

# CENTRAL SPINE

Newsletter of Central Arizona Cactus & Succulent Society

September 2000

## From Your President

**HOT, HUMID WEATHER.** Yes, it's tough on lots of plants. But, there are many that love this weather: Most Cucurbitaceae (Cephalopentandra, Ibervillea, Momordica.) Most asclepiads, especially Ceropegia, Edithcolea, Fockea, and Pseudolithos. Most Brazilian cacti (Arrojadoa, Cereus, Discocactus, Melocactus, Pilosocereus, Uebelmannia...) Most columnar cacti (Austrocephalocereus, Buinigia, Neocardenasia, Neoraimondia, Pachycereus, Rauhocereus, Stephanocereus, Thrixanthocereus,...) Most Pedialaceae, including Pterodiscus and Uncarina. Most Pachypodium, especially P. brevicaulis.

If you don't have a few South American columnars in your collection, you're missing a lot. This month's Plant of the Month is devoted to one of these genera.

Your board is collecting information before deciding whether to bid for the 2005 Biennial Convention of the Cactus and Succulent Society of America. The convention runs from Saturday evening to Friday evening of one week and features four solid days of fantastic lectures by noted authorities and plant collectors, one day of field trips, about 10 plant vendors from all over the country, book sales, a rare plant auction, an opening cocktail party, and a closing banquet. If you might be interested in working on such an event, please contact me, Lin Leivian, or one of our board members.

I have received so much positive feedback about Scott McMahon's program on caudiciforms that the board is planning ways to incorporate more such home-grown demonstrations into our programs. Let us know what you want to hear.

Your board is also revising the Show schedule and rules. If you have ever shown or considered showing, please contact Scott McMahon or me with your concerns. We want to make the Show more attractive to members so more enter. You don't need to bring in 50 plants; 5 is plenty. You'll be surprised how much fun it is. In fact, right now is a good time to look at your collection and pick 5 nice-looking, easy-to-carry plants to enter next year.

This month's speaker is Mary Irish, and she will be talking about the subject of her new book, Agaves, Yuccas, similar plants. Please join me in welcoming Mary.

Leo A. Martin

# Central Arizona Cactus & Succulent Society

P.O.Box 8774  
Scottsdale, AZ 85252

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## Central Spine

*Deadline for articles and submissions for next newsletter:*

**September 15<sup>th</sup> 2000**

*Send to:*

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## San Diego Here We Come

CACSS Annual Buying (Spending) Trip

Our annual buying trip will be the weekend of Friday October 6 - Sunday October 8.

This trip will be limited to the first 30 people who place their deposits.

We will depart Phoenix very early Friday by bus and drive to Mission Valley, San Diego (near the stadium.) After lunch, we will go to Canyon Pottery in Mission Valley, then to our motel.

Saturday we will go to 3-4 nurseries in Encinitas and / or Vista. Sunday we will go to 1-2 nurseries, then drive back to Phoenix.

Dinner and lunch plans are undecided. We may go out as a group in the bus for meals, or we may be staying within walking distance of restaurants. We will try to find a motel near a supermarket.

The bus will cost approximately \$75 per person based on mileage. A final figure will be available before the trip begins. We don't have room rates yet but that will be known in advance as well. We will try to hold room rates as low as possible. We will be staying 2 nights. The earlier we can fill the trip and confirm reservations, the better the rates we will be able to negotiate.

To sign up, mail your deposit of \$100., payable to CACSS, to **Jo Davis**, 2714 West Monte Avenue, Mesa, AZ, 85202, (480) 839-3792. If you will be sharing a room, please send all deposits together in one envelope, and enclose a note listing the people sharing that room.

You will have to pay the remainder of the cost before the trip begins. Remember, this trip is limited to the first 30 people who send deposits. You might want to call Jo first to be sure space is still available.

Deposits and balance payments will be non-refundable. If you decide you cannot go after placing your deposit or paying the balance due, you

will have to find somebody to take your place and get your money from them, not from the CACSS.



~ALERT ~

Agave weevils may be operating in your area!

I have already pulled out two *A. americana* variegated plants from different locations that were too infested to save. Large species of Agave are especially vulnerable, so now is the time to treat them. If a plant appears affected, but is not to the stage that it can be broken off at soil level, try a strong solution of Diazinon poured over the entire plant and around the base. Even if the plant has died and you want to replace it with another one in the same location, it is wise to treat the soil before planting.

Healthy appearing plants may have been infested with weevil grubs and not show any signs of it. By boring into the heart of the plant, the grubs allow bacteria to infect it and cause the catastrophic decline evidenced by a flattening of the lower leaves and the appearance of wrinkles caused by root failure. By this time, secondary insects have taken advantage of the available bonanza and are tunneling in and around the stricken plant.

If you suspect a plant is in danger, use Diazinon to kill the weevils that are there and follow up with another dose a few days later to be sure. Treat your healthy Agaves with Diazinon granules sprinkled into the crown and around the base. Lightly chop the granules into the soil and water it in. This will enter the tissue of the plant, as well as kill insects that come in contact with it. I saved a large *A. pacifica* in this way last year that was loose in the soil and close to being lost. Two *A. tequilianas* would also have been lost, had I not treated them in time. I could not save a large *A. bovicornuta*, *A. colorata* or a *A. medio picta alba*, as they were too far gone.

Scott B. McMahon



Pay more for your Margarita

Will Tequila costs sour drinkers?

Daryl Bell, San Antonio Express-News

The taste of tequila is distinctive, and its effects range from soothing to bewitching.

But what tequila drinkers are discovering is that its once relatively moderate price has been shooting up.

A shortage of blue agave, the plant from which tequila is made, is causing the price increase.

Three years ago, a fungus destroyed many agave plants, but demand continued to rise. As a result, prices began climbing.

Mexico's Tequila Regulatory Council, which governs the industry, watched proudly as the drink's popularity soared in the past decade. Mexican production doubled, with half of that being exported to the United States.

"I got word about prices going up a few months ago," said Ron Moore, manager of Blanco Liquors in San Antonio. "My distributors told me what was happening, but there's not much I can do about it. It's sort of like gas. What are you going to do?"

"It's gone up, in some cases, about \$3 or \$4 a bottle. It may be going up higher, I believe people are going to still get it because they love their margaritas and they like their tequila."

A similar distilled liquor, mescal, also is derived from the agave plant. It is less expensive, and its taste is stronger than tequila.

Tequila was named after a small town of that name in the Mexican state of Jalisco. Some say the word itself comes from the Mexican Indian word for "lava hill," or "from the volcano."

Hundreds of years ago, the Aztecs began producing a drink known as pulque, which was taken from the blue agave plant. The beverage was fermented by sugars taken from the plant that grows only in soils rich in volcanic ash.

In the 16th century, the Spaniards arrived and introduced distilling. That eventually led to the creation of Tequila as it is known today.

# Central Arizona Cactus and Succulent Society

## 2000 Questionnaire Results

25 June 2000 ~ 48 questionnaires returned

THINGS WE DO NOW	Yes	No	Don't care
Lectures	47	0	1
Slide shows	48	0	0
Demonstrations	46	1	1
Library	45	0	3
Pass the can to fund library	46	0	2
Monthly rare plant auction	31	3	13
Silent Auction	48	0	0
Newsletter	48	0	0
Color newsletter issue	33	3	11
Annual donation to DBG	39	1	8
Annual buying trip	34	0	13
Holiday party	40	1	7
Annual show	40	1	6
Plant of the Month	37	1	10
Show & Tell of member's plants	41	1	5
Refreshments at meetings	14	19	14
Refreshments provided by members in rotation	12	26	7
Refreshments provided by club from club funds	6	30	10
More hands-on demonstrations/workshops	36	4	7
Demonstrations/workshops following the meetings	20	11	14
Attendance prize at meetings (raffle)	24	11	10
Rare plant auction at holiday party	22	8	18
Social events/tours of member's collections	28	15	5
Contact schools to introduce them to C&S	22	3	16
Plants so far for the rare plant auction?	<i>Not rare enough</i> 1	<i>Too expensive</i> 22	<i>Just right</i> 14
WOULD YOU LEAVE THE CLUB IF DUES WERE INCREASED TO \$20 ANNUALLY?	Yes 1	No 42	

## Comments (categorized)

### Meeting schedule:

One silent auction per year (The club needs the money as dues provide only about 2/3 of our income--President); more educational lectures; don't repeat lectures each year (how to pot a plant for show); more rare plant lectures; more lectures on how to grow; landscape plant of month.

### Meeting structure:

I voted yes for many new things but I don't want the meetings cluttered Cultural information at each meeting; Ask the Experts monthly-drop box; trial of demonstrations following meetings would be a good idea; raffle better than auction--if tickets \$1 to \$2 -- more money raised than 1 big plant which might not even bring what it cost; please air condition Webster, very uncomfortable with medical problems; too hot in summer; pay for AC -- better attendance (The AC is old and runs at maximum during our meetings--President); plant give away at holiday party.

### Topics we'd like to see:

Bob Schick lecture (no for health reasons--President); Kalanchoe; Mark Dimmitt; use CSSA slide shows; desert trees; tour of DBG greenhouses; Agave weevils and chemicals; landscape cactus and succulents; information on members.

### Newsletter:

Like color newsletter; print history of club; interviews with experienced growers; color newsletter too expensive for club; newsletter typeface too fancy to read; articles from members about their favorite plants; main purpose is to encourage attendance; best newsletter; ever Get newsletter out on time? love "how to grow" columns; enjoy newsletter.

### Club in general:

Need more social interaction; make annual donation to DBG a fixed percentage of CACSS income.

### Show:

Too much effort on show.

### Refreshments at meetings:

Don't want to clean up refreshments -- and, it's always the women who have to clean up; alphabetize club, bring refreshments according to that; start with the board; do as break in middle of meeting; members bring in rotation, are reimbursed by club; focus on plants not food.

### Other:

Need club started on west side -- too far to drive to DBG; please call volunteers in advance if you don't need them (show, plant sales) so we don't have to drive down there for nothing; bid for convention in 2004 (We are considering a bid for the CSSA Convention in 2005--President); membership list with favorite plants; would like to see greenhouses of members.

### Dues:

OK to raise dues so long as not family does not exceed \$40; try \$17 + \$3 to start with.

### Web site:

Need Web site on cactus-mall.com; need web site; need e-mail address.

Leo A. Martin  
Phoenix, Arizona, U S A



## Bug-of-the-Month ~ STINKBUGS

Sue Hakala

Stinkbugs are part of the *Hemiptera* order of bugs which means that they are “true bugs.” True bugs share similar features: they have a simple metamorphosis from eggs to nymphs to adults (no larva or pupa stage for these guys); they have two pairs of wings, with the top ones being thicker and forming an “X”; adults and nymphs have piercing and sucking mouthparts; they are predators of other bugs; many have glands that produce an odor when threatened; and they have a triangular central plate on their bodies.

I may as well get it out in the open right away: I HATE STINKBUGS! I hate them more than any other bug I’ve ever known—well, I guess to be truthful that they are part of my “big three” which includes mealy bugs and cockroaches. Their piercing and sucking mouths create those horrible little cream-colored circles on my cactus that never go away. They inject a toxin while feeding that causes the yellow spots. Through the years they seem to know which plant I am particularly admiring, choosing that one for their egg laying that year. I diligently check my plants for them daily when the temperatures start heating up. Often times they have already left for good when the yellow marks appear in great numbers. They also love to suck out the juices of tomatoes.

Eggs are barrel shaped, laid in clusters of usually ten or more on leaf surfaces and under spines. As the eggs hatch (I’ve never been successful in finding the eggs to destroy them before they hatch), the young (as well as the adults) then suck out the juices from my plants leaving those nasty permanent marks. I suspect that these punctures may provide an avenue for bacteria and viruses to enter too. In my potted plants and for some of the larger less lethal landscape plants, I’ve developed a strategy to kill the nasty things. (I don’t like using pesticides, although I have used an application of a systemic with one particularly bad infestation. I wouldn’t recommend it though, as I believe that some plants died from it.)

Using a large pair of blunt tweezers, I steady one hand with the other, then slowly approach the  $\frac{3}{4}$ ” long adults head on. Oddly, they just sit there and watch me coming. Then, I grab them with the tweezers and employ the stomp method. Their escape strategy, if I approach too fast, is to simply drop quickly to the ground or into the plant. The adults will fly away. Then, I’m unable to get at them. So slow and steady leads to success. If I squish them with the tweezers, it’s at this moment that I’m reminded why they are called stink bugs. You see, they shoot a powerful stream of stinky stuff right at me, one time landing the green goo right on my glasses. Under a thick shoe sole their defense mechanism has no effect. Also, that way I know that they are really dead. They can be sneaky and can fly away or hobble away with one less leg. I also find that where there is one adult, there is usually always another. If they escape by dropping or flying away, I know that they’ll be back in 5-10 minutes. Patience brings me success.

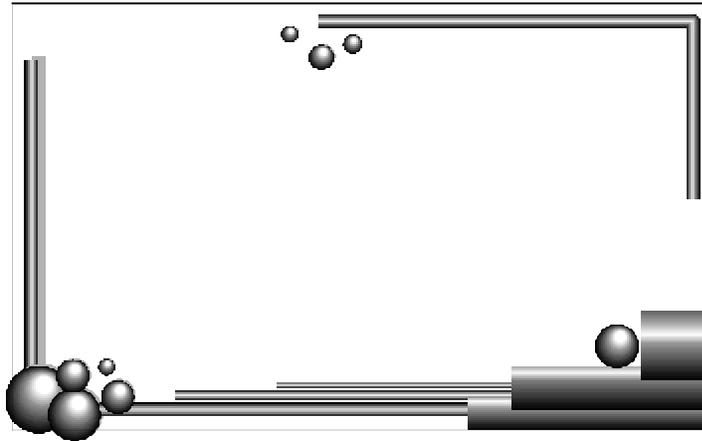
The babies, called nymphs, require a little different strategy as they are more bashful, and are usually (but not always) found in more densely spined plants. They are round, a bright green with reddish antenna held high over their heads. They can be easily observed early in the morning when the first shafts of sunlight are gently caressing the plants. I have no idea if this is really what they are doing, but it seems as though they are warming themselves or doing some kind of sunrise ceremony. Anyway, they line up on the edge of a cactus pad or, at the top and edges of plants, and seem to be smiling enjoying the morning their little heads bobbing around. Probably, they are grateful to be alive one more day or, are remembering the great feast they had sucking the juices out of my plants. Gently blowing on the plants seems to reassure them and make them move so they reveal themselves—maybe they think it’s mom coming back for a visit. I use the blunt tweezer method, but quickly substitute the squashing method when needed using the tip of the tweezers. They can quickly escape, falling into the plant (they are wingless until mature). Then, I go for the “killing stick.” A small, blunt twig especially selected for the purpose (I don’t want to pierce the plant to kill the bug). Jabbing repeatedly at the soil I can usually squish them. If not, after 5-10 minutes they are back up on the plant ready for another round of “escape the tweezers.” I’m wise to their tactics, and can usually kill them all in one round of the game.

If this fails, I slowly water the plant. Not being swimmers, they crawl back up on the plant, then, squish, I’ve got ‘em. In fact, if you notice the tell tale marks on your plants announcing their presence, try this method. They always show themselves.

If any one has any better solutions in dealing with stink bugs, I sure would like to know about them.



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Cactus & Succulent Society**  
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Scottsdale, AZ 85252



**Central Arizona Cactus & Succulent Society**

Meetings held last Sunday of the month

*Time: 2:00-4:00 PM*

*Location: Webster Auditorium, DBG*

*Next Meeting: Sunday, August 27<sup>th</sup> 2000*

*Board Meeting: 1:00-2:00 PM Location: Archer House*

August 27, 2000	2:00 PM	<b>Mary Irish</b> <i>Agaves/Yucca , taken from her new Book</i>
Oct 29, 2000	TBA	<b>CACSS Fall Cactus &amp; Succulent Silent Auction</b>
Nov 19, 2000	2:00 PM	<b>Woody Minnich</b>
Dec 10, 2000	TBA	<b>CACSS Annual Holiday Party</b>
Jan 21, 2001	2:00 PM	<b>Brian Kimball</b> <i>Terrestrial Bromeliads</i>
February 25, 2001	2:00 PM	<b>Steve Southwell</b> <i>"Grafting and Other Propagation"</i>
March 25, 2001	2:00 PM	<i>"Preparing Plants for presentors, Judging"</i>