Johnson**  
**Elizabeth Rothner**  
**Adam Snyder**  
**Kathie Snyder**

*Membership Chair: Beth Kirkpatrick*

## ***CACSS October 2012 Silent Auction***

Photos by John Crummey—see more on p. 8



Members had many plants from which to choose.

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**CACSS**  
**Ballot for Officers and Directors for 2013**  
(Biographies written by the candidates)

**Wendy Barrett:**

I've lived in Phoenix for 24 years, recently retired from Hallmark and been a CACSS member for two years. My family has always gardened and I've always had houseplants. My collecting started with African violets in the Midwest. My current collecting started with the DBG sales with Sansevierias and Euphorbias. Now I'm adding aloes and agaves to my xeriscaped yard.

**Jo Davis:**

I'm originally from Chicago, Illinois. My husband Rich and I moved here in 1971. We have two sons and four grandchildren. I'm a floral designer and have been designing for 24 years. My other interests are working in the yard with all the plants I have collected or purchased. I became a member of the Central Arizona Cactus & Succulent Society about 17 years ago. I also volunteer for the Desert Botanical Garden.

**Doug Dawson:**

Doug has been an active member of the CACSS since 1990. He has been on the board of the club for at least 10 various years, as well as serving as president of the club in 2007. He has presented many educational workshops and PowerPoint programs for our members and actively participates in our club's activities. Very important, he has a memory of what works and what doesn't work over the years. This club's historical background can be useful to help guide board discussions and directions. Doug is not just interested in his Lithops collection --although he has a passion there. He has broad interests in cacti, succulents, propagation and exploration in the world's many desert areas. Having been an educator in Arizona since his arrival here in 1971, Doug will continue to actively seek to enhance the educational components of our club and its place in the greater Maricopa community.

**Mike Gallagher:**

Mike is a Valley resident since 1978, moving from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A semi-retired pharmacist, he has been a club member since the early 1980s. He has an interest in all types of succulent plants, especially aloes and related genera, columnar cacti, and landscaping with succulents. He is a past judge of the club's annual show and a member of the propagation committee.

**Dan Smith:**

My plant interests are mainly Adenium and Plumeria. I've been growing both for about eight years and grow mostly from seed. I also grow a few house plants. I moved to Mesa, Arizona in 1973 and still reside in Mesa. I came from Michigan but was born and raised in Northwestern Pennsylvania. One of my other activities is a horticulture aide for the Desert Botanical Garden. I started there the year I retired in 2008. Scott McMahon has to put up with me two mornings a week. I also have a fresh water aquarium where I also grow my own plants. I'm married and have four grown kids and eight grandkids that live here and in California. They haven't been bitten by the plant bug like I have, but I'm sure it will come when they get older.

**The ballots will be mailed out this month.**  
**Please return your ballots to be tallied.**

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## “What are those cactus that look like giant toothbrushes?”

by Tom Gatz (reprinted from the DBG volunteer newsletter 'Gatherings')

Sometimes the best questions at the Garden come from the docents themselves. These questions were posed by Sunday docents JoHanna Kirk and Shirley Kafton. The columnar cactus in question is located just south of the main trail between the two entrances to the Cactus and Succulent galleries. It has reddish-brown woolly bristles restricted to the northwest side of each column, near the top.

### What is it?

Scott McMahon, our curator of cactus, told us that it is *Espostoa guentheri*, a South American cactus native to the harsh, dry deserts of Bolivia. The genus is named after Peruvian botanist Nicolas Esposto.

### What are these woolly protrusions?

They are modified spines forming what is known as cephalium. It literally translates to 'head'. The plural is cephalia. Cephalia are specialized reproductive stem growth of dense wool or hairs on some cactus, with very short internodes (spaces between the areoles).

### What function do they serve?

Only found on adult, reproductive specimens, cephalia likely afford protection to the flowers and fruits while they are still developing. The closely spaced areoles of the cephalium produce lots of bristles and wool that may protect the young flower buds until they are ready to open, and also the young fruits until they ripen. The flower buds and young fruits are hidden within the cephalium, enveloped by the bristles and wool, and not visible until they are mature enough to appear above the surface of the cephalium.

### Why are they only on one side of the cactus?

This is the interesting part. According to Dr. J. D. Mauseth, by limiting the reproductive adult tissue (which is non-photosynthetic so it doesn't help the plant grow) to only one side of the column, cactus with lateral cephalia, like this species, can continue to produce photosynthetic juvenile tissue on the remainder of the cactus for much of their lives and

continue to grow. Eventually, with age, the cephalium spreads around all sides of each column of *Espostoa guentheri* resulting in what is called apical or terminal (top) cephalia, and growth stops. In contrast, smaller species like melocactus that have apical cephalia on all sides of the top of the cactus for their entire reproductive lives, can no longer produce new photosynthetic juvenile tissue once they reach reproductive age and vegetative growth stops as soon as the terminal cephalium is produced.



The reproductive area with bristles (called a lateral cephalium) of this *Espostoa guentheri* in the Garden is restricted to one side of each column allowing the remaining portion to continue to photosynthesize and continue to grow.

Photo by Tom Gatz

### Why do they all face the same direction?

I never did find a definitive answer to this question. Some sources say the cephalia grow on the sunny side of the cactus. Others say on the shaded side. Depending upon the species of *Espostoa* involved, some appear to grow on the outside curve of the branches. On others, all individuals in a local population have cephalia facing in the same direction. In his book *The Great Cacti* David Yetman observed that *Espostoa cephalia* orientation is inconsistent and that, given this genera's proximity to the equator, there is no apparent advantage to orientation in any particular direction.



In contrast to *Espositoa*, the reproductive head on the top of a cactus (called an apical or terminal cephalium) like this *Melocactus peruvianus* inhibits further growth of this adult cactus. Photographed in Peru by Scott McMahon

## ***A view of the last 40 years of the CACSS***

### **Joan Skirvin**

By Sue Hakala



Who has been a member of the CACSS the longest? Joan Skirvin has. She joined the CACSS in 1973. "I met Frank Hennessey (one of the Society's earliest members) at a plant display that the Society held at Encanto Park. He told me all about the club, and I joined. In those days, members used to meet at each other's homes. It was such fun to get to see how everyone grew their plants," Joan reflects.

Joan Skirvin became interested in cactus in grade school in Cincinnati, Ohio when selling planters door-to-door as a school fundraiser. A neighbor gave her a cutting of *Mammillaria elongata* that she kept alive for about 30 years, while adding to her collection.

After she married Stan, they lived in New York growing her plants in a mini greenhouse with plastic sides and lights in her hall. Joan, Stan, their three children, and 20-year-old black cat Gandolph moved to Arizona, with the plants packed in the moving van. The plants rejoiced in their new home blooming for the first time. Most of the plants were still thriving 30 years later.

Joan and Stan have been active in the Society serving as secretary, newsletter editor, and many other positions through the years. Joan's interest

in cactus and succulents led her to open The Cactus Company a nursery located on Cave Creek and Sweetwater from 1980-83. "We were a victim of the recession in the 1980s, so I can really feel for what people have been going through lately," Joan said. Joan remembers Mike Gallagher joining the Society about this time and that she employed Martha Passwater, one of the early members, as part-time help in the nursery. "Martha planned the club's first bus tour, typing up an agenda (in Society archives), and created box lunches for all on the trip. She really set a precedent," Joan said. "Stan always went on the bus trips holding my plants as I made my selections, and supported my interest in every way."

Stan has a degree in engineering, conducted research in atomic engines for planes and helped design the space capsule for re-entry, becoming a specialist in heat-transfer engineering. In the 1950s he became interested in computers. He eventually became a Honeywell software engineer planner, coordinating software and hardware.

The Skirvins exhibited many unusual and rare plants in the club shows through the years. One year, Joan exhibited a collection of five *Haworthias*. An admirer saw them, sought Joan out giving her 150 starts of other *Haworthias*. "I was so surprised that someone would do that. I think the rabbits smelled them and squeezed their way under our gate and ate most of them. Stan put a sweep on the gate, but they ate that and got in again, along with some gophers that finished them off," Joan said.

Joan has encyclopedic knowledge about cactus and succulent plants and can always identify plants for anyone who needs it. I bet she can help you out, too. I asked her how she has learned so much. "Just from growing the plants, reading the Cactus and Succulent Society's Journal. I especially like reference books with big pictures and names right under them. There is a lot I cannot grow, though. I have learned not to be too quick to throw things

out that I think are dead. As the plant could still be alive, seeds may sprout or, seeds brought by birds may sprout. That's how I've gotten lots of saguaros," Joan said.

Joan has a fail-safe method for rooting anything. She says to take a plastic cup, poke about five holes around the cup just up from the bottom and again about midway. Fill with pumice and your cutting. Place in an old container, and fill with water to between the two sets of holes. The plant has moisture if it needs it, but lots of air too. "It's been such fun to be a member of the CACSS for so many years. The passion that everyone has

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for the plants has not diminished at all," Joan said. She still enjoys growing her plants, and is now babysitting what she describes as 'a gaggle of orchids' for her son.

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**CACSS October 2012 Silent Auction**  
More photos by John Crummey



Writing bids on bid sheets



Discussing plants and pots



Deciding what plants to bid on



Members bring boxes to carry plants home.

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Here's the song we'll be singing at the December Annual Potluck.

**WINTER WONDERLAND – ARIZONA STYLE**

Palm trees wave, are you listenin?  
In the pool, waters glistenin'.

A beautiful sight, we're happy tonight  
livin' in a Phoenix Wonderland.

Gone away is the blizzard  
Here to stay is the lizard.

A warm sunny day we like it that way,  
livin' in a Phoenix Wonderland.

In the desert we will have a picnic, cactus,  
sand and rattlesnakes and sun.

Christmas dinner is an old tradition it's pinto beans  
and tacos by the ton.

Later on we'll perspire, temperatures rise higher,

A warm sunny day, we like it that way,  
livin' in a Phoenix Wonderland.



## **PLANT QUESTIONS???** **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. Find 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

desertpatrick@cox.net

Specialization in softwood stem-cuttings, plant division and seed starting (rooting cacti, agave and aloe).

### **STEVE PLATH**

623-915-7615

revegdude1@juno.com

Specializations include General Propagation and Desert Revegetation, *Ariocarpus*, *Astrophytum*, *Cyphostemma*, *Echinocereus*, *Fouquieria*, *Thelocactus*.

### **DAN SMITH**

480-981-9648

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Specializes in adeniums. raising adeniums from seed, grafting and adenium culture in general

### **BOB TORREST**

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Specializations include Desert Landscaping, Unusual (including Rare Fruit) Trees and Shrubs, Aloes, Agaves, Columnar Cacti, *Trichocereus*, and *Opuntia*.

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