I am the Cactaceae Collections Manager here at the DBG. I received my B.S. and M.S. in Plant Protection from the University of Arizona and have worked in the ag chemical industry and as a landscaper. I have been collecting cacti and succulents since the mid ’70’s and have been here at the DBG for almost 14 years.

Scott McMahon  Cactaceae Collections Manager
April, 2015  Central Spine Deadline:  April 15, 2015

2015 CACSS Officers

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Facebook Coordinator  Dan Smith
Finances, Accounting  Ingrid Swenson
Holiday Party - December 2014  Sue Glenn
Library Co-Chairs  Wendy Barrett, Nancy Mumpton
Membership  Beth Kirkpatrick
Members-Keeping-In-Touch  Jo Davis
Mailed Newsletter Subscriptions  Sue Tyrrel
Newsletter  Diana Decker
Nominations for Board Officers and Directors  Jim Oravetz, Joe Barnes, Jeanne Ann Brush, Chuck Brush
October Silent Auction  Mike Gallagher
Plant Rescues  Open Position
Private Plant Sales at General Meetings  Sue Tyrrel
Programs  Diana Crummey
Pumice Sales  Gard Roper
Refreshments  Kat Hanna
Show & Sale – 2015  Sue Tyrrel
Website  Beth Kirkpatrick

Telephone numbers, email addresses, and street addresses can be found in the CACSS Member List emailed periodically to members by Beth Kirkpatrick.

For questions, and to send articles and photos for the newsletter, contact the newsletter editor, Diana Decker:  
(602) 220-9825  
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Serving through December, 2015

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On a bright, clear Sunday we had a great time at Dana Hiser’s open-garden on March 8th. It was a joy to behold. I was impressed with plants she had outside that can withstand our summer extreme temperatures. A partial list includes epiphyllums, jade plants, scented geraniums, amaryllis, echeveria, pink oxalis, anemones. I mention these plants because they are ones that I have lost in the heat of the summer or have to bring them in the house when the heat accelerates into the teens. Dana said she is lucky to live in a microclimate where the temperatures stay low enough to permit her heat-sensitive plants to survive. Open-gardens should be a must-attend activity for all members. Thanks, Dana, for inviting us to your paradise.

Our second meeting for this month will feature Scott McMahon, who will relive for us his cacti-and-succulent-seeking trip to Peru. Because I was on this trip, I am especially looking forward to seeing his pictures for the first time. Scott is a Past President of our Society and is the curator for cacti at the Desert Botanical Garden; we are always fortunate to have him address us.

Have you got your plants ready for our major judged-show next month? Entry forms will be available at our next General Meeting. Trophies and ribbons will be awarded to those entering outstanding plants so plan to prepare and show your prized specimens. For the third year in a row, Sue Tyrrel heads the steering committee for this annual event, which will involve around 60 volunteers. If you have not signed up yet to help, it is not too late. You can either do so at our next meeting or on-line. The Show & Sale is a great time to meet your fellow CACSS members.

Being the chief mover and shaker for other activities can be much fun. You do not have to be a Board Member to organize events for the Society. For example, Diana Crumey, our Program Chair, Sue Tyrrel, our Show and Sale Chair, and Diana Decker, our Newsletter Editor, chose not to be on the Board and look what they have accomplished. They, of course, enjoy their CACSS roles, and you will too. If you are interested in organizing popular road-trips, hosting an open-garden, conducting educational classes and workshops, chairing special interest committees, or rescuing cacti and other succulents, please contact me. The more involved you become, the happier you will be as a Member of the CACSS.

Please Wear Your Name Tag at Monthly Meetings

Board Member Jo Davis asks members to wear their name tags at monthly meetings and other club events. Members then can more easily spot guests and talk with them about the guest’s interests and CACSS. If you need a lanyard to hang the name tag around your neck, see Jo at the meetings.

Please bring boxes to the meetings so you can carry plants home more easily. Jo Davis

CACSS NEW MEMBERS

Joe Bacik
Larry and Carol Brecker
Ellen Gerardis
Joanne Johnson
Gary Ledford
Natalie Melkonoff
Anita Oliphant
Mary Ann Palmer
Carol Pearson
Brian Stolfa

Membership Chair: Beth Kirkpatrick
Please Send Articles for Newsletter

For a more interesting newsletter, articles about plants and taking care of them are very important. Please send your articles or suggestions for topics to the editor: Diana Decker  dianadec@cox.net
Julie Plath gave a wonderful presentation about potting plants for the Show at the March 1st meeting. Photos by John Crummey
SHOWING CACTUS & SUCCULENTS FOR THE NOVICE Part 3

IT’S BEEN KNOWN TO HAPPEN

By Steve Plath

(This article originally appeared in the March, 2008 Central Spine)

I remember judging the Inter-City Cactus and Succulent Show held in Los Angeles a number of years ago. Can you imagine most of the premier hobbyists and growers of southern California displaying their choicest plants in one setting? The category was Mammillaria clusters, over 12” pots. Between Novice, Advanced and Master there had to be 18 or 20 absolutely perfect, stunningly presented specimens, any one of which would be desirable to have. Some of these clustered masterpieces were enormous, old and rare.

The other judges and I were looking for Best Mammillaria in Show and had determined that the 12” and over group was where we needed to choose from. The species of blue ribbon winners in the Advanced and Master categories I don’t recall, but I do remember the Novice one. In a very simple round bonsai pot, brown in color, was a drop-dead gorgeous specimen of *Mammillaria* bombycina. Not many years ago that was probably one of the most common Mammillarias you could find. Nevertheless, this plant was absolutely at its peak and fit perfectly in what was probably a 14” pot. It not only smiled, the darned thing was grinning! Looking over all the magnificent plants that particular one kept drawing my attention.

Finally I broke the silence by saying, “you know what guys (it was an all-male judging panel), that plant there (pointing to the *M. bombycina*) does it for me. The other judges scrutinized the plant further, one even commented how “common” it was. But, I pointed out that if I was going to take any one of the prospective winners home that would be the individual. And guess what, one by one they agreed! Imagine, a Novice grower winning Best Mammillaria in Show at the Inter-City Cactus and Succulent Show with a common plant like *Mammillaria* bombycina!

It’s been known to happen! Good luck, and see you at the show!

Part 1, January Central Spine • In the Beginning • Exhibiting Plants • The Plants
Part 2: February Central Spine • Pots • Top Dressing

From the CACSSS library:

*** Here's something for cactus & succulent book fans to look forward to in May/June 2015. Take a look at the following web site for the two special volumes our club library has ordered: http://cactus-aventures.com. The two volume set is titled: *Taxonomy of the Cactaceae.*

Nancy Mumpton Co-Librarian
‘Skirts’ of Dead Leaves May Protect Tree Aloes From Wildfire

by Tom Gatz (reprinted from The Gatherings, the volunteer newsletter at the Desert Botanical Garden)

In nature, almost all form has a function. You may have noticed that the trunks of some of the taller aloes such as *Aloe* ferox and *Aloe* marlothii, when not intentionally pruned, are clothed in a layer of persistent, dead leaves, almost making them look like they are wearing a shaggy skirt. I wondered why. As a new horticulture volunteer at the Desert Botanical Garden nine years ago, I was instructed not to remove these dead leaves and was told that they likely protect the trunk from sunburn. Other researchers have suggested that perhaps they protect the trunks from the cold at night or maybe the thorny mass of dead leaves deter unwanted wildlife in search of water, nectar or seeds. Hmm. These explanations seemed to make sense until I noticed that other species of tree aloes such as *Aloe* dichotoma and its hybrid *Aloe* ‘Hercules’ naturally shed their old leaves; yet their bare trunks haven’t been damaged by the sun, cold or animals. In fact, I noticed that *Aloe* ferox that have their dead leaves manually removed at some of the resorts around town and even at the Boyce Thompson Arboretum appear to have survived for several years with their protective ‘skirts’ removed. In their natural habitat in southern Africa where the green leaves are harvested for their medicinal properties (mostly as a laxative but also for arthritis), they also survive without the dead leaves -at least until a wildfire passes through the area. So, if the dead leaves aren’t needed to protect the aloes from the sun, cold or wildlife, could they be protecting them from fire?

*Aloe* marlothii in its natural habitat with thick, corky, persistent dead leaves protecting the trunks from wildfires.
I located a study that was published in 1983 in the science journal *Oecologia* by W. Bond on the purpose of retaining dead leaves by several species of tree aloe. Bond proposed that dead-leaf retention provided thick, corky, fire-resistant ‘bark’ in a fire-prone habitat. He found that wild aloes with many dead leaves had less mortality from fires than those with fewer leaves. His laboratory studies confirmed the insulating properties of dead leaves. He also observed that bare-stemmed species of southern African aloes were confined to fire-free habitat, while ‘fully-clothed’ species occurred in both fire-prone and fire-free habitats. Natural selection has apparently favored the survival of shaggy aloes in fire-prone areas. He cautioned that harvesting leaves of *Aloe ferox* for medicinal purposes could increase their mortality in fire-prone areas.

Many of us prefer the natural look and keep the shaggy skirt of dead leaves on our tree aloes, so I’m not advocating trimming them off. However, if you choose to remove the dead leaves from aloes (or from any plants growing in our hot sun), I would only do so in the late fall or early winter to allow the trunks to acclimate to the sunlight before the heat of summer arrives. Cathy Babcock and Chad Davis observed some *Aloe ferox* in southern California that were apparently trimmed at the wrong time of year and suffered sun damage in a particularly hot summer. Gay Hendricks and I also noticed another function that these stiff, persistent dead leaves may serve, at least in horticultural situations. Some young tree aloes often become top heavy and the dead leaves may serve as supports to prop them upright until the trunks thicken up enough to support themselves.

Thanks to Cathy Babcock, Chad Davis, Gay Hendrick, John and Diana Crummey, Andrew Salywon, Starr Urbatsch and Kenny Zelov for helping me with this article.

*Aloe marlothii* in a garden, with dead leaves removed.
Photos from the 2014 Show & Sale by Doug Dawson

One of the winners

Arizona Native Cacti and Succulents
CACSS 2015 Meeting Schedule

April 10 - 12, CACSS Show and Sale

May 31, 2:00 – 5:00 pm. David Palzkill: PhD: Topic: Adenium
Presentation on Adenium propagation, care and comments on some varieties; Will include discussion of various propagation techniques, re-potting, pruning and pest control.

June 28, 2:00 – 5:00 pm. Ernst van Jaarsveld: PhD: Topic: The genus Gasteria and the new arrangement of genera within the aloe family
Ernst’s talk will be an introduction to the new arrangement of the aloe family but the emphasis on Gasteria.

July 26, 2:00 – 5:00 pm. Scott Calhoun: Topic: "The Gardener’s Guide to Cactus"
Join author and garden designer Scott Calhoun for a journey into the world of garden cactus. Scott will bring books for sale.

August 30, 2:00 – 5:00 pm. Jason Eslamieh: Topic: Boswellia.
Jason’s talk will cover cultivation of, habitat and distribution, taxonomy of all nineteen species.

Sept 27: 2:00 – 5:00 pm. Jeff Chemnick: Topic: The greatest wildflower show on earth -- The Richtersveld and Namibia
Join Jeff for an armchair tour of the Richtersveld ...a place where daisies, mesembs, aloes, and other succulents abound in spectacular array.

October 18: Annual Auction

November 22, 2:00 – 5:00 pm. Leo Martin and Monte Crawford: Topic: Cycads. This will be a combined lecture
Leo will speak on Mexican Cycad (Dioon) species and raising cycads from seed. Monte will talk about how to move cycads, plant them, injector fertilization and working with pH issues. This pH discussion should be valuable to every Gardener.
PLANT QUESTIONS???  WHO 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 email Diana Decker, Central Spine editor, dianadec@cox.net; 602-220-9825. 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
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Specializations include Growing from Seed, Flora of Namibia, Lithops, other Mesembs, Melocactus, Miniature Cacti and Succulents of Arizona.

MIKE GALLAGHER
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Specializations include Aloes, Haworthias, Columnar Cacti, and Turbinicarpus.

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

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

DAN SMITH
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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.